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Wyoming Women's Foundation encourages women to obtain leadership positions

For the Gazette

The Wyoming Women's Foundation (WYWF) has partnered with the Wyoming Women's Legislative Caucus (WWLC) 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. "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 White House Project is a nonpartisan nonprofit organization which aims to advance women's leadership across the nation).

In order to increase women's leadership in Wyoming, WYWF and the WWLC are bringing "Leap into Leadership" workshops to two communities in 2011: Evanston on May 11 and

Gillette on May 12. 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 per-





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cent of city councils and 12 percent of county commissioners,” says Growney, citing a 2009 study from the Wyoming Council for Women’s Issues.

In addition to announcing the local trainings, WYWF and WWLC announced that Representative Rosie Berger from House District 51 will become the new statewide spokesperson for Leap into Leadership. Berger is the chair of the state House Appropriations Committee, has been a legislator for eight years, and founded the Wyoming Women’s Legislative Caucus. “This isn’t just about achieving equality in the equality state, it’s about having a diverse conversation where male and

female constituents are both represented in the most effective manner.”

Women who are interested in attending the trainings can go to www.wywf.org or call (307) 250-0479. Registration costs \$15 and includes lunch as well as training conducted by The White House Project. The Evanston event will feature a lunchtime panel with Mayor Joy Bell, former state Senator Sandra Meyer, and school board member Julie Burleigh. State Representatives Sue Wallis and Norine Kasperik will sit on the panel in Gillette. Women throughout the state of all ages and professions are encouraged to attend to expand their civic, professional or per-

sonal leadership roles and skills.

Leap into Leadership partners and sponsors are the Wyoming Women’s Foundation, Wyoming Women’s Legislative Caucus, Rocky Mountain Power Foundation, Wyoming Community Foundation, Evanston Area Community Foundation, The Equipoise Fund, Bank of Gillette, the Wyoming Council for Women’s Issues, Smith’s Food & Drug Stores, Campbell County Chamber of Commerce, Evanston Chamber of Commerce, The White House Project, Uinta County #1 B.O.C.E.S., and Gillette College.

In order to register for the Gillette and Evanston events, please visit www.wywf.org.