

## Women's Fund Fall Luncheon Speaker Exemplifies Power of Change

BY LAURA KELLER

National American Red Cross President and CEO Gail McGovern knows what it's like to hit the ground running, or in her case, flying, the first days on the job. In June of 2008, after only five days in her new position, McGovern found herself on a plane to China with 29 other delegates from the American government, businesses and other non-profit groups. A massive earthquake measuring 8.0 on the Richter scale had shaken China's Sichuan province the previous month, leaving nearly 90,000 people dead or missing.

It was her first opportunity to see the kind of trauma and catastrophe that she would face day in and day out in her new role. "At the time it was a bit of shock, as you can imagine. Once I got there on the ground, it was a combination of heartbreak and absolute steely determination — that we were going to help no matter what," McGovern says.

McGovern, one of *Fortune Magazine's* 50 most powerful women in corporate America, was looking for a challenge when she was offered the American Red Cross position. She was serving as president at Fidelity Personal Investments and on the faculty at Harvard Business School at the time.

"I was hoping to join an organization that could really make a difference in the world. And frankly, I was also looking for a leadership challenge," she says.

McGovern will share the message of how embracing change can help a person reach her full potential at the Women's Fund of Omaha's 10th Annual Fall Luncheon on October 28.

"Consider the mid-life, late career change she's crafted in her own life, moving from being one of the top 50 female corporate executives in America to running one of this country's largest nonprofit organizations," Tina Labellarte, chief executive officer, American Red Cross - Heartland Chapter, says of McGovern. "She's traveled the world in the two short years she's been at the helm of the American Red Cross and she's faced the world's largest humanitarian crisis in Haiti in the past six months with compassion and skill. Her appearance here in Omaha is a rare opportunity to meet a woman who, I believe, will go down in history as one of our finest leaders and change managers. Gail McGovern's personal and professional life story will teach all those who attend how to relish opportunities for change in their own lives."



**Women's Fund of Omaha  
10th Annual Fall Luncheon  
Thursday, Oct. 28  
11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.  
Holiday Inn Central**

Individual tickets are \$75.  
Register online at  
[www.omahawomensfund.org](http://www.omahawomensfund.org)  
or call 827.9280

According to McGovern, there's a greater acceptance of change in the middle of a crisis. "We need to leverage the economy and the force of gravity to be able to affect change," she says.

It's a message that applies to individuals as well as businesses.

Now, as the leader of an institution that responds annually to 70,000 global disasters, McGovern is a woman who has been able to accept any challenge she has faced in her career with grace and aptitude. In the

short time that McGovern has been on the job, the Red Cross has reduced its deficit 75 percent and raised \$100 million to replenish its depleted disaster relief fund.

"Gail McGovern is a great leader who inspires the more than 38,000 paid staff and more than 2 million volunteers of the American Red Cross to do our best everyday," says Labellarte. "Her unique ability to manage change in a 129-year-old organization is especially critical in the current economy. She is fearless, energetic and passionate." **W**

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President**