

Not you.  
Not me.

It's *we*.



2015 Annual Report

**W**  
*e*  
Women Employed

In expanding employment  
and educational opportunities  
for women...

It's not just you.  
It's not just me.  
It's *we*.

All of us and Women Employed.

Dear Friends,

For more than four decades, **Women Employed** has been an ardent voice on behalf of working women. We believe that listening is important too, and it's the way we ensure that women's needs and experiences drive our work.

This year, we pioneered national opinion research with 1,000 professional women to explore the workplace issues that concern them and their awareness of the realities facing low-paid women workers. At the same time, we conducted focus groups with low-paid women in Chicago about their employment needs, aspirations, and challenges.

Although the women we heard from had widely varying life experiences, we heard strong commonalities: a yearning to do the best for their families, the importance of financial stability and security, a desire for work that is respected and fulfilling, a belief in fairness, and the importance of speaking up for change.

That is the vision we all share. The voices of working women are at the heart of this annual report.

Our research reminds us that **WE** is more than our acronym—**we** stands for the aspirations that unite working women. It stands for what **we** can accomplish together.

Thanks to our many partners, activists, and supporters, we made important progress this year. Together, we'll continue to work towards a world in which all women can advance economically and achieve their aspirations.



Anne Ladky  
Executive Director



Lisa Pattis  
Board Chair

# Working together, we will.

**W**omen Employed is mobilizing individuals, organizations, policymakers, and civic leaders to achieve our vision of expanding women's educational and employment opportunities. Even though these goals seem straightforward, they aren't easy to achieve. But we have a clear destination and the know-how and experience to get there. **Working together, we will.**







**"I am not just a number.  
I matter."**

**"A working mother should be able  
to see her kids before they go to  
bed and have enough money to  
provide for her family."**

# We all deserve a workplace that is fair and employers who treat us with respect.

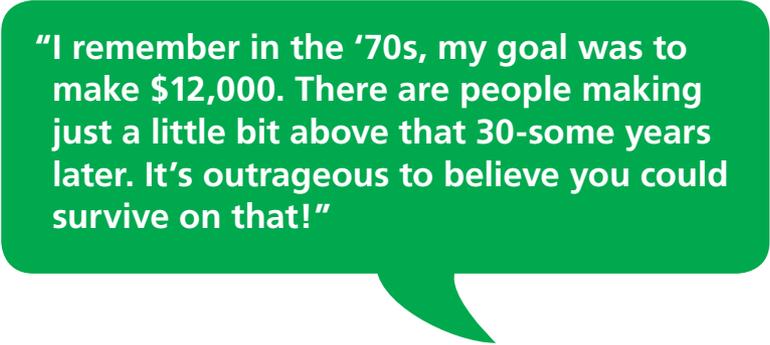
**W**hether our job site is a factory, an airplane, a hotel, a cubicle, or the corner office, our work has value. *We* all deserve to be treated with dignity and respect. We want equal pay for equal work. We want our country's rhetoric about the importance of families to be matched by workplace policies that actually help.

**Women Employed** is leading the way on issues like pay transparency and scheduling practices to ensure fair treatment for all women workers.

Our work to ensure equal pay for equal work took a major step forward with the Obama administration's decision to prohibit pay secrecy by companies doing business with the federal government. A new Executive Order makes it possible for workers and job applicants to share information about pay without fear of discrimination. **Women Employed** worked for years with the U.S. Department of Labor to shape this policy and advocate for this important advance for equal pay.

Our work for fair pay also includes our continuing advocacy for a higher minimum wage federally and in Illinois and an end to a "subminimum" wage level for tipped employees. Having to work for tips often leads to harassment and discrimination—and undermines fairness.

**Women Employed** is addressing another employer practice that undermines economic stability—unstable and unpredictable schedules. In sectors like retail and food service, hourly employees have little notice of their schedules or the number of hours they'll get, which makes it impossible to budget, obtain child care, or fulfill family responsibilities. We are shining a spotlight on this issue and its consequences for women and families, sharing their stories with the public and policymakers, devising policy options, and promoting "best practice" solutions to employers.



**"I remember in the '70s, my goal was to make \$12,000. There are people making just a little bit above that 30-some years later. It's outrageous to believe you could survive on that!"**

# We all need opportunities to grow, to achieve.

**W**hether working women aspire to be employed full-time or part-time, to become chefs or CEOs, **we** all deserve the opportunity for education as a path to achieving our dreams. For millions of women, education beyond high school has been essential to their advancement. Millions more aspire to go to college but face barriers: the cost of tuition, the demands of work and family, lack of academic preparedness.

**Women Employed** is working to ensure that all women have access to the education and training they need to achieve their goals.

We built partnerships with colleges, advocated for policy changes, and created curricula with the City Colleges of Chicago and trained nearly 60 of their teachers in order to make “bridge programs” widely available. Bridges combine basic academic instruction with career education, leading to jobs paying family-supporting wages. Since **Women Employed** began this effort, more than 3,000 Illinoisans have enrolled in bridges, and the number is rising rapidly as more schools adopt this approach.

This year, we built Career Foundations, a critically needed beginning step for low-skilled adults who haven’t chosen a career field. This is especially important for women, who often lack good career information. The Career Foundations curriculum, now available on the web, introduces students

to ten employment sectors that they can prepare for at City Colleges. This 32-hour course, the first of its kind, is now being offered at six City Colleges. To reach more adults who want to begin on a career pathway, we partnered with twelve community-based organizations on an exciting effort to implement the Career Foundations curriculum and enable more of their participants to transition to college.

“People have a sense of pride when they have a job they are proud of or something they are good at.”

To ensure that more low-income adults have the opportunity to enroll in college, **Women Employed** continues to lead the fight for adequate funding for MAP, the state’s financial aid program. Throughout the state’s budget stalemate, we are making sure that policymakers hear from their constituents about the vital role MAP plays for them and for the economic health of the state.

A close-up photograph of a person's hands kneading a large piece of white dough on a wooden surface. The person is wearing a light-colored apron over a dark blue long-sleeved shirt. The background is slightly blurred, showing a kitchen setting with a large sack of flour. Two green speech bubbles with white text are overlaid on the image.

**"My dream is to own my own catering company."**

**"Our educational system falters in trying to help people who are low-income, who don't have exposure to higher education, to know exactly what is out there for them."**

A close-up photograph of two hands clasped together, one larger and one smaller, against a background of out-of-focus green and yellow bokeh. The hands are positioned vertically, with the larger hand at the top and the smaller hand at the bottom. The lighting is soft and natural, highlighting the texture of the skin.

**“When you advocate for women, you are advocating for the entire family. It’s a snowball effect.”**

**“This is a moral issue. People get sick or they need to take care of a family member who is sick. I don’t understand what kind of society people want to live in when we have policies like this that don’t address these issues.”**

# We all need jobs that enable us to care for ourselves and our families.

**W**hite collar, blue collar, hourly, or salaried, we all get sick sometimes. So do our children and parents. Emergencies happen. All of us need employers who understand and support our desire to contribute at work and do our best to care for our families. Research shows that when we are healthy and engaged, we are also more productive employees.

**Women Employed** is leading the effort to ensure that every employee can earn sick time. In Chicago, we worked with advocates and aldermen to draft an ordinance to create a basic earned sick time requirement and built support for passage. At the urging of advocates, Chicago's Mayor appointed a Working Families Task Force to address issues including sick time, irregular scheduling practices, and other family support concerns. Our Executive Director co-chaired the group during a six-month process comprised of community-level focus groups with employers and employees, expert testimony, research, and deliberations. When the task force issues recommendations in early 2016, **Women Employed** will continue to play a leadership role by advocating for public policy and urging businesses to adopt best-practice solutions.

During the first year since the passage of Illinois' Pregnancy Fairness Act, **Women Employed** worked to ensure strong implementation of the law by creating and disseminating materials to inform women about their rights and inform employers of their obligations.

We're promoting sound public policies and voluntary employer action to expand the availability of paid parental leave—which both women and men need and want. This year, we developed a model policy that we are disseminating to encourage employers to include paid leave in their benefit programs.

At the same time that support for family caregiving is growing, Illinois' governor provoked a serious crisis for low-income parents with drastic cuts to child care subsidies. **Women Employed** joined advocates across the state to put pressure on the governor and legislators and won restoration of the critically needed funds.

**"My dad is 84 and I take him back and forth to the doctor. I don't know from week to week which days I'll be off, and his appointments are set weeks or months in advance."**

# There is unity in community.

**T**hough we come from different places with diverse backgrounds, *we* share ideals about equality for working women.

For more than 40 years, **Women Employed** has mobilized people and organizations to drive change. Today, Facebook has replaced flyers, and Twitter is used more than the telephone, but our commitment remains unchanged: to build a community of advocates who are passionate about economic justice for women.

Through thought-provoking public events, dialogues with policymakers, social and traditional media, councils and committees, and our online action network, **Women Employed** is raising awareness and attracting new voices to our advocacy efforts.

Together, we've created and will continue to build a community that expands opportunity for all.

*It's up to us.*



"I realize I need to protest in some way—call or email, get noisy, ask questions, create media buzz. I think that's the only way."

"With all the resources and everything that you learned that made you successful, why wouldn't you pass that on to someone else? I am going to make sure that I do."

## DONORS

Just as many voices inform our work, many hands enable us to achieve results. We are deeply grateful to all those who invest in economic advancement for working women by supporting **Women Employed**.

We salute the many foundations, corporations, organizations, and individuals who have supported us over the years. The following donors generously contributed between July 1, 2014 and September 30, 2015. We recognize the importance of every contribution and regret that we cannot list the many people who donated less than \$100. Heartfelt thanks to all our supporters.

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 Judith and Roger Wallenstein\*  
 Valerie Waller  
 Barbara Waller\*  
 Gail Ward  
 Christina Warden  
 Elaine Waxman  
 Sonia Weaver  
 Tara Webb  
 Eryn Weber-Shifrin  
 Beata Welsh  
 Debra Weninger  
 Tiffany White  
 Lindsey Whitlock  
 Tami Wielgus

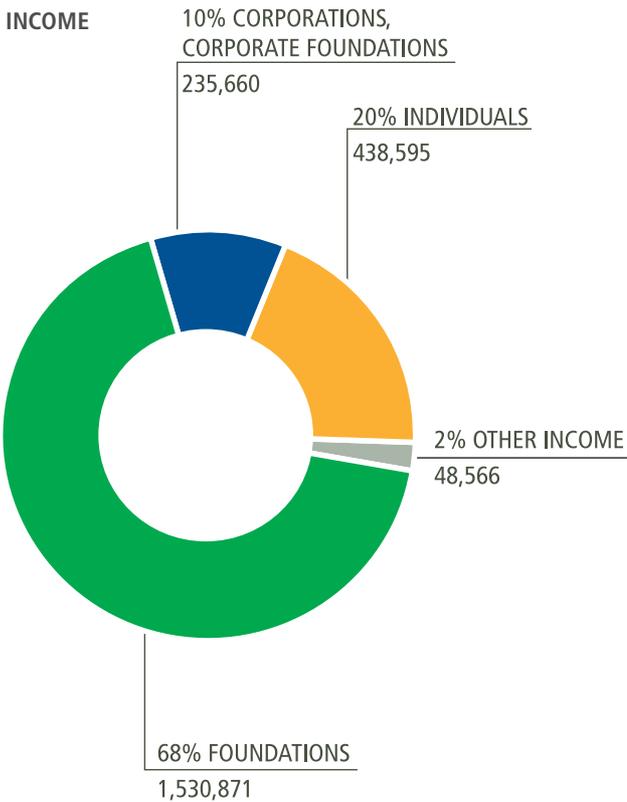
Julia Williams  
 Stephanie Williams  
 Rachel Williams-Newman  
 Jane Wilmoth  
 Cynthia Wilson\*  
 Mary Jane Wilson  
 Charlotte Winkler  
 Jodie Winnett  
 Laura Winters  
 Deborah Winton\*  
 Brenda Wolf  
 Chiara Wrocinski  
 Julie Wrona  
 Caren Yanis  
 Marci Ybarra  
 Carolyn Yelton  
 Laurie and Michael Young\*  
 Susan Young  
 Donna and Phillip Zarcone  
 Alison Zehr  
 Chelsey Ziegler  
 Gabi Zolla  
 Jerrold Zoloto

+ Generations Circle member

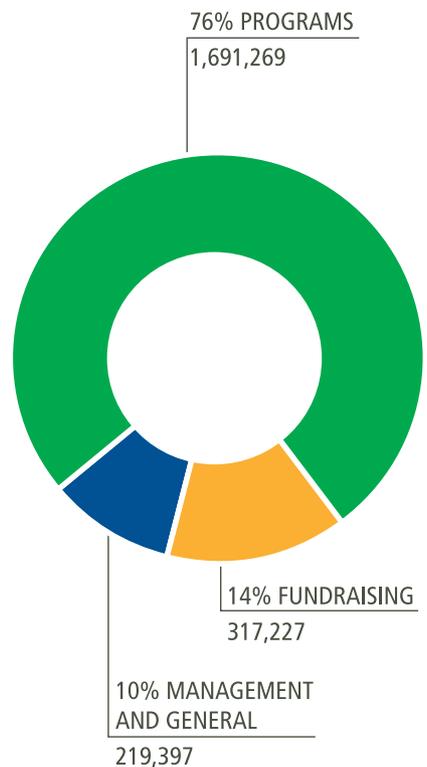
\*Gifts to the Nancy B. Kreiter Advocacy Fund

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*Program Coordinator*

Amanda Collins  
*Program Coordinator*

Elizabeth Cunneen  
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Starr de los Santos  
*College Support Specialist/  
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*Director of Community  
Initiatives*

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*Communications Associate*

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*Development Officer*

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*Senior Communications  
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*Policy Associate*

Shirley Perry  
*Network Administrator*

Mehwesh Siddiqi  
*Bookkeeper/Accounting  
Assistant*

Sylwia Sokolowski  
*Database Coordinator/Data  
Entry Specialist*

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*Senior Program Manager*

Rebecca Wellisch  
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