

## Bridge that gap

According to an article published by NBC News in 2011, "Women now occupy 51 percent of managerial and professional jobs, up from 26 percent in 1980. More women are graduating from college than men. Seventy-five percent of women say they make the shopping decisions, so they're the consumers, too." However, the same article points out that there are only 15 female CEO's in the Fortune 500.

Forbes wrote an article a year later outlining the ways that female empowerment improves economies.

For instance, the U.S. State Department found that productivity gains caused by an increase in female employment account for 25 percent of current U.S. GDP.

What does that have to do with Rutland? Everything! Check out the table included with this article. In particular, look at the "Management of companies and enterprises" line. There is a 67 percent wage gap between men and women in this category in Rutland County. This indicates that there are barriers to upward mobility for women in our area.

Two initiatives have been created in Rutland that can help overcome the barriers women face with regard to career advancement. The first is aimed at young women between the ages of 15 and 25. It's called Three Steps Forward and is a program of the Rutland Region Workforce Investment

Board. Back in 2010, after speaking with educators and service providers, the RRWIB concluded that our region has a significant population of young women who lack the education, skills, habits or attitudes for well-paying jobs and therefore end up living in less than ideal situations, often financially trapped in unhealthy or abusive relationships.

Program Director Lynn Bondurant, says that the biggest issue facing these young women is "feeling powerless to change their circumstances. In addition to their lack of money, they have multiple other deficits such as

education, formal language skills, physical health, support systems, role models, and social capital." Most participants are from families living at or below the poverty level, and many are experiencing multi-generational poverty. Some have high school diplomas or GEDs, but they all need additional education and skills to get and keep a good-paying job.

When asked what Rutland can do for these young women, Bondurant answered, "They need role models, opportunities, encouragement and support. They need established people in our community who will introduce them to opportunities and experiences, showing them that they can become productive, valued citizens in a community striving to become a healthy place for all to live and work."

Bondurant left me with



**Rutland  
upRising**

### Rutland County Labor Market Information

| Industry Sectors                                    | Jobs   | Annual Average Earnings |           | Earnings Ratio |             |
|---|--------|-------------------------|-----------|----------------|-------------|
|   |        | Total                   | Female    | Male           | Female/Male |
| Rutland Region WIB                                  | 27,264 | \$ 39,318               | \$ 31,878 | \$ 47,186      | 67.6 %      |
| <u>Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting</u>   | 66     | \$ 20,065               | \$ 16,039 | \$ 21,753      | 73.7 %      |
| <u>Mining</u>                                       | 338    | \$ 53,098               | \$ 45,194 | \$ 54,298      | 83.2 %      |
| <u>Utilities</u>                                    | 714    | \$ 94,972               | \$ 75,113 | \$ 103,304     | 72.7 %      |
| <u>Construction</u>                                 | 1,331  | \$ 39,205               | \$ 29,434 | \$ 40,650      | 72.4 %      |
| <u>Manufacturing</u>                                | 3,209  | \$ 58,251               | \$ 50,775 | \$ 60,988      | 83.3 %      |
| <u>Wholesale trade</u>                              | 949    | \$ 46,999               | \$ 36,444 | \$ 50,134      | 72.7 %      |
| <u>Retail trade</u>                                 | 3,904  | \$ 25,194               | \$ 19,389 | \$ 31,141      | 62.3 %      |
| <u>Transportation and warehousing</u>               | 738    | \$ 35,838               | \$ 28,052 | \$ 42,932      | 65.3 %      |
| <u>Information</u>                                  | 285    | \$ 44,176               | \$ 37,426 | \$ 48,757      | 76.8 %      |
| <u>Finance and insurance</u>                        | 497    | \$ 43,896               | \$ 37,855 | \$ 61,283      | 61.8 %      |
| <u>Real estate and rental and leasing</u>           | 298    | \$ 29,910               | \$ 27,423 | \$ 31,593      | 86.8 %      |
| <u>Professional and technical services</u>          | 734    | \$ 52,229               | \$ 36,498 | \$ 76,182      | 47.9 %      |
| <u>Management of companies and enterprises</u>      | 197    | \$ 76,541               | \$ 43,544 | \$ 117,121     | 37.2 %      |
| <u>Administrative and waste services</u>            | 923    | \$ 32,682               | \$ 29,549 | \$ 34,878      | 84.7 %      |
| <u>Educational services</u>                         | 3,239  | \$ 33,428               | \$ 32,117 | \$ 36,352      | 88.4 %      |
| <u>Health care and social assistance</u>            | 4,713  | \$ 44,212               | \$ 37,556 | \$ 71,813      | 52.3 %      |
| <u>Arts, entertainment, and recreation</u>          | 235    | \$ 21,735               | \$ 15,375 | \$ 26,812      | 57.3 %      |
| <u>Accommodation and food services</u>              | 3,219  | \$ 18,232               | \$ 15,216 | \$ 21,678      | 70.2 %      |
| <u>Other services, except public administration</u> | 762    | \$ 24,223               | \$ 18,582 | \$ 29,261      | 63.5 %      |
| <u>Public administration</u>                        | 915    | \$ 40,142               | \$ 37,716 | \$ 41,676      | 90.5 %      |

Source: U.S. Census Bureau and Vermont Department of Labor, Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics, released Nov 17, 2012

this thought, "In many low-income homes men come and go, but the women are the glue that holds the family together. When we improve the economic stability and living conditions for the women, the children and other family members benefit." If you're interested in volunteering for or participating in this program, you can call Bondurant at 293-5089.

The other important initiative that recently started up in Rutland is the Women's Professional Development Center of Rutland. Co-founded by Kiki McShane, president and managing director of FarVision, one of its initial goals will be to provide support and training to professional women with

established careers. These women can go on to be role models and mentors to younger women in the community, fitting in nicely with the needs of Three Steps Above.

When asked why Rutland is a good place for this initiative, McShane responded, "This community is poised to create the future it wants instead of settling for business as usual, and it needs new leaders to see it through." She added, "The Women's Professional Development Center is the right combination of women and men who are willing to work in a committed, confident and caring manner so that this community will prosper.

The timing is right for strong women leaders."

WPDCR will focus on professional development programs that provide career skills and leadership development. They will follow national trends that are of interest to businesswomen and provide workshops, webinars, and other resources to help Rutland women and girls advance in their careers. McShane aims for WPDCR to be a statewide asset, filling a gap in resources she identified using focus groups. "I believe ordinary people can do extraordinary things when supported to take risks and given role models who have set challenging goals and achieved success," she said. McShane began her

career creating strategies for organizational development, coaching corporate executives and designing leadership teams. She brings 30 years of business experience to WPDCR.

To get involved in this initiative, visit the WPDCR Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/womenscenterofrutland](http://www.facebook.com/womenscenterofrutland). I'm excited about these opportunities to fix the wage and opportunity gap in Rutland. I think we will be a better community for it.

*Elsie Gilmore is the founder of Urban Mayhem Project, the catalyst for the Rutland Uprising campaign. [www.urbanmayhemproject.com](http://www.urbanmayhemproject.com).*