

The Reverend Eugene Wayne Morse

Eugene (Gene) Wayne Morse was born August 21, 1943, in Sutherland, Nebraska to Lloyd Justice and Lydia Marie Young Morse. He passed away Friday, January 6, 2023, while fishing in Kirkwood Park.

Gene grew up in Gothenburg, Nebraska, the youngest of four siblings. During Gene's high school and college years, the Morse family operated the Gothenburg Pony Express Station where Gene learned his business acumen as the primary manager of the gift shop and museum. Gene and his brothers also learned trade skills as they worked alongside their father at his store, Gothenburg Paint & Glass.

Following graduation from Gothenburg High School in 1961, Gene attended the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, following his brother, Ron, as a member of Farmhouse fraternity. He earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in sociology in 1965. That summer he married Lettie Jean Clark of Ainsworth, Nebraska, whom he had met at the Wesley Foundation where they were both active. He continued his education at St. Paul School of Theology, graduating in 1968 with a Master of Divinity degree. He was ordained Elder in the Nebraska Conference of the United Methodist Church and has been a member of the Missouri Conference since 1978.

Gene began his work in social justice ministries at the East End Mission in London, England in 1968. He returned to Nebraska in 1970 to serve four years as the pastor of the United Methodist Church of Hay Springs and campus minister at Chadron State College. In 1971 his daughter, Lydia Jean was born. The family returned to London in 1974 for four more years at the East End Mission where Gene ran the St. George's Men's Care Center and Soup Kitchen. **In 1978, they moved to St. Louis, Missouri where Gene was appointed Executive Director of Kingdom House, now LifeWise StL, serving there until retirement in 2006.**

In his retirement, Gene was an active volunteer with numerous community organizations including his church, Webster United Methodist. As a 43-year member of the St. Louis Downtown Lion's Club, he received the Melvin Jones Fellowship commendation. For six years he and Lettie have participated in NOMADS, a United Methodist volunteer mission that provides construction work at various Methodist agencies, camps and churches.

Gene loved to fish, boat, and travel by RV. He was a talented and avid woodworker, creating and gilding his many projects to friends and charities. He was a sports fan and enjoyed the Cardinals, Blues, Nebraska Cornhuskers, and watching his grandson play soccer for Kirkwood High School. He treasured the time spent proudly following the activities and educational pursuits of his three grandchildren.

Gifts can be made in memory and celebration of Gene's life to LifeWise StL.



Three Kingdom House/LifeWise StL Executive Directors, Rev. Tom Sanders, Rev. Gene Morse and Scott Walker, which was taken at Rev. Sanders' retirement celebration in 2011. Scott Walker became President/CEO that year.



Senior Programming

The Senior Programming Department at LifeWise StL consists of two main programs: the Senior Companion Program and the Senior Resiliency Fund. It also serves as a point of contact for many referrals and individuals who face multiple challenges.

The Senior Companion Program is a wonderful opportunity for retired people to find meaning and purpose through national service as volunteers. It's also a reliable way for lonely or isolated older adults to receive free transportation and consistent companionship. Clients also connect with our staff about other issues in their lives as we provide wraparound assistance from our agency and holistic referrals. There is no end date for the program, and clients remain for an average of 3.5 years. Some have been in the program as long as 15 years. One volunteer is celebrating 21 years of service this year!

The Senior Resiliency Fund is a one-time, 6-month long program that encourages healthy habits, gives an opportunity to socialize with peers in similar situations, and provides a savings match for an individualized goal. We now have a pipeline of new SCP volunteers through SRF. They start out in one program, and they grow to know and trust us so they want to stay engaged with LifeWise long-term.

Our department receives calls and referrals from a variety of places: insurance companies, EAPs, hospitals, partner agencies, out-of-state caregivers and community members, to name a few. Sometimes people come to us if they are caring for a loved one and don't know where to start. We do our best to connect them with not only our services and programs, but also directly with others in the Aging Network to try and remove some of the burden. Others come to us ready to participate because their neighbor told them how much they've enjoyed and learned from the Senior Resiliency Fund or the Senior Companion Program.

Regardless of how folks find us, we're proud of how well-connected we are in the Aging Network and the broader community, enabling us to offer advice, comfort, and support to the individual and their family in times of joy, crisis, or transition. Our department served more than 200 unique individuals directly and nearly 100 individuals indirectly last year. We are grateful to be a part of the stellar team at LifeWise StL and faithfully serve older adults in our community.



Celebrating 120 Years of History

As our 120th year celebration concludes, we look back on our history and appreciate the people and major milestones that have shaped our path. LifeWise StL has always had a strong sense of the community it serves. Helping our participants achieve economic wellness is at the heart of our mission. We are focused on partnering with our participants to build “life skills for better futures,” which is also our tagline!

2000 - 2010

2000 – To better provide for the needs of the Kingdom House community, building renovations created new office space, meeting rooms, a service elevator and a new Infant/Toddler Center, plus updates to the playground.

2002 – Kingdom House celebrated 100 Years with a series of events. A commemorative book, *Advancing the Kingdom*, was written to chronicle the agency’s service, along with a video, “Kingdom House – The First Hundred Years.”

2006 – – Rev. Gene Morse retired after 28 years of service as Executive Director. Kingdom House welcomed Rev. Tom Sanders as the new Executive Director in April.

2007 – Rev. Sanders relocated the Soulard Family Center from a location near Tower Grove Park into Kingdom House to meet the needs of the families in the Near Southside Community.

2008 – Kingdom House rebranded with a new tagline “Change Begins Within” and a new butterfly logo to express its focus on transformation. Like a butterfly undergoing change, Kingdom House helps people learn and gain confidence to fly on their own.

2010 – Rev. Tom Sanders retired from Kingdom House leadership in December.

2010 – Kingdom House welcomed Scott Walker as Executive Director/CEO in January.

2010 - 2020

2012 – Renovations were completed in the lobby and social work areas of the main building. A micro-branch of St. Louis Community Credit Union was opened to provide neighborhood access to financial services.

2014 – Funded by a capital campaign, two neighborhood buildings were purchased to increase Kingdom House programming. The Urban Forum Volunteer Program moved into the Rutger Street building, and the Academy high school program and Senior Companion program were shifted into the Annex building on Park Avenue.

2016 – Kingdom House was awarded the local distinction of Focus St. Louis’ “What’s Right with the Region!” award.

2019 – Kingdom House rebranded as LifeWise StL to better communicate our transformation to a model of supportive educational programming that helps people at every age live wisely.

2020 -

2020 – The 2020 Pandemic struck, but LifeWise StL never stopped providing for the community. Our Early Childhood Center was allowed to stay open for children of healthcare workers and first responders, 650 bags of food were distributed weekly, and our Participant Recovery Fund helped affected families pay rent and utilities. Never in our history was the need so great and the response so impactful!

2021 – By May of 2021 we were fully operational again, one of the first organizations in the area to return to full programming.

2022 – LifeWise StL celebrated 120 years of positive impact in our community with multiple events. A special celebration recognized individuals who helped build the organization to what it is today... one committed to helping people create better futures.



Volunteer Spotlight - Frank Grimes

How did you first hear about/get involved with volunteering at LifeWise StL? I first learned about LifeWise StL from the Ignition Volunteer Corps, of which I'm a member. The IVC provides individuals, most age 50 or over, opportunities to serve others and to transform lives. IVC works in partnership with hundreds of community partner organizations, including LifeWise!

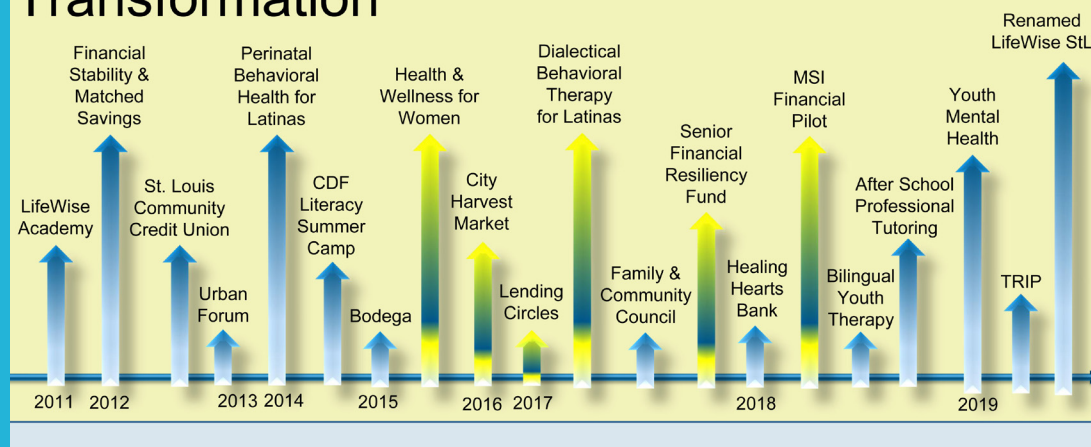
How long have you been volunteering with LifeWise, and what keeps you coming back to volunteer with us? I began volunteering in September of 2017, soon after I retired. The participants (clients) and the staff are the reasons I keep coming back. I can see the benefits every day that the staff brings to their participants, especially during my work at the reception desk.

What would you say to others considering volunteering at LifeWise? There are so many great opportunities for volunteering at LifeWise. I have gotten to know many of the regular volunteers, and they all love what they do, from the routine to the adventurous! There are so many ways to connect with participants, and all of them are rewarding.

In your opinion, what is the greatest impact that LifeWise provides in the community? LifeWise is primarily an educational experience, thus it is always moving people forward. Be it the infant that gets extra attention in the early childhood center or the senior that learns that something that makes them more independent or confident to walk with the rest of us in this complex world. On a personal note, I think the smiles from the kids (hundreds of them by now!) are what make me smile when I think of LifeWise. There are in fact many other great things about LifeWise worth mentioning, but the smiles are my favorite!



From Transaction to Transformation



Our organization has experienced its own metamorphosis as it adapted to meet the needs of our participants in this changing environment. We listened to and learned from them. As we did that, we continued to move away from crisis service transactions toward holistic transformations through the support of professionally trained staff. Our priorities have shifted to focus on an individual's overall well-being. (The height of the arrows in this graphic are arbitrary; yellow arrows signify programs that are unique to the community.)

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Thanks to our Friends of LifeWise members who are raising awareness and promoting our mission!

Thanks to all of our board members for their ongoing support!

120th Anniversary & Champions Celebration

On September 13, 2022 we held our annual Champions Event in conjunction with our 120th Anniversary Celebration. We honored those who have exhibited passion and involvement in our mission; invested time, talent or financial support in our programming, projects, or committees; and connected others to LifeWise StL.

To celebrate this special anniversary year, a video presentation and congratulatory message from Michele Rutledge, who wrote the 100 year history *Advancing the Kingdom – Kingdom House: the First 100 Years*, was shared with honorees and guests. Reprint copies of the book were available for all guests.

Special thanks to Anheuser-Busch for donating their indoor Biergarten for this special event! It was a wonderful evening filled with history, music, food and a brewery tour. We're grateful for not only our supporters who attended, but for everyone who has helped make LifeWise what it is today. We hope to be making an impact for as long as our community needs us.

In honor of Reverend Eugene Morse, who served LifeWise/ Kingdom House as Executive Director for 28 years from 1978-2006, our Champion Awards will be renamed The Rev. Gene Morse Impact Awards.

Read more about our honorees and watch our anniversary video: lifewisestl.org/champions



2022 Champions



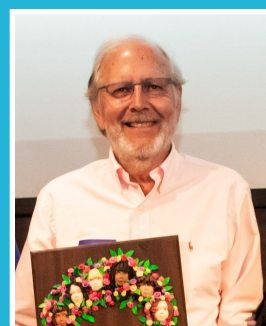
Michele Rutledge



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Life
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 **The Lifeline**



LifeWise StL

Spring Bling

BRUNCH & AUCTION

Helping Women Flourish

Saturday, April 1, 2023

9:30am-1:00pm

Missouri Athletic Club
405 Washington Avenue, St. Louis, MO 63102

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GOLF TOURNAMENT
& Dinner Auction

MONDAY, JUNE 5, 2023

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Want to learn more? Contact Jennifer March, jmarch@lifewisestl.org, 314.627.1228.

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