



THREADS

The Women's Fund | Spring 2023

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We Rise By Lifting Others

The Rise 2.0 campaign launched in late 2018 to help single mothers become self-sufficient by eliminating barriers. One of those barriers being affordable housing. A valuable partnership was forged with Evergreen Retirement community, who provided two homes on their property. The women participating in the program are required to pay a percentage of their income to rent, as well as attend weekly classes on financial sustainability, parenting, healthy relationships and more. These classes are provided by Christine Ann Domestic Abuse Services – another extremely valuable community partner. The goal of Rise 2.0 is to stop the cycle of generational poverty by helping these mothers, and their families, get to a place of self-sufficiency within three to five years.

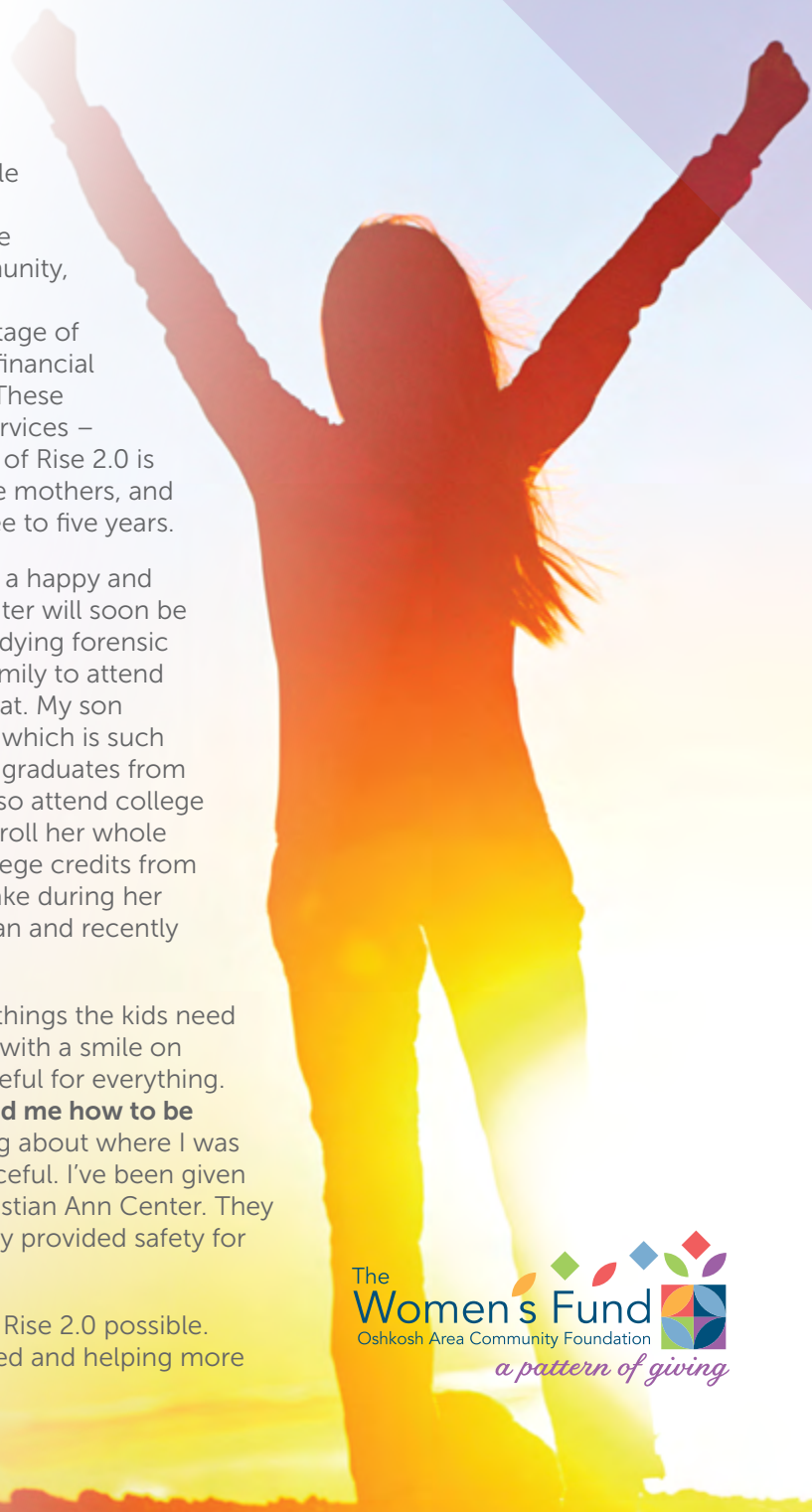
We're happy to share a recent update from Melissa, who began this program in 2019.

"Life is great, and I say that with a happy and genuine heart. My oldest daughter will soon be attending college in Florida, studying forensic science. She is the first in my family to attend college and I am so proud of that. My son received a football scholarship, which is such a blessing. My middle daughter graduates from high school this May and will also attend college in Florida. She made the honor roll her whole senior year and already has college credits from CAPP classes she was able to take during her

junior and senior year. My youngest daughter is a freshman and recently got her temps. She is also doing well in school.

As for myself, I have been working a lot to pay for all the things the kids need in life to succeed. I work two jobs but wake up every day with a smile on my face knowing I'm alive. I am blessed, and beyond grateful for everything. **The Rise 2.0 program allowed me to breathe and showed me how to be strong.** When I reflect on my life, I cry tears of joy thinking about where I was compared to where I am. My life has never been this peaceful. I've been given a start to a new life thanks to the Women's Fund and Christian Ann Center. They chose to help me, despite not knowing my story. And they provided safety for my family."

The Women's Fund is grateful for the partners who make Rise 2.0 possible. We look forward to continuing the work that's been started and helping more mothers in need of support.





Making A Difference: The Impact of A Grant

A large part of the work we do is investing in programs that make a difference in the lives of women, girls, and families. The Women's Fund was proud to award grants to the following organizations, who recently shared with our volunteers the impactful outcomes of these dollars.

Reflections of Grace Performing Arts School is a non-profit organization that offers faith-based, non-competitive, outreach focused, affordable, dance instruction. In an environment where children feel loved, encouraged, and safe, the school serves low-income families, single mothers, foster care families, refugees, and many more. It is the goal of the organization that all students can participate, no matter their financial situation or physical abilities. They achieve this through donations and grants. One of their participants is autistic and non-verbal. In the beginning, she was intimidated to go into class. Now, she runs into the room with a big smile; she feels a part of something special.

The Salvation Army shared the specific outcomes of the Pathway of Hope program, which launched in 2011. The program provides targeted services to families wanting to break the generational cycle of poverty and enable a path out of constant crisis. This initiative offers single mothers job training,

health services, childcare, education, housing opportunities, and legal service. In the last year alone, nearly 30 mothers have received services and assistance through the program.

Reach Counseling is a sexual assault service provider for children and adults offering culturally responsive outreach, prevention education, victim advocacy, trauma counseling, and sex offender treatment. As an anti-violence agency, Reach strives to heal lives and transform communities. In 2019, the Women's Fund provided a survey to local non-profit organizations, uncovering a need for support to spread awareness of their work. The Women's Fund provided Reach with a grant to help raise awareness of their services, with a focus on those that serve single mothers. Through print and social advertising targeted to single mothers, Reach had over 19,000 engagements and interactions.

The Women's Fund provides many grants, big and small, that create impact in our community. We can do this because of donors like you. Thank you for supporting these programs and organizations!



Being a Mom comes with lots of **"pit" & "cherry"** moments; what are some of your best?

**Visit our
Mother's Day
blog for
details!**



Celebrating Moms

Parenting is hard. Mothering is hard. You don't need us to tell or remind you of this fact. We also know that for every frustrating, defeating, overwhelming moment in motherhood, there are cheerful, joyful, and beautiful moments to balance it out.

In the spirit of Mother's Day, we want to acknowledge and appreciate it all.

The state of mental health in our community.



Read more here.



"rape day" and a culture of sexism showing up in middle and high schools. The large increase in day care expulsions also came as a surprise. Everything these experts shared reinforced the depth of need in these areas.

Local Professionals Share Their Voices

No one is a stranger to mental health and wellness needs. Society is realizing more every day that mental health is as vital as physical health. It's likely you are impacted daily by mental health needs, whether personally or by those close to you. Awareness and acceptance have improved tremendously, but solutions, access, and understanding have not been able to keep up with the demand.

Listening and researching is an important part of our Women's Fund work. We knew mental health struggles were commonplace (particularly post-pandemic) and within the population we serve. But we wanted a deeper understanding. We turned to 22 local experts whose daily work in the mental health field gives them the best pulse on: what the struggles are, what the causes are, and what may help.

Much of what was shared, sadly, did not come as a surprise. The pervasiveness of anxiety, substance abuse, and feelings of isolation were shared often. There were also some shocking surprises, including

There are so many factors and layers surrounding mental health issues that it can seem, no... it is overwhelming. Where can any one person, any one organization, any one community, really make a gain? At the end, the focus group was asked to come up with "pie in the sky" programs and solutions they felt could "move the needle". No, the Women's Fund does not have a capital campaign ready in the wings to fund the solutions they identified. We challenged them with this request so they could tap their insider knowledge but not be limited by red tape, bureaucracy, or funding.

Big problems require big solutions. Yet oftentimes solutions must start small. Our takeaways from these mental health discussions were numerous. We're actively working to identify where the Women's Fund can be a conduit of support based on the insights and ideas these experts shared. While we don't have an exact direction mapped out yet, we know we're on a path of great need. If you're interested in supporting or knowing more about the initiatives that stem from this work, please contact Karlene Grabner, karlene@oshkoshareacf.org.

Our most sincere thanks to those who contributed their voice and insight to these conversations.

We'd love for you to share a "pit" and "cherry" moment of motherhood that another mom or caregiver could relate to. It will help them to feel seen, less alone. The curious thing about caregiving is that although we are rarely alone (especially in the younger years), we often feel lonely. Shared experiences can help keep lesson feelings of loneliness, even when the heavier moments can seem to outweigh the lighter ones.

We see you. You are not alone.

Big or small, share a time when you just about (or actually did) throw your hands up to tap out (temporarily of

course). Then tell us a time, again big or small, when you saw a glimmer of hope that you've been doing something right, a moment of exhale and perhaps relief.

The tough moments make the good ones that much more fulfilling. And the good ones help light the way through darker times. We're all walking a different path of parenting and motherhood, but we all have our sights set on similar horizons. This Mother's Day let's connect over the "pit" and "cherry" steps on our unique paths.



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For more information, visit <http://women.oshkoshareacf.org>

Go Oshkosh Kids Community & Parenting Resources

Go Oshkosh Kids helps to strengthen families by connecting them with the resources they need to be healthy, happy, and successful. In partnership with the Women’s Fund, Go Oshkosh Kids brings easily accessible information from organizations that work with families and children. This exciting initiative stemmed from our parenting focus groups.

Check out the latest and upcoming podcast episodes at GoOshkoshKids.com.

