

# Womanspace Annual Report

FYE 2023 | 9.1.2022-8.31.2023



Connecting. Empowering. Creating. Transforming. Since 1975.

# ...enduring



Dear Friends of Womanspace,

The privilege of living at the core of the Womanspace community for the greater part of my life has not been wasted on me; my “founder’s heart” is embedded in this physical and spiritual space. Every single day, I thank God for all those who make Womanspace a place of great love, connection, empowerment and creativity. In its essence, the Womanspace community provides a sacred ground for deepening and transformation. It brings me great joy to know that.

Recently, though, I’ve become puzzled and concerned. I notice that many people seem to take the existence of Womanspace for granted, assuming that “someone” is holding this place in existence for all to enjoy. To all the women and men who are helped and empowered and supported and inspired here – to all who express the sense of “coming home” when they enter our grounds – to all who say there is nothing else like this safe and creative place – to all of these and so many more, I pose the question: Will YOU help be a part of breathing life into Womanspace? If you personally care that this unique place continues to exist, will you do your part to help sustain it?

Please really take time to look at the charts on the donor pages. Notice that Womanspace operated at a considerable deficit this past year. If we continue to dip into our small savings to pay our bills, Womanspace won’t easily survive for the next generation – and no one wants to see that happen! Your generous contribution will help to keep our modest budget balanced and ensure that Womanspace will remain vibrant for many years to come.

If you can give generously, thank you! If you can give even a modest amount, thank you! But if you are inclined to just ignore this request, please ask yourself **WHY**. Even a small monthly donation from you can have an immediate positive impact on our work. Will you be part of ensuring Womanspace as a strong community asset into the future? We count on you!

  
Elaine Hirschenberger

Executive Director, Co-Founder of Womanspace

## Mission and Philosophy of Womanspace

Connecting, empowering, creating and transforming our world – one woman at a time. Womanspace offers programs to enhance the body, mind and spirit, with a focus in the creative arts, holistic health, interfaith exploration, and environmental stewardship.

Womanspace believes every person is a spiritual being, having within her the potential for health, self-reliance, creativity, wisdom and responsible caring. By enhancing her potential, she enriches her own life, the life of her family, and the lives of others. Through the strong, healthy, self-development of each individual, the world we live in is made a stronger, healthier, and more peaceful planet.

Womanspace offers programs that stimulate awareness, develop competence, encourage creativity, and generate healthy decision-making. We provide support that offers honesty, compassion, challenge, and spiritual growth. Womanspace works cooperatively with others, striving for collaborative partnerships in our endeavors.

## History

Womanspace was co-founded in 1975 by Dorothy Bock and Elaine Hirschenberger, members of the School Sisters of St. Francis. It is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors in cooperation with the Executive Director. Womanspace has art studios, a gallery, Gallery2Go gift shop, beautiful gardens and a labyrinth on its 7-acre campus, and operates as a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) organization.

## Board of Directors

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During this fiscal year, Womanspace collaborated with:

**Rockford University (RU)** – RU partnered with us on Lunafest -- sponsoring access for students and faculty. Dr. Catherine Forslund of RU emceed the film festival. RU's history students researched Womanspace archives and interviewed our members for their community-based-learning (CBL) project. RU also generously co-sponsored our newest event, Restyle the Runway, which crossed over into our new fiscal year. (More on that event in our next report.)

**Bennie's Cleaners** – Bennie's partnered with us on Witches' Night Out and Restyle the Runway, two visually amazing events, utilizing their well-known arts and dry-cleaning space for social, cleaning and storage purposes.

**Rosecrance** – Their staff regularly brings groups of young people to walk the Womanspace labyrinth as part of their experiential therapy program. We are delighted to provide our beautiful grounds as a safe space for them. Some Rosecrance clients also volunteer to help maintain the weed-free nature of the Womanspace labyrinth!

**OSF Trauma Recovery Center**, – Serving victims of violent crime and their families, the OSF TRC refers clients to Womanspace for healing therapies and programs that support their recovery. Our tranquil and beautiful Holistic Health Room as well as our bright art studios are perfect settings for healing.

**Rockford Area Arts Council** – RAAC utilizes Womanspace as the site for their summer program, SPARK (Significant Public Art Apprenticeships in Rockford). Over the past several years, for two weeks in summer, our campus and studios are fully occupied by young people who are learning from a professional artist and producing mosaic sculptures to enhance the greater Rockford area.

**School Sisters of St. Francis** and the **Mayor's Hunger Campaign** – Both groups (SSSF in Milwaukee and Mayor's Hunger Campaign in Rockford) sponsor major fundraisers aimed at eliminating hunger. In 2023, WS artists in our pottery studio (both teachers and students) created, glazed and donated over 80 unique ceramic bowls to these two events.

**Girl Scouts** – For exciting learning opportunities, seasonal events and dance parties, RRV Girl Scouts have discovered that Womanspace is for girls, too!

**TadMore Tailoring** – Our newest collaborators are the creative staff of TadMore Tailoring – generous kindred spirits who are as passionate about conservation and creative use of materials as we are. More information about our recent (and also upcoming) Restyle the Runway collaborations will be coming soon.

## ...collaborative



## At a Glance



**3,642**

volunteer hours donated  
by 98 volunteers



**2,600**

registrants attending  
a variety of programs



**82**

new members joined



**10,800**

pottery pieces made



**24**

campus rentals



**528**

unique programs presented



...visi

## Dreams and Visions

At Womanspace, we dream our way into our future. Our dreaming is a visionary act and produces results. To hear the story of Womanspace is to know that “living in process” has always been the way for this organization. If it weren’t, we would still be operating from a little two-room apartment above the garages in the building next door to our current location. We dreamed our way out of that space many years ago and stepped into an expansive future. To visit the beautiful 7-acre campus that Womanspace now owns and stewards, to spend time in our gallery, our main building and our bright and welcoming art studios, to enjoy activities on the Anjali pavilion, to walk contemplatively on our labyrinth, to celebrate life passages in our forest sanctuary, to converse with friends in one of our abundant gardens – these are all manifestations of our dreaming-into-action. Together, the Womanspace community has created a magnificent healing oasis, and it is clear that there is a high energy holding us in existence.

We read the signs of the times. We listen to the ideas and dreams of those who walk in our front door. We meet people in random places and know we are destined to collaborate with them. We have conversations that light a fire in us. We think. We talk. We sleep and dream. We wake and act. We invite and cooperate. We propose and initiate. We applaud and encourage. Our work – the work of building community and facilitating transformation – goes on dynamically.





# onary

As we look forward, we are excited by the increased desire we see in individuals to express themselves creatively, to connect more deeply with self and others through mind/body movement and exploration and to establish or regain a sense of familiarity with the spirit of nature. These are ideals Womanspace has promoted for many years and we will continue to manifest them well into the future with many more members of the community.

Our vision and belief tells us that the time is now ripe for greater community support and recognition of the work of Womanspace. If our words and works resonate with you – if you are supportive of our values and visions – we invite you to join us. Are you willing and able to direct your energy and resources to make Womanspace even more of a resource for healing our broken world? Are you able to make a significant donation? Are your personal resources financial or can you volunteer or donate in-kind? Can you connect us with like-minded businesses who would be good sponsors of Womanspace programs and services? Are you in a position to direct a bequest toward Womanspace and leave a legacy for the future? Do you want to know more about our needs, our dreams and our visions? We would like to talk with you. Please just say the word! We thank you – and we welcome you!



## Thank you to our sponsors



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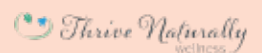
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# ...thankful

This listing recognizes, with gratitude, all whose donations arrived during our last fiscal year - between September 1, 2022 and August 31, 2023.

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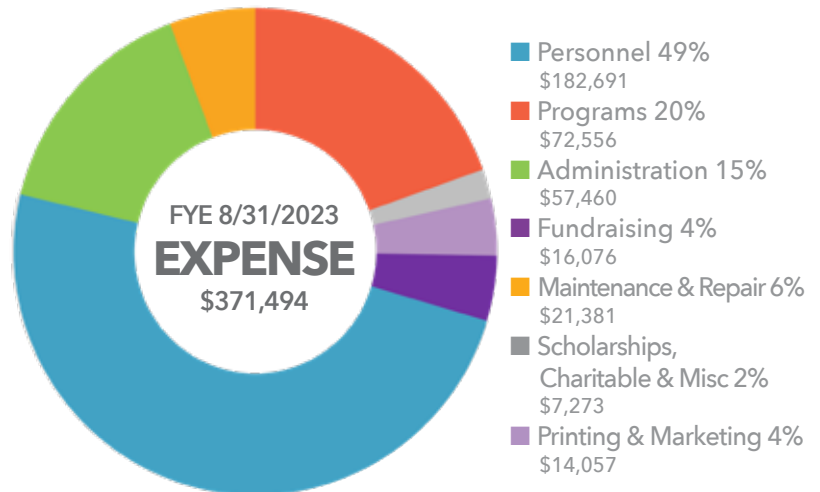
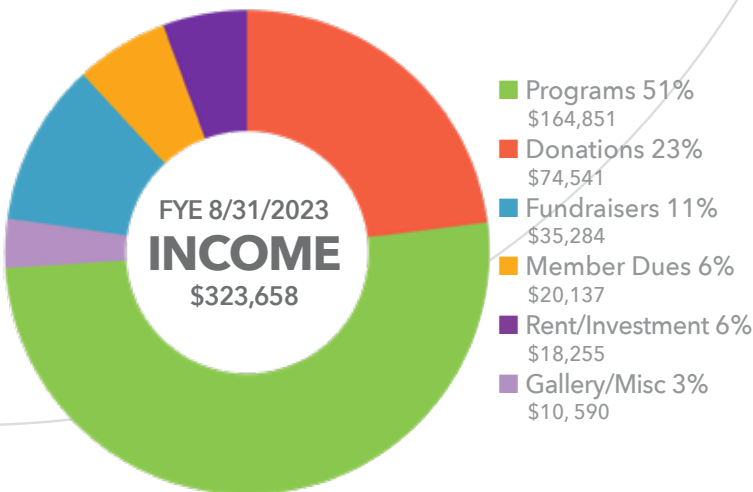
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womanspace

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**Kathryn Wolfram**, a 2023 graduate of Belvidere North High School, was selected as the winner of the 2023 **Womanspace Fine Arts H.S. Scholarship**. Kathryn is now attending DePaul University in pursuit of dual degrees in horn performance and political science/government.

Reflecting on her time as a budding musician in middle and high school, Kathryn writes, "for as long as I can remember, I have been the only girl. The only girl in my brass quintets. The only girl in the orchestra's brass section. In four out of the five big American orchestras, a man holds the principal horn seat. In all five orchestras, at least 75% of the brass musicians are male. The lack of woman-representation has inspired me to push forward in the music industry and pursue music performance and political science/government during the next four years."

Kathryn played principal horn for Rockford Youth Symphony Orchestra and NIU Sinfonia. She taught private lessons to high school horn students and middle school brass and percussionists. Womanspace is proud to support Kathryn in pursuing her vision and we applaud her for using her many talents and gifts to inspire other young musicians.

...supportive



Womanspace is also pleased to report that during the past year, we awarded three **Esther Schenck Scholarships for the Arts** to adult women pursuing further education in various fine arts fields, in accordance with the directives of Esther's generous bequest to Womanspace.