

## Dear Friends,

At WISE, we talk a lot about relationships. When the core of our work focuses on unhealthy and abusive relationships, it is essential for us to commit to creating, maintaining and nurturing healthy, dignified relationships. Safe relationships with the people we support, with our community partners, with one another, and with all of you.

In this issue, we share a few highlights of the work we do. This work is possible because of our relationships with schools who invite WISE educators to teach their students, with students who highlight our issues and fundraise, with faculty at Dartmouth and Geisel, with community members who help staff our crisis line, and with all of you who made Jane's Place possible. By establishing helpful and authentic relationships, we can create a community safety net of care. We can learn from one another and promote opportunities for positive impact throughout our communities. We can be a community of support, a community of understanding, and a community of knowledge about gender-based violence.

As ever, thank you for being in relationship with us.

Warmly,

  
Peggy



## Save the dates

### WISE Connections

creative expressions with  
color, texture, writing and imagination  
Wednesdays 5:30-7:00 pm  
[laura@wiseuv.org](mailto:laura@wiseuv.org) to sign up

### Foundations of Gender-Based Violence

scheduled for March 2024  
[stacey@wiseuv.org](mailto:stacey@wiseuv.org) for more details

### 32nd Covered Bridges Half Marathon

June 2, 2024  
early registration opens mid-November  
[development@wiseuv.org](mailto:development@wiseuv.org) for more information

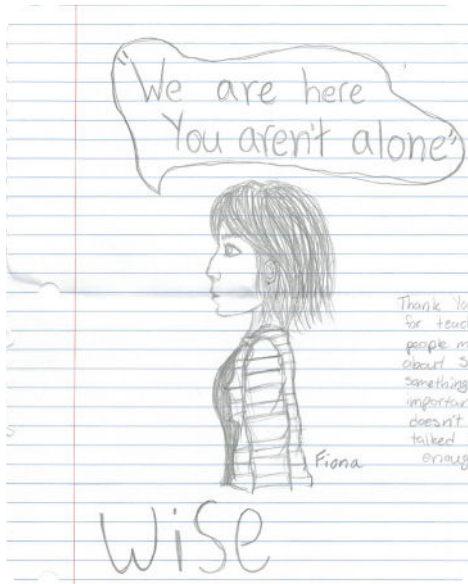
## Board Members

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*We are thrilled to welcome Beth Ames and Lauren Adams to the WISE Board.*

*Beth has been a WISE Volunteer Advocate since 2016. Beth is a pediatrician and lives in Hanover.*

*Lauren offers expertise in a mediation and conflict resolution. Lauren lives in Norwich.*



A little classroom sketch of Fiona, a WISE prevention educator

In 1990, WISE launched its schools program at Lebanon High School, quickly followed by Hartford, Woodstock, and Hanover high schools. Over the past 33 years, our programming expanded to include all grade levels and we currently have relationships with over 30 Upper Valley schools.

## FY23 schools by the numbers

- **672** total lessons
- **3,930** total students
- **295** lessons in elementary schools
- **169** lessons in middle schools
- **200** lessons in high schools
- **10** Upper Valley school districts
- **28** Public schools
- **2** Private schools
- **2** Summer camps
- **7** Parent presentations

Our goal is to ensure that all young people have access WISE prevention programming. We work with schools, camps, after-school programs, the homeschooling community, and youth-centered organizations to incorporate prevention education.

“Thank you for teaching people more about sexual assault, it’s something very important and doesn’t get talked about enough.” - Upper Valley high school student, September 2023

## Prevention: a national priority

In May, the White House released its U.S. National Plan to End Gender-Based Violence: Strategies for Action. It is an unprecedented and comprehensive plan of action focused on ending gender-based violence. Its first pillar of action is prevention with goals to increase public awareness about the root causes, its societal impacts, and the value of prevention and early intervention as well as to enhance education efforts that promote healthy and respectful relationships among children, youth, and young adults to address and break cycles of violence.

This is a big deal. The national plan acknowledges and prioritizes what we have long known to be essential. Over three decades ago, we made an intentional commitment to build the WISE youth violence prevention program. WISE programming is rooted in our advocacy and learning from survivors. Our programs with youth, starting in kindergarten and spanning the entire educational career, are grounded in the science of what works in prevention and the wisdom of working with survivors in our communities every hour, every day.

Effective prevention focuses on two core lessons: we have to value and care about other people, and we have to look out for each other. While WISE’s high school lessons more explicitly focus on the dynamics and warning signs of abuse, all of the programming leading up to this is supporting young people to develop a foundation of empathy and justice. We believe that when young people have the skills to identify violence or injustice, and the empathy to know that they can support one another, they will grow to create communities where violence cannot thrive. Relationship and sexual violence cannot be solved with fear. Strategies that rely on fear (don’t go there, don’t talk to strangers, don’t ever put your drink down) are consistently demonstrated to be ineffective. It may make individuals feel a sense of control (If I don’t do X, I will be safe), but the reality is that these beliefs and strategies do not stop violence, rather they increase victim blaming and silencing.

All information about WISE prevention programming is on our website: [wiseuv.org/preventing-abuse/preventing-abuse](http://wiseuv.org/preventing-abuse/preventing-abuse). There are also simple ways to incorporate prevention into your own lives, check out our WISE Prevention booklet: [wiseuv.org/who-we-are/media/#booklets](http://wiseuv.org/who-we-are/media/#booklets). Together we can foster communities that are safe, happy and fulfilling.



The goal of WISE’s prevention program is to prevent gender-based violence, bolster protective factors and increase prevention techniques across the community. Our strategies reflect the Socioecological Model: connecting the individual, relationship, community and societal factors that influence real and lasting change.

## Meeting with Stacey, WISE Program Operations Manager

We often refer to Stacey as the WISE air traffic controller: she ensures that WISE advocacy and support services are available every hour, every day, throughout the year. We caught up with Stacey for a friendly chat. Stacey just celebrated six years with WISE!

### What brought you to WISE?

I began my career as a software engineer working in Boston, NYC, and Colorado. I moved with my family to the Upper Valley 24 years ago and found that with small children I wanted a more flexible schedule to balance my work and family life. I taught myself web programming while helping Vital Communities on a project and then continued to work there as their webmaster, adding the role of Leadership Upper Valley Manager as my kids grew. While working there, I learned a lot about the Upper Valley and all the wonderful nonprofits in the area. Once my children graduated high school and left the Upper Valley, I was ready for something new. I wanted to join a meaningful organization where I could serve others. I saw an ad for the position at WISE and thought it would be amazing to support the staff, help them to do their jobs, and directly support community members in need.



*Stacey joined WISE in October, 2017*

### What part of your job do you find most inspiring?

I love how much I have learned and changed as a person since working at WISE. I'm always learning and seeing things in new and different ways. The best thing about my job is the many people I get to interact with, both staff and volunteers. My position bridges many different areas at WISE including the Prevention and Education Program and the Crisis and Advocacy Program. This allows me to experience a full range of WISE's work. One of my favorite things is facilitating and participating in our trainings. I enjoy the opportunity to provide the space for community members and volunteers to learn, grow, and change. I love being a part of those "aha moments" as people open to a whole new perspective of the world.

### If you could get rid of one thing from your daily routine, what would it be?

This is such a hard question! There are things I find difficult, like listening to the news. Still, it is important to continue listening and bear witness to what is happening in the

world. Probably the easiest answer would be deciding what to cook for dinner – I don't mind cooking, I just hate deciding what to make. Fortunately, my husband is willing to decide. He likes to cook – and eat dinner by 6:00 p.m.

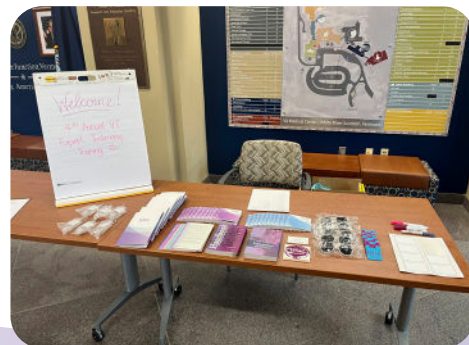
## Building expert capacity in courtrooms

WISE's Multidisciplinary Interview and Training Center (MITC) recently held our Fourth Annual Vermont Domestic & Sexual Violence Expert Testimony Training with AEquitas, an organization that provides technical assistance for gender-based violence prosecution.

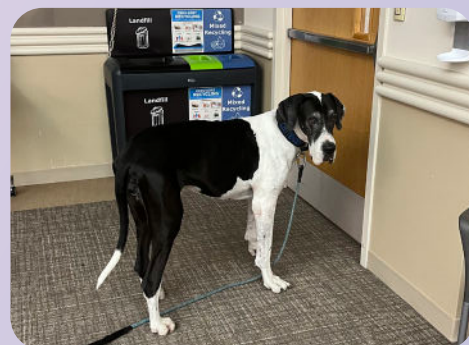
This year's training was particularly special as it was the first year we were able to be together in person. We welcomed professionals from around Vermont for a daylong training centered on both providing and utilizing expert testimony in gender-based violence cases. This group of people represented a variety of professionals involved in the criminal legal system including prosecutors, systems-based advocates, Network program advocates, Vermont Department for Children and Families workers, and interviewers from Special Investigative Units.

Fact-finders in the criminal legal system—like juries and judges—are still influenced by myths and misconceptions about gender-based violence. One of our goals is to increase the capacity of prosecutor's offices to use expert witnesses to help dispel those myths and misconceptions that may negatively affect how the fact-finders view a case. In this training, focused specifically on Vermont law and what is happening now in Vermont courts, potential experts worked alongside prosecutors discussing case scenarios, identifying aspects of the case that may present a challenge at trial, and playing out potential lines of questioning.

One special guest, Zena, the trained therapy dog in the Chittenden County State's Attorney's office, was a big hit. Participants mentioned Zena and the increased sense of community and collaboration as highlights of the day!



*4th annual expert witness training at White River Junction VA Medical Center*



*Zena, the special surprise guest*

## On doctoring with Geisel

We are honored to participate in Dartmouth Geisel School of Medicine's On Doctoring program every year. On Doctoring introduces med students to the skills, knowledge, and attitudes that are fundamental to clinical medicine. Recently, we joined the panel with DH staff, Geisel faculty, and a survivor of domestic violence. As the survivor shared her story, each panelist shared the various ways their individual roles intersect within the medical system. It was a great opportunity for students to see a 360 picture of survivors' domestic violence experiences and better understand the reasons survivors may not disclose.

Medical professionals are crucial in creating safe environments for disclosures and can learn how to be receptive in ways that feel empowering and appropriate to the scope of their role. By partnering with survivors to identify their needs, we can determine how we - in our respective roles - can best meet them. Understanding how the legal, advocacy, and medical systems intersect is one important part in expanding the web of support for survivors.



*Secrets, a WISE Words animation*

offered WISE materials for translation projects to her students. The translations are not part of the required curricula and students choose to participate. They take quite a lot of care with the translation, honoring WISE's intentional use of language. We particularly appreciated their translation of our *Does you partner...* poster which increases our ability to reach the Spanish speaking community.

Check out these materials in the new media section at [wiseuv.org/who-we-are/media](http://wiseuv.org/who-we-are/media).

## Here for you at wiseuv.org

Have you visited our new website yet? Our goal was to create a survivor-centered website that embodies our core values and culture while improving functionality and use. The result? A much cleaner website that is easier to navigate. Let us know how we did!

## Future leaders

We have loved getting back out into the community, speaking about WISE and inviting various groups of people to join us in ending gender-based violence. It is a particular honor when groups of young people choose to hold events for WISE and invite us to speak.

This year, the Lebanon High School boys basketball team invited us to their last regular season game, the Richmond



*LHS basketball player Chris Perriello and Executive Director Peggy O'Neil speaking to fans*

Middle School student council invited us to speak at their annual benefit dinner, and the Hanover High School feminism club plastered the school walls with WISE posters and passed out stickers and carabiners during their annual bake sale.

Let us know if you would like us to come speak to your group!

## And more collaborations with Dartmouth...

We were pleased to work with Dartmouth's Digital Applied Learning and Innovation (DALI) Lab once again this year. Together, we created the third WISE Words Animation. Using the audio from the WISE Words radio segment *Secrets* narrated by a Hanover High School student, a team of undergraduate students created an animated short, which encourages young people to brainstorm safe adults who can help when feeling scared and confused.

For the second year in a row, Dartmouth Spanish professor Kianny Antigua



### ¿Tu compañero o compañera...

- se enoja** si pasa tiempo con otras personas o haces cosas sin él o ella?
- exige** que compartas tus contraseñas, que le muestres los textos, tu ubicación y/o que le permitas revisar tu teléfono?
- te impide** trabajar, dormir, estudiar y/o que cuides de tu persona?
- insiste** en que estás equivocada, loco o que no entiendes cómo funcionan las relaciones?
- afirma** que tus amigos y familiares están tratando de separarlos o de arruinar la relación de ustedes?
- te culpa** por los problemas en su relación contigo?
- te presiona** para que hagas cosas sexuales, para que bebas, uses drogas o hagas cosas que pueden meterte en problemas?

*Does your partner... poster in Spanish*

## End of year planning

As you focus on your long-term financial planning, please consider including WISE in your plans. By making strategic decisions, you can maximize financial and tax benefits while making a bigger impact with your donations.

Gifts of stock, mutual funds, and retirement assets offer opportunities for you to make a difference as well as financial and tax benefits.

By including WISE in your will, trust, or as a beneficiary designation, you can create an enduring legacy by helping to create a more peaceful Upper Valley.

Curious to learn more? Email us at [development@wiseuv.org](mailto:development@wiseuv.org) or visit our website at [wiseuv.org/ways-to-give](http://wiseuv.org/ways-to-give).

## The lasting effects of the pandemic

Now 3 ½ years after the height of the pandemic, there have been both positive and negative changes that continue to affect survivors. The investment in technology made online chats and meeting with people remotely through Zoom possible. These advancements have made WISE advocacy more accessible to people who are not able to pick up the phone or drop by the Program Center. People can reach out to us privately from public spaces and without transportation barriers.

Two particular effects of the pandemic - the housing crisis and high inflation - have dramatically affected survivors. This year, we provided special assistance for survivors at record levels. WISE provided nearly \$85,000 in special assistance to approximately 250 survivors and their children. Special assistance included Covid-related needs, materials assistance, transportation, childcare and housing-related support. Additional funds through the America Rescue Plan (ARP) provided us the ability to be creative and ease a variety of needs. The extra funding helped pay security deposits for survivors to rent new apartments and pay back rent so that survivors could stay in their homes. It helped pay for car repairs so survivors could get to their jobs, and make their medical or mental health appointments. It helped pay for groceries, childcare, prescriptions, and access to counseling.



Left: Stacey, Program Operations Manager  
Right: Abby, MITC Director

## FY23 (July 2022 - June 2023) by the numbers

### Advocacy Program

**1,333** total people supported  
**111** average people supported per month  
**15,189** services provided such as emergency shelter, financial planning assistance, safety planning, court and hospital accompaniments, housing referrals, and shelter assistance

### Youth Violence Prevention Program

**672** lessons  
**3,930** students  
**30** schools  
**10** school districts

### Professional Training

*health professionals, law enforcement, educators*  
**47** presentations  
**993** participants

### WISE Volunteers

**44** active crisis line volunteers supported survivors and donated **9,760** hours  
**42** ambassadors represented WISE within the community **18** times



Bethany, WISE Shelter and Housing Coordinator, speaking to the crowd at the annual meeting

## Safe housing means access and a good night's sleep

*Bethany Hartt, WISE Shelter and Housing Coordinator, helped celebrate the opening of Jane's Place at the WISE Annual Meeting in May. For those who were not able to join us, we are pleased to share her poignant remarks.*

"We at WISE use the Housing First model as a best practice for our housing and shelter program. This means that we make sure to remove as many barriers and prerequisites as possible to ensure someone experiencing homelessness can be housed as quickly as possible. After that, the understanding is that once housing is reestablished, other things can fall into place.

It is one thing to have that as a hope and a theory and another to see it play out in real life. We know it is a formula that works. We have seen it work. Here at WISE, once someone is housed, they can get a good night's sleep. They are able to access advocacy and other connections like access to a computer, email, printer, and fax machines. They have access to consistent healthcare, including mental health care. They can access attorneys, from free consultations to pro bono representation. They can access food, toiletries, and state benefits that enable people to have funds for food and basic necessities. And, even more, they have access to a community of care and elements of fun - from the incredible community partners who provide art classes, swimming lessons, knitting yarn, and activities for kids, to bike rides on the rail trail and farmers' markets at Coburn Park.

One of the most rewarding parts of my job is to witness how shelter truly transforms circumstances. I also think I speak for all the advocates when I say that some of the most excruciating conversations we have with people occur when shelter and housing options do not meet someone's needs or are virtually non-existent. Jane's Place is such a welcome addition because it helps us provide a few more options. We are so grateful for all of you who made it possible."