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Wyoming Women's Foundation encourages women to obtain leadership positions

LARAMIE — In order to increase women's leadership in Wyoming, the Wyoming Women's Foundation has partnered with the Wyoming Women's Legislative Caucus to increase the number of women who participate in local community leadership roles, such as volunteer and professional boards, and women running for elected positions.

WYWF and the WWLC are bringing "Leap into Leadership" workshops to two communities in 2011: Evanston on May 11 and Gillette on May 12.

"Wyoming is very close to last in the nation," says Sarah Mikesell Growney, Advocacy Coordinator with the Wyoming Women's Foundation. "When it comes to the number of women in the state Legislature, Wyoming sits near the bottom at 41st place." She points out that more than half of the state population is women, yet few of them sit in the Legislature.

"Only thirteen women are in the Wyoming House of Representatives out of 60 and only one woman is in the Senate," says

Growney. WYWF cites research from the White House Project showing that having women alongside men during policy discussions creates a more full-bodied conversation.

The short five-hour trainings are modeled after WWLC's two-day Leap into Leadership trainings held in Cheyenne for the past four years.

"We hope that more women can gain access to leadership development in Wyoming with localized trainings," says Richelle Keinath, Executive Director of the Wyoming Women's Foundation. The first event will be held in Evanston, which has a female mayor and two city council members. Neither Uinta nor Campbell County has any female county commissioners. Gillette only has one female city council member.

"This is not unusual in Wyoming where women make up less than 25 percent of city councils and 12 percent of county commissioners," says Growney, citing a 2009 study from the Wyoming Council for Women's Issues.

