

Wanda graduated from John Abbott in 1979 with a diploma in Heath Sciences. She continued her studies at McGill University completing a BCom and then earning an MBA at l'Université de Montréal.

She founded a sheet metal manufacturing company in 1991, a successful endeavour which is still in operation. However, a major turning point in her life came in 1999. After reading the first reports of the situation of Afghan women living under Taliban rule, Wanda spent over a year researching and investigating the issue, coming to the conclusion that ensuring that every girl has access to a quality basic education is the key to women's empowerment in the world.

After several years as a deeply engaged volunteer with UNICEF Canada, Wanda gathered eight other women to establish the **60 million girls Foundation** in 2006. The goal was to sponsor on an annual basis a large-scale project focused on providing access to education for girls in developing countries. The Foundation has since invested \$3.1 million supporting 26 projects in 19 countries directly benefiting over 50,000 children.

A completely volunteer-run organization, **60 million girls** has administration costs of less than 1% of donation revenues. In 2012, **60 million girls** added a dedicated R & D team to its structure to search for, evaluate and develop new approaches to girls' education focusing on learning outcomes. This decision has since led to the creation of the Mobile Learning Lab model which has now been successfully deployed in 21 countries by local community-based organizations on their own.

Wanda has also been a member of the International Advisory Board of McGill's Institute for the Study of International Development (ISID) since 2013 supporting the long-term vision of the Institute. And she was a member and then President of the *Montreal Y des Femmes* jury for the annual Women of Distinction Award from 2009 to 2016.

RECOGNITION

- Volunteer of the Year UNICEF Canada in 2004
- Personality of the Week by Montreal newspaper LaPresse/Radio-Canada, in October 2006
- Women of Distinction Award by the Montreal Y des Femmes in 2008
- World of Difference 100 Award in 2009 given by The International Alliance for Women
- \$20,000 International Service Award from the Velan Foundation and the Rotary Club in December 2009
- Laurie Normand-Starr Humanitarian Award received May 9, 2011 on the occasion of the Table of Hope Annual Gala
- Received the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal in February 2012 at the inaugural ceremony at Rideau Hall



Wanda Bedard

ALUMNA '79