



WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT NETWORK

ANNUAL REPORT

JULY 2024 TO JUNE 2025



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PRESIDENT'S STATEMENT

As I reflect on the past year and look ahead to the next, one truth remains clear: women in the Kansas City region continue to be powerful drivers of our economy – yet many still face barriers that limit their ability to fully participate and succeed. At the Women’s Employment Network (WEN), we see these challenges every day, and we remain steadfast in our commitment to helping women overcome them.

Rising living costs, wage disparities, unaffordable childcare, and unreliable transportation continue to shape the daily realities of the women we serve. Women of color face these challenges most acutely, disproportionately impacted by systemic inequities that limit access to higher-wage jobs, financial stability, and career advancement. Often, these barriers compound – making it difficult to accept a promotion without childcare, secure employment without transportation, or pursue career growth without financial guidance and support.

Throughout last year, WEN responded with programs designed to meet these needs head-on. We expanded financial coaching for women navigating inflation and housing instability, strengthened our workforce development services, and – through the OneKC for Women Alliance – continued advancing regional solutions to the childcare crisis. As a result, more women are securing employment, starting small businesses, building savings, and confidently advocating for their futures.

As we enter a new year, our focus remains on long-term economic mobility and equitable access



to opportunity. We are investing in enhanced career-readiness programming, deepening partnerships across industries, and continuing to champion the needs of women facing poverty, racial inequities, and generational financial barriers.

Women are ready and resilient. With the right support, they can transform their families, workplaces, and communities.

Thank you for standing with us and helping build a Kansas City where every woman has the opportunity to rise.

Together, we are shaping a stronger, more inclusive future for all.

sherry turner

WEN PRESIDENT AND
ONEKC FOR WOMEN FOUNDER

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.



alliance

WEN is a proud partner of the OneKC for Women alliance with the Women’s Business Center, Women’s Capital Connection, and Women Lead Initiative. By working together as OneKC for Women, these partner organizations are able to better achieve a common goal: empowering women to achieve financial independence.



our history



WEN CO-FOUNDERS BETH K. SMITH AND MARJORIE POWELL ALLEN



WEN STAFF AT THE 2025 LUNCHEON

In 1986, two Kansas City philanthropists and visionaries, Beth K. Smith and Marjorie Powell Allen, had a profound idea of how to "help women help themselves" and they worked to form the Women's Employment Network. With the involvement and support of hundreds of volunteers, donors, and dedicated staff, WEN has grown from a single classroom at Pioneer College to where we are today.

WEN has continued to work toward the mission and vision of its founders and has played an important role in the professional growth of women in Kansas City for nearly four decades – at no cost to the women WEN serves.

the board

2024-2025 Directors:

Julie Pine, <i>Chair</i>	Shanee Kimber
Megan Whitman, <i>Vice Chair</i>	Nicole Miller
Patrice Brown, <i>Secretary</i>	Arlene Mockapetris
Julie Bowen, <i>Treasurer</i>	Rachel Smith
Cathy Baier	Sylyva Stevenson
Stacey Callands	Toni Walsh
Kelly Eschweiler	
Amber K. Goering	Stacey Paine, <i>Past Chair</i>
Sharon Holmes	



Julie Pine
Chair



Megan Whitman
Vice Chair

about our program

For nearly four decades, WEN has provided high-quality, much-needed programming in Kansas City. WEN believes that when you give women the support to build a foundation for their futures, potential, and well-being, you also strengthen the foundation for the entire community. WEN's holistic approach helps women reach their full potential – beyond unemployment, and underemployment, not only by helping them find work but also by developing



their personal strengths, assisting them in understanding and realizing attainable goals, guiding them through the debt reduction process, and building personal finance skills and wealth over time.



1695

TOTAL UNDUPLICATED CLIENTS

1256

NEW CLIENTS

236

FINANCIAL COACHING CLIENTS

207

EMPLOYMENT REFERRALS

program statistics

56%

wen clients
below federal
poverty level

BASED ON HOUSEHOLDS OF FOUR

\$20.35

AVERAGE FULL-TIME WAGE

75%

wen clients
making very low
income

BASED ON KC METRO MEDIAN INCOME

72% / 28%

MISSOURI / KANSAS CLIENTS

75%

wen clients
single or
divorced

RELATIONSHIP STATUS

51%

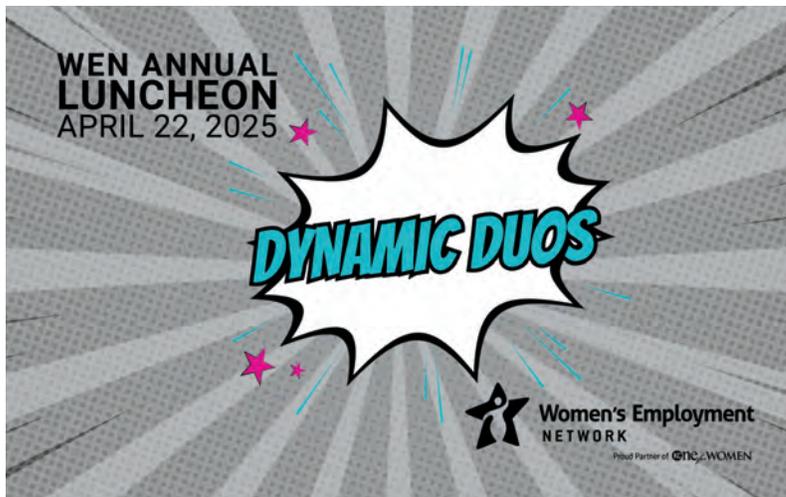
wen clients
identifying as a
person of color

RACE AND ETHNICITY

WEN Annual LUNCHEON



2025 Luncheon Co-Chairs Megan McCurdy and Angela Hurt are joined by WEN President Sherry Turner, Chief Operating Officer Erin Cole, Vice President of Programming and Services Lynnette Williams, Director of Employment and Client Services Tonia Bomar and 2025 Beth K. Smith Award Recipients Shelly Freeman and Kimberly Jones. Inset is 2025 Keynote Michelle Young.



Throughout our history, powerful partnerships have fueled WEN's success – from Board leaders engaging with the community, to advocates expanding our reach, to staff walking alongside our clients every step of the way. Our job fairs and employer partners open doors to new possibilities, while our OneKC for Women Alliance collaboration creates even more opportunities. And at the heart of it all is our most vital partnership: WEN and you.

KC JOB FAIRS



KC Job Fairs are held twice annually, once in the spring and then again in the fall. In October of 2024, there were 61 employers and over 200 job seekers. In May of 2025, we had 39 employers and over 300 job seekers.

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



OCT

MAY

61 EMPLOYERS
200 JOB SEEKERS

39 EMPLOYERS
300 JOB SEEKERS

STRENGTHENING OUR IMPACT

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. Last year, we welcomed the following companies: Country Club Bank, James Emmett & Company (JEC), Johnson Controls, Inc., Kansas City Medical Coding and Training School (KCMCT), Kansas City Police Department (KCPD) and Rosebrooks.

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 personal empowerment – both necessary for long-term success in and outside the workplace.

WORKSHOPS

Free, expert-led virtual weekly webinars provided education in financial literacy, job search strategies, personal development, and career advancement. These sessions expanded 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 re-define their career paths. Our coaches help women access resources like childcare and transportation and collaborate with them to define and set actionable goals.



CLIENT STORY

MICHELLE



WEN was the beginning for me.

At the time, I was a young mother – lost, overwhelmed, and unsure of where my life was heading. I didn't have a career path. I didn't have the skills. I didn't even have the confidence to believe that I was capable of more.

I grew up in a single-parent home. My mom was a great mother – strong, loving, and determined – but she was doing it all on her own. And like so many families in that situation, we struggled. I saw her struggle every day. I remember as a child I had no dreams of what I wanted to become, because you see when you grow up in the inner city there's not many people around you that have been successful. I didn't grow up in a family of college educated adults. Now don't get me wrong they worked hard and we were surviving but no one talked about life after high school.

When I was in high school – just a month into my senior year – I found out I was pregnant. I was 17 years old. At that moment, I remember thinking, "What could I possibly have to offer a child?" I was still a child myself, unsure, scared, and facing a future that looked completely different than what I had imagined.

But I kept going. I graduated with the class of 1993, nine months pregnant. And just a few weeks later, I gave birth to a healthy, beautiful baby boy. That same little boy will be 32 years old this year – wow, time really flies.

When I found Women's Employment Network, I came broken. I came without direction. I didn't have hope. I didn't know what the program would do for me – or if it would do anything at all. But one thing I did know? The program was free – and for me at that time, that meant everything. I came into WEN with nothing – no job, no transportation, barely enough food. I was catching the bus with a baby who wasn't even a year old. But from the moment I walked in, I felt something different. I felt seen. I felt heard. And most importantly, I wasn't judged.

WEN gave me tools – real, practical tools. They taught me how to write a resume, how to present myself with confidence, how to walk into an interview and own it. But more than that, they helped me rediscover who I was. They helped me find my voice, my value, and my strength.

After my time at WEN, I went on to enroll at TAD Technical Institute and earned a certificate in Computer Technology. From there, I worked several jobs, gaining experience and learning more about who I was and what I wanted to become. Eventually, my husband and I opened our own preschool business – a place we built from the ground up and ran side by side for 16 years.

Yes, I said husband – we've been together for almost 30 years now! That's something else I didn't see coming in my life, but here we are – still going strong. We also have two more children – a son and a daughter. Our daughter graduated from Lincoln University in 2022, which is such a proud moment for our family. And if you're wondering – no, I didn't see two more kids in my future either! Life really does surprise you in the best ways.

Eventually, I made the decision to close our preschool, and I promised myself I'd go back and finish something I had started so many years ago – my Bachelor's Degree. I began working as a substitute teacher, then took a position working as a school attendance clerk while completing my degree in Social Work at the University of Central Missouri. And guess what? I graduated with the Class of 2023!

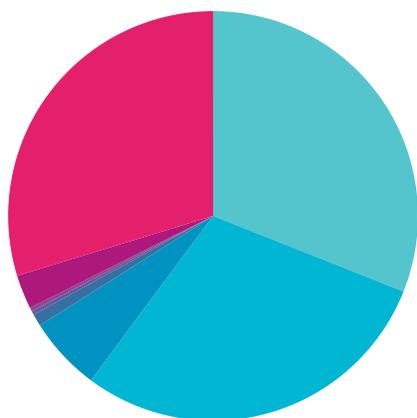
Today, I'm proud to say that I work in a school district as a School Social Worker – a career that allows me to support students and families in a way that's deeply personal and meaningful to me.

When I found the Women's Employment Network – or maybe I should say, when WEN found me – I was at a crossroads. For me, WEN wasn't just a program – it was a lifeline. They gave me something I hadn't felt in a long time: hope.

2024 - 2025 FINANCIALS

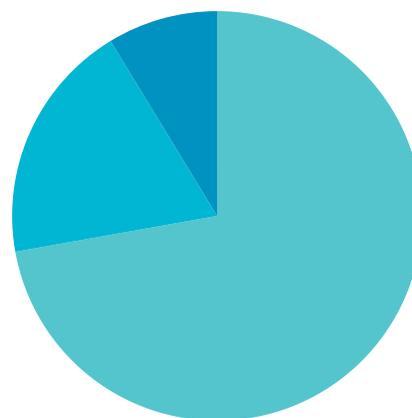
Since 2009, WEN has balanced its budget and increased cash reserves, resulting in strong financial sustainability for the organization. The Finance Committee remains diligent in monitoring our cash flow and sources of revenue in concert with our Board of Directors.

revenue



Foundations/Trusts	\$491,531
Luncheon/Special Events	\$461,893
Legacy Circle	\$92,985
Individuals	\$14,984
In-kind	\$5,000
United Way	\$4,675
Investment gain (loss), net	\$42,667
Miscellaneous	\$471

expenses



Program	\$991,654
Development/Fundraising	\$262,274
Administration	\$119,585

TOTAL REVENUE - \$ 1,114,206

TOTAL EXPENSES - \$ 1,373,513

LEGACY CIRCLE



The Beth K. Smith & Marjorie Powell Allen

LEGACY CIRCLE

WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT NETWORK

LEGEND

Cathy & Rick Baier
Ann Baum
Kay Callison
Karen Daniel
Janice Blansit & Terrence Kolich
Amy Fauss
Elizabeth "Zibbie" Ferrell
Jenny Haile
Angela Hurt
Kim Jones & Shelly Freeman
Catherine J. Kelly
Bill Maness
Michele Markham
Nicole Miller
Mary O'Connor
Marta Padula
Stacey Paine
Debbie Sinopoli
Debbie Smith

FOUNDER

Dana Abraham
Adrienne Byand Banks
Kate Ferrell Banks
Becky Blades
Rita Blitt
Pam Breuckmann
Tonia Bomar
Kelly Carnago & Doug Duty
Carla Chavarria
Mindy Corporon
Chelsea Dickerson
Kathy Dodd
Cheryl Flood
Lisa Gioia
Amber Goering
J. Brett Gordon

FOUNDER (CONT)

Shirley & Barnett Helzberg
Sharon Holmes
Celia Huneycutt
Gwen Johnson
Laura Lee Jones
Nancy Kenner
Madeleine McDonough
Lori McGroder
Mark Melchior
Arlene Mockapetris
Megan O'Rear
Lynn McIntosh
Christy Paoli
Amy Pieper
Joan Redhair
Jen Regas
Cindy Richey
Sue & Cliff Rippe
Dr. Michelle Robin
Kimberly Robinett
Joshua Rowland
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
Megan Whitman
Shelley Wolff
Joe & Lori Yager

VISIONARY

Lisa Acree
Aviva Ajmera
Sarah Baum
Trisha Bean
Brian Beard
Dyanna Black
Julie Bowen
Katie Briscoe
Tammy Broaddus
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
Chris Jackson
Gail James
Theresa Hursh
Jeanette Jayne
Jill Jenkins
Jasmine Kaplan
Katie & Andrew Killen
Shannon King
& Kate Nielsen
Katie Lord
Sherri Lozano
Jennifer Malone

VISIONARY (CONT)

Rebecca Martin
Megan McCurdy
& Meredith Moser
Kate Migernon
Amanda Mohr
Erika Moody
Tamra Moran
Barbara Koval Nelson
Gayle Packer
Lenora Payne
Julie Pine
Cheryl & Ryan Poage
Anne Post
Nicolle & Harley Ratliff
Leslie Reardon
Chelsey Ryerson
Martha Salinas
Andrew Shepard
Margo Shepard
S. Sloane Simmons
& Harl A. Van Deursen
Charlie & Jeanne Sosland
Hillary Stamper
Sylvya Stevenson
Jessica Best Stewart
Kelly Summers
Cyndi Swall
Polly Thomas
Angela Tower
Jennifer Turner
Sherry Turner
Anna Valdivia
Shanelle Varone
Toni Walsh
Tanya Rodecker Wendt
Colleen White
Ramona Williams
Marie Woodbury





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

kcwen.org

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