

The Means Behind the Scenes

WITAN members raise funds to help Akron's nonprofits.

>> *In every community, there's a group of people that keeps the city thriving and successful. In Akron, one of those groups is WITAN, a nonprofit that attracts Akron's most dynamic women of all ages and from all walks of life. The organization name, WITAN, is derived from the Anglo-Saxon word "Witenagemot," meaning a group of carefully selected leaders operating under democratic rule.*

>> Since its founding in 1943, WITAN has raised and granted more than \$2 million to area agencies, and WITAN's members have performed more than 3 million hours of volunteer service.

With a current membership of over 300 women, WITAN has three different "classes" of membership. The first is an annual Conditional Class of prospective members that usually includes 20 to 25 women. After the first year, these women become active members of the organization; there are presently around 90 at this level. Then, after many years of active membership, a woman can become a "sustaining" member which means that she'll always be a part of WITAN but she's no longer required to fulfill the duties of an active member.

According to Beth Fink, WITAN Imagine Ball Committee Chair, the group's oldest active member is 72, and WITAN has sustaining members in their 90s. She says WITAN has several sustaining members who continue to volunteer, attend business meetings and work at WITAN's events.

To maintain active membership within WITAN, every active and conditional member must pay dues, attend three membership meetings each year, volunteer a minimum of

30 hours annually at an approved location and must work at WITAN's annual 2-day juried, invitational art show, The French Market. The ladies also take on several smaller, short-term projects throughout the year.

Fink says The French Market and the annual gala (this year called The Imagine Ball) have been held annually for nearly 25 years and provide nearly \$50,000 annually to help 501(c)3 nonprofit agencies or organizations that serve the needs of the greater Akron area.

In addition to fundraising efforts, WITAN offers "socialization with a purpose" with its autumn party and holiday event to collect toys or coats for children in need.

✦ An interest in volunteering is one reason women join WITAN. Fink says WITAN also is a fantastic venue to meet new people and establish long term friendships.

"I'm a 21-year member, and the folks I met in my very first year in WITAN continue to be close friends," she says. "We all come to WITAN from different walks of life and different age groups, and we discover the talents and abilities of each other through WITAN."

"I've enjoyed so much what the organization has to offer. This is a very hard-working

group of women. Our efforts have paid such great dividends: socially in building true friendships, and especially providing for others who are in need in our community. If a woman really wants to imagine the difference she can make, WITAN may very well be her answer."

If you'd like to learn more about WITAN and its work in the Akron community, check out the group's website at witaninfo.org or email WITAN at membership@witaninfo.org.

Membership in WITAN is by invitation, and a questionnaire and application must be completed to be considered for membership.

✦ *Writer Katelyn Murphy is an editorial intern with akronlife. She is a senior at KSU working on her bachelor's in magazine journalism.*

Comments?

E-mail them to managing editor Abby Cymerman at acymerman@bakermmedia-group.com



1. 2012 Executive Board Members of WITAN
2. Members and guests enjoying WITAN's Holiday Party 2011
3. Junior members helping at the Holiday Party 2011
4. Three of WITAN's active members working at The French Market
5. Toys donated by WITAN members for Summit County Children's Services' Holiday Toy Room program



WITAN's Imagine Ball

Feb. 2, 2013
Sheraton Suites
1989 Front St., Cuyahoga Falls
Open to the public.
Tickets start at \$150 per person.

This black-tie optional gala features champagne, hors d'oeuvres, dining and dancing. There will be a silent auction with gift baskets, jewelry, Hollywood and sports memorabilia, plus a drawing for a six-month pre-paid lease on a new car.

The French Market

Feb. 22, 2013 - 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Feb. 23, 2013 - 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Todaro's Party Center
1820 Akron-Peninsula Road,
Akron
Tickets are \$6 at the door.

Forty-five vendors, art and flowers galore, plus homemade baked goods and WITAN's famous pepper jelly. Don't forget the tuna salad and spinach quiche for lunch!