

Impact Report

2020

women
UNITE!



A MESSAGE FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR LIZ JANSEN

January and February are quiet months for Women Unite!. Our year picks up around International Women's Day, and last year was no exception.

On March 8, we participated in Flour Power: A Bake Sale with a Purpose. Thanks to Lettuce Entertain You's energy and creativity in putting together the event and attracting countless attendees, Women Unite! received more than \$20,000 in donations. These funds were a major reason why we didn't just survive the pandemic, but grew despite it. Later that day, we attended a Goose Island event where they released a new brew, Women of the House, in honor of the record-breaking number of women elected to office in 2018. Proceeds benefited Women Unite!.

It was a big day, especially for an introvert. I remember thinking about how much energy I'd need to be "on" all day. At the time, I couldn't imagine how much I would miss that particular kind of exhaustion—socializing for hours, smiling, and schmoozing. The exhaustion of catching up with friends and colleagues on a beautiful spring day. Little did I know—did we all know—that we'd soon be facing a very different kind of exhaustion, one that we're still in the midst of.

It began with 8,889,297 acres burned to ash during a catastrophic wildfire season. Then came COVID-19. From the White House dubbing it the "Chinese virus," to stay-at-home orders lifted too soon, to 500,000 (and counting) dead Americans, those with power failed us at each turn. Then there was the 8 minutes, 46 seconds it took for a Minneapolis police officer to murder George Floyd. 8 minutes, 46 seconds became a rallying cry for those who took to the streets protesting lives cut short with zero repercussions.

People struggled in our cruel, capitalist framework: 26 million Americans with not enough to eat and 10.7 million unemployed. Meanwhile, the stock market ended 2020 at record highs. As the death toll rose with painful losses, the Traitor-in-Chief threw his tantrums, spewed lies and hate, and incited a violent insurrection because he couldn't handle getting fired.



In this country that refuses to own up to its violent, racist past and how that past persists today, infecting our present and limiting our future, it's easy to focus on the negative. And though it's critical to name these injustices as a means to healing, 2020 has reminded me that it's just as critical to see the helpers, name the good, and celebrate the wins—even if they're small.

The summer's Black Lives Matter protests became one of the largest movements in our nation's history. The U.S. has its first Black, South Asian, woman vice president, who is married to a Jew, was married later in life, and is a stepmother with no biological children of her own—giving representation to so many. Illinois ended cash bail, making it the first state to take this crucial first step in creating a more equitable justice system. We saw a resurgence of local mutual aid groups, folks pooling their resources to take care of one another. And then there was Stacey Abrams and her Fair Fight team, who delivered a historic Democratic win in Georgia.

The small is often all we have. And that's what this Impact Report is: a summary of all the small steps we took together, and their cumulative impact.

So consider this a love letter to you, the people who continue to make Women Unite! grow and thrive. WU! was founded with the belief that together, we can move the needle, make real and lasting change. The pages that follow are a testament to what we can do when we join in solidarity and what can happen when we refuse to accept things as they currently are. Thank you for making our work possible. Without you, there would be no impact to share.

Liz Jansen, Executive Director



2020

By the numbers

\$235,000

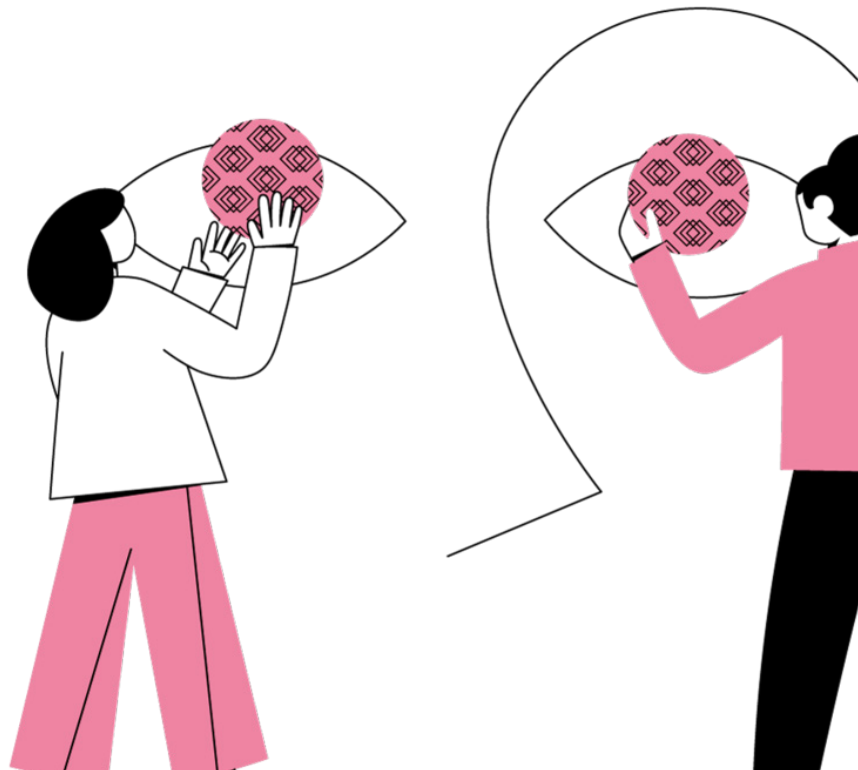
dollars raised for clients & partners through our fundraising services

\$23,936

directly donated to our partners

\$1,696,350

dollars awarded to clients & partners through our grant management services





25 new grants

awarded to clients & partners through our grant management services



429

hours of free services provided to partners

2,982

hours of services provided to clients on a sliding scale

52 trainings

on racial equity and social justice completed

387 hours

spent on racial equity trainings and organizational equity audits for our clients



Pivoting during the Pandemic

Just like so many other organizations this past year, Women Unite! had to pivot as a result of the pandemic.

Although most of our work had always taken place in a work-from-home environment, with in-person meetings rendered unsafe, trainings, client face-to-faces, and events transitioned to the Zoom world.

The biggest change was being unable to hold our yearly events in person. So our New Partner Launch Party, Plantasia, and our Annual Fundraising Event all moved to the virtual space. And somehow, it all still worked. For our New Partner Launch, we held a Zoom party where everyone had the chance to meet the new partners and participate in a raffle. During Plantasia, people could purchase plants online or visit Plant Shop while adhering to social distancing. And for our Annual Fundraising Event, the panel discussion and donor campaign were a great success. We also held a month-long membership drive, during which we secured 44 new WU! Crew members, surpassing our goal. Two members even joined at our highest level (\$100/month). These new memberships translated to \$10,140 over the course of the year.

WU! is fortunate to be able to conduct our work remotely while many can't. And while we look forward to the day when we can resume in-person functions, the constraints of the pandemic drove us to get creative in how we connect with our community.



Putting the People Back in Philanthropy

This year, our annual fundraising campaign was all about changing the way we look at giving. The Putting the People Back in Philanthropy campaign meant reimagining giving, centering small gifts and individual donors, and prioritizing community over philanthropy. We asked our community to join us from October to December to help us reach our fundraising goal of \$10,000 from as many donors as possible. And show up they did.

Putting the People Back in Philanthropy served as both a way to educate folks on the dangers of big philanthropy and a way to demonstrate the power of the collective. We love this theme so much and everything that it stands for that we will carry it on into 2021, and focus on just how much our community can accomplish when we come together.

The campaign was a major success, as Women Unite! raised

\$10,285 from

158 donors, with

80% of contributions

coming in at **\$50** or less.



What Our Clients & Partners Are Saying

HEALING TO ACTION

“We’ve been incredibly lucky to land a partner like Women Unite!. The WU team has thrown their heart and soul into the work since the day we started working together. Not only do we have a fierce, talented and hardworking partner in WU!, we have new champions of our work who are always looking for our next opportunity for growth - and making it come to fruition.”

Sheerine Alemzadeh, Co-Founder/Co-Director

“I am deeply moved by this amazing group of experts who are dedicating themselves to bring beauty, strength, and clarity to our movements by investing critical resources in small grassroots organizations like ours. It is because of Women Unite! that our mission can grow and thrive, even in the darkest of times. It is such an honor and privilege to build this work with some of this amazing group of change-makers.”

Karla Altmayer, Co-Founder/Co-Director

“Equiticity’s partnership with Women Unite! has already transformed our organization. In only a few short months, we’ve raised more money through a giving campaign and we’ve submitted more grants than we had in the previous three years.”

Olatunji Oboi Reed,
President & CEO

EQUITICITY
POWER + EQUITY >



GROWING HOME

“We knew working with Women Unite! would support our programming – but we didn’t realize how transformational it would be. From small projects like communication templates for emails and social media designs to long-term projects like a donor stewardship plan and strategy that includes an in-depth quarterly newsletter and a full communications plan, the Women Unite! team has truly had lasting impact for us. The key to this success is that Liz and her team truly listen to what we need as an organization and are ready to advise and go into action with our lead. We can’t thank you enough, Women Unite!”

Janelle St. John, Executive Director

“Women Unite! has accelerated CWHC’s movement toward our most important goals – amplifying our outreach, strengthening our systems, and providing stability in a time of uncertainty. They’ve brought us into compelling conversations with like-valued organizations about our shared work and shared future. They’ve done all this while being incredibly kind and responsive, every step of the way.”

A.J. Barks, Development Director

CHICAGO
WOMEN’S
HEALTH
CENTER

“Working with Women Unite! laid the groundwork for lasting change at Girls on the Run. I was so impressed with their engaging content and willingness to customize lessons. They provided a safe space for team members to develop a shared language and explore their own relationship to issues of race and class. Our team continues to reference learnings as they wrestle with decisions and navigate day-to-day work.”

Jill Eid, Executive Director



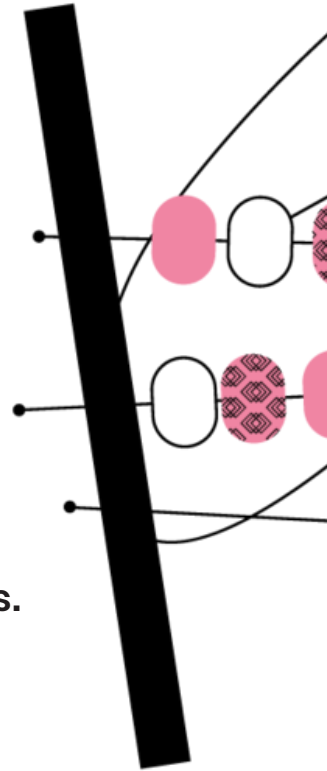
“Women Unite! is responsive and reliable. They are exactly what they call themselves—a group of badass women coming together with their time and talents to make the process of social change just a little bit easier.”

Zelda Mayer, Director of Development



Women Unite! Donors Help Make Change Possible

Thank you to our WU! Crew members and incredible donors.
Our work would not be possible without your support.



Largest one-time gift

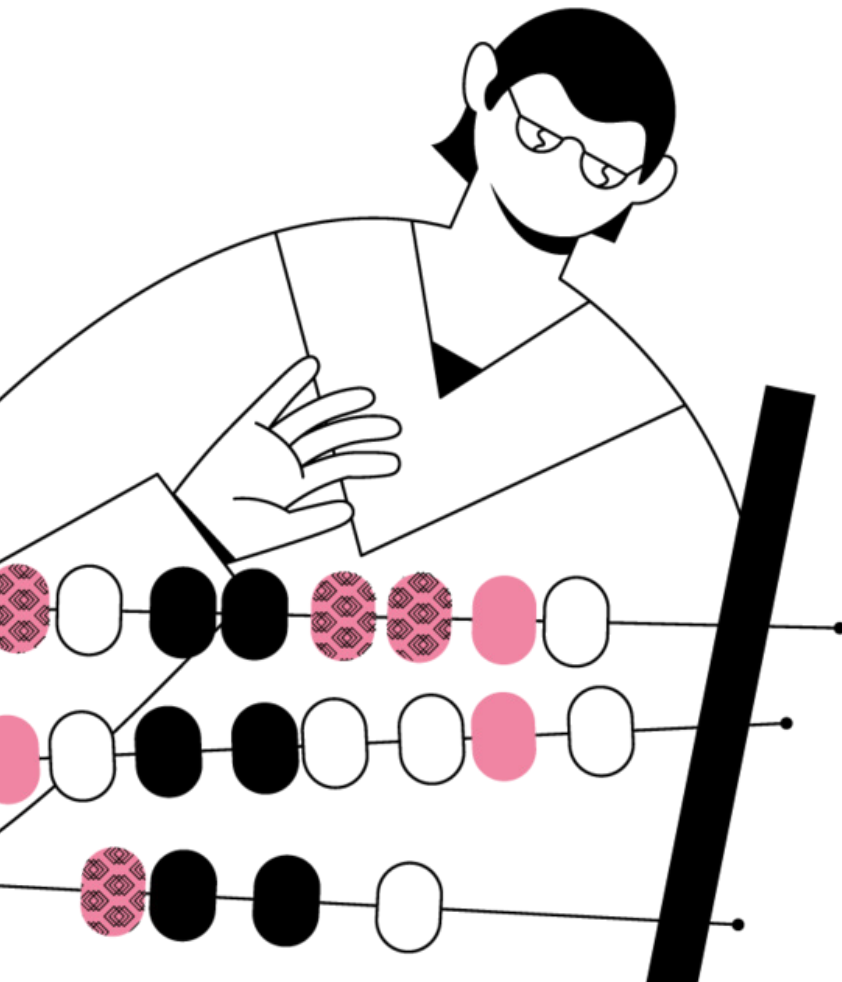
\$1,000

Individual donors

197

“I support Women Unite! because I know there is a lot of inequity in Chicago that I can’t address on my own, and I trust WU!’s leadership to help identify and partner with organizations that are making an impact in those communities. Simply put, WU! makes it accessible and easy for someone that knows Chicago communities need help but doesn’t know where to start.”

Mary, WU! Donor



Average one-time
gift amount

\$67

Average WU! Crew
membership size

**\$22.50/
month**

“I support Women Unite! because their programming and their mission is tangible. Unlike other nonprofits, I see the faces of the people that I am engaging with—I know their names, I’ve met their partners, and I trust in them and their belief in the true power of providing services for others. I see that this City is not the same for everyone and have looked for an organization that I can trust, propelled by people who are educated, driven, and passionate. People that I can align with to try and make a difference. Women Unite! is that organization, they are justice-centered, creative, and unapologetic for trying to set so many wrongs right. I am a proud supporter of WU! and sleep a little easier knowing that the WU! Crew is working to make Chicago just a little better, one day at a time.”

Christine, WU! Crew Member

77

**WU! Crew
Members**

Board of Directors

Sherin Khan
Board President
she/her/hers

Emily Barish
Board Member
she/her/hers

**Sterling Haukom
Anderson**
Co-Founder
+ Director of
Professional Training
and Development
she/her/hers

Jasmine Watkins
Board Member
she/her/hers

Catie Mouton
Board Secretary
she/her/hers

Beth Duffy
Board Member
she/her/hers

**Gabriela
Zapata-Alma**
Board Member
they/them/their


Ally Burns
Co-Founder +
Board Treasurer
she/her/hers


Jessica Gwilliam
Board Member
she/her/hers or
they/them/their


Emily Lusk Battle
Board Member
she/her/hers

**Darcie Young
Tashey**
Co-Founder &
Lifetime Member
she/her/hers

Andreanna Trillegi
Co-Founder +
Board Member
she/her/hers

 @womenunitechicago

 @WomenUnite11

 @womenunitechicago

 womenunitechicago

Learn more:
womenunitechicago.org

Donate at:
womenunitechicago.org/donate

women
UNITE!