

## Letter from our President/CEO

Dear Friends,

When *Maria\** first came to LifeWise StL, she was balancing multiple jobs, raising two young children, and struggling to make ends meet. She wanted more for her family but didn't know where to start. Through our Economic Wellness program, Maria worked with a certified financial social worker, built her credit, and saved enough money to purchase a reliable car—giving her access to better job opportunities and more time with her children.

Maria's story is one of many at LifeWise StL. Every day, **we empower women and girls** through education, financial resources, and wellness programs, providing the tools they need to build brighter futures.

**Our commitment to education starts early.** Through our Early Childhood Center, after-school program, literacy-focused summer camp, and LifeWise Academy for teens, we ensure that young girls receive the support, mentorship, and academic foundation they need to thrive. As they grow, our Adult Education programs help women gain independence and opportunity.

**Financial security is life-changing.** Our Economic Wellness programs provide women with financial coaching, matched savings programs, and a variety of workshops, helping them break cycles of poverty, achieve stability, and take control of their future.

But a strong future requires **health and resilience.** Our Emotional & Physical Wellness programs offer mental health counseling, exercise classes, nutrition workshops, and maternal mental health support, ensuring women have the strength and confidence to move forward.

None of this is possible without you. Every success story at LifeWise StL—like Maria's—is made possible by the generosity of volunteers, donors, and community members who believe in the power of transformation.

We invite you to read more about the inspiring work happening every day at LifeWise StL. Whether it's a child discovering a love for reading, a teen gaining confidence in their future, or a mother finding financial stability, these moments of change happen because of a community that cares. **Thank you for being part of it.**

With gratitude,



Scott E. Walker  
President/CEO



*\*Name changed to protect privacy*



## Join us for Spring Bling!

Join us for LifeWise StL's annual Spring Bling Brunch & Auction on Saturday, April 12, 2025, at the Missouri Athletic Club - Downtown as we celebrate this year's theme, "Fostering Women's Growth." The event will feature a delicious brunch, an inspiring atmosphere, and an exciting silent and live auction with designer handbags, elegant accessories, and unique gift sets.

Doors open at 9:30 a.m. for mingling, mimosas, and silent auction bidding. The brunch buffet begins at 10:00 a.m., followed by the live auction at 11:00 a.m. The silent auction closes at noon, with raffle winners announced shortly after.

Tickets are \$75 per person or \$600 for a table of eight. Tickets can be purchased at [www.lifewisestl.org](http://www.lifewisestl.org). Sponsorship opportunities range from \$100 to \$5,000, with tax credits available at select levels. We look forward to celebrating with you!

**SPRING  
BLING**

FOSTERING WOMEN'S GROWTH  
BRUNCH & AUCTION  
APRIL 12, 2025

## Advocating for Seniors in Housing Crisis

A few months ago, a former Senior Resource Fund (SRF) participant reached out to share a troubling issue: the management company at his senior apartment complex had changed for the fourth time that year. He had just received an incorrect invoice claiming he owed \$1,400 in back rent.

In the weeks that followed, similar stories poured in from other participants. Many reported that rapid turnover in management companies was leading to poor record-keeping, resulting in erroneous rent invoices and eviction threats. For seniors who pay rent with money orders or do not receive receipts, proving payments becomes nearly impossible.

To address this growing crisis, we gathered partners from the St. Louis Housing Authority, Coalition for Justice for Elder and Disabled Adults (CJEDA), Legal Services of Eastern Missouri (LSEM), The College Church ID Project, St. Louis Community Credit Union, and St. Louis Public Library. Together, we hosted a morning session to inform, educate, and empower seniors to advocate for themselves and their neighbors. The event provided crucial guidance on safer payment methods, proper documentation, and using technology to protect their financial security. It was also a wonderful opportunity to reconnect with past SRF graduates and welcome new participants into the program.

With the help of our incredible volunteer Beth Ann, we raffled off three fantastic gift baskets, bringing joy to many. Katherine Lawless, our new practicum student, played a key role in setup and coordination, ensuring everything ran smoothly. And of course, none of this would have been possible without the tireless efforts of our team, who remain deeply committed to staying connected with participants—many of whom we hadn't seen in years but were eager to join us however they could. At LifeWise, we take relationship-based programming seriously.



### A Fond Farewell to Allison

This event was also a bittersweet moment, as many attendees were eager to see and speak with Allison, who is retiring after four years of dedicated service. Known as “the voice of Senior Programming,” Allison has built lasting relationships with our community, ensuring that everyone she meets is welcomed with kindness, empathy, and a great laugh. Her patience, quick wit, and ability to make every individual feel heard have been invaluable.

Her departure leaves big shoes to fill, but we are eternally grateful for her impact. Because of Allison, our community is a better place to grow older.



### 2024 Holiday Market: Spreading Joy and Strengthening Families

For over 50 years, LifeWise StL's Holiday Market has embodied the spirit of the season by providing families with the opportunity to shop for new, affordable household items, clothing, and toys. This cherished tradition not only brings joy during the holidays but also serves as a meaningful way to recognize and support families who have worked toward their goals through LifeWise StL programming.

In 2024, the Holiday Market served 176 families over two days, providing holiday gifts to approximately 775 people, including 430 children. With an average family size of four, parents had the opportunity to select gifts that best met their families' needs while preserving their dignity and independence.

We are grateful for the ongoing generosity of our donors and volunteers, whose support makes this event possible. By coming together, we ensure that families not only experience the joy of the holiday season but also feel encouraged and empowered as they continue their journey toward stability and success.







## Donor Spotlight: Andy & Lisa Remack

### A Lifetime of Commitment to LifeWise StL

Andy and Lisa Remack's journey with LifeWise StL (formerly Kingdom House) began three decades ago. Inspired by the mission, Lisa started volunteering in various ways—often bringing along their young daughter, Annie. **Through her time spent volunteering her eyes were opened to the lived experiences of the families she was serving.**

Determined to better understand these realities and how she could best contribute, Lisa balanced volunteering with work and family life while pursuing dual master's degrees in Social Work at Washington University and Theology at Eden Seminary. **"I wanted to explore—from both a social science perspective and a faith-based lens—the deeper issues affecting the community,"** Lisa explains.

As she continued her studies, Lisa became even more involved with Kingdom House, applying what she was learning to help shape the organization's first-ever strategic plan. **She also introduced the idea of Individual Development Accounts (IDAs), a program designed to help individuals build financial stability.** "I was learning what should be obvious—that people across all socio-economic levels have similar goals: stable and safe housing, a reliable vehicle, a good education. Here was a tool that could help our participants reach those goals." Over the years, this program has grown into a powerful resource for countless families.

Lisa spent many years on the Board of Directors, offering her leadership and guidance. **"To say that LifeWise has had an impact on our lives is an understatement. It has informed the way we live,"** says Lisa. Andy adds, "Seeing how Kingdom House/LifeWise changed Lisa's life has had a dramatic impact on my own giving and spirituality." They both relate that the impact is felt by their daughter Annie, too, now an Early Childhood Special Education Interventionalist. "It affected how she sees the world and the profession she chose."

But the Remacks' impact extends far beyond hands-on involvement. Together, Lisa and Andy have **provided steadfast financial support to LifeWise StL for decades.** "Given the size of LifeWise versus a larger, national organization, we really appreciate being able to see the impact of our support," Andy shares.

Beyond their giving, they also serve as passionate ambassadors for LifeWise, sharing the mission wherever they go. "It's a natural thing to share with others when it's part of our mindset and part of our hearts," Lisa says. **"We are Team LifeWise!"**

**For the Remacks, supporting LifeWise isn't just about giving—it's about being part of a movement that transforms lives, including their own. Their decades of commitment, leadership, and generosity continue to shape the future of LifeWise, inspiring others to join in. Because when you give, serve, and believe in the mission, you don't just support a cause—you become part of something bigger. You become part of Team LifeWise.**



### Make an Impact with Your IRA Qualified Charitable Donation

You've worked hard to save for retirement—now, **your savings can help support youth on their path to financial stability.** By making a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) from your IRA, you can invest in programs that empower young people, including IDA initiatives that help them build savings and develop financial independence. From \$1,000 starter accounts for young children to matched savings opportunities for teens ready to move out on their own, your support provides critical resources to help them succeed. **Plus, your QCD qualifies for Missouri tax credits, making it a meaningful and tax-savvy way to give back.**

## Total IDA Impact



28 First time homeowners

36 Cars purchased



15 Micro businesses started

6 Secondary education degrees



28 Home repairs

## Volunteer Spotlight: Ron Henley

Late last summer, LifeWise StL faced a major challenge. Our outdated donor database was riddled with duplicate records, lacked essential reporting capabilities, and didn't integrate with our event and email systems. Upgrading was crucial, but we lacked the time, expertise, and budget to make it happen.

Across town, Ron Henley had recently retired from a successful career in IT, where he worked as an application programmer and systems engineer with IBM, IT Auditor with Fortune Brands and most recently helped consolidate systems for major corporation mergers like Charter/Spectrum and Sprint/T-Mobile as an IT consultant with KPMG. Looking for a way to give back, he wanted to find a nonprofit where his skills and passion aligned with its needs.

***You see where this is going...***

**After over 300 volunteer hours**, Ron single-handedly streamlined our systems, cleaned up data, and migrated everything into a new, more efficient donor management platform. **This transformation will enhance our efficiency and improve the giving experience for our donors.**

***But what you might not expect is the rest of the story.***

Ron's background makes this story even more powerful. Growing up in the Ida B. Wells housing project on the South Side of Chicago in the 1970s, he was surrounded by families like his - a single mom trying to make ends meet on welfare. Ron recalls, "I never felt as if we were poor. I thought our lifestyle was the norm since it was all I knew and all of the neighborhood families lived on the same level."

"Although I was academically talented in math," he continues, "I did not have role models to challenge my academic aspirations or show me how far I could go. During my freshman year in high school, I was taking math classes with juniors and assisting students per the teacher's request."

During this time, his high school counselor recognized the potential and encouraged him to apply for the A Better Chance (ABC) program. After being accepted, he left home at just 15 years old to attend high school in Minnesota—**his first real exposure to the opportunities that education could provide.**

At John Marshall High School, Ron initially struggled with feeling like an outsider. Out of about 500 students, there were approximately 15 Blacks, 8 of which were a part of the ABC program and lived in the same house. "In fact, I was the only black student in my history class on my first day. And the subject was slavery. It was a pretty rough start." However, through sports and academic success, he found his place, eventually earning a perfect score on the math section of the ACT. He went on to attend Northwestern University, earning a bachelor's degree in Computer Science, followed by a master's in Communication Systems Strategy.



Now retired, **Ron is giving back in a way that reflects his own journey—leveraging his skills to create opportunities for others.** His next project? Working closely with the teens in LifeWise Academy to expose them to career paths and opportunities. Just as ABC helped him break through barriers, he is helping LifeWise StL better serve our community.

**Ron's story is a testament to the power of opportunity, perseverance, and the incredible impact that volunteers can make. We are beyond grateful for his dedication and expertise, and we look forward to seeing the lasting effects of his work at LifeWise StL.**



**Interested in volunteering  
your skills and time?**

**Learn more about  
volunteering on our  
website!**

**[www.lifewisestl.org/get-involved](http://www.lifewisestl.org/get-involved)**



## Emotional & Physical Wellness at LifeWise StL - Small Moments, Big Impact



At LifeWise StL, the Emotional and Physical Wellness Department is redefining mental health support by meeting people where they are—whether in a park, a garden, or a kitchen—creating a sense of belonging that removes barriers to care. Rather than relying solely on traditional clinical settings, we integrate emotional wellness into everyday experiences, making mental health support more accessible, sustainable, and stigma-free.

Our bilingual therapists provide one-on-one counseling, but we also recognize that healing happens in community. To minimize stigma and engage people in natural, familiar ways, we offer innovative group experiences that spark curiosity, reduce stress, and build resilience. Through horticultural therapy (in partnership with Missouri Botanical Garden), participants experience nature's calming effects while developing social connections. A walking group fosters mood-boosting movement and community connection, while Zumba and other exercise classes provide a space to release stress and build confidence. Our Spanish-language baking classes nurture cultural identity, pride, and well-being.

These moments of connection lead to deeper engagement in mental health care, creating ripple effects that extend to families and communities. At LifeWise StL, we believe emotional wellness is for everyone—and through small, intentional moments, we are building a stronger, healthier community together.

## Reflecting on 2024: A Year of Impact Through Volunteerism

At LifeWise StL, volunteers play a crucial role in strengthening our community, and 2024 was no exception. With 178 volunteer groups contributing 4,153 hours and individual ongoing volunteers serving 7,418 hours, their dedication has been truly remarkable. Additionally, 48 Urban Forum groups engaged in both service and service learning, contributing 2,400 hours to furthering our mission. Together, these efforts have made a lasting impact on the individuals and families we serve.

Through the Department of Volunteer Engagement & Service Learning, individuals and groups connected with LifeWise StL in meaningful ways. Whether serving in our programs, assisting with special events, or participating in social justice education, volunteers helped create opportunities for individuals and families to achieve better lives.

Volunteers can get involved as individuals, offering their time and skills on a flexible schedule, or serve as a group, whether part of a mission trip, corporate team, or community organization. No matter how you choose to help, your efforts make a tangible difference.

As we look ahead, we invite new and returning volunteers to continue this journey with us. Thank you for making 2024 an incredible year of service and impact!

### 2024 was amazing...

**178 Volunteer Groups served 4,153 hours**



**Individual Ongoing Volunteers served 7,418 hours**



**48 Urban Forum Groups learned while they served**



**LifeWise StL**

**Thank you volunteers!**

## Additional Impact Award Winner!



Bill and Pam Moench couldn't attend the celebration last September, but we are grateful to acknowledge their commitment to LifeWise StL through their volunteering and dedicated financial support. Congratulations on being a 2024 Rev. Eugene W. Morse Impact Award Winner!



The Lifeline

SPRING  
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APRIL 12, 2025  
BRUNCH & AUCTION  
FOSTERING WOMEN'S GROWTH

Outdoor Recreation  
Enrichment Class



## Adventure is out there!

At LifeWise Academy, we believe learning extends beyond the classroom. Thanks to our partnership with River City Outdoors and Big Muddy Adventures, our Outdoor Recreation Enrichment Class has given scholars the opportunity to explore nature in their own communities.

Since September 2024, scholars have engaged in outdoor experiences that build confidence, teamwork, and resilience. A highlight was a four-week canoeing course at Forest Park, where six scholars earned certificates of completion, equipping them with the skills to teach others and progress to more advanced waters.

A hike through Kennedy Forest Loop Trail challenged scholars to navigate hilly terrain and try birdwatching with binoculars. A visit to Lafayette Park introduced them to fishing, reinforcing patience and focus.

As temperatures dropped, outdoor adventures continued indoors at Climb So iLL, a local rock climbing gym. Climbing tested scholars' strength and perseverance, helping them push past fears and build confidence.

This spring, we look forward to bringing these experiences back and introducing new opportunities, including a visit to Gateway Arch National Park. For many scholars, this will be their first time exploring the museum and learning more about St. Louis' history.

Seeing scholars step out of their comfort zones and discover new possibilities has been truly rewarding. We are deeply grateful to River City Outdoors and Big Muddy Adventures for their invaluable support, instruction, and gear, which has made this program possible.



## Monthly Giving Matters

**Consider making a lasting impact by setting up a monthly gift to LifeWise STL!**

By giving monthly, you can create a steady foundation of support that allows us to plan for the future and make a bigger difference in our community. **Together, we are building better futures!**

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