LifeWise STL
Life Skills for Better Futures

The LifeLine

Fall 2026

Letter from our President/CEO

Dear Team LifeWise,

It's easy to feel overwhelmed by the news these days. There is plenty of uncertainty and hardship in the world, and sometimes it can be hard to see past it.

But here's what I see every day at LifeWise: **Good things are happening.**

We saw that this summer through the incredible results from our Literacy Camp. Over the summer **67% improved by at least one grade level in reading, 68% improved by a grade level in vocabulary, and 97% of our scholars experienced no reading loss.** That's especially encouraging because, in recent years, about 67% of students avoided summer reading loss. The new approach we shared in our summer newsletter, bringing experienced teachers into the program to focus specifically on reading skills, made a real difference.

We're seeing progress in our Economic Wellness programs, too. So far this year, our IDA program has helped **16 people purchase vehicles, six people purchase homes, and five people complete major home repairs.** Each of those numbers represents an individual or family taking an important step toward greater economic well-being and building a stronger future.

And there's more good news in this newsletter. You'll read about what our high school scholars were up to this summer as they explored college and career opportunities, and how LifeWise helped one participant pay down debt while strengthening her small business.

You'll also meet a couple of the people we honored as our 2026 Impact Award winners. Their stories are reminders that Team LifeWise is made up of people who show up, share their time and talents, and believe in what is possible for their neighbors.

None of this happens without you.

Times aren't easy, and the news isn't always rosy. **But right here in St. Louis, we have the opportunity to do something about the challenges in front of us.** Together, we're helping children build skills and confidence, supporting young people as they plan for their futures, and helping individuals and families strengthen their economic well-being.

There is a lot of good happening. And with your support, we're going to keep building brighter futures, together.

With gratitude,

Scott E. Walker
President/CEO



Literacy Camp Results

97% avoided learning loss

67% increased grade-level in vocabulary

68% increased grade-level in reading





2026 IDA Results to date

16 vehicles purchased
6 homes purchased
5 major home repairs completed

Preparing Students for Success Beyond High School



LifeWise Academy's Summer Camp gave 23 scholars in grades 9–12 opportunities to explore college, careers, community service, and personal growth while building skills for life after high school.

Through support from Scottish Partnerships for Arts and Education, The Art of Felting, and Spire Energy, scholars participated in interactive workshops focused on college readiness, career exploration, music appreciation and culture, and making solid financial decisions.

Students visited Washington University in St. Louis, Goldfarb School of Nursing, Missouri Baptist University, and Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, gaining exposure to different college environments and postsecondary pathways.

"Before this summer, I wasn't sure if college was for me," said Maria Gonzales, sophomore in LifeWise Academy Summer Camp. "Visiting different schools and learning about scholarships made me realize that I have options. I also learned how to interview and network."

The camp also emphasized self care, wellness, and community service. Students participated in three community service projects and prepared 350 sandwiches for individuals in need.

"We have a great group of scholars," said Darrius Harris, Director of LifeWise Academy. "I can tell from the start to finish of camp how our scholars grew with friendships, confidence and connections. I believe they have a strong idea now of what is needed for them to be successful."

Acrostics on Values

V	Victories, Celebrations, What matters to you
A	Achievements that keep you going through
L	Labeled at the top or the bottom
U	Useless or it matters to your morals, your priorities
E	Eagerness to make or break that situation
S	Standards you keep that support you highly

-written by an Academy student (anonymous)

Meet some of our 2026 Rev. Eugene W. Morse Impact Award Honorees



Team LifeWise 2026

Mike and Chris Scavotto

Andy Matthys-Pearce



For nearly two decades, Mike and Chris Scavotto have been dedicated supporters of LifeWise StL. Last year, Mike reunited his band, Reunion Jazz, for its first performance in years, bringing musicians to St. Louis from as far away as Portland, Oregon. Chris helped coordinate the concert and spread the word. The event raised funds for LifeWise's tornado recovery work supporting seniors affected by the May 2025 tornado. We're thrilled to honor Mike and Chris as 2026 LifeWise Impact Award Winners for sharing their time, talents, connections, and generosity with LifeWise.

Andy Matthys-Pearce first came to LifeWise StL as a volunteer through his employer. Inspired by his own daughters' success with DreamBox Math, an adaptive learning platform, he helped bring it to LifeWise's preschool and elementary afterschool programs, giving scholars new ways to strengthen math skills, build confidence, and develop critical thinking. Andy also volunteers weekly with scholars, offering encouragement and helping them work through challenges. Andy is a 2026 LifeWise Impact Award Winner in recognition of his dedication to helping scholars grow their skills, confidence, and love of learning.



Save the Date!

Reunion Jazz returns for another LifeWise benefit concert on May 23, 2027!

Read about all of our honorees!

From Debt to Freedom for Amber

As an entrepreneur, hairstylist and salon owner, Amber has built a career around serving others. But managing a small business and household expenses led her to take on predatory loans which were charging more than 300% interest.

Paying off those loans became Amber's primary goal when she joined LifeWise StL's Debt Reduction Savings program. She successfully saved $2,000, which LifeWise StL matched with $4,000. The funds helped her pay down predatory debt, get current on tax debt and clear a debt with a financial institution so she could regain good standing.

Through the program, Amber also developed greater discipline and confidence in managing her money. She set goals, tracked her progress and stayed accountable—all while working toward financial freedom and a stronger future for her elementary-aged daughter, Allison. "How I'm being disciplined with money is allowing me a certain type of freedom I didn't have before," Amber said.

LifeWise StL's Financial Trauma class and Financial Support Group became particularly meaningful to her. Amber said hearing other people's stories helped her recognize that she was not alone in the experiences and emotions surrounding money.

"I feel seen. This whole experience has been humanizing," Amber said. "Those [financial] support groups taught me other people go through this, too, and made me feel human instead of robotic," she said.

Her coach, Ian Andres Amado, LCSW, CFSW, has witnessed that commitment firsthand.

"Amber's participation has been enthusiastic and vulnerable since day one," Ian said. "For all of the progress we made in our hourlong coaching sessions with one another, she would go home and work on finances for several more hours. Watching Amber show up for herself and her family has been an honor," Ian said.

"How I'm being disciplined with money is allowing me a certain type of freedom I didn't have before."



Amber's goals for the future remain ambitious: establish emergency savings, continue strengthening her financial habits and ultimately build generational wealth for her daughter.

Celebrating 125 Years in 2027!

Next year marks our 125th anniversary and we have a variety of special things planned! Check out the insert in this newsletter and mark your calendars now so you don't miss out on any of the fun. Fill out the form online or on paper to win a ticket to your choice of 2027 event!

As part of our celebratory year, we will be raising funds for the LifeWise Legacy Fund. This will include outright gifts, three year pledges, and estate planned giving, all to support our programming and capital needs over the next 125 years. You'll be hearing and seeing more about this in the months to come. We're grateful for your consideration and generous partnership. **Together we are Team LifeWise!**

2026 LifeWise Impact Award Winners Announced

The **Rev. Eugene W. Morse LifeWise Impact Award** recognizes partners of LifeWise StL who exhibit a passion for our mission, invest their time and talents as volunteers, support our work financially, and connect others to the work LifeWise does in helping people achieve a better life.

The 2026 Award winners:

Laura Brozka
Bob & Becky Courtney
Andy Matthys-Pearce
Chris & Kelli McDonald
Mike and Chris Scavotto
René Vences

Surrounded by LifeWise StL supporters and staff, honorees enjoyed an evening together at Busch Stadium cheering the Cardinals on to a late season win. Thank you to our honorees for your unwavering support these many years!



Our preschoolers celebrated a special milestone last month as they graduated from LifeWise StL's Early Childhood Center! Congratulations to all of our wonderful students and families who gathered with us to celebrate this memorable occasion. Our teachers will miss these little ones terribly, but we're excited to see **"oh the places you'll go"** next!

YOP TAX CREDITS STILL AVAILABLE!

Now at 70%

Consider increasing your donation - giving 67% more than your past gift is the same net cost to you and a greater impact for the families that together we are serving!

Sample Income Tax Results*
Missouri Resident or Individual/Business with Missouri Income

Donation	$8,333	~~$5,000~~	$5,000	$1,667	~~$1,000~~	$1,000
MO Tax Credit 70% ~~(50%)~~	-5,833	~~-2,500~~	-3,500	-1,167	~~-500~~	-700
MO Tax Savings**	-117	~~-117~~	-71	-23	~~-23~~	-14
Federal Tax Savings**	-550	~~-550~~	-330	-110	~~-110~~	-66
Total Tax Savings	-6,501	~~-3,179~~	-3,901	-1,300	~~-633~~	-780
NET cost to donor*	$1,832	~~$1,832~~	$1,100	$367	~~$367~~	$220

*Assumes donor itemizes deductions, is in the 22% marginal Federal and 4.7% Missouri income tax bracket.
**Contribution deduction reduces by amount of Missouri credit per Final Treasury Regulations issued June 2019. Please consult your tax advisor about your personal tax situation. Minimum $1,000 donation.
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