



A

ASPIRE

WINTER 2023

50TH

ANNIVERSARY

WOMEN'S RESOURCE CENTER

*Celebrating 50 years of empowering
women in the workplace*

Margaret's Story

“During times of unemployment and job searching, it is so uplifting to have those positive boosts to motivate you to keep moving forward.”

▶ [READ MORE INSIDE](#)

Fifty years of empowering women in the workplace. This year marks Women’s Resource Center’s 50th Anniversary, a monumental time in our organization’s history. Every day, I continue to be inspired by the legacy of our founding pioneers and grateful to lead an organization with such rich history in the advancement of women in the workplace.

Since 1973, WRC has played a major role in the movement to improve workplace conditions and access to economic mobility for women. Although much has been accomplished, there is still more to be done as our society evolves and the economy changes. According to the 2022 Women in the Workplace report, women with traditionally marginalized identities often have a worse experience at work. It is so important that we continue to acknowledge and address the persistent workplace challenges experienced by women of color, LGBTQ+ women, women with disabilities and justice-involved women.

The majority of WRC participants experience multiple barriers to financial stability. Our approach to workforce development helps women navigate those barriers and establishes a pathway to economic independence:

- **Coaching:** Co-creating an individualized plan to achieve workplace success
- **Mentorship/Advocacy:** Providing accountability, support and encouragement as women navigate barriers, setbacks and accomplishments
- **Resources:** Holistic support through financial assistance, essential needs and community partnerships

As we look ahead, our work will continue to respond to the needs of women in our community. This spring, we are so excited to move into WRC’s future home in the Third Ward community. By moving to a new space, we will help more women secure meaningful employment, which will ultimately strengthen economic opportunities for them and their

families. And supporting the financial wellness of families is imperative for creating safe, strong communities.

Your partnership is what sustains this organization. Whether you have been on this journey since 1973 or just started, thank you for supporting Women’s Resource Center. We look forward to continuing on this journey with you as we aspire to improve the lives of women from all walks of life, through **workplace success.**



Sandra Gaddy
Chief Executive Officer

“We need women at all levels, including the top, to change the dynamic, reshape the conversation, to make sure women’s voices are heard and heeded, not overlooked and ignored.”

- Sheryl Sandberg

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Keep Moving Forward

Our team had the chance to interview one of our wonderful mentor and mentee duos, Jan and Margaret. Margaret's story is one of resilience and we are excited to share it with you.

How did you learn about the Women's Resource Center? What made you want to engage with WRC?

M: I first engaged with WRC more than 10 years ago. I was unemployed due to cutbacks during the fiscal crisis. I read an article in The Grand Rapids Press newspaper about WRC and the services they provided. I was interested in WRC because of the career services they offered, their convenient location, and there was no charge to use their services. Also, and maybe most importantly, it appealed to me because it sounded like a welcoming and encouraging environment.

What services did you participate in that you found most helpful?

M: I attended workshops which were always informative, but the most helpful service has been working with a mentor, Jan, during my job search.

What successes have you experienced as a result of working with the Women's Resource Center?

M: I have landed new jobs, received support and encouragement, and gained insight into my own strengths as well as areas where I could improve.

For you, what makes Women's Resource Center different from other organizations that assist with workforce development?

M: WRC always has a positive and encouraging focus. Without fail, I could walk into WRC and be greeted and welcomed warmly. During times of unemployment and job searching, it is so uplifting to have those positive boosts to motivate you to keep moving forward.

If you could tell donors and supporters anything, what would that be and how would you thank them?

M: I believe WRC benefits women in all stages of life throughout our community. It is difficult to describe the benefits of working with a mentor in analytical terms. Certainly, working with mentors as part of a job search resulted in good, stable employment with excellent benefits.

However, I would add that working with a mentor creates a pathway where wisdom can join the journey. I came to realize that my work and life experience is valuable and that I have many talents and strengths that I can draw upon in a variety of situations and then make beneficial contributions. I am so grateful for WRC, and will always be thankful for all donors and supporters for ensuring this service is available in our community.

Margaret's story wouldn't be possible without Jan, her mentor. Volunteer mentors, like Jan, play a critical role in helping women successfully reenter the community. Our center wouldn't be able to do what it does without these wonderful mentors.

How did you get connected with the Women's Resource Center?

J: The Women's Resource Center was recommended by two different friends who were familiar with WRC's programs. They felt that WRC fit me perfectly with my professional background and my focus on relationships that would provide a meaningful volunteer experience. How right they were, as I also personally grew through the experience.

In what ways has your participation in the Women Mentoring Women program impacted your career?

J: When I started as a volunteer I had been retired one year. Becoming a mentor started a new chapter of my life with a new meaning. As a volunteer, I found enrichment in assisting women with their life transitions. This helped me grow personally in my perspective on how each person's journey has unique challenges. It is invaluable to have a trusted person guide a woman through these challenges with a positive relationship.

What has been the most rewarding aspect of your mentorship?

J: The most rewarding aspect is developing incredible relationships with amazing and courageous women. Helping mentees with important decisions to overcome barriers, find their confidence, and pursue a secure life of value is so meaningful. I've been volunteering for a long time, and it's still rewarding and an honor to have women return for consultation and guidance.

What would you tell someone who is considering participating in the mentorship program at WRC?

J: The mentorship program at WRC is a valuable service that you will not find anywhere else. You will be surprised by how it will assist you in discovering your own skills. Don't miss out on the unique experience of a personal consultation for the direction of your career and affirmation to become the best you can be.

It is during the best parts of our lives that we often miss or underestimate how volunteer opportunities may be important turning points in our personal development. WRC mentorship offers opportunities for women to discover themselves and how to work on creating a fulfilled life. [W](#)



Providing Hope and Support

Justine first learned about the Women's Resource Center as an inmate in Kent County Correctional Facility. Here is her story in her own words.

WRC was the first beam of light set upon my life while I was in absolute darkness. I remember reading about what they offered, and I thought to myself, *my fight is not over yet!* I was blessed with hope for myself and my situation.

When my coach Tia and I met for the first time, I was even more hopeful. Tia looked at me like a woman who just needed support, instead of a criminal.

WRC has helped me find rehabilitation services, build my resume, further my education, find and fund sober living housing, provided gift cards for food, funded a hotel stay during an extremely tough transition, been advocates to my family and probation officer and the courts, and lastly have always answered the phone or text whenever I was in need of anything.

WRC has become a huge part of my recovery and I would not be where I am without their support and without my favorite coach, Ms. Tia. Tia is one of my biggest supporters and she is a godsend to all the women she helps. Because of the overwhelming support from WRC, I have a steady job and will soon further my education as a Peer Support Recovery Coach. WRC will be helping me with a scholarship for my education.

I am truly blessed and thankful. My list of hardships is lengthy, but with the

support of WRC, my successes are off the chart. Thank you for everything, WRC. Your program and the dedication of your mentors has changed my life. [w](#)



Wine, & Women & Chocolate

Thank you to all who attended the 2022 Wine, Women & Chocolate hybrid event! With your generous support, we raised **over \$50,000** to empower women in the workplace.

Guests enjoyed wine and chocolate sampling from local vendors, a silent auction with amazing packages, and a wonderful raffle. The proceeds from this annual event support women on their journey to financial stability, economic independence and workplace success.



Thank you to our sponsors!

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Save the Date

Wine, Women & Chocolate
October 5, 2023

New Beginnings in Muskegon and Ottawa

In June 2021, the New Beginnings program began serving women in Muskegon and Ottawa county jails through a partnership with the Michigan Justice Fund. Modeling how the program has operated since 2012 in Kent County, New Beginnings services in Muskegon and Ottawa counties begin pre-release, up to 90 days prior to women returning to the community, and may continue for up to 18 months post-release.

Throughout the first year of the program expansion, WRC staff has enjoyed connecting with the community in Muskegon and Ottawa counties in an effort to create meaningful partnerships. These partnerships will provide a network of resources for New Beginnings participants as they pursue workplace success after incarceration.

YEAR 1 OF THE PROGRAM EXPANSION:

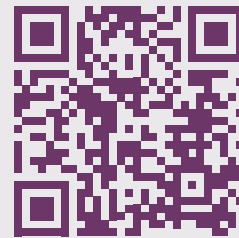
 **32** women served

25 Ottawa County Jail

7 Muskegon County Jail

 **12** volunteer mentors recruited

Learn more about the program through the [New Beginnings video](#).



Propel

A CAMPAIGN FOR WOMEN'S RESOURCE CENTER

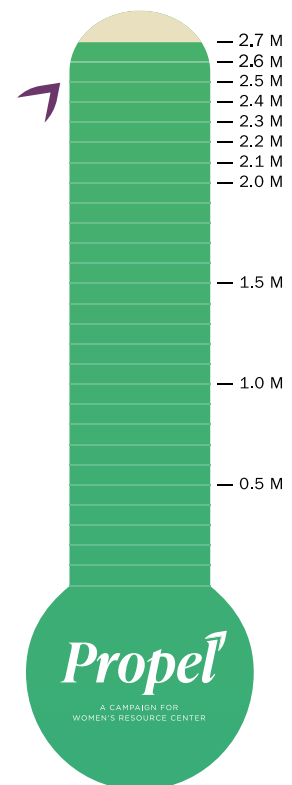


Earlier this year, the Propel Campaign for Women's Resource Center publicly launched in an effort to raise \$2.5 million to move to a new location at 816 Madison Ave SE and expand our capacity to serve more women in the community.

We are so grateful for the support of individual donors, private foundations, and corporate partners in giving \$2.7 million, surpassing our goal!

Join us in this historic campaign to invest in the economic independence and workplace success of women with multiple barriers to employment in our community.

Learn more at grwrc.org/propel.



2022 BY THE NUMBERS



1,650

Hours of volunteer work



Over

4,000

personal care items distributed

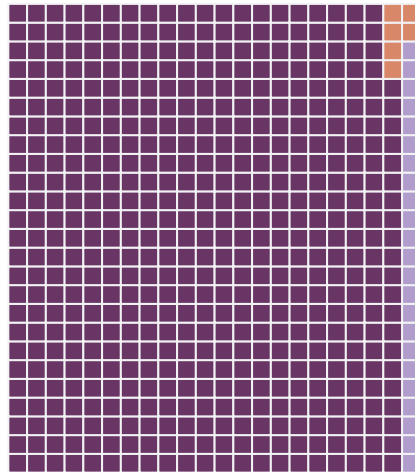


\$31,278

in participant financial assistance for emergency housing, rental assistance, food and transportation.

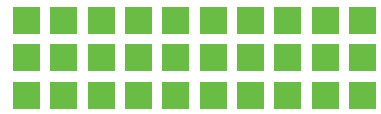
580

participants served



95% women
1% men
4% unreported

30 Volunteers



Outcomes



77

women participants had an increase in salary

15



women enrolled in an education program (certificate program, college, trade)

61



women accessed clothing and accessories in the Business Boutique

93%



of New Beginnings Program Participants

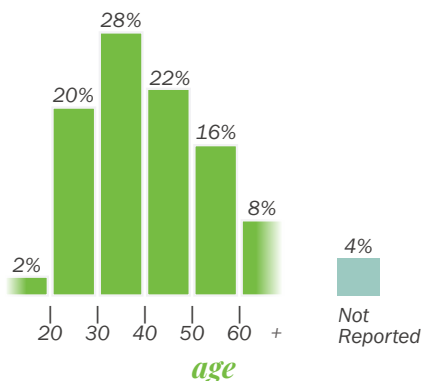
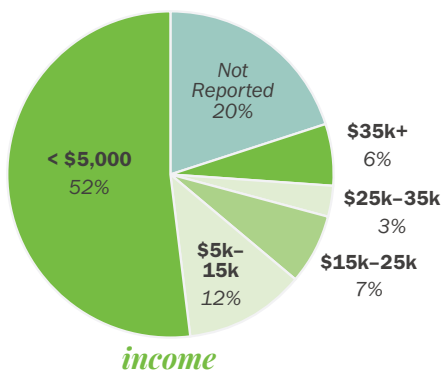
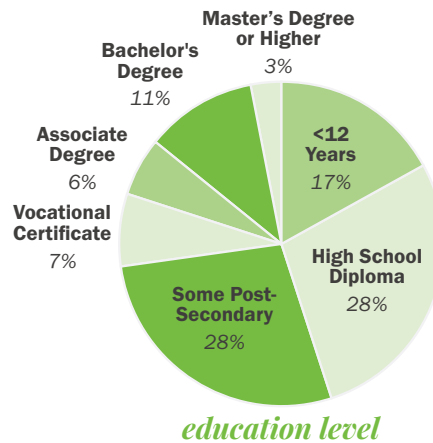
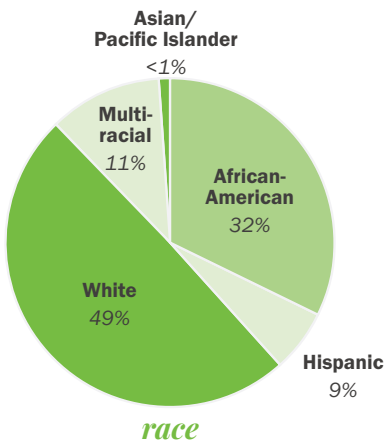
and

88%



of Empower Program Participants **Successfully Entered Employment**

Our participants are...





ANNIVERSARY

WOMEN'S RESOURCE CENTER

50 years of empowering women in the workplace

Stay tuned for more announcements on the year-long celebration. We are collecting stories from women who have been impacted by WRC over the past 5 decades.

If you would like to share your story, please contact Tatum Hawkins at thawkins@grwrc.org.

Participant Quote

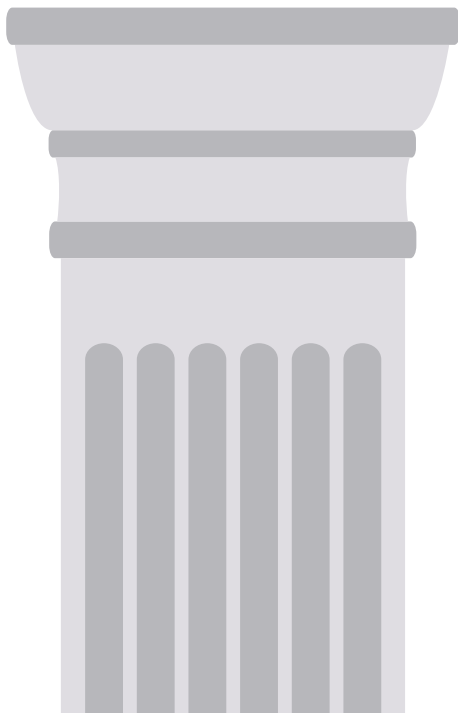
“As a sult of my experience with the Women’s Resource Center, I was able to land a new job as a Resident Services Coordinator. I have also been able to improve my job skills, personal growth and networking opportunities. WRC focused on me as a person and the skills I needed to take my life to another level and how to dress for the job. I just feel that I gained another level of confidence with the support and help I received.

I am truly grateful to have been involved with the Women’s Resource Center. It has changed my life in ways I would have never imagined. I pray this place is able to help so many other women with different walks of life.” - **Ashley**

Partnership with Broadway Grand Rapids

We are excited to announce our partnership with Broadway Grand Rapids! They recently held a tights and warm socks donation drive for our Business Boutique and we will continue to partner with them in celebration of our 50th anniversary. Join us during “My Fair Lady,” which runs April 11–16, 2023. Tickets are on sale now at broadwaygrandrapids.com.

2023 PILLAR AWARDS



Through the Pillar Awards, Women’s Resource Center recognizes West Michigan employers that have implemented best practices which empower women at work. Since 1987, this prestigious award showcases the noteworthy efforts of local employers who are pillars of support for working women.

Sponsorship opportunities are available. Please contact Tatum Hawkins at thawkins@grwrc.org for more information.

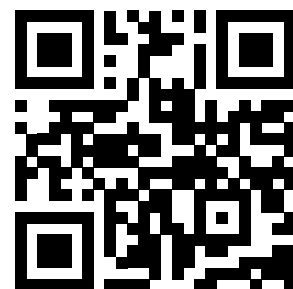
Save the Date

Pillar awards
March 9, 2023
JW Marriott in
Grand Rapids, MI

Keynote Speaker: Princess Sarah Culberson



Tickets Available Now





ANNIVERSARY

WOMEN'S **RESOURCE** CENTER

50 years of empowering women in the workplace

Riverview Center

678 Front Ave NW Suite 180

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Ways to Give

- Consistent giving helps us sustain our programs and plan for future needs. Join our **EMPOWER monthly giving program** by making a recurring gift at grwrc.org/donate.
- Make an impact by donating **long-term appreciated securities**, including stock, bonds, and mutual funds. Contact your financial advisor to discuss the best option for you.