

WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT NETWORK

ANNUAL REPORT

JULY 2025 TO JUNE 2026

WEN

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CEO'S STATEMENT



As we celebrate 40 years of the Women's Employment Network (WEN), I am reminded of the women whose lives have been transformed through opportunity, encouragement, and the belief that a brighter future is possible. For four decades, WEN has helped women overcome barriers, discover their strengths, and move toward financial independence. Some have found confidence, others stability, but all have taken steps toward becoming more fearless.

As I step into the role of CEO, I am grateful for the leadership of those who came before me and the foundation they built. Their commitment to women in Kansas City has created a legacy of impact that continues through our staff, community partners, volunteers, and supporters.

Yet our work is far from finished. Rising living costs, childcare challenges, transportation barriers, and employment inequities continue to prevent women from achieving lasting economic security. At WEN, we recognize that securing a job is only the beginning. Our goal is to help women build stable careers, strengthen their financial futures, and create the lives they envision.

Throughout the past year, WEN has remained responsive to the evolving workforce, providing personalized career support, financial coaching, job fairs, and connections to employers who value a diverse and talented workforce. These services do more than prepare women for employment — they empower women to advocate for themselves, pursue advancement, and build lasting independence.

Looking ahead, my vision is for WEN to continue growing, innovating, and responding to the changing needs of women and employers. We will strengthen partnerships, expand opportunities, and focus on making equitable employment and economic security achievable for every woman we serve.

Our next 40 years should be defined not simply by the number of women who find jobs, but by the number who build meaningful careers, achieve financial stability, and shape their own futures.

Thank you for believing in our mission and standing alongside the women of Kansas City. Together, we will build on 40 years of impact and create a future where opportunity knows no barriers.

Together, we are 40 & Fearless — and our best work is still ahead.

erin cole
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

mission

To help women raise their self-esteem and achieve economic independence through sustained employment.

vision

To advance positive change in the lives of women, their families and the community, one woman at a time.

our history



Co-Founders Beth K. Smith and Marjorie Powell Allen



WEN Staff at the 2026 Luncheon

In 1986, two Kansas City philanthropists and visionaries, Beth K. Smith and Marjorie Powell Allen, shared a powerful vision: to “help women help themselves.” Together, they founded the Women’s Employment Network (WEN). With the support of hundreds of volunteers, donors, and dedicated staff, WEN has grown from a single classroom at Pioneer College into a vital resource for women throughout the Kansas City region.

For 40 years, WEN has remained true to its founders’ vision, empowering women to achieve economic independence through career development, employment opportunities, and financial education — all at no cost to those we serve.

As we celebrate this milestone, we honor the women whose lives have been transformed, the partners who have made our work possible, and the generations of women yet to come. While the workforce has evolved over four decades, our commitment remains unchanged: helping women build confidence, overcome barriers, and create brighter futures for themselves and their families.

the board

2025-2026 Directors:

Julie Pine, *Chair*
Megan Whitman, *Vice Chair*
Patrice Brown, *Secretary*
Julie Bowen, *Treasurer*
Cathy Baier
Stacey Callands
Kati Carr
Becca Castro
Phyllis Collins
Kelly Eschweiler
Amber Goering
Sharon Holmes
Angela Hurt
Shaneé Kimber
Erin Kobler
Megan McCurdy
Arlene Mockapetris
Courtney Moon
Amy Pieper
Stacie Prosser
Rachel Smith

Stacey Paine, *Past Chair*



Julie Pine
Chair



Megan Whitman
Vice Chair



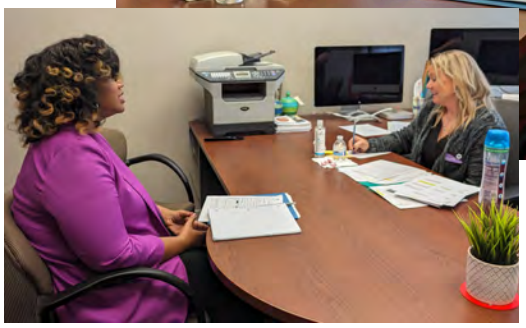
2025-2026 Board members pictured at the 2026 Annual Luncheon are (left to right): Sharon Holmes, Erin Cole (WEN CEO), Arlene Mockapetris, Amy Pieper, Cathy Baier, Amber Goering, Stacey Callands, Kati Carr, Megan Whitman, Rachel Smith, Courtney Moon, Patrice Brown, and Stacie Prosser.

about our program

For 40 years, the Women's Employment Network (WEN) has empowered women throughout the Kansas City region with high-quality career development, employment services, and financial education. We believe that when women have the tools, resources, and support to build stronger futures, entire families and communities thrive.

WEN's holistic approach goes beyond helping women find employment. We equip women with the confidence, skills, and guidance to overcome barriers, recognize their strengths, set achievable goals, and pursue meaningful careers.





Through personalized career coaching, workforce development, financial education, and debt reduction strategies, WEN helps women achieve greater financial stability, build long-term wealth, and create lasting economic independence — all at no cost to the women we serve.

1,235
TOTAL UNDUPLICATED CLIENTS

836
NEW CLIENTS

189
FINANCIAL COACHING CLIENTS

273
EMPLOYMENT REFERRALS

STRENGTHENING OUR IMPACT

THREE PILLARS

WEN offers the Three Pillars to Success course free of charge to women in the Kansas City metro area. Three days per week for three weeks, participants attend structured sessions focused on resume development, interview preparation, workplace navigation, confidence building, and goal setting. The program's holistic model equips women with technical skills and boosts their sense of personal empowerment – both necessary for long-term success in and outside the workplace.



WORKSHOPS

Free, expert-led virtual webinars, part of WEN Courses On-Demand, provide education in financial literacy, job search strategies, personal development, and career advancement. These sessions expand access for women who may face scheduling or transportation challenges.

1:1

Through 1:1 career coaching, WEN clients receive individualized support as they work to define or redefine their career paths. Our coaches help women access resources like childcare and transportation and collaborate with them to define and set actionable goals.

AI FOR BEGINNERS

WEN launched new programming in 2025-26 to meet the need for literacy in artificial intelligence (AI). Through beginner-friendly courses and workshops, women learn practical ways to use AI and build the skills needed to advance their careers in an increasingly AI-driven workforce.

program statistics

65% wen clients below federal poverty level

BASED ON HOUSEHOLDS OF FOUR

$23.55

AVERAGE FULL-TIME WAGE

78% wen clients making very low income

BASED ON KC METRO MEDIAN INCOME

72% / 22%

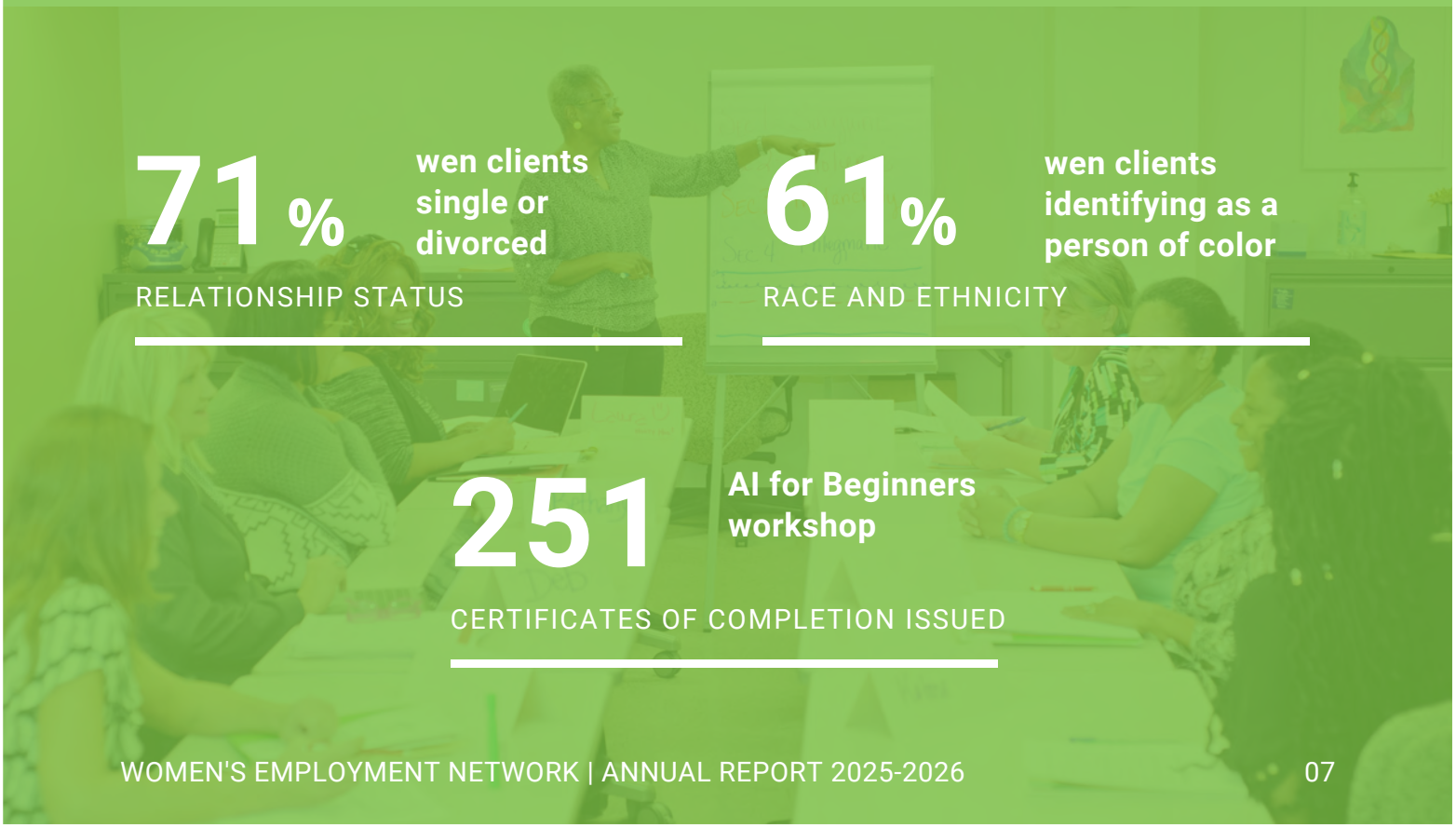
MISSOURI / KANSAS CLIENTS

71% wen clients single or divorced

RELATIONSHIP STATUS

61% wen clients identifying as a person of color

RACE AND ETHNICITY



251 AI for Beginners workshop

CERTIFICATES OF COMPLETION ISSUED

EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT

CONNECTING WITH AREA EMPLOYERS

We continued our successful employer engagement efforts, hosting companies to share open positions and workplace culture directly with women in our program and the broader Kansas City community. These on-site connections created meaningful opportunities with employers ready to hire.

273+ employment referrals

120+ clients attended employer presentations

Last year, we welcomed the following companies: Allied Behavioral Health Systems, InterContinental Hotel - Plaza, Emfluence Digital Marketing, Jackson County Children's Division, KC Medical Coding School, KCPD, Security Bank, USPS, University of Kansas Health System, KVC Health Systems, Heartland Coca-Cola Bottling, i.c.stars Kansas City, Rose Brooks Center, Synergy Services, and Syndeo Marketing.






WEN Annual LUNCHEON





2026 Luncheon Co-Chairs Ashley Mahoney (left) and Rachel Smith (right) are joined by Chief Program Officer Tonia Bomar, former Vice President of Programming & Services Lynnette Williams, and Chief Executive Officer Erin Cole. Inset is 2026 Keynote Speaker Sophia Robertson.



Tonia Bomar, Chief Program Officer (left), and Erin Cole, Chief Executive Officer (right), are pictured with 2026 Beth K. Smith Award Recipient Aaron Mefferd of Aaron Mefferd Creative.

For 40 years, WEN has fearlessly empowered women to overcome barriers, pursue opportunities, and build brighter futures. Our strength comes from powerful partnerships — dedicated Board leaders, passionate advocates, committed staff, and employers who believe in every woman we serve. Through job fairs and career development programs, we continue to open doors and create pathways to economic independence.

KC JOB FAIRS

KC Job Fairs are held twice annually, once in the spring and then again in the fall. In October of 2025, there were 35 employers and over 310 job seekers. In May of 2026, we had 42 employers and nearly 230 job seekers.

Employer industries: Healthcare, Financial Services/Banking, Education, Transportation and Logistics, Catering and Food Service, Insurance, Energy/Utilities, Technology, Nonprofit, Accounting/Tax Preparation, Government, Hospitality, Human Resources and more.



CLIENT STORY
SOPHIA



A woman's story does not end in her hardest chapter

Some stories begin with a dream. Sophia's began with survival.

When she spoke at WEN's 40 & Fearless Luncheon in 2026, Sophia shared what her life looked like before hope felt possible. She was a single mother of two, facing the weight of incarceration, separation from her children, and a future filled with uncertainty. By the time she was released, she was not stepping into stability. She was stepping into another fight.

She had to regain custody of her sons. She had no job. No place to live. No clear path forward.

And yet, even in that season, Sophia kept going.

Her story is not powerful because it was easy. It is powerful because she chose to move forward when everything in front of her said to give up.

After arriving in Kansas City and facing housing instability, Sophia was referred to Women's Employment Network. She came in carrying the weight of everything she had been through. In her words, she felt like a mess. She felt like she had already failed.

But WEN did not see failure. WEN saw possibility.

Through support, encouragement, and practical tools, Sophia began rebuilding from the inside out. She learned how to write a resume. She practiced interviewing. She attended workshops that helped her face her fears and recognize something she had not fully seen in herself before: resilience.

Step by step, workshop by workshop, Sophia began to believe that her future could look different from her past.

That is part of what it means to be fearless. Sometimes fearless begins with showing up before you feel ready.

Sophia's story did not stop at getting through hard times. It grew into something beautiful.

With WEN's support, she found employment through an employer partner and remained there for five years. Over time, the woman who once doubted herself became a homeowner, a business owner, and the leader of a healthcare transportation company with six employees.

Her sons graduated from high school and continued their education. Her family grew. Her confidence grew. Her life opened up in ways she once could not imagine.

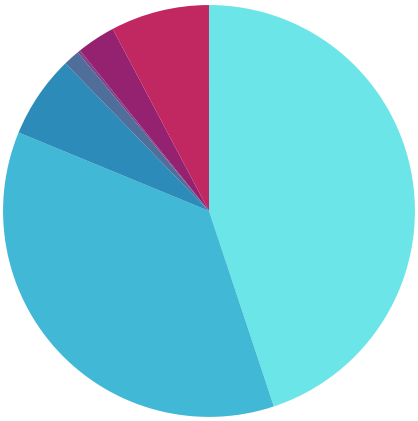
Today, Sophia describes her life as fulfilled, beautiful, and full of confidence.

Sophia's story is a testament to what becomes possible when a woman discovers her own strength, receives the support she deserves, and realizes that her next chapter is hers to write.

2025-2026 FINANCIALS

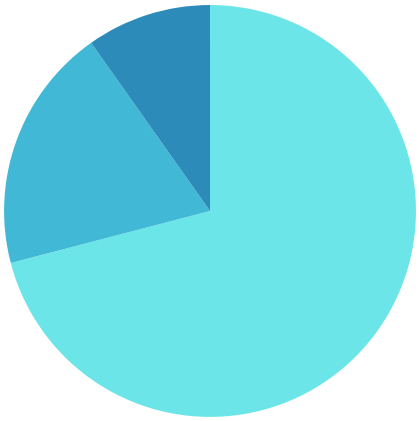
Since 2009, WEN has balanced its budget and increased cash reserves, resulting in strong financial sustainability for the organization. The Finance Committee remains diligent in monitoring our cash flow and sources of revenue in concert with our Board of Directors.

revenue



Foundations/Trusts	$621,190
Luncheon/Special Events	$502,437
Legacy Circle	$89,948
Individuals	$17,630
United Way	$3,146
Investment gain (loss), net	$41,939
Miscellaneous	$107,126

expenses



Program	$947,297
Development/Fundraising	$257,329
Administration	$130,804

TOTAL REVENUE - $1,383,416

TOTAL EXPENSES - $1,335,430

LEGACY CIRCLE

2025-2026

The Beth K. Smith & Marjorie Powell Allen
LEGACY CIRCLE
WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT NETWORK

IMPACT BUILDER

Cathy Baier
Karen Daniel
Kathy Dodd
Kim Jones & Shelly Freeman
Bill Maness

LEGEND

Ann Baum
Kay Callison
Janice Blansit & Terrence Kolich
Amy Fauss
Elizabeth "Zibbie" Ferrell
Jenny Haile
Angela Hurt
Catherine J. Kelly
Nicole Miller
Barbara Koval Nelson
Mary O'Connor
Marta Padula
Stacey Paine
Debbie Sinopoli
Debbie Smith

FOUNDER

Dana Abraham
Adrienne Byand Banks
Kate Ferrell Banks
Rita Blitt
Pam Breuckmann
Tonia & Richard Bomar
Kelly Carnago & Doug Duty
Carla Chavarria
Cheryl Flood
Lisa Gioia
Amber Goering
J. Brett Gordon
Shirley & Barnett Helzberg
Sharon Holmes

FOUNDER (CONT.)

Celia Huneycutt
Gwen Johnson
Colby Jones
Nancy Kenner
Madeleine McDonough
Lori McGroder
Arlene Mockapetris
Lynn McIntosh
Christy Paoli
Amy Pieper
Nicolle & Harley Ratliff
Joan Redhair
Cindy Richey
Sue & Cliff Rippe
Kimberly Robinett
Kelly Scanlon
Amy Slattery
Rachel Smith & Chris Vickers
Susan Stanton
Shannon Swift
Hailee Bland Walsh
Cynthia Weber Scherb
Diana Toman
Nan Vail & Keith Bottorff
Valerie Vaughn
Ashley & Monica Vernon
Paul Weber
Cheryl Lockton Williams
Lynnette Williams
Casey Williamson
Megan Whitman
Shelley Wolff
Joe & Lori Yager

VISIONARY

Lisa Acree
Aviva Ajmera
Sarah Baum

VISIONARY (CONT.)

Trisha Bean
Brian Beard
Julie Bowen
Katie Briscoe
Tammy Broaddus
Shanelle and Eric Bubb
Kati Carr
Becca Castro
Julie Anderson Clark & Vince Clark
Joan Cohen
Erin & Shannon Cole
Phyllis Collins
Kimberly Deveney
Darlene Dunn
Katie Dunn
Alice Ellison
Seth & Kelly Eschweiler
Julie Farrell
Melissa Gray
Katie Grimes
Amy Grothaus
Jen Gulvik
Donald J. Hall
Theresa Hursh
Chris Jackson
Jeanette Jayne
Jill Jenkins
Laura Lee Jones
Ashley Kendrick
Julie Klima
Katie & Andrew Killen
Shannon King & Kate Nielsen
Katie Lord
Sherri Lozano
Jennifer Malone
Rebecca Martin
Megan McCurdy & Meredith Moser

VISIONARY (CONT.)

Kim McGownd
Kate Migneron
Amanda Mohr
Erika Moody
Tamra Moran
Gayle Packer
Lenora Payne
Julie Pine
Cheryl & Ryan Poage
Anne Post
Leslie Reardon
Angela Watson Robertson
Chelsey Ryerson
Martha Salinas
Andrew Shepard
Margo Shepard
S. Sloane Simmons & Harl A. Van Deursen
Charlie & Jeanne Sosland
Hillary Stamper
Jessica Best Stewart
Kelly Summers
Polly Thomas
Angela Tower
Jennifer Turner
Sherry Turner
Anna Valdivia
Kristy Vetter
Toni Walsh
Tanya Rodecker Wendt
Kimberly Wilkerson
Marie Woodbury



WEN'S OFFICES ARE LOCATED IN THE HEART OF WESTPORT IN KANSAS CITY

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