

Dear Friends,

With the arrival of the warming sun and Covid vaccines, we enter the season of renewal and hope. Hope that soon we will be able to gather together safely again.

At this time last year, it felt like the world stopped. We cancelled our regular spring activities and focused solely on ensuring that our advocacy and support remained accessible every hour, every day. We learned a lot about ourselves as we shifted into virtual spaces, established new routines, and redefined human connection. I wonder what are we have learned as a community and what we will carry forward. Personally, I am inspired by Margaret J. Wheatley's *Turning to One Another*:

*There is no greater power than a community discovering what it cares about.
Ask "What is possible?" not "What's wrong?" Keep asking.
Notice what you care about.
Assume that many others share your dreams.
Be brave enough to start a conversation that matters.*

Thank you for showing up so fully for WISE this year and every year.

Warm regards,

Peggy



Save the Dates

WISE Art Group

Monthly: every 3rd Saturday 1-3:00 pm
email bailey@wiseuv.org for Zoom link

WISE Women Writing

Seasonally: Wednesdays 5:30-7:00 pm
email pam@wiseuv.org for details

Annual Meeting

Tuesday, May 18, 2021
6:00pm

Covered Bridges Half Marathon Virtual Race

June 6-13, 2021

Board Members

Patricia Spellman, President
Martha Goodrich, Co-Vice President
Kate Griffiths Harrison, Co-Vice President
Margaret Rightmire, Treasurer
Emily Dentzer, Secretary
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Susan Dewees, Board Emeritus
Jane Maglaque, Tuck Revers Board Fellow
Stylianios Chasapopoulos, Tuck Revers Board Fellow

highlights

Spring 2021



“WISE is a place where a whole piece of your life is understood the moment you walk in the door.” - survivor



38 and 34 Bank Street, new transitional housing next door to the WISE Program Center

WISE safe spaces

National research shows that 92% of homeless women report experiencing physical or sexual violence, with over 50% citing domestic violence as a cause for their homelessness. Over the years, we have supported hundreds of survivors seeking a safe place to live. In the early days, this meant a patchwork of private homes offering refuge. Through the decades, our program evolved to a coordinated effort between our Safe Home, homeless shelters, time-limited and state-funded hotels, or a friend or family couch.

Survivors often struggle with moving from these temporary locations to permanent housing. Survivors who have fled unsafe relationships often have minimal resources available to them, typically the result of their abuser's actions to control, limit, or prevent access to shared or independent funds. Transitional housing units provide survivors with a housing option that allows them the time and space to establish a financial foundation that permits independent access to permanent housing.

We have long recognized the significant need for transitional housing for survivors of gender-based violence and identified it as a priority in our strategic direction over the next five years. It was a serendipitous opportunity when the adjacent property at 34 Bank Street, a converted circa 1840 home, became available for purchase. The building already offering multiple apartments with easy access to public transportation, shopping, schools, presented as a truly ideal location to establish our vision for transitional housing. WISE purchased the property in September 2020 and renovations are underway this spring. Our thanks to Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center and other supporters for their financial support of this project. Over the coming months, we will complete repairs to the building, renovate the outdated garage to a laundry and common room, and create an ADA compliant unit. We look forward to opening units to survivors later this spring.

Our expanded Safe Spaces Program increases accessibility to safe housing through a variety of avenues fully supported by WISE survivor-centered advocacy. Because affordable and secure housing is not isolated in the spectrum of survivor needs, we also support survivors in issues such as securing employment, solving rural transportation challenges, and accessing safe and affordable child care. In keeping with the WISE philosophy of advocacy, we provide a place where survivors can feel safe and nurtured, and where they have space to plan the next steps for themselves and their children.

Celebrating 50 WISE years

In 1971, Elaine Selle Babcock and Lois Aaron created a center to support women in different phases of their lives with education, employment information, and community resources. Together with a small group of women, Elaine attended training at University of New Hampshire. After they completed training, each woman left with a \$500 grant to establish a WISE center in their area. By 1974, there were 11 WISE centers throughout New Hampshire, including an office in White River Junction, Vermont.

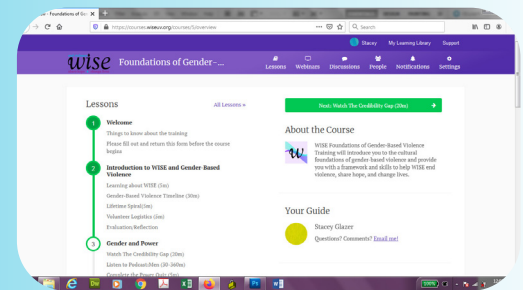
We have been exploring our history through the past five decades, seeing how the history is part of the evolution of who WISE is today, and how it forms the foundation of where we are headed as an organization. Celebrating in-person will feel different this year as we remain affected by social distancing realities. We are getting creative so that together we can honor our past as we head into the future.



Foundations has gone virtual

Our highly popular Foundations of Gender-Based Violence training for volunteers and community members has evolved in keeping with social distancing requirements. We have adapted our in-person training to include a combination of Zoom and home-study.

We purchased a new software platform to help facilitate an exciting virtual WISE university. With the new system, we upload all the pre-work for each session and release on a set schedule so that participants can read articles, watch videos, or listen to podcasts to prepare for the next session. The system has a discussion feature which has been particularly rewarding for us as facilitators. Participants can discuss home assignments and share their reflections with each other in between Zoom sessions.



new WISE virtual university

Some unexpected and positive advantages – there are no snow storm cancellations! While this new format does not replace the importance of being in-person as we process gender-based violence together, it does increase the accessibility of our training. We look forward to incorporating the best features into our training when we are able to be in community together again.

Curious about our home assignments? Check out thishappenedpodcast.com.

Have a story to share with us about the early days? How has working with WISE affected you? Were you on the crisis line years ago? We want to talk with you! We are currently capturing an oral history of WISE and your stories are important. Email marketing@wiseuv.org for more details.