

May 15, 2017

Cher Amis:

It is hard for me to believe that so many years have passed since the founding of the Woman's Board in the spring of 1996. It was with great enthusiasm that the founding members, Jeannie Giesen, Kay Krehbiel, Maureen Smith, Judith Terra and Jere Zenko and I, spearheaded by Catherine Graham, Eleanor Wood-Prince and Catharine Hamilton took on the task of establishing this group to support and promote the Alliance Française de Chicago. We approached twenty-five women who were devoted Francophiles, avid members of the Alliance, or strong backers of the organization and enlisted their membership on our first Board. With this core group we set out to provide funding and support for the Alliance.

Our original fund raising goal was to provide additional funds for the general support of the Alliance, which we have done successfully for many years, increasing our contributions annually to a number that now represents a significant percentage of the Alliance's annual budget. But, we also very quickly recognized that one of our Woman's Board members, Francine Saltoun, was starting a program focusing on afterschool education with a Chicago public school that deserved our special attention, support and financial backing. We continue to consider this one of our most important contributions to the Alliance and the outreach has now expanded to include 6 Chicago schools, scholarships to a summer language camp, and sponsored trips to Paris for select students, much of this due to the hard work of Francine and a dedicated group of our members and the financial support of the Woman's Board.

As our Board expanded, we recognized that many of our members had a strong interest in the cultural aspects of the Alliance and we wanted to promote this through special programs including sponsored trips to France and the now longstanding Symposium on the Arts of France, which is an annual spring event. The Symposium brings expert speakers from around the world to discuss not only the history of French decorative arts, but also the impact of this history on our world today. We have formed a strong connection with the Art Institute of Chicago and work closely with their staff to assure that the speakers and content of these lectures are of superb quality. It is now one of the most anticipated events by not only the Alliance members and the members of our Board, but also by many in the Chicago cultural community.

The members of the Woman's Board, which number 85 today, continue to be dedicated to the goals of the founders, and have increased their financial and leadership support of the Alliance over the years. It is with great pride that I look back at all that has been accomplished by the Woman's Board and it is with great anticipation that I look forward to what we will contribute to the Alliance in the future.

Warmest Regards,
Libby Horn, Founding President