

Hopewell Express

MERCER

Girls' night out is a party with a purpose

Women With a Purpose have fun and raise funds for people in need

BY STACEY PASTORELLA

Each month, Hopewell native Andrea Nami-Wyatt has a girl's night out with 125 to 200 other women.

They are not all coworkers or classmates, although some of them might be. What brings them together is an opportunity to help local women while enjoying one another's company and food from local restaurants.

The dinners are held by Women With A Purpose, an organization that Nami-Wyatt founded with her mother, Stacey Nami, in 2009. Nami-Wyatt now lives in Pennsylvania.

"We've always been of the philosophy of pay it forward, help someone in need, give back to your community," Nami-Wyatt said.

After some brainstorming, the idea for the organization was born.

"We came up with this: local women, helping local families and supporting local businesses," Nami-Wyatt said.

The group plans a dinner each month. Attendees pay for the food, often at special rates set by the restaurants. Each person is also asked to make a donation of at least \$10. At the end of the night, the donations are presented to a local woman who is going through a challenging time and has an immediate need for funds. Those women are often living with serious illnesses, or have experienced a catastrophic event, such as a house fire.

Anyone in attendance at the dinners can nominate someone to be the next month's recipient.

"The recipients nominated and chosen must be experiencing a life-altering, devastating, irreplaceable loss," Nami-Wyatt said.

Hamilton resident Jaime Young first heard about the organization in June, and is now a member. She is a nurse who learned about the dinners from coworkers. Young's cousin was selected as the recipient for the month of August.

At that dinner, held at Rho Ristorante and Discoteca in Trenton, Young shared her cousin's story. She said that being selected

was helpful and meaningful for her cousin, a mother going through medical challenges. Besides the financial boost provided by the experience, the recipient receives support from the knowledge that others are thinking about her, Young said.

The uplifting emotions go both ways.

"These girls get to come together, be inspired by other people's stories," Nami-Wyatt said.

Almost \$4,000 was raised for Young's cousin through the Women With A Purpose dinner in August. Nami-Wyatt said the average amount raised on a monthly basis ranges from \$1,500 to \$2,500.

The dinners have been held at a variety of local restaurants, including KC Prime in Lawrenceville, Rats at Grounds for Sculpture in Hamilton, The Stone Terrace in Hamilton and Spigola Ristorante in Hamilton. The events provide an opportunity for attendees to try new restaurants or dine at favorite spots with special rates. And, of course, they are a time for women to socialize with others from the area.

When the organization was established three years ago, it had only 23 members. Now, there are 1,000 local women involved, with as many as 200 attending the dinners each month.

"The girls love to meet new people, mingle, do some networking, just make new friends or bump into girlfriends they haven't seen in years. It's really just word of mouth that's grown membership," Nami-Wyatt said.

Rosemarie Micharski, of Hamilton, heard about the organization from a parishioner who is a member of Women With A Purpose. That person nominated Micharski's great niece, who was selected to be honored at the dinner last July. Micharski and her family, including her great niece, attended the dinner.

Micharski, who has gone to other events for Women With A Purpose, praised the organization.

"I think they're just a light and a hope for people who need something at that point in time," she said.

The next dinner event for Women With A Purpose is scheduled for Nov. 26 at 6 p.m. at Spigola Ristorante in Hamilton.

For more information about Women With A Purpose, contact the organization via email at wwap.njpa@gmail.com.