

News from our CEO

It's been nearly a year since we pivoted in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Thanks to generous donors and CARES Act funding, we were in a position to help not only our participants, but also the community at large. We're very proud that we were able to serve an average of 330 families per week for 45 out of the last 48 weeks. In total, we distributed 34,357 bags of food, 328,176 diapers and 8,865 boxes of produce!

Unfortunately, funding recently ran out so we've transitioned to a distribution model that is sustainable and will enable us to serve our ongoing participants. Even though we will no longer be serving the community at large, we're happy to report that a number of families we served through the pandemic are interested in engaging in our programs moving forward.

During the past 48 weeks, we noticed that our regular participants represented a smaller percentage of those 330 families than we expected, usually accounting for only 10-15% of the total served. As we continued to check in with them, it became clear that the work they did through our programs prior to the pandemic made them more resilient. They were in a better position to survive the challenges than others in similar circumstances were. This was affirmation that our work is essential.

We know the pandemic is far from over, so we're working hard on maintaining our program engagement virtually until we can resume fully in person. We're also looking ahead for when things return to normal on how we can be in a position to increase our impact with our participants and community. It's important that we continue to create opportunities for the people we serve to help them achieve the life they desire.

People often ask, "How can I help?" There are many ways for you to support our mission of helping families achieve economic well-being. You can do this financially, by volunteering or by spreading the word about the work we do. With your support, we can all play a role in changing lives and helping others achieve their goals.

Scott E. Walker
President/CEO



Don't Miss Spring Bling

We invite you to join us on April 10 through 17 for our Spring Bling Virtual Event & Auction. This is a great opportunity to support our efforts to help the women in our community flourish! Each year, Spring Bling is one of LifeWise's most highly anticipated events. Now that it's virtual, you can expect the same empowering atmosphere, plus so much more!

On Saturday, April 10, catch our event on Facebook or YouTube. You'll be entertained by influential female musicians. You'll also be motivated to "bloom where you're planted" by inspirational leaders in the area.

Browse and bid in our Online Auction from April 10 through 17, which will feature an array of designer handbags, beautiful accessories, and creative gift sets. Register online to receive your "Bloom Book" (an interactive guide filled with affirmations, wellness tips, and inspiration) and a special gift!

For more details, visit lifewisestl.org. Registration begins March 1.

We ♥ Our Supporters!





Young Scholars Program

Our after school program is in full swing as we kick off 2021! We have been virtual since starting our program in early October. We have three classes that meet every afternoon, led by our wonderful Activity Leaders. Each class meets over Zoom, where scholars join in via a pre-shared link. Even though we cannot be in the same building together, we love the opportunity to stay connected with our scholars and see their faces.

We still provide homework help each day, where the activity leaders guide scholars through their schoolwork. Then we move onto enrichment time—where scholars do a fun, engaging activity alongside their peers. Activities done in the past include arts and crafts, simple cooking activities, STEM, and ways to get our bodies moving such as yoga and dancing. Any activity supplies are delivered in a socially distant manner to the scholars' homes.

While the focus is on our day-to-day program, individualized support is still provided. Individual tutoring is continuing through our partnership with St. Louis Learning Disability Association, who has also been meeting with specific scholars virtually. We still have a connection with families and provide additional support and resources where we can.

Senior Resiliency Fund

The Senior Resiliency Fund (SRF) is a four-part intervention for lower income older adults to gain access to valuable information and liquid assets for savings, and to grow relationships in the community. Throughout the six months of the program, participants engage in bi-weekly meetings with speakers on various topics including, but not limited to, productivity and goal-setting; physical, emotional and sexual wellness; elder financial abuse and scam avoidance; and conversations with family and friends about end-of-life planning.

They also participate in one-on-one financial coaching with our Certified Financial Social Worker to set individual savings goals, manage their budget on a fixed-income, credit repair or any other financial goal they have set for themselves. We also ensure they are enrolled and informed about national and local programs that could help them save needed funds. Finally, at the end of the six-month period, participants who have successfully completed the above requirements for the program receive a 2 to 1 match on their savingsgoal (up to \$400 for \$200 saved) to use for the goal they set at the beginning for whatever they choose, such as emergency savings, paying down a debt or a major car repair. This program is generously funded through the St. Louis City Senior Fund.

During this last year, we have provided this program to older adults virtually. It was a great success after transitioning a current SRF group virtually and then beginning new groups completely virtual. While we would love to be in person for all of these meetings, we are thankful to have this virtual option for individuals so we can continue to build relationships and connect with peers, gain knowledge of resources and information, and to continue providing the savings match.

“On the day of classes my mind had a chance to rest from everyday thoughts. I was able to concentrate on myself.”

“I really learned a lot from this program and the other people. I'm going miss our sessions. It gave me something to look forward to every Friday.”

We're about to start two new groups this month, and we're very excited to meet everyone! We've also been working hard to keep groups connected after they complete SRF, especially during this period being home alone and trying to still stay connected with others.

Volunteer Spotlight



Jorje Quinn's volunteer journey with LifeWise began a little over eight years ago when she was invited to join the Board. It wasn't long before she was asked to become Board Chair. It turned out to be a good place for her to share her administrative skills by coordinating meetings, planning for the future, and aligning the board with the goals and needs of the organization. It was also a great way for her to meet and work with other people who were committed to helping LifeWise be successful.

One of Jorje's biggest accomplishments while on the board was leading their rebranding efforts. This was a perfect fit with her marketing background. She was able to work with various resources and draw in friends to help with the process of generating names, collecting opinions, and developing a new logo.

Jorje came off the board after six years, just before the pandemic hit. She and her friends, who were eager to find a way to help others, turned to LifeWise and began helping with the food and supply distribution.

They purchased diapers and wipes and assembled them into packs in her garage. Their "diaper brigade" did this several times before LifeWise was able to start doing it on a larger scale in-house. Their efforts continue today.

Jorje has found her time spent with LifeWise extremely rewarding. "You've probably heard people say that that they've gotten as much out of volunteering as they give. For me, I'd say that I've gotten even more than I've given. My experiences with LifeWise have taught me the reality of how difficult life can be for some people and the hardships and barriers they face through no fault of their own. LifeWise is all about nurturing change in people's lives. Now I know personally just how they do it. I'm so glad I said 'yes' to that invitation." We're very grateful she said "yes" as well!

New Emotional & Physical Wellness Department

We are all living proof that our emotional and physical wellness are intrinsically tied together. Anxiety and depression are risk factors for chronic conditions. Inversely, those who have experienced chronic pain and/or conditions are at a higher risk for experiencing increased poorer mental health and decreased moods.

At LifeWise, we recognize that our participants are not exempt from these determinants of health. In addition, our community faces increased risk factors for poor health and emotional wellness due to historical and structural racism, lack of access, and other cultural disparities. For these reasons, we have created the Emotional & Physical Wellness Department as an intentional step towards recognizing and addressing the wellness of our participants in a holistic manner.

We will continue our popular Health & Wellness Program, which offers exercise and nutrition classes geared towards those who don't have access to a traditional gym or gym membership. Over the last 5 years, we've incorporated components of emotional health into our programming, including mindfulness, meditation, and other supplemental programs. This holistic approach helps participants to better understand the connection between emotional and physical health.

Our Mental Health team will continue to offer emotional support in the form of therapeutic groups, support groups, one-on-one coaching, individual therapy, care coordination, social capital building, and collaboration with other programming. We will continue to provide therapy to the youth we serve from preschool through high school. We will also continue to provide one-on-one coaching for mothers who are feeling overwhelmed and burned-out, while helping them understand the connection between their wellness and that of their family. In addition, we will provide space for mothers to gather and seek mutual support through our support groups, as well as provide therapeutic groups.






 **The Lifeline**

Inside!

February is Heart Health Month



A grateful heart can help you physically, emotionally, mentally, spiritually and socially. A heart healthy practice can begin like this... close your eyes or gaze downward. Place both hands over your heart. Take three gentle deep breaths as you clear your mind. Mindfully think of something for which you are grateful. Whisper to yourself, "Today, I am grateful for _____. Next, think of one action that you will do to express your gratitude to someone else. Whisper to yourself, "Today, I am going to express my gratitude to _____ by _____." Sense how you are feeling, then slowly open your eyes and be thankful.

*By Eileen Wolfington
Coordinator of LifeWise's Health & Wellness Program*

Please consider giving monthly!

Did you know that \$20 provides fresh fruit for one preschool classroom for one week?

**Our
community
needs us
and
WE NEED
YOU!**

www.lifewisestl.org
or
use the enclosed envelope



UPCOMING EVENTS

**Spring Bling
Virtual Event & Auction
Saturday, April 10**
Scavenger Hunt - June
Trivia Night - November

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