



women's lunch place

# Annual Report

Fiscal Year 2021

## Fiscal Year 2021

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# Message from WLP

Dear Friends of Women's Lunch Place,

Over the past year, we stood witness as our family, friends, and neighbors struggled to survive the pandemic. For Women's Lunch Place's guests, COVID-19 has revealed, again, how years of hardship have taken their toll on women experiencing homelessness and poverty. These lessons have taught us the importance of a shared vision and investment, and what these things can mean for a woman's long-term health and safety.

In the following pages, you will read about how our community has banded together in response to the crisis. Our volunteers have fostered optimism, our Triage program has created a "fast track" strengthening the link between Direct Care and Advocacy, two donors have funded and extended our successful Housing Stabilization pilot project, and a variety of experts have lent their knowledge and perspective to strengthen our unique service model.

I have never been more proud of the Women's Lunch Place team, who have stood with and by our guests through a daunting reality. Not only were we first responders, but through our talented leadership and staff, WLP has listened deeply to guests as they voiced their urgent needs.

And as we listened, we acted. Each member of our community worked intently to ensure that vulnerable women were nourished, protected, and supported on their journey to greater health, stability, and independence. WLP's investment of time and talent has provided us with critical knowledge and insights that further inform our decisions, resulting in a powerful impact on the women we serve.

It is my pleasure to offer WLP's 2021 Annual Report to our investors, friends, and neighbors.

With gratitude,



**Kay Calvert**  
Chair, Board of Directors

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# FY 2021 Achievements

## Women's Lunch Place

**1,800+**

women served annually

## Healthy Meals

**100,201**

meals served with fresh fruit, vegetables, and lean protein

**\$80,702**

value of in-kind food donations received

**1,200**

meals prepared and delivered weekly to communities in response to COVID

## Direct Care

**8,000+**

protective items distributed to guests

**\$218,674**

worth of in-kind toiletries, clothing, and other donations received

*Your investment has been wise  
– the impact is tangible.*

## Advocacy

**4,616**

guest visits to receive help on issues such as fleeing domestic violence, immigration status, housing, and increasing income

**622**

individual guests served

**57**

guests assisted from homeless to housed

**\$176,881**

directed to help 197 guests secure or maintain housing or prevent eviction

## Volunteers

**4,556**

volunteer hours during COVID

**240+**

trips to deliver meals to guests and community partners

# Program Overview

Since our inception in 1982, Women's Lunch Place has seen many changes take place, from the women who walk through our doors to the services we are able to provide them.

Growing from our humble beginnings forty years ago, we have not only seen an increase in the number of women experiencing hunger, homelessness, and poverty but have also noticed a diversification of the needs of our guest community. Thanks to the generosity of our dedicated donors, we have been fortunate to raise the funds necessary to invest in our programs and grow our team of talented staff. We have seen the implementation of Direct Care programs geared to meet the needs of our guests, an expansion of our Healthy Meals program to ensure we are offering nourishment to a growing number of food-insecure women, and a broadening of our Advocacy services to include outreach initiatives and housing stabilization services.

Despite WLP's growth and diversification, we have remained consistent on our founding promise: meeting each guest where they are while treating them with dignity and respect. Often times, the guests that come to WLP have fallen through the cracks of social welfare and healthcare systems. Our dedication to assisting women on a case-by-case basis has allowed us to build trusting relationships with guests and tailor our services to best address their unique situations.

Your support has sustained a life-saving environment for women in need. In addition to more visible economic strain and housing insecurity, the isolation caused by the enduring pandemic has led to an overall deterioration of the wellbeing of our guests. Women's Lunch Place has been a critical source of community, supporting mental health by providing a place of belonging, understanding, and acceptance for all. Despite the uncertainties ahead, WLP will remain committed to preserving the safe space so many women depend on.



## Healthy Meals

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We believe all people should have access to healthy food. That's why WLP provides two nutrient-dense meals to our guests each day. Packed with lean protein, fresh produce, and whole grains, each meal is prepared from scratch in our on-site kitchen by staff and volunteers and is served with a smile, restaurant-style. As hunger and food insecurity rates continue to increase in our community, WLP recognizes the critical role the kitchen plays in combatting hunger – this year, 88% of our guests reported that they rely on WLP's meals for their nutrition. Our Healthy Meals program has recently extended its reach, preparing and delivering over 1,200 additional meals each week to community partners in need.



## Direct Care

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For many of our guests, meeting basic needs is often complicated by sleeping rough, navigating the shelter system, or living on a fixed income. WLP's skilled Direct Care team is ready to assist women with short and long-term issues. Access to self-care and feminine hygiene products, PPE, showers, and laundry services is often the first step in restoring and maintaining dignity for those suffering housing insecurity. Once the basic necessities are covered, the Direct Care team addresses the next level of need – transportation, communication, and connection to other services. Using a triage method of assessment, Direct Care works in tandem with our Advocates to provide guests with longer-term solutions to housing, employment, healthcare, and more. Due to the stressful realities our guests face, Direct Care also serves the critical role of cultivating connections with guests, restoring dignity and respect, and fostering trust. Many women who come to WLP initially do so for a meal or basic service – our Direct Care team meets them with a smile, welcomes them in, and walks alongside them through their journey towards greater stability.



## Wellness

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Over the past year, WLP has recognized the need for a Wellness program for our guests. Although we have historically focused on the importance of nourishing meals, restorative programming, and community-building, we have become more intentional about wellness. We work with our on-site healthcare partner, Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program, to provide opportunities for women to make their health and wellbeing a priority by offering breast cancer screenings, COVID-19 testing and vaccination, flu shots, and more. Delivering these services in a safe, dignified setting increases participation and allows women to feel empowered about their health.

## Advocacy

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Our Advocacy program enables women to overcome the barriers to stable housing caused by poverty, homelessness, and systemic inequality. Advocates connect guests to a range of services, like workforce development, legal aid, and benefits, as well as to critical medical care, mental health resources, and substance-use disorder treatment. Guests often work with Advocates on housing – transitioning out of homelessness, securing housing, preventing eviction, maintaining utilities, and more. Our Outreach Advocacy program, which proved essential during the early months of the pandemic, has evolved into a permanent stabilization tool to ensure guests are supported and remain successfully housed. Last year, our team helped 217 women stabilize their housing situations, preventing eviction and a devastating return to homelessness.



## Triage at WLP:

# Helping as Many Women as Possible



We meet people where they are at.  
We do not have a formal intake process.  
We are a low threshold shelter.

These are foundational statements expressing the intentionality of creating access to WLP's services for vulnerable, traumatized women. But what happens when this intake process is not fully aligned with its intent? Passively "meeting women where they are" may miss women with addressable needs who do not or cannot express them.


Imagine that you've lost your identification card, and you're homeless. Until you get a new ID, you cannot apply for housing, gain employment, open a bank account, or sign up for food stamps and social security benefits, among other vital tasks. The question "What to do next?" is extremely daunting, especially if your basic needs of food, warmth, shelter, and hygiene are not met. Obtaining an ID is just one among a

litany of common barriers that our guests face. Barriers can lead to lengthy delays, threats to health and safety, frustration, alienation, and a loss of hope.

Most people are familiar with the practice of triage in a medical setting – conducting a preliminary assessment of patients to determine the urgency of need for treatment and particular treatment required. Essentially, it establishes priorities for care. In business, triage is a decision-making framework used to maximize outcomes with available resources.

At WLP, we first introduced the concept of triage as part of our work to refine an integrated, relational service model that provided outreach to our most vulnerable





guests who were not accessing services. Triage was to be used to eliminate these barriers, educate guests, and streamline the pathway from Direct Care (short-term needs) to Advocacy (long-term needs). The program looked to meet disenfranchised guests and provide immediate support to encourage hopefulness by experiencing small, early successes.

With the onset of the pandemic and the resulting changes in our service model, triage on the street became a critical mechanism to manage service delivery—effectively replacing all previous forms of outreach. As demand for WLP’s help grew, triage was a key tool in matching guests to Direct Care and Advocacy staff with relevant specialized knowledge.

Requests for Advocacy services, particularly housing search and stabilization, have increased dramatically this past year. The need for a rapid, prioritized workflow to identify critical issues and stratify others became essential to manage caseload capacity. Our team implemented a central triage desk in the community dining room, overseen by a Care Navigator, to ensure Advocacy services were more accessible and basic care needs were quickly met. Care coordination aligns Advocacy, Direct Care, and Volunteer services and procedures to address the most urgent issues first. Once urgent issues are identified, other workflows are employed to address more routine needs.

Outreach in the community setting continues to identify guests in need and ensure connection to Advocacy services. Many guests will seek our services and approach a Direct Care staff member or visit the triage desk. They will be asked a few basic questions (e.g., “What can we help you with?” “Have you already been

matched with an Advocate?”). Our process is designed to learn about and address the guest’s needs as quickly and efficiently as possible. For example, if a guest has a lower barrier need such as help getting an MBTA card, they can be assisted right away by the Care Navigator at the triage desk. There are two clear benefits—the guest skips the wait for an Advocacy meeting and is helped immediately, which builds trust and optimism for future problem solving, and the WLP Advocate keeps a valuable opening on their schedule.

If a guest’s issue is more complex, the WLP team member may usher the guest into a nearby room with two on-call Advocates. Many times, our staff will facilitate a face-to-face introduction between a guest and her new Advocate. This thoughtful, personal connection generates trust with the possibility of furthering a guest’s momentum.

More extensive work continues in individual meetings with Advocates, who are skilled at navigating the bureaucracies that obscure critical benefits and solutions for our guests. To find available housing, for example, requires comprehensive identification, income verification, housing histories, housing search, complicated applications, background searches, interviews, and negotiations with property owners, all of which can be overwhelming for anyone, particularly for our most vulnerable guests. Advocates skillfully weave through these roadblocks, both with and on behalf of their clients, pushing the process forward and cementing a sense of hope and possibility in doing so.

Through it all, our approach is relational, not transactional. In a world full of relentlessly complicated obstacles to their safety and stability, our guests can find a clear, hopeful path forward at Women’s Lunch Place.

# Innovative Funders Directly Impacting the Lives of WLP Guests

Mariann Youniss currently serves on the Board of Directors at Women's Lunch Place. She and her husband Andy are longtime supporters of WLP who are dedicated to improving the lives of at-risk women and children in the Greater Boston area. In the past year, WLP received significant funding from Mariann and Andy which enabled us to launch a successful pilot: WLP Housing Stabilization.

Before we get into WLP Housing Stabilization, can you talk a bit about your philanthropic journey? Have the two of you developed any guiding principles so far?



Mariann

Well, some of our big focus areas are children and women. I've been involved with Women's Lunch Place for years—volunteering and setting up company groups to join in as well. I've always thought the organization was amazing.



Andy

What I would add to that is that we're focused on Boston. And it's not just philanthropy, it's giving our time as well. It's food, it's housing, it's mentorship, it's health. Those are some of the guiding principles we've been focused on over the past decade or so.

What is the moment when you first became involved with Women's Lunch Place?



Mariann

I can distinctly remember it. I was invited to a house party, and we were told to bring socks for Women's Lunch Place. A former Executive Director came to talk to us about WLP and the work seemed so meaningful. And now, the work you do is so much more expansive than back then... this had to be at least 10 or 12 years ago.



Andy

I wasn't at that party, but I did a ride around one day with Lovin' Spoonfuls and we delivered food to WLP. We got a chance to meet the chef and I got really interested in the story—the mission, the people, on that visit—and started learning about all the amazing services that Women's Lunch Place provides. From that moment on, I said, "I want to be involved."



Does either of you have a personal connection to the issues surrounding homelessness?



Mariann

There's no direct connection, but I think that the ability to raise a family in a home that's ours has meant so much to us. So, it touches a nerve.



Andy

That's right. Also, we moved into Boston from the suburbs four years ago, and one of the things we noticed right away was the number of homeless people. It struck us that it's kind of crazy—here we are in Boston, a very affluent city—and there are people who don't have food and don't have housing. It just doesn't make sense.

*Housing is an absolute necessity before a woman can achieve economic and physical wellbeing. Research compiled by the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) shows us that the key factor for successful long-term housing is stabilization, which hinges on the quality and consistency of support and intervention provided during the initial months of a woman's housing placement.*



Was there something unique about WLP's service delivery that drew you to our organization?



Mariann

Flexibility. You are always learning from every step of the journey. I just connected WLP to Boston Medical Center and sat in on that first meeting, and it was incredible. Both organizations are serving a similar part of the population, but they have different knowledge bases, and to see how vibrant the energy was... it was exciting!



Andy

For the past 30 years I've been running a software company, and some of the things that make you successful in that field are collaboration and innovation. Women's Lunch Place isn't afraid to try something new and learn from it, and I think we can focus even more on that mindset going forward.

*In a brief titled "The Importance of Housing Affordability and Stability for Preventing and Ending Homelessness," USICH writes that "a body of evidence indicates that when people—both adults and children alike—experience housing instability or homelessness, their prospects for future educational attainment, employment growth, health stability, and family preservation are significantly reduced." While the value of stabilization services is clear, Women's Lunch Place identified a lack of available resources to address this issue for our newly housed guests.*

What motivated you to increase your giving and start WLP Housing Stabilization?



Andy

It was after the George Floyd killing. We were reckoning with what we've been doing, you know, "is it working?" And we decided to focus on a more specific population. I wanted to get into UBI (Universal Basic Income) and WLP came to us and said that stabilization would be an even better use of those funds.

Interesting. It seems like WLP Housing Stabilization is taking principles of UBI and wealth redistribution, while also combining them with WLP's style of individualized care.



Mariann

Yes, exactly! And every one-on-one interaction at Women's Lunch Place is like that, not just in this program, but even in the dining room. It's a unique relationship with that person because that person is unique. It's not a cookie-cutter approach.



Andy

And at the same time, there's structure there. It's focused and helpful and follows a pattern that your leaders have seen in terms of good outcomes. WLP is very thoughtful about caring about the individual needs of guests within a larger framework.

*The pilot project was born, with the primary goals of connecting women with the resources and supports available in their new communities and maintaining their relationship with Women's Lunch Place through the transition. Picture a guest moving into a barren home, lonely, isolated, and detached from her new neighborhood. This is what stabilization prevents.*

So, how does it feel to see WLP Housing Stabilization grow from a pilot project into an established and growing part of WLP's services over the past year?



Andy

It's great and just makes me want to accelerate it and have even more of an impact.



Mariann

Likewise. We were excited when WLP was going to start with a cohort of five, and to think that they've stabilized 51 guests is incredible. But like Andy said, now it's about "how do we do more?"



The new program allows WLP Advocates to conduct a comprehensive assessment of need for every newly housed guest, focusing on the key areas of personal safety, mental health, substance use, housing, income, engagement, citizenship, and criminal involvement. Women are assigned a dynamic self-sufficiency score, and as the stability of the guest changes over time, their score increases or decreases accordingly. This allows Advocates to distribute their time according to their clients' current needs.

Advocates conduct a series of at-home visits, where they provide continued support ranging from aid with navigating service systems and peer groups to gaining access to mental health, medical, and substance use disorder resources and entitlement benefits. Practical, hands-on help with daily living skills—including financial training—is also provided, along with move-in items like appliances and furniture.

On that note, how do you measure the impact of the investment that you're making?



Andy

The ultimate measure of success is that you walk around Boston and there aren't women sleeping in front of churches and in tents. We are challenging WLP to come back with real results, like how many women are entering the program, dropping out, and graduating. We're spending time to look at what did and didn't work and improving from there.

Initial results from the program were exceptional and have made it clear that front-end investment results in a significant return demonstrated in each guest's continued tenancy in her new home.

51

guests participated in the pilot program

42

guests received financial assistance

23

guests took steps to increase income

With further investment from the Youniss' and other, similarly aligned philanthropic individuals and organizations, WLP is in the process of expanding and adopting WLP Housing Stabilization full-time, with the goal of assisting a minimum of 75 newly housed women over the next three years.

## Guest Feature

# Patience through a Complicated Stabilization Process

Molly is a long-term guest of Women's Lunch Place, who we first began working with when she was discharged from the hospital to our care. She had been experiencing severe physical and emotional abuse from her intimate partner, and she still struggles with mental and physical disabilities that stem from this violence.

We first welcomed Molly into our non-judgmental environment, and as with all our new guests, we took the time to understand who she was and what her needs were. WLP Advocates began their relationship with Molly by intentionally focusing on her safety—securing a restraining order and referring her to an Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) support group. The Advocates guided her through basic tasks, like settling an outstanding phone bill, getting a primary care physician, and changing the locks on her apartment.

Within a year, WLP supported Molly through a successful housing search—her Section 8 voucher quickened the process—and began what was then an informal stabilization procedure. An Advocate sourced furniture, linens, and food for the new apartment, which Molly would be sharing with three of her friends.

Her current Advocate, Imani Jones, describes Molly as “thoughtful and

generous,” but notes that she has had a history of being manipulated by people close to her. For example, shortly after moving into her new apartment, Molly's roommates began to demand regular payments and would physically assault her when she resisted. There were other disruptions, and her Section 8 housing voucher was in jeopardy as a result. Eventually, through a months-long negotiation with her landlord and Metro Housing Boston, WLP was able to assist Molly, and her roommates were removed from the lease.

Violence, loneliness, isolation, and neglect have been lifelong challenges for Molly, and she makes decisions that are unsafe as a result. We recognize that she is at high risk for repeat victimization. For example, at one point she began a relationship with a man who initially provided protection from her former abuser. Eventually, Molly's new partner began to steal and spend her food stamps, leaving her with nothing at the end of the month.

Through a thoughtful approach, WLP has been able to provide a variety of creative solutions to address Molly's unique risk factors. Her Advocate, Imani, counsels her on managing personal relationships, advising her to direct friends in need to organizations like WLP. Currently, her barriers



continue to keep gainful employment out of Molly's reach, and her sole source of income is her monthly Social Security Disability Insurance. To support Molly's independence, Imani taught her how to create a budget, order groceries online, and, to fulfill a lifelong goal for Molly, access a computer to begin writing her life story. To address her physical limitations and loneliness, Imani guided Molly through successful applications for a personal care assistant and emotional support pet.

Molly now enjoys her clean, organized home, and the friendly cat that keeps her company. She felt empowered to leave her boyfriend, and since then, according to Imani, she has become happier and more stable, and still comes to WLP for our welcoming community, safety, and the opportunity to meet new friends. Molly has gone from having no support systems to

a variety of options within and outside of WLP. With the guidance and training she has received, she knows that she is now able to navigate complex problems, and this has decreased her chances of being victimized. Her recovery and emotional healing are statements of strength and a reclaimed identity. "She has managed to keep her sense of generosity while learning to say no," says Imani.

Throughout her journey, our team has empowered Molly, rather than completing tasks for her. We have focused on building a trusting relationship and collecting small successes to boost her confidence, hope, and optimism for the future. The goal of this work has been to prevent repeat victimization and reduce vulnerability—and with each obstacle she has overcome, Molly has taken one step closer to greater independence.

A decorative border of yellow flowers with white centers surrounds the text.

**We Can't Do It Alone:**  
*WLP Partners with Experts  
across a Variety of Fields for New  
Ideas, Perspectives, and Guidance*

As Women's Lunch Place continues to be recognized as a thought leader in the homeless sector, we have built relationships with distinguished experts in housing, healthcare, workforce development, and other fields. We work with these specialists to deepen our programming, develop and refine our service model, and amplify the voices of our guests while advocating for broader public policy changes.

At a board retreat in early spring, WLP spoke with City of Boston leaders Sheila Dillon and Laila Bernstein, who serve as Chief of Housing and Deputy Director of the Supportive Housing Division, respectively. Together, we reviewed the City's action plan to fight homelessness, including our collective COVID response, the pipeline of Permanent Supportive Housing, and rental assistance distribution.

In response to what we have witnessed over the past year of the pandemic, one of WLP's primary concerns is addressing the declining mental health of the women we serve. Isolation, loneliness, substance use disorders, and a plethora of other factors are all contributing to an ongoing crisis within our community.



## MENTAL HEALTH AND HEALING

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Among the experts that WLP is consulting with is board member Dr. Derri Shtasel, who serves as the Chair and Director of the Massachusetts General Hospital Division of Public and Community Psychiatry and as an Associate Professor at Harvard Medical School.

“Women’s Lunch Place has a longstanding commitment to our guests’ mental health needs as part of its fundamental mission and through partnering with Boston Health Care

for the Homeless Program for on-site clinical services,” said Dr. Shtasel.

“In addition, we are proud of our staff’s sophistication in understanding the need to simultaneously meet people where they are, while at the same time gently and respectfully promoting individual relationships. This slow process of building trust promotes healing and eventually, when appropriate, makes referrals to mental health services possible.”

## PREPARING GUESTS FOR THE WORKFORCE

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WLP has also increased our focus on workforce development. As the female-dominated hospitality and foodservice industries have been devastated by the pandemic, many of our guests are looking at new career opportunities for the first time and scheduling appointments at WLP for guidance.

To aid in these efforts, we hired Rebekah Lashman, an innovative consultant and recognized thought leader in workforce development. Before beginning her consulting practice, Lashman was the Senior Vice President of Commonwealth Corporation, leading their regional and sector strategies team. Additionally, she formerly served as the Manager of Workforce Partnerships for the Boston Private Industry Council. From January through March 2021, Rebekah worked with WLP staff to prioritize the needs of our guests and determine the most effective role for our organization to serve. Her approach was both fact-first and compassionate, a combination that continues to shape WLP’s growth.

“You shouldn’t design a program if you don’t have good data around the problem you’re trying to solve,” said Rebekah. “I look for clients that have a clear sense of the issue they want to work on, and Women’s Lunch Place has that. You are experts in your clients and their issues, and you are dedicated

to building more robust systems to serve them.”

There are already a variety of intensive workforce development programs throughout Greater Boston which can act as effective pathways toward economic empowerment. However, we have found that an increasing subset of our guests are pre-contemplative (i.e., not ready for these programs), as their trauma and homeless histories have eroded their coping mechanisms and life skills.

Following Rebekah’s guidance, the design of WLP’s Job Readiness program is underway and seeks to address these issues. Through our programming, women will be able to develop the skills and emotional regulation needed to successfully enter employment or into existing workforce development programs. This will be particularly helpful for homeless women who lack a high school diploma and face multiple barriers such as limited English, learning disabilities, criminal records, histories of trauma, and more.

WLP will combine individualized instruction with intensive case management to address these barriers and help women further their education, complete our prerequisites program, and ultimately engage in successful job searches with the long-term goal of finding employment and greater economic stability.

## DEVELOPING WLP STAFF

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Beyond our guest population, WLP's emphasis on workforce development has also extended to our staff, who have now taken part in three Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) workshops with board member Christie Lindor, Founder and CEO of Tessi Consulting.

As a former technologist turned workplace culture and inclusion strategist, Lindor first encountered WLP through a corporate volunteering event. She recalls being impressed by the level of organization and collaboration in our kitchen and stepping up her volunteer efforts shortly thereafter.

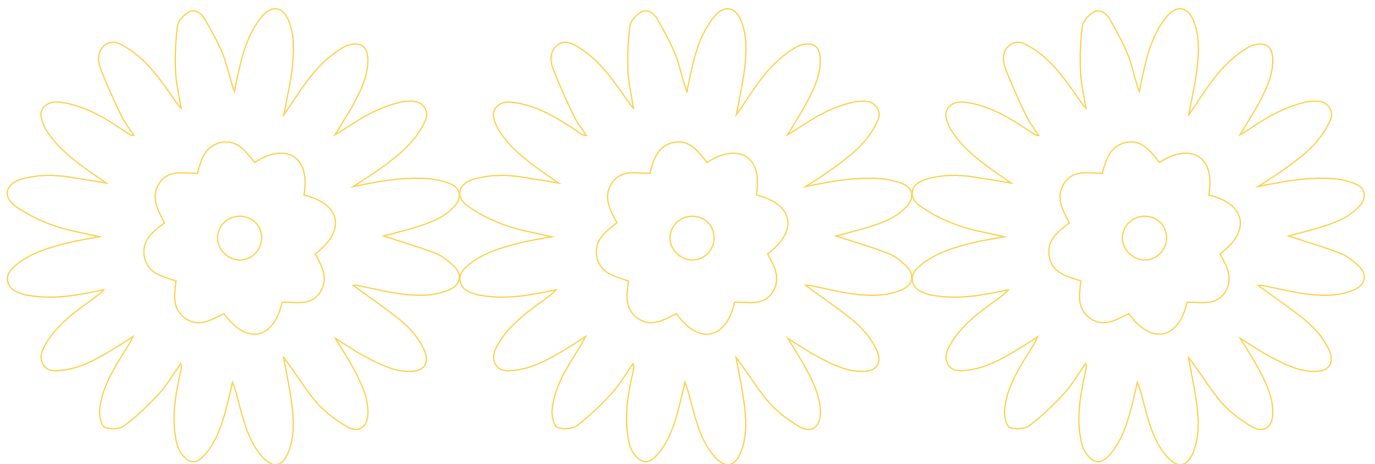
"I'm in a state of constantly educating and explaining to leaders that DEI is not just a project or an initiative," said Lindor. "It is a core value, and it is about how you think, the habits you create, and the systems you have in place. I can measure early success when I see executives start to ask questions differently and become allies by holding themselves as well as their peers accountable."

In this spirit, WLP leadership undertook the annual budget process through the lens of DEI. The National Low Income Housing Coalition report "Out of Reach 2020," which detailed housing wage data by state, disclosed that an affordable housing wage in Massachusetts is \$28.81/hour for a one-bedroom apartment and \$35.52/hour for a two-bedroom.

In response, we initiated a multi-year step up for entry-level wages. WLP also recognizes the importance of economic security in retirement, especially for women. Our internal analysis of the 403b retirement plan revealed a disparity in participation between management and frontline staff. Therefore, we transitioned from a 5% match for staff contributing to the 403b plan to a 5% contribution for all employees regardless of personal participation.

WLP is determined to foster an environment that continuously embraces diversity and supports our employees equitably as we provide professional development and opportunities for advancement. A new tuition reimbursement benefit supports this goal via degree programs and standalone courses to build the skills required for an employee's success.

The Lindor-led DEI workshops were not isolated exercises. WLP's long-standing commitment to welcoming a diverse guest population is mirrored in our success in the recruitment and retention of a skilled and increasingly diverse staff. Our high retention and low vacancy rates serve as a strong indicator that employees appreciate WLP's intentional focus on building a workforce that centers around a sense of belonging, safety, and a commitment to professional growth for all employees.



# Guest Quotes

Thank you for being so kind and welcoming to others. It means so much, especially when someone is going through such a rough time.



I constantly bring people here because the staff is great.



The staff is amazing and extremely helpful. They go above and beyond to welcome you and help you to get the services you are in need of.



I enjoy coming to WLP because of the peaceful environment. All of the staff treats me w/respect.



You have been the most beautiful experience I've ever had since COVID-19 hit in 2020. Thank you.



I managed to survive here in the US because of Women's Lunch Place and it helps me with everything I need. Thank you so much Women's Lunch Place.



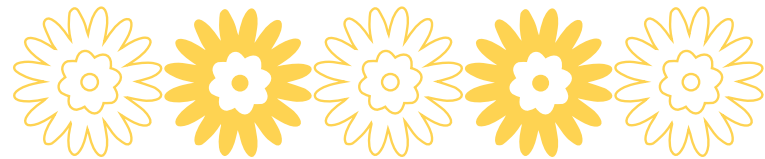
# Volunteers Create Optimism and Decrease Isolation for Guests at WLP

“Women’s Lunch Place offers compassion. There’s a welcoming glow, and you’re always treated with dignity and respect and concern.”

These words are from an elderly guest, Kiki, who has been making daily visits to our shelter and advocacy center for healthy meals and protection from the cold. Outside of WLP, women experiencing poverty and homelessness are often made to feel invisible and unworthy—but as we respond to necessities like hunger, human connection, showers, and laundry, guests begin to feel as though their needs can and will be met. This dynamic starts when women like Kiki first walk through the doors of our community and are greeted by a team of friendly, skilled staff and volunteers.

“If they want to chat, we’re the first ones that they see, and we ask them about their day,” said Pouran, who has been volunteering in the Welcome Center for over five years. “Many of them are vulnerable, and they feel defeated sometimes. I try to be as kind and loving as I can because I want all our guests to feel like they’re being cared for.”

When volunteers like Pouran connect with our guests, WLP begins to address the devastating impact of social isolation and the burden it causes for the women we



serve. Trust-building moments between volunteers and guests are critical in advancing women to our Advocacy program, where they can work on long-term issues like housing, economic empowerment, and mental health.

Over the past decade, researchers have been exploring the connections between mental health, optimism, and social support among vulnerable people. From one University of Arkansas study, we can see that “despite the overwhelming conditions of homelessness, persons with higher levels of optimism and social support report lower depression and anxiety symptoms.” In response to the available research, Women’s Lunch Place has intentionally developed a service model that addresses our guests’ need for hope and community connections.

We understand that community is the solution to isolation, and our volunteers are—and have always been—a key element of the fabric of our community. Whether they are serving scratch-made food, working with a guest on her resume, or simply answering a phone call, volunteers deepen our ability



to create a caring environment that seeks solutions and decreases a woman's sense of isolation. This approach facilitates community integration and continuity of care by ensuring that a person has enduring ties to their community and support systems during times of need.

WLP's analysis shows the positive effects that volunteer efforts have been making on our guests' lives. In our 2021 guest survey, 80% of women reported that they get support from people they trust at WLP, 93% reported that WLP has made a positive difference in their life, and 94% reported that they felt welcomed by staff and volunteers.

"There are many guests who I know by name and who know me by name," said Pouran, when asked if she has been able to create lasting connections with guests. "I have rich conversations with them. Their stories can be sad, but I'm happy that I am there to listen."

To Pouran and the hundreds of other volunteers who lend their time and energy to our community each year, thank you for being there to listen. Our unique, individually tailored, life-changing services would not be possible without you.

”

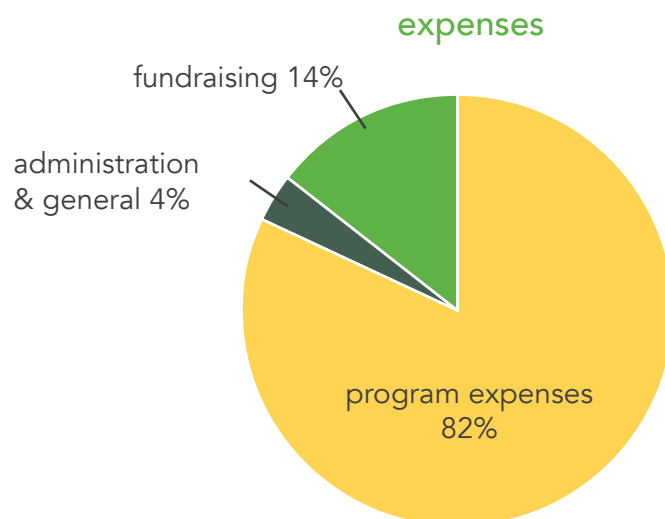
**I would not be  
alive without this  
place and all the  
love you give me.**

**- WLP Guest**

# Financials

## consolidated statement of activities

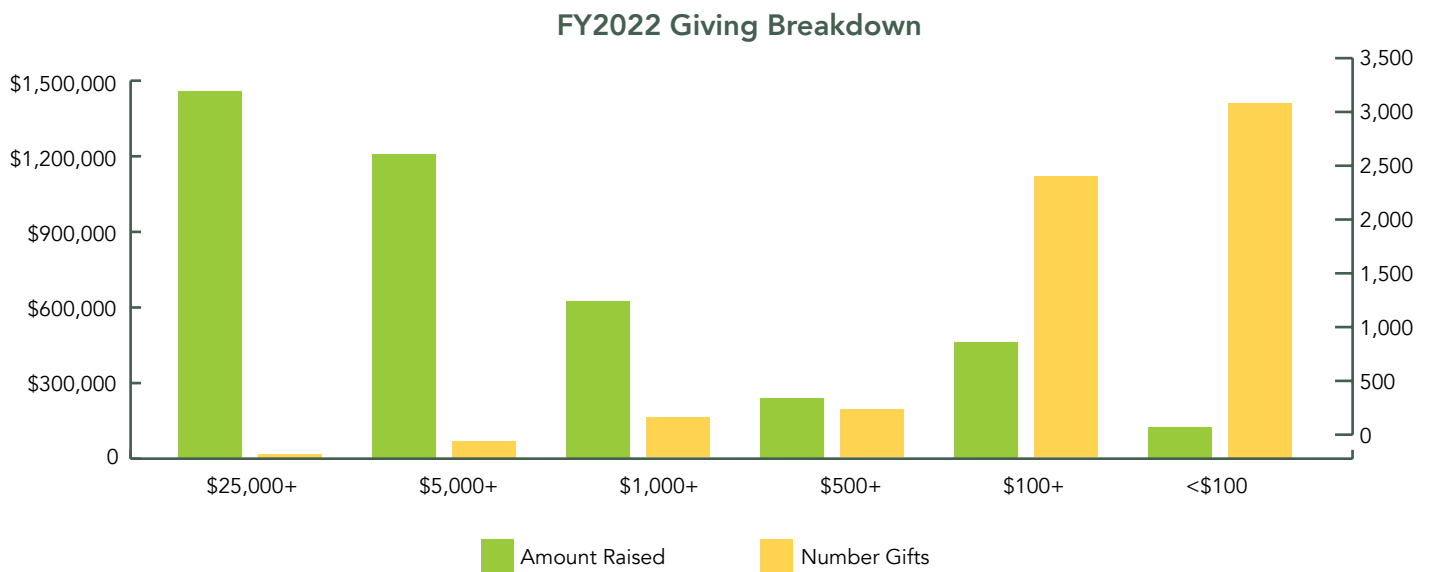
revenue and support	FY 2021
Annual Signature Events	\$936,870
Contributions and Grants	\$2,895,804
Other Income	\$402,258
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>\$4,234,932</b>
<i>plus</i>	
In-Kind Donations	\$613,091
<b>TOTAL REVENUE AND SUPPORT</b>	<b>\$4,848,023</b>
<b>expenses</b>	
Program Services	\$3,266,213
Administration and General	\$139,053
Fundraising	\$569,335
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$3,974,601</b>
<b>increase (decrease) in net assets</b>	<b>\$873,422</b>
<b>net assets beginning of the year</b>	<b>\$4,875,367</b>
<b>net assets end of the year</b>	<b>\$5,748,789</b>



# Fundraising

2021 was, for most of the country, the most challenging year in recent history. Thanks to the unwavering support from our donors, Women’s Lunch Place received a total of \$4,234,932 which allowed us to expand our programming. The Healthy Meals program sent an additional 1,200 meals to community partners each week. Direct Care was able to restore dignity and foster wellness through showers, laundry, medical screenings, and community. Our Advocates were able to expand our program into new neighborhoods to secure and stabilize housing for more women, prevent eviction, and keep our community vibrant and supportive.

We could not do our work without the support of our generous supporters. We rely on donations from individuals, foundations, corporations, and program partners in order to fulfill our mission.



**Volunteering** – Throughout the year, we hosted regular online orientations for new volunteers. WLP relies on members of the community to supplement the incredible amount of work done at the shelter each year. In 2021, volunteers contributed 4,556 hours of labor and made over 240 trips to deliver meals across the city.

**Community groups** from the Boston area held golf tournaments, dinner parties, auctions, and peer-to-peer fundraising campaigns to raise awareness and much-needed funding for our work.

**In-kind** – thousands of necessary items that keep our guests’ dignity and stability intact are donated each year. \$299,376 worth of food, clothing, services, and other supplies were donated in FY21.



**Corporate Partners** enjoy unique collaborations with Women's Lunch Place. Companies that are looking to make a difference in their community through volunteerism, financial support, and shared resources find a full partnership at WLP.

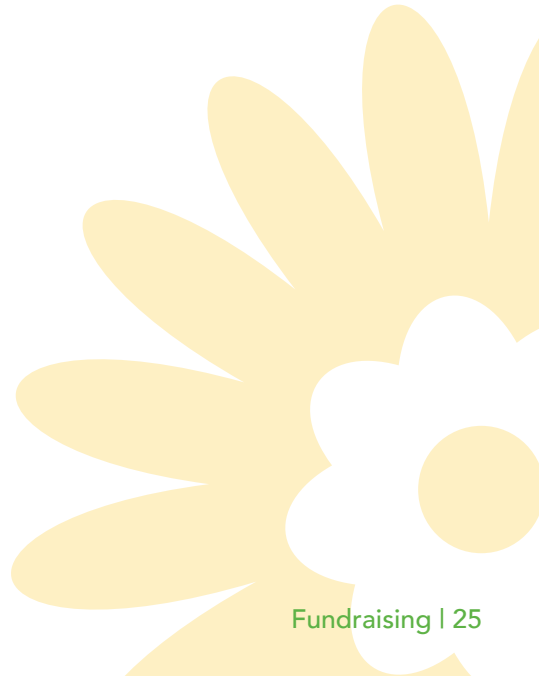
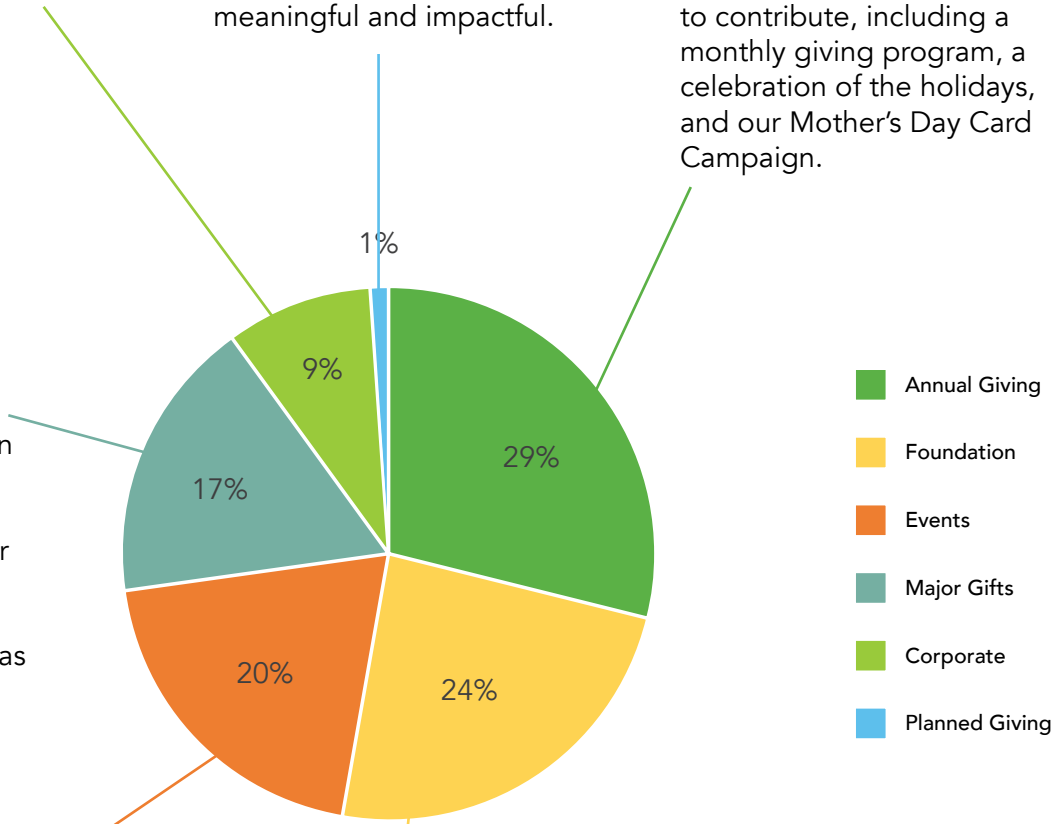
**Planned giving** options are a creative way that many of our donors make a difference in the lives of our guests. From distributions from an IRA to intended bequests and named beneficiaries, the options are meaningful and impactful.

**Annual Fund** programs give individuals and companies the opportunity to provide essential funding through tax-deductible donations to support the daily work at the shelter. We provide several ways to contribute, including a monthly giving program, a celebration of the holidays, and our Mother's Day Card Campaign.

**Major gifts** make an incredible impact on our ability to provide new, innovative pilot programs to serve our guests. Donors who contribute \$5,000 or more are considered as major donors.

**Events** are an essential part of WLP's fundraising plan. We host Spaghetti Dinner in the fall and eat LUNCH give in the spring to spread the work of the shelter, share stories, meet new friends, and raise funds through fun and engaging celebrations.

**Private and public foundations** award us grants for core mission services and the expansion of homeless resources that play a critical role in sustaining and growing the programs that further our mission.



# Partners

Successful collaborations are crucial for us to be effective without duplicating services available through other local agencies. Our partners share our commitment to supporting women living on or beyond the margins. WLP has strategically assembled a wide range of partners in the following key areas:

## Emergency Shelters

Amal Women's Shelter  
Boston Rescue Mission  
Bristol Lodge  
DOVE  
Eliot Community Center's Safe Haven Program  
Green Street Shelter  
Pine Street Inn  
Queen of Peace Shelter  
St. Francis House  
St. Patrick's Shelter  
Woods Mullen Shelter

## Finance

CAPIC payee program  
Rent Secure  
Urban Edge Credit Counseling

## Healthy Meals Program

Area farms and restaurants  
Cambridge School of Culinary Arts  
Community Servings  
Fenway Victory Gardens  
Food Project  
Lovin' Spoonfuls  
Menus of Change  
Northeastern University  
Project Bread's Foodsource Hotline  
Rescuing Leftover Cuisine  
Roxbury Church of Christ  
St. Mary's Center for Women and Children  
The Greater Boston Food Bank

## Housing

Affordable Movers  
Beacon Communities  
New Lease for Homeless Families  
Boston Healthcare for the Homeless  
Boston Housing Authority  
Boston Public Health Commission  
Boston's MetroList  
Brookline Housing Authority  
Cambridge Housing Authority  
Caritas Communities  
Clarendon Residences  
Commonwealth Land Trust  
CSI Co-ops  
Heading Home  
Hearth  
HomeStart  
Malden Housing Authority  
Metro Housing Boston  
Newton Housing Authority  
Pine Street Inn  
Quincy Housing Authority  
Revere Housing Authority  
Somerville Housing Authority  
St. Francis House  
Villa Victoria

## Job Readiness

Boston Career Link  
Boston Center for Adult Education  
Community Work Services  
Dress for Success Boston  
Found in Translation  
Jewish Vocational Services  
Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission  
New England Center for Arts & Technology  
New England Center for Homeless Veterans  
Project Hope  
Project Place  
SPAN Inc.  
Tech Goes Home  
Training Inc.  
Women@Work Plus

## Legal

Boston Homeless Court  
Boston University School of Law  
Chelsea Collaborative  
Greater Boston Legal Services  
Holland + Knight  
Julie Dahlstrom Immigrant Rights and Human Trafficking Program at BU School of Law  
Lawyers Clearinghouse  
Rian Immigrant Center

## Material Assistance

American Friends Service Committee  
Bob's Discount Furniture's Charitable Giving Program  
Boston Share Network  
Dignity Matters  
Dignity U Wear  
Hope and Comfort  
Household Good Recycling of Massachusetts  
LensCrafters  
Letters Foundation  
Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless  
Mission of Deeds  
New Life Furniture Bank  
One Roof Program and A Bed for Every Child

## Medical

Barbara McInnis House  
Boston Health Care for the Homeless  
Boston Medical Center  
Fenway Community Health Center  
Massachusetts General Hospital  
Network Health  
South End Community Health Center

## Specific Elder Services

Elders Living at Home  
Executive Office of Elder Affairs  
Executive Office of Health & Human Services  
Hearth  
S.W.A.N. Society

## Substance Use & Mental Health Treatment

Bay Cove Human Services  
Boston Emergency Services Team (BEST)  
Boston Healthcare for the Homeless Program  
Boston Public Health Commission  
Freedom Trail Clinic  
Ignatian Spirituality Project  
MGH Hope Clinic  
Mom's Project/MORE Program  
PAATHS  
Pine Street Outreach Team  
Project Respect  
The Department of Mental Health's Outreach Team  
Victory Programs  
Vinfen

## Transitional Housing

Betty's Place

## Urgent Needs

Action for Boston Community Development  
Barrier Busters  
Boston Area Rape Crisis Center  
Boston BullPen  
Department of Transitional Assistance  
Family Aid  
Howard Benevolent Society  
Lend A Hand Society  
Letters Foundation  
Safelink Domestic Violence Hotline  
Salvation Army  
Social Security Administration  
St. Anthony's Shrine Food Pantry  
S.W.A.N. Society

# Get Involved



## Program Support

- Sponsor a day of meals and help our Healthy Meals program provide life-sustaining nutrition through 100,000+ meals each year
- Connect your company with our Corporate Partnership Program and support WLP through a variety of engagement opportunities
- Purchase a pair of new winter boots for a woman living on the street

## Support WLP Events

- Attend one of WLP's signature fundraisers, eat LUNCH give & Spaghetti Dinner, to learn more about the impact of your support
- Donate unique items or experiences for our event auctions so we can reach our goal – sports tickets, gift baskets, art, and more!
- Join Team WLP at a fitness fundraiser, like October's Ride for Food

## Host a Fundraiser

Host a virtual event with your friends, family, or network to spread the word, get your community engaged, and raise critical funds!

- *Book club*
- *Cooking class*
- *Charity fitness class*
- *Cocktail hour or Lunch and Learn*
- *Social media campaign, Facebook fundraiser*

## Volunteer & Engage

- Become a Card Ambassador for our Mother's Day or Holiday Card campaign by selling cards, spreading the word, or purchasing cards for your personal or professional network
- Volunteer in the kitchen or drive meals to local community partners
- Engage with WLP Young Professionals at our quarterly events and special volunteer opportunities

There are many ways you can get your network involved and support the critical mission of WLP. Our team will assist you with your fun, informative and impactful engagement activity!

To learn more about getting involved with Women's Lunch Place, please email us at [development@womenslunchplace.org](mailto:development@womenslunchplace.org).

## Mission

Women's Lunch Place inspires hope and supports the development of self-sustaining skills for women experiencing hunger, homelessness, and poverty. We create a safe, welcoming day shelter community in which we respect the dignity of our guests. We build trusting relationships to provide individualized, integrated services focused on nutrition, health, housing, and economic empowerment.

## Vision

In the effort to eradicate hunger, homelessness, and poverty among women, Women's Lunch Place is a visionary, collaborative leader and partner in Greater Boston. With a unique, relationship-driven service model, we provide women with a path to self-sufficiency, improved health, housing, and financial stability.

## Core Values

- We believe that no individual should have to be hungry or homeless.
- We believe all human beings should be treated with dignity and respect.
- We meet each woman where she is, and we base and adjust our services according to her needs.
- We offer our services in a gracious, comfortable, and safe environment, offering both physical and emotional sustenance.
- We create a community of understanding and acceptance among guests, staff, volunteers, and board members.



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**women's lunch place**

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