

She100 gives back to the queer community through grants

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A little over a year ago, four Chicago-based queer women—Brooke Skinner, Angela Barnes, Maia Benson and Amy Bloom—were engaged in a dinner conversation regarding the presence of LGBTQ women when it comes to giving back to their Chicago community in terms of advocacy work and charitable donations.

"It really started with a conversation about engagement and why the majority of philanthropic communities in Chicago were run mainly by men," Skinner told Windy City Times. "We talked about how we could address this and how we could come together to help our community knowing that more voices are more powerful than one. The four of us invited four of our friends and those four invited others."

The grassroots organization She100 was born out of that 'more voices' ideology. Within the course of a year, and working with the partnership and guidance of The Crossroads Fund, the membership role of She100 has flourished to more than 120 active, passionate and engaged women who cross the spectrum of race, orientation and income levels with the singular goal of invigorating and empowering their community.

Skinner said that the membership role continues to exponentially grow each time the group holds a meeting. "They are the most diverse group of queer women I've ever been a part of," she asserted. "It's been a really incredible year of growth for all of us and an incredibly energizing and overwhelmingly exciting experience."

Through their efforts and donations over the past 12 months, the women raised \$16,700. In a ceremony held Oct. 5 at the Center on Halsted, they handed out that money through grants to organizations and initiatives nominated by their members but that fall within a clearly delineated set of guidelines which include queer women being a visible part of their leadership, the demonstration of a clear impact on the Chicago queer women's community and those actively working to address the root causes of discrimination based on race, class, sexual orientation and religion among others.

Those organizations included Affinity, Project Fierce, The Chicago House Trans Legal Project, The About Face Theatre Loneliness Project and The Black Alphabet Film Festival.

"The majority of the projects that we're funding are new to the scene," Skinner said. "We were both their biggest and their first grant. I think the groups chosen really will make a significant impact."

Meanwhile, She100 has begun anew with the hopes that their own impact in 2015 and the years to follow will continue to amplify as their membership and its power to create lasting change in their community expands to new and unprecedented heights.

See SHE100.ORG/ .