



Creating Pathways to Resilience & Stability Together

2023 COMMUNITY IMPACT REPORT



MILWAUKEE WOMEN'S CENTER
Where Abuse Ends and Hope Begins
A Division of Community Advocates



COMMUNITY ADVOCATES
Where Meeting Basic Needs Inspires Hope

Our Mission

To provide individuals and families with advocacy and services to meet their basic needs so they may live in dignity.

Our Vision

A community in which each person envisions a future with hope.

Debby's Story



After facing the devastating loss of her father and subsequent eviction, Debby, a 25-year-old single mother of three, found Community Advocates. This turning point came when she was at her lowest, struggling with depression and homelessness. At the Milwaukee Women's Center, a part of Community Advocates, Debby and her children found not just shelter but a springboard to rebuild their lives. Debby's resilience, coupled with the support received through the Rapid Rehousing program, enabled her to secure stable housing, essential household items, and eventually, meaningful employment working with autistic adults. Her journey of transformation is a testament to the power of community support, empowering her to envision and work towards a brighter future for herself and her children. Debby's story underscores the critical role of organizations like Community Advocates in providing the necessary resources and encouragement to families in crisis, highlighting the impact of generosity and advocacy in fostering stability, independence, and healing.

Partnerships



For a complete list of Community Advocates programs and services go to communityadvocates.net.

Letter from Leadership

We are honored to present our inaugural Community Advocates Impact Report, which highlights the individuals we had the privilege to serve and the positive impact of our programs throughout 2023.

As we reflect on our achievements, the number of clients we served in 2023 is significant. However, it's the people and the stories behind those numbers that truly underscore the importance of our mission. Each individual we assist brings with them a unique journey of resilience and the pursuit of stability, which serves as the driving force behind our work.

**Access to safe and secure housing is not
just a fundamental human need,
but also a cornerstone for building stronger,
more resilient communities.**

At the center of all our programs at Community Advocates lies a steadfast commitment to addressing housing instability. Access to safe and secure housing is not just a fundamental human need, but also a cornerstone for building stronger, more resilient communities.

As we enter 2024, we are reminded that many individuals and families in our communities continue to face daunting economic and social challenges. Whether it's a family on the brink of eviction, a survivor of domestic violence seeking refuge, or someone grappling with mental health issues, Community Advocates is here to offer tailored support and services.

We want to express my deepest gratitude for your support and trust in Community Advocates. Together, we can continue to make a meaningful impact by addressing the root causes of societal challenges and fostering a community of empathy and understanding.

With appreciation,



Andi Elliott
Chief Executive Officer



Bryan House
Board President



Lisa's Story

Embarking on a journey from fear to freedom, Lisa and her five children found refuge at the Milwaukee Women's Center Domestic Violence Emergency Shelter, a Community Advocates program, where she and her children received comprehensive support, including housing, counseling, and essential resources, facilitating their recovery and rebuilding process. The specialized trauma-informed programs for her children helped them overcome the violence they witnessed, paving the way for healing. Lisa's story of resilience, underscored by her transition to stable housing and meaningful employment, highlights the critical role of supportive services in transforming lives and breaking the cycle of domestic violence.

Outcomes Achieved

Basic Needs

21,379

households received financial support and help making payment plans to maintain their utilities through the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program.

2,237

households in Milwaukee and Waukesha County received emergency rental assistance, stabilizing their housing situations amid temporary financial hardship.

254

adults and 574 children received intensive case management services and support to enhance housing stability, school attendance, and financial well-being.

7,876

landlords and tenants received support resolving issues related to rental housing.

3,363

residents accessed resources through the Milwaukee Rental Housing Resource Center to prevent or divert eviction.

355

consumers received assistance and advocacy with their SSI and Disability benefits.

886

individuals obtained employment through the FoodShare and Employment Training Program.

76

individuals with disabling conditions received protective payee and financial management services.

Jermaine's Story



Jermaine's transformative journey through the Community Advocates Nevermore Program highlights a profound commitment to personal growth and social responsibility. After serving time for a non-domestic violence offense, 37-year-old Jermaine sought to redefine his life's path and break the cycle of violence. The program equipped him with critical tools for trauma-informed education, understanding domestic violence dynamics, and mastering non-violent communication and conflict resolution. It wasn't just about rehabilitation but about reimagining his role in society. Inspired by his own transformation, Jermaine is now guiding others on similar journeys after becoming a facilitator intern at Nevermore's 40th anniversary event. His journey underscores the power of education and support in transforming lives and fostering a community free of violence. Through continued education and a pursuit of statewide certification, Jermaine embodies the change that Nevermore strives to instill in every participant.

Behavioral Health

183

individuals experiencing street homelessness received critical outreach through the Homeless Outreach Program.

36

individuals experiencing chronic homelessness and mental illness received stable shelter and supportive services through the Autumn West Safe Haven, while working to secure permanent housing.

101

Milwaukee residents experiencing chronic homelessness and living with a disability, received immediate access to safe and affordable housing through the Autumn West Permanent Housing Program.

Milwaukee Women's Center

297

adults and children received emergency transportation, safe housing, and comprehensive domestic violence services through the Milwaukee Women's Center Domestic Violence Emergency Shelter.

213

families experiencing homelessness received safe shelter and assistance through the Family Support Center Emergency Shelter.

282

people seeking new employment opportunities received free career-appropriate clothing through the Bottomless Closet.

118

fathers enrolled in the Milwaukee Fatherhood FIRE Program to become more effective and engaged partners.

76

individuals striving to overcome substance use disorders received intensive, outpatient treatment.

124

older adults facing abuse received safe shelter and assistance through the Older Abused Women's Program.

251

men participated in the Nevermore batterers' prevention and intervention program to break the cycle of intergenerational violence.

Public Policy Institute Highlights

Community Advocates' leadership created the Public Policy Institute in 2008 to address the root causes of poverty through policy advocacy and community collaboration on economic and public health issues.



PPI re-launched our county-wide substance misuse prevention coalition as RISE Drug Free MKE to elevate our entire community out of the harms caused by substance misuse. The coalition's prevention activities reached 45,108 individuals online and in person.



Celebrated the Public Policy Institute's 15th anniversary with an evening reception featuring Ben Westhoff, author of "Fentanyl, Inc.: How Rogue Chemists Created the Deadliest Wave of the Opioid Epidemic."



Created a six-part training series on LGBTQ+ behavioral health with 289 participants; 62% said they increased their skills related to serving LGBTQ+ individuals.



77 families at risk of child welfare involvement were served by the Stronger Families Milwaukee case management program, with 90% saying they improved their self-sufficiency.



Co-launched "Escucha Tus Emociones / Listen to Your Emotions" bilingual workshops with Trainer and Therapist Ana Paula Soares. More than 200 individuals attended Pláticas in the community.



Facilitated 89 Mental Health Awareness workshops on Mental Health First Aid, suicide prevention, verbal de-escalation, and mindful gratitude with 1,241 participants.



Distributed 1,375 medication lock boxes, 675 medication lock bags, and 2,200 drug deactivation pouches across the southeast region of Wisconsin.



Frankie's Story

Frankie's journey from a challenging childhood and aging out of the foster care system to embracing a hopeful future embodies the transformative impact of support. At 25, after experiencing homelessness and the harsh realities of life without a safety net, Frankie's pivotal moment came when she connected with Community Advocates Homeless Outreach, leading her to Autumn West Safe Haven. It was there, amidst feelings of anger, depression, and despair, that Frankie found the comprehensive support she had long been missing, including a long-term case manager, therapy, and medical care. This holistic approach enabled her to address her trauma, mental health concerns, and begin rebuilding her life with newfound skills and confidence. With plans to obtain her GED and develop workplace competencies, Frankie's story is a testament to the power of saying "I am ready" and having the right support to turn readiness into reality. Her progress, from learning to maintain a home to forming meaningful friendships, marks the start of a new chapter filled with possibilities and a sense of belonging.



752 youth participated in life skills workshops thanks to RISE Drug Free MKE coalition; 76% of those who completed the curriculum increased their ability to make good choices.

2023 Program Spotlight:

Siemer Homelessness Prevention & Family Stability Program

The Siemer Homelessness Prevention and Case Management Program, administered by Community Advocates in partnership with United Way of Greater Milwaukee & Waukesha County since 2012 with support from Al and Barbara Siemer, has become a model for addressing homelessness, locally in Milwaukee and nationally.

Focused on ensuring long-term housing and economic stability, Siemer has supported thousands of low-income families in Milwaukee. It prioritizes the well-being of parents and the academic success of children, using a holistic, multi-generational approach.

Through personalized assessment and case management, families receive assistance in overcoming housing challenges, setting financial goals, and accessing essential resources, including tenant training and budgeting assistance.

In 2023, Siemer made a significant impact on 254 families with school-aged children. Post-program, 96% of participant households maintained stable housing, 64% adhered to budgets, and 32% experienced increased income, showcasing its effectiveness.

Siemer has expanded to new locations and target populations while maintaining positive outcomes. It deployed Case Managers in select Milwaukee Public Schools and most recently extended services to Milwaukee Academy of Science with support from the "I Have a Dream" Foundation.

Furthermore, the Siemer model has been adapted to assist families at risk of Child Protective Services (CPS) intervention through the Stronger Families Milwaukee Initiative. Led by the Community Advocates Public Policy Institute, this initiative provides case management and wraparound services to enhance parent-child relationships in collaboration with The Parenting Network and Neu-Life Community Development. Throughout 2023, 77 families were served through Stronger Families, with 90% saying they made progress toward achieving their personal and family goals.

Leadership

Andi Elliott

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Maudwella Kirkendoll

Chief Operating Officer

William Koch

Chief Financial Officer

Jennifer Patrick

Human Resources Director

Kari Southern

Public Policy Institute
Deputy Director

Matt Raymond

Supportive Housing Programs
Director

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of this Community Impact Report
with additional information
about the organization and
our Impact in 2023, please go
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