

women
of
cincy

20
20

PUBLIC
HEALTH
SAVES
LIVES.

A Year in Review

A letter from the executive director

A writer, a photographer, and an editor walk into a pandemic...

This isn't your typical "letter from the executive director," nor your typical year at your typical nonprofit. 2020 began with high hopes and expectations as Women of Cincy entered our first year as a 501(c)3 nonprofit. From our origin as an Instagram account in 2017 to evolving into a full-fledged media organization, Women of Cincy's journey to this moment has been wild. In 2020, we quickly realized that not only was the year going to throw curveball after curveball into our plans – but it was also going to be the year we had to fight to survive, take a hard look at ourselves, and rewrite the rules.

At its core, Women of Cincy is a nonprofit media organization dedicated to creating more empathetic communities. We believe citizens have the power to create a more equitable, inclusive city. That journey begins when we start to take control of our narrative while working to understand and respect one another on a deeper level. To kickstart this work, Women of Cincy focuses on cultivating the next generation of civically engaged storytellers – while promoting systems-level change by centering the diverse voices that make up our community. In a nutshell, if you change hearts and minds, you change behaviors. And when you change behaviors, you change systems. If I care deeply about my neighbor, I'll behave like I care deeply about my neighbor... Right?



K. Nemeth



C. Walter



K. Nemeth



H. Colley

It's a simple mission, but achieving it isn't quite as straightforward. This past year, our community faced – and continues to face – so many obstacles: from unemployment to experiencing homelessness, isolation, mental and physical health problems, financial hardship, death, racism, hate, bigotry, and so many more issues. For many, these are not new obstacles – but a global pandemic paired with political unrest has exacerbated already broken systems.

What do you do with a year like 2020? You show up. We've learned that flexibility is key, empathy is a muscle, listening is powerful, and the only way to move forward is together.

From taking a deep dive into the economic mobility of Black women in Cincinnati to creating a one-stop resource guide for community services to covering Black Lives Matter protests and organizing supply drop offs – we've adapted and worked hard to show up for you, Cincinnati.

I am so immensely proud of our team, interviewees, residents, and community members who stepped up this year – and not only held sh*t together, but adapted, expanded, and revamped services to create a better future for our city. I am honored that Women of Cincy could play a part in strengthening our community and I can't wait to share with you the work we've done in the following pages.

Keep reading. Keep listening. Keep loving.

Chelsie Walter
Executive Director

“Citizens have the power to create a more equitable, inclusive city.”

–Chelsie Walter

What is Women of Cincy?

Women of Cincy is a nonprofit media organization dedicated to creating more connected, empathetic, inclusive communities by centering the diverse voices that make up the fabric of our city. We enact this mission through three pillars: storytelling, community building, and mentorship.



S. Wegley



C. Walter



N. Mayes

Tell me more.

Storytelling:

We believe telling stories changes things. Our stories consist of long-form Q&As, Community Mix pieces, and in-depth special series on topics including entrepreneurship, housing insecurity, and more. All of our stories are centered around the Cincinnati region.

Community building:

Empathy is a muscle and we say you've gotta flex it. We amplify local leaders, organizations, and initiatives that strengthen communities, and we connect like-minded people who can leverage one another's strengths to work toward a common goal. We also build community within our team, with more than 100 volunteers and residents who are more like family than acquaintances.

Mentorship:

Young people must be a part of the conversation and the action.

Our residency program is aimed toward college students with interests in journalism, communications, graphic design, and multimedia. We believe in investing in young people by giving them an active role in creating work that exemplifies integrity, quality, and social good.

To create impact, you need focus. Our work is guided by four values:

1. Promoting inclusive communities

Encourage the growth and creation of inclusive communities that value diversity, collaboration, and collective action to create an equitable city.

2. Amplifying social equity

Amplify stories, public policies, and organizations actively committed to creating a more just society. We are dedicated to community-driven storytelling highlighting strength despite inequities as well as insights into creative ways we can enact systems-level change – starting at the local level.

3. Building community muscle

The beauty of a muscle is its ability to flex. We believe in shaping a community that can respond to local needs – together. We're building that community through hyper-local storytelling, our mentorship program, a tightknit Women of Cincy family, and reinforcing engagement and pride in our city through our brand.

4. Expanding pathways for women

It can be hard for a person to envision themselves in a role if they've never seen someone who looks like them in that role. We're here to share the stories of folks who've gone down that road before them – all of the messiness, the trials, and successes – in hopes that it inspires even one person to take that next leap forward, into whatever it is they want to do. We're also working to establish a network of opportunity that will open new doors for our residents and as many Cincinnatians as possible.



A. Lipscomb

What have we accomplished so far?

By the numbers

135,513+

readers

370+

stories

100+

volunteers

244,776+

page views

24

residency graduates

4

in-depth series

In addition...

- * In January 2020, we became a nonprofit
- * We've been featured in CityBeat, Fox 19, Cincy Magazine, WVXU, and more
- * Hosted dozens of community events
- * Presented at Sherrod Brown's Ohio Women's Leadership Summit
- * We even had a beer from Taft's Brewing Co. named after us - cheers!

"There is always room for more empathy."

-Cole Imperi



A. Lipscomb

Where do our interviewees live? All over!



C. Brage

We've interviewed Cincinnatians from...

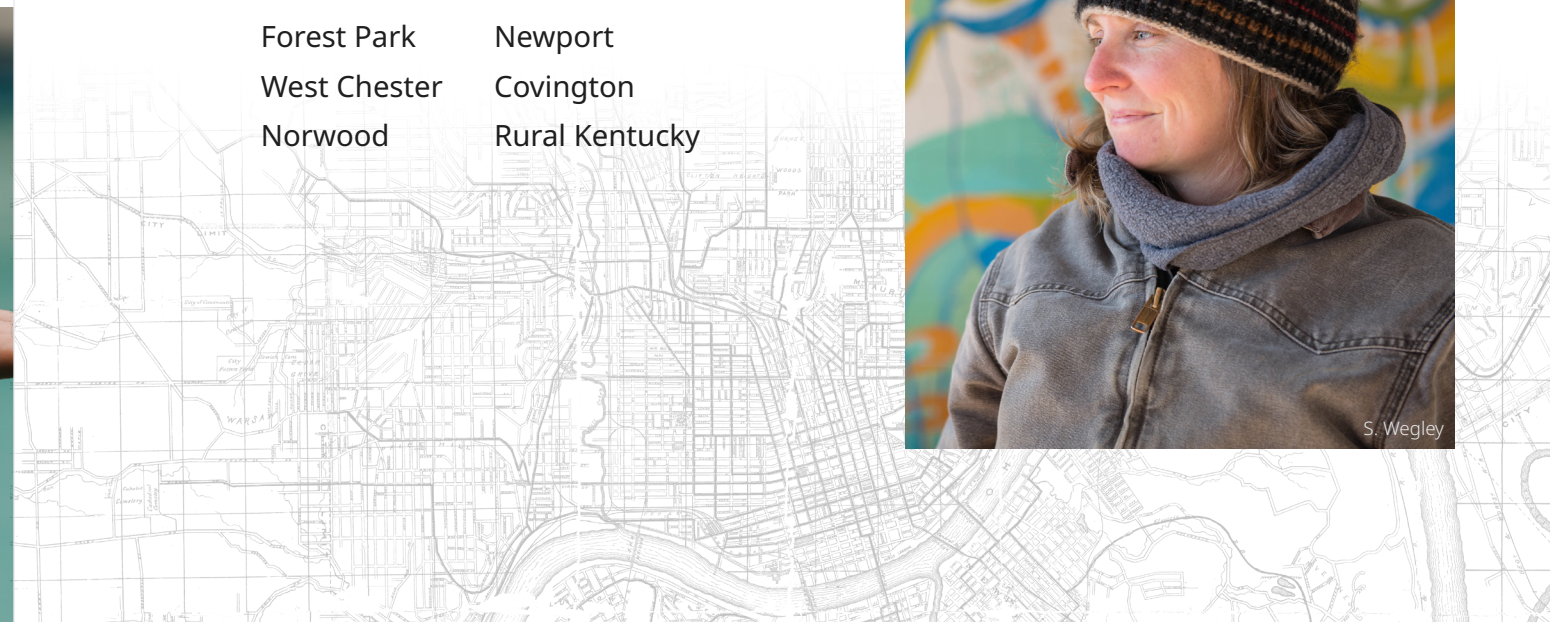
- | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------|
| Westwood | Evanston |
| East Price Hill | North Avondale |
| Lower Price Hill | Paddock Hills |
| Central Business District | Bond Hill |
| West End | Hyde Park |
| Over-the-Rhine | Oakley |
| Walnut Hills | Roselawn |
| Camp Washington | Carthage |
| Clifton | Hartwell |
| Northside | Pleasant Ridge |
| College Hill | Kennedy Heights |
| Avondale | Madisonville |
| East Walnut Hills | Mount Airy |

And outside Cincinnati city limits in places like...

- | | |
|--------------|----------------|
| Mason | Taylor Mill |
| Loveland | Colerain |
| Forest Park | Newport |
| West Chester | Covington |
| Norwood | Rural Kentucky |



S. Wegley



A look back at 2020

What. A. Year.

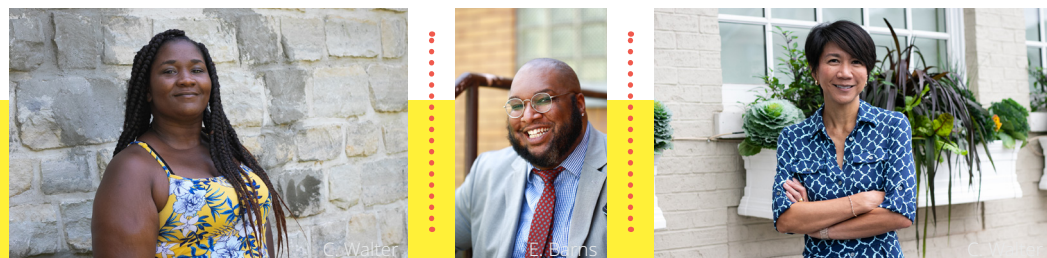
It's safe to say that in 2020 – and the years to follow – there has and will be a deeper need for empathy, community building, mentorship, and diverse voices. The seismic shifts that occurred over the course of the last year changed the way the world works and the way we view ourselves – and highlighted a need for deep reflection as a community, as individuals, and as Americans. For Women of Cincy, we drew on our reserves of flexibility, creativity, relationships, and storytelling experience to adapt to meet the needs of our community.

In January of 2020, we received our 501(c)3 status and hit the ground running. In March, the pandemic hit, lockdowns began, and we found ourselves asking, "What do we do next?" We quickly saw a need for a one-stop resource guide to connect our readers to service providers across the city. After a few long nights and many volunteer hours, our all-encompassing guide launched and has now been viewed more than 3,500 times – connecting our neighbors to vital services to help weather the pandemic.

We then looked inward to assess how to best keep our stories and programs flowing. We revamped our residency program to an all-virtual platform and rolled out a series of pandemic-safe guidelines for writers, photographers, and interviewees.

As we settled into "the new normal," our world was shaken by the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and countless others. We packed up our cameras, masks, goggles, and recorders and headed downtown. We interviewed Black Lives Matter leaders and protesters, and published resources for folks to take action. A few weeks later, we launched "Questioning the American Dream: A Look at the Economic Mobility of Black Women in Cincinnati" and took a deep dive into the systems that govern us. We also launched "Live from the Living Room," an Instagram Live series connecting with interviewees safely at home.

Over the course of 2020, we continued to roll out Feature stories, Community Mix pieces, and wrapped up our series on entrepreneurship – with an all-volunteer staff. At the end of 2020, 42,356 readers read more than 90 pieces of content and responded with \$5,300 in donations.



A quick snapshot of 2020's stories



A. Lipscomb

Features

In-depth Q&A conversations with awesome folks selected from community-driven nominations. We welcome nominees who identify as trans, genderqueer, and nonbinary.

of interviews

22



N. Nemeth



A. Lipscomb

This Is Entrepreneurship

There is no single definition of an entrepreneur. Entrepreneurs sling drinks, run back and forth to the post office, navigate the scary land of taxes, break glass ceilings, write code, and push boulders uphill. It isn't easy, but the reward is indescribably cool. We spent one year following 18 entrepreneurs and their journeys.



C. Walter

of interviews

18



C. Walter



C. Walter



C. Walter

Questioning the American Dream

Women of Cincy and the Women's Fund of the Greater Cincinnati Foundation teamed up to present six stories spotlighting the economic mobility of Black women in Cincinnati. These are the stories of women navigating daily life in the Queen City.

of interviews

6



C. Walter



C. Walter



C. Walter

A look back at 2020



E. Palm

Community Mix

A city's heartbeat is made from the voices of thousands of people, and Cincinnati is full of brilliant voices. Community Mix is a celebration of those voices and their insights, hopes, and stories. Each month, readers find a new collection of pieces produced by a multitude of creators. From chatting about sex, to local gift guides, to immigrant stories, Community Mix covers it all.

of stories

43



E. Palm



K. Nemeth

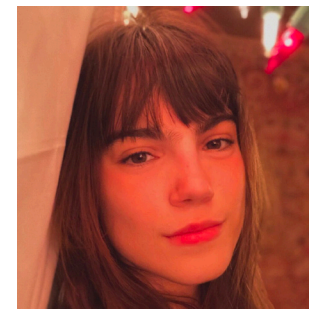


C. Walter

"I know where I come from, and I draw strength from that."

—Erika Nj Allen

A glance at our 2020 residency program



Olive Taylor,
Residency Director

A huge thank you to the young people who keep our wheels turning

Through Women of Cincy's residency program, college students interested in journalism, communications, creative writing, and related fields develop skills that will help them in their future careers. Through editing, fact-checking, writing, communications, field trips, and individual capstone projects, Women of Cincy encourages students to explore and create while providing support and resources to help them succeed.



- 1. Sara Skaggs:** Double major in creative writing and journalism, certificate in copy editing & publishing, University of Cincinnati (January to December)
- 2. Rebecca (Bex) Wolff:** Double major in journalism and creative writing, University of Miami (January to April)
- 3. Shannon Smith:** Double major in journalism and international affairs, University of Cincinnati (May to December)
- 4. Janet Chu:** Master's in professional writing, graduate certificate in data analytics, University of Cincinnati (May to August)
- 5. Natalie Galle:** English major with a focus in rhetoric and professional writing, University of Cincinnati (August to present)
- 6. Emma Segrest:** Double major in creative writing and journalism, University of Cincinnati (August to present)

By the numbers

1,170

hours worked over
3 semesters

70

articles
fact-checked

130

social media
posts produced

34

iced coffees
consumed by Emma

5

fields of study

Creative Writing, Journalism, English,
Professional Writing, International Affairs

Looking ahead to 2021

What's on the horizon for Women of Cincy?

*We've got big plans for 2021 – and it's going to take all of us to get s*** done!*

- Officially hire a part-time executive director and part-time content manager + residency director
- Raise funds for our residency program
- Produce a new in-depth sponsored series
- Reach 65,000 readers
- Increase our social media following to 10,000
- Launch a business directory for local businesses with woman-identifying owners
- Produce feature stories that more mindfully reflect Cincinnati's community, with 75% of interviews highlighting people of color + 54% specifically spotlighting Black women
- Continue to build strong ties with our community and train the next generation of civically minded storytellers

How can you help?

- We need funds! This work takes time and resources – no ifs, ands, or buts about it. We're looking to raise at least \$10,000 for our spring fundraising drive. To give, head to womenofcincy.org/give.
- Know a business that might be interested in participating in our business directory? Send them our way! Email chelsie@womenofcincy.org.
- Tell your friends and family about Women of Cincy and share our stories each week.
- Nominate awesome folks in your community for us to interview. Head to womenofcincy.org/nominate.
- Volunteer your time. Are you a writer, photographer, or editor? Consider joining our team. Learn more at womenofcincy.org/join.



E. Palm



C. Walter



C. Walter

Special Thanks

This work belongs to YOU.

We are created by the community, for the community. Thank you for showing up and supporting this work. A huge thank you to the Women of Cincy volunteer team as well as our sponsors, donors, interviewees, and readers.

When people support each other, incredible things happen.

Signing off, with love... –Women of Cincy

