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## ASPIRE

FALL/WINTER 2020



WOMEN'S RESOURCE CENTER  
STRATEGIES FOR WORK. SKILLS FOR LIFE.

## *Empower & Employ*

Thanks to her supportive coach Julie and her own determination, Wynnielle Howland graduated from the 18-week welding program at GRCC and was offered a full time job at a local company—all during COVID-19.

*“ The success of every woman should be an inspiration to another. We’re strongest when we cheer each other on.”*

- Serena Williams

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Women in Grand Rapids are hurting. In the first two months of the COVID-19 pandemic, we interacted with nearly as many clients as we typically do in an entire year.

But despite added barriers, we also see women thriving. I am so proud of our team and our clients who are continuing to train, pursue new career opportunities, and keep themselves and their families safe during this season. Thank you for continuing to partner with us and support them in their good work!

One of my favorite stories was from two of our New Beginnings participants who pressed their way through and completed the Welding Program at GRCC. We are so proud of them for completing this training that will set them up for a new career path.

Another highlight is our new partnership with the Kent County Sheriff’s Department. As they release women to reduce overcrowding during COVID-19, we help them successfully re-enter the community, find a safe temporary shelter, and ensure they have food, clothing, and assistance with employment opportunities.

All across West Michigan, women are doubling down to overcome challenges of unemployment and underemployment. We are supporting them – virtually, in person, with texts and phone calls – to achieve their personal and professional goals. Even in the midst of a global pandemic, the support and professional development that we provide are avenues to raise women from where they are to where they want to be.

During this season of giving, please consider supporting WRC today at [grwrc.org](http://grwrc.org) or by joining EMPOWER, our new monthly giving program. Thank you for helping women aspire to better futures!



**Sandra Gaddy**  
Chief Executive Officer



# Overcoming COVID-19 Challenges

**Last fall, Wynnielle Howland had a difficult decision in front of her. She had just finished serving time at the Kent County Jail and she was ready to start fresh in a new career, but she didn't know where to start.** She was recommended to our New Beginnings program and paired with one of our coaches, Julie. They began meeting and discussing Wynnielle's career goals. Her father had been a welder, and Julie suggested Wynnielle enroll in the 18-week welding program at GRCC M-Tech.

Wynnielle began classes in December 2019 and attended school full time Monday through Thursday. She was in a small class of five people, including one other woman who was working with the Women's Resource Center. After intense, months-long, hands-on training, Wynnielle was comfortable with the helmet, jacket, and gloves needed for the job. She knew all about safety precautions and how best to start a new project. She persevered throughout the quarantine period and graduated this summer with her certificate — and a full-time job offer from a local metal manufacturer.

We are so proud of Wynnielle and many others who continued pursuing education, a job change, and skills training throughout the pandemic shutdown.

## COACH JULIE

“When I met Wynnielle, she wasn't sure what she wanted to do. I suggested the welding program. I'm elated and overjoyed to watch her progress. She's an amazing woman and an amazing mother. She's had some tough times, but she's driven. Even when tough things happened, she had that drive and said, 'I'm going to succeed,' and she did!”

## PARTICIPANT WYNNIELLE

“Julie was the best. Very positive. I'm just thankful that I met her. I don't know where I would be today without her. She's kind of like my sister. She was always there. Any time I needed to talk to her she always picked up the phone.”



## Participant Testimonials

LISA —

“Thank you for your help not only with my resume but with giving me the confidence that I could pick myself up and move forward.

I was fired from my job on February 20th. A friend of mine recommended that I get in touch with the Women's Resource Center. Shortly after the initial interviews to determine my needs and how you could best assist me, COVID hit. Everything was shut down. But you still arranged for help with my resume. I sent you my resume, you arranged a coach, and after a couple of phone calls and reviews and coaching and encouragement, I had a really good resume.

Once things started opening up, I had several interviews which led to my being employed in an ideal position. I know that the improvements and professionalism of my resume are what got me noticed.



Lisa standing outside of her new job.

LACY —

“They never made me feel embarrassed or ashamed to ask for help.

The Women's Resource Center has been an absolute godsend for my family and me during this challenging pandemic. Their financial aid and emotional support was pivotal in keeping our heads above the water as we struggled to even keep food on the table. They were able to help with rental assistance, funds for groceries, and other assistance information.

They have always treated me kindly and with respect. I sincerely don't know how my family and I would have fared without the amazing support and assistance of the caring staff at the Women's Resource Center. 🙏



**Joan Crandall**

*Pioneer of the WRC*

Joan Hamann (Crandall) was a beloved pioneer of the Women's Resource Center. Joan was the very first Board Chair and also served as Executive Director.

“I had the opportunity to spend time with Joan over the past couple of years,” said CEO Sandra Gaddy. “She was just as passionate about our work now as she was in 1973.”

Two years ago, Joan shared with our team Senate Resolution No. 169, a 1981 tribute from the Michigan Senate Office for our advocacy and work in leading the charge on preventing Sexual Harassment in the workplace.



**Deb Bailey**

*Former WRC Team Member*

Deb Bailey started working at the WRC in the mid 70s, around the time we moved into space donated by the Grand Rapids Community College. She was excited to work alongside trailblazing women who were offering progressive programming during this time.

Deb considered it a privilege to help women realize that until they were able to take care of themselves, they were incapable of taking care of others.



**Jayne Schafer**

*Former WRC Team Member*

Jayne was an integral part of our WRC team in the 1980s. She found pride in advancing women in the workplace and impacted many West Michigan women through her tenure at the WRC. She will be remembered for her wisdom, generosity, and keen interest in community.

*Our hearts are with all the families of WRC partners who have passed this year. Thank you to all who have shared their legacies with our team.*

IN MEMORIAM

# Wine, Women & Chocolate

Over 230 guests joined us virtually for a special evening of wine and chocolate. Sommelier George Walker led us through a delicious tasting that featured beer and wine from local businesses. We also enjoyed an online auction with amazing prizes. Thank you to all who supported and attended this event!



Find more photos at [grwrc.org/wine-women-chocolate](http://grwrc.org/wine-women-chocolate)

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Save the date for next year's event:  
*October 7, 2021*





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Coach Niesa Nelson works with client Malika

### *Skills for Life.*

**TaLinda** was extremely grateful to receive financial support to help pay her mortgage when she was furloughed during the COVID shutdown. She had originally applied for financial assistance from a local relief fund but experienced an issue with her application. It was thanks to lots of patient technical assistance from our team that she was able to resolve her problem and receive the funding she needed.

**Cassandra** was scared that she might lose her house because she didn't have her next mortgage payment. Newly divorced with two small children, this was an extremely vulnerable time for her. Our team called her on a routine check-in and was able to provide crisis relief during a time when she was feeling terribly overwhelmed.

### *Strategies for Work.*

**Sarah** had just completed her Participant Interview before the Stay at Home order went into effect. She received help with her resume over email and video calls and was able to continue applying for work.

**Connie** is overqualified for her current position and is seeking a job that's more fulfilling. She received assistance with interview prep and was able to practice her elevator speech with a coach. Her ultimate goal is to own her own business, and in the meantime she's excited to secure a position that is more fitting for her skill set.