

Addressing the networking gap in Toledo

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The “Network Gap,” coined by LinkedIn, is a phenomenon that highlights the literal “gap” in opportunity that individuals not fortunate enough to be born into opportunity, nor have access to a professional network, face on a daily basis. Female communities especially face such barriers. This was the case before the pandemic, and COVID-19 only magnified this harsh reality, especially for women of color. Time and attention must be directed toward building a diverse and inclusive community of women supporting women in general, but especially here in Toledo.

A recent study by the Boston Consulting Group highlights how diversity within a workforce increases a company's bottom line. In Greater Toledo, women needed a dedicated community of resources that were easily accessible. That’s why I created HerHub with other women leaders to connect women to local resources through an online platform, or “Hub.” The mission of HerHub is to focus on women’s empowerment activities, social progress efforts, and economic development.

The idea behind HerHub was to connect and support women, but we soon realized women needed a forum to further connect. HerHub’s Mastermind group, a private Facebook group, is that place where women can share ideas and resources. We have found tremendous success that has transpired from a conversation, asking a question, and simply connecting with other women through the group. The group has become the “go-to” place for women who need access to experienced mentors, business advisors and peers.

Having a robust network is critical to the success of individuals seeking to create their businesses. We are intentional about removing barriers and providing a pathway forward. HerHub’s new accelerator fund, supported with an initial investment of close to \$7,000 by the Toledo Rotary Foundation, will also greatly help address network gaps women face in our region.

We encourage you to consider giving your time and talent to boost our region. Even though we have developed a focused effort, we still find that women of color remain disproportionately affected by poverty, discrimination, and exploitation. Please consider sharing your specialized knowledge with someone who might really need the advice. Whether it’s through an online “hub” or in person, if we can all do one small thing to make Northwest Ohio a better place for women to succeed, it will be worth the time and effort.

The author is a co-founder of HerHub.

