



**WOMEN'S FUND**  
OF GREATER FORT WAYNE

**YOUNG WOMEN AND GIRLS** REPORT

# The Women's Fund of Greater Fort Wayne is focused on examining the data and the 'why' behind some of the biggest hardships and barriers that women and girls face in Allen County.

This is why we conduct ongoing research in a variety of areas—to not only inform the work that we do, but to also give others the resources to help make an impact as well.

When we completed our initial Women and Girl's Study of Greater Fort Wayne in 2020, we learned that girls perform well academically, earn more high school honors diplomas than boys, and are more than twice as likely to have a bachelor's degree than their mothers and grandmothers.

But we still have work to do. We needed to hear more from the 12-24 age group. So, we convened three focus groups to dig deeper. The results were insightful and can arm our community on how to better support and celebrate our young women and girls.

Middle and high school girls report feeling sad and hopeless, and had higher rates of contemplating suicide than boys. As this new research reveals, gender-based violence, racism, and mental health are major concerns for our young women.

They expressed concern about lack of education around their bodies, feel unsure where to find mental health support, and want access to safe female-

centric spaces in our community. This isn't the first research study on our community's young women, and it won't be the last. The intent of this work is to center their voices, elevate their experiences, and show the next generation that we're willing to listen.

Our young women are leaders. They are resilient, creative, and brave, and they deserve our attention, our resources, and our time.

**Join me in rallying around our community's next generation with an open mind, a listening ear, and a willingness to take action.**

**Your partner in change,  
Cassie Beer**



**SUPPORT  
THIS WORK**

FOCUS GROUP

ONE

# FOCUS GROUP #1

APRIL 18, 2021

## FUTURE: Hopes & Dreams

- IN Progress! • success!
- UNSTOPPABLE! • Hopeful!
- Purposeful!



### WHAT/WHO SUPPORTS YOU?

MY TWIN SISTER  
MY MOM  
SHE HAS MY BACK.



GO TO COLLEGE?  
 YES

MY PLANS MIGHT GET ALTERED - BUT w/ FAITH & WILL I'll get TO WHAT God HAS IN STORE FOR me

CONFIDENCE to KEEP GOING...even IF YOU CAN'T DO it NOW

MAKE A DIFFERENCE - an IMPACT on the WORLD

## MOVE BACK to F.W.?

MIGHT Miss other opportunities... see THE WORLD!



Don't WANT TO LIMIT MYSELF... Move out of COMFORT ZONE

on the Good SIDE... it's CHEAP to LIVE HERE...



## CHALLENGES



FEELING DISCOURAGED NOT CAUGHT UP

NEGATIVITY - PEOPLE WHO BRING YOU DOWN...

OTHER PEOPLE'S OPINIONS OF ME...



## WHAT SONG REFLECTS YOUR FEELINGS?

"HOME"

\* STAY IN MY HOUSE  
DON'T WANT TO  
Go out (violence)  
(EVEN THOUGH I DO  
WANT TO GO OUT!)

PRAYER FOR HUMANITY

\* VALUING OUR HUMANITY

## WHAT CONCERNS YOU?

SCHOOL

on Zoom

• OVERWHELMING  
too much work!

• TEACHER not  
AVAILABLE...  
(LIMITED HOURS  
to contact them)

ISSUES BETWEEN  
MALE AND  
FEMALE

How men try to  
JUSTIFY...  
Being stubborn

RAPE  
STATISTICS

• RACISM  
• HOMOPHOBIA

• NOT LISTENING  
• NOT OPEN MINDED  
Everyone just trying  
to be RIGHT.

People think their  
OPINIONS are FACTS!

MY little cousins  
on SOCIAL MEDIA...  
SAD that they feel  
they need to LOOK  
A CERTAIN WAY...



GIRL/  
BOY  
DYNAMICS...

Prefer A  
compliment  
from another  
GIRL vs. A  
BOY...

IF A YOUNG WOMAN  
CAN HOLD HER OWN...  
SHE DOESN'T NEED  
A BOY/YOUNG MAN for  
VALIDATION...

But...  
MEN want you  
to DEPEND ON  
them...

## WHAT KEEPS YOU UP AT NIGHT?

• SELF DOUBT...  
• Negative Comments

• WHAT people  
THINK of  
me...

• NOT DOING  
BENEFICIAL  
WORK in my  
COMMUNITY

## HOW YOU'VE BEEN AT EASE?

Don't LIMIT  
YOURSELF to WHAT  
YOU ALREADY  
KNOW

NOW I...  
Do WHAT I  
WANT.

I WAS TIRED OF  
FEELING SORRY  
FOR MYSELF!

You gotta  
KNOW YOURSELF  
as a PERSON...

You're not here to  
PLEASE ANYONE

Take it  
SLOW...

NO  
RUSH...

DANCE

GOT AROUND  
like Minded  
people

## How you feel about your COMMUNITY?

... SCHOOL ... NEIGHBORHOOD ...

## IMPACT OF COVID?

IF people ARE SELFISH... THIS WILL NEVER END!

Makes me REALIZE HOW UNSANITARY PEOPLE ARE!

WHERE COULD WE HANG out w/ FRIENDS & FAMILY?

separation ANXIETY

## SCHOOL

TESTING ESPECIALLY IS MORE STRESSFUL I LEARN better in person

IN COLLEGE.. Not the FULL EXPERIENCE

NOT really BEING TAUGHT this YEAR... (WATCH the VIDEOS LEARN it on your OWN)

MORE BORING...

Less BONDING w/ the DANCE TEAM

LACK of BALANCE  
LACK of ORGANIZATION

MY BUSINESS:

CAN'T FILL my PASTRY ORDERS!



POSITIVE SCHOOL THOUGHTS

IN A PRIVATE SCHOOL - MOSTLY BLACK it's like a BIG FAMILY

SUCH A DIFFERENT EXPERIENCE to HAVE A BLACK HISTORY TEACHER - learning IN DEPTH ABOUT the CIVIL RTS. MOVEMENT - (& HIS PERSONAL STORIES.)

MY MATH TEACHER Has US TALK ABOUT WHAT'S GOING ON...

WHERE & WHEN DO YOU FEEL HAPPY?

WITH FAMILY...

Love our FAMILY REUNIONS

meeting COUSINS

My Support System

WHERE DO YOU FEEL SAFE?

YOU CAN DO ANYTHING YOU SET YOUR MIND to!

- SHE CHEERS me up
- SHE SUPPORTS me



WHERE DO YOU FEEL UNSAFE?

EVERYWHERE!!

it's STRESSFUL!

Feel on EDGE... due to BRUTAL POLICING

TRAUMATIZING Feels UN Hopeful



Even in MY OWN Home.

They Don't Listen to the OTHER SIDE

AT ANY MOMENT

SOMETHING COULD Happen

WALKING DOWN THE Street - SOMEONE COULD SHOVE THEIR OPINIONS at ME!

It's not FAIR

IF I'm Harrased... COULD I defend MYSELF?

pepper spray

BUT YOU HEAR ABOUT ♀ WHO GET CONVICTED WHEN DEFENDING THEMSELVES.

WHAT IF I HAD KIDS? HOW WOULD I KEEP THEM SAFE?

PULLED OVER BY THE POLICE... YOU NEVER KNOW...

# HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED BULLYING?

- LOT OF TALK FROM BEHIND THE SCREEN



They'd NEVER say THAT in person!

## CYBER BULLYING

- BTS - the FANDOM army is TOXIC!  
//////////
- SHAMING re: How they Look

- PEOPLE CONFUSE CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM w/ BEING DISRESPECTFUL

- But I've WITNESSED THIS -

Why do people WANT to BRING OTHERS DOWN?

- WHY did I take in WHAT THEY SAID?  
(The popular kids)

- I SHOULD JUST get it OUT of MY BRAIN!



# WHAT ADULTS SHOULD/CAN DO?

How to  
MAKE LIFE  
EASIER  
FOR WOMEN  
& GIRLS?

Send  
YOUR  
IDEAS!



TO SUPPORT OR  
ENCOURAGE  
ENTREPRENEURS?

WHAT  
ELSE?



PAMPERING/  
SPA DAY



SELF  
CARE  
time



Appreciate your

- Beliefs
- REASONS
- Your ability to ARTICULATE & SHARE

You SHOWING  
UP



FOCUS GROUP

TWO

# FOCUS GROUP #2

11.15.2021

WHEN YOU GROW UP...  
DO YOU HOPE TO  
**STAY** in FT. WAYNE/  
ALLEN COUNTY?

NO.

MAYBE...  
NOT SURE

I like to  
keep  
MOVING!

want to  
SEE NEW THINGS

EXPERIENCE  
Different states  
& climates

want to  
TRAVEL

I'LL RETURN  
HOME ONE DAY...

MAYBE...

PEOPLE tell me

Go Get  
out!

THERE'S  
SO MUCH  
out there!



WHAT DO YOU  
**LIKE** ABOUT  
FT. WAYNE?

MY SCHOOL

SMALL,  
GET TO KNOW  
EVERYONE

UNIQUE

NOT  
TRADITIONAL

WE GET TO GO OUT  
& TALK TO PEOPLE IN THE  
COMMUNITY...

Felt  
WELCOMING...  
(IT'S MORE THAN  
SCHOOL)

WE CAN TALK  
FREELY

- OPEN TO DIVERSITY
- RESPECTFUL
- ACCEPTING EACH OTHER

MY CHURCH



FEELS LIKE  
FAMILY...

WE UNDERSTAND  
& RESPECT EACH  
OTHER

CREATIVE  
ACTIVITIES  
FOR KIDS

- DANCE
- ARTS
- MUSIC



IT'S SO COMMON...

A LOT OF PEOPLE STRUGGLE w/ MENTAL HEALTH



I've BEEN IN THERAPY...

I've HAD to talk MULTIPLE people out of ENDING their LIFE...

ON ANTI-DEPRESSANTS...

it's DRAINING for everyone involved

# WHAT ARE YOUR CONCERNS Related to MENTAL HEALTH?

2 years AGO MY FRIEND SHOT HIMSELF

I HAD NO IDEA OF HIS STRUGGLE HE WAS VERY SILENT ABOUT it

ADULTS SAY they're HERE for you BUT it's HARD to find someone to sit & LISTEN & TRY to HELP...

They BRUSH it OFF

OH EVERYONE HAS ANXIETY/is SAD at SOME POINT ...



This makes me feel WORSE



HARDEST to OPEN up to MY FAMILY...

EASY to SUFFER IN SILENCE



SOME ADULTS I CAN TRUST

OTHER ADULTS DON'T REALLY HEAR me...

IS there ANYONE HERE to REALLY LISTEN to me?

TO UNDERSTAND ...?

INSTEAD they

SIT there & SMILE. DON'T HELP out

Tell me I'M the PROBLEM

Tell me WHAT I'M DOING "WRONG"

Tell me I'm BEING "DRAMATIC"

Tell me TO "GET BACK up"

SOME will EVEN make Jokes...

HOW DID YOU  
FIND RESOURCES  
FOR MENTAL HEALTH?  
WHAT EMPOWERED YOU?

\* SLOWLY  
ACKNOWLEDGING...  
"OH...this is WHAT  
I'M DEALING WITH...  
I NEED SOMETHING

\* FRIEND invited me  
to her CHURCH youth  
Group...

CREW up  
Repressing  
TEARS!

There I LEARNED that  
PEOPLE WHO CRY are  
EMOTIONALLY STRONG.

\* Joined a GROUP...  
(or Find one By Accident)

I DIDN'T REALLY  
KNOW WHAT IT  
WAS...

TALKING...  
ABOUT FEELINGS

DIDN'T EVEN  
KNOW I HAD  
A PROBLEM...

UNTIL I  
STARTED  
TALKING...

HARD to KNOW  
YOU'RE DEPRESSED  
UNTIL YOU'RE  
NOT DEPRESSED...

LISTENING...

NO JUDGEMENT...

cried more...  
FELT Better...  
(from Low to  
MEDIocre)

# WHAT TRIGGERS your ANXIETY / DEPRESSION?

SCHOOL · FRIENDS · SOCIAL MEDIA

BEING CROWDED IN A PLACE WHERE I KNOW NO ONE

Feeling UNCOMFORTABLE Terrifies me...

- I keep to myself... Not the type to actively go out & meet people

- BUT ALSO HELP SOMEONE ELSE IF I SEE THEM STRUGGLING

- I SIT w/ THE RECEPTIONIST DURING LUNCH...

- WOULD RATHER SIT ALONE THAN FEEL ALONE AMONGST people

I GET EXTREME ANXIETY WHEN I'M ALONE... AMONG PEOPLE



SOME OF MY FRIENDS HAVE MOVED ON... (in college NOW)

WHERE DO I FIT IN?

Feeling of PRESSURE → I HAVE to FIT IN...



IT'S A STEREOTYPE THAT IT TRIGGERS US.

- I use it as AN OUTLET
- EXPRESS MYSELF
  - ENTERTAIN MYSELF



SOCIAL MEDIA

IT'S A GREY AREA

PLUS

- ⊕ ONLINE FRIENDS
  - CONNECTING
  - FAR AWAY

MINUS

- ⊖ MINUS
  - CYBER BULLYING
  - NOT MUCH YOU CAN DO (JUST BLOCK THEM)

- ⊖ CAN BE A RABBIT HOLE! ] GET LOST IN IT Gotta LOG OFF & GROUND BACK INTO REALITY

NO RESTRAINING ORDERS

fake accounts

BUT: IT'S EVEN WORSE if you KNOW WHO it is!

FEARFUL of OUTCOME if you TELL ADULT

ENDED UP GETTING ME IN TROUBLE!

DEFEND OTHERS: WHEN TRIED to INTERVENE they Blocked ME & THEN POSTED ABOUT ME

# Your IDEAS for a GIRL-CENTRIC Space?

## A YOUTH GROUP VIBE



TALK

PLAY GAMES

BREAK it up by AGE GROUP OR GRADE...

WE've Lived MORE Life!

"experience GAP"

freshman → seniors

## WHAT ELSE CAN YOUR COMMUNITY PROVIDE/DO?

JOB opportunities

VOLunteer opportunities

SPORTS TEAMS

take COVID MORE SERIOUSLY

More COMMUNITY EVENTS

## COVID

MADE THINGS WORSE BUT PROBLEMS were APPARENT BEFORE...

is like a MICROPHONE...

ALL the PROBLEMS are BEING HEARD.



SO WHAT'S GOING ON IS...

I Totally RELATE...

OH I've BEEN there TOO...

# WHAT BRINGS YOU JOY?

## \* FRIENDS!

CAN RELATE

HELP EACH OTHER

they LIFT my MOOD!

SAME PROBLEMS

EASY to LAUGH

my COUSINS

BRING OUT A SIDE I DON'T SHOW PEOPLE / DON'T SHOW PARENTS

ALONE... or at HOME I feel "MEH"

AROUND FRIENDS I feel that SEROTONIN HIGH!

MY GOOFBALL SIDE

MWAHA HAHA!



GO TO MOVIES...

TRY WEIRD SODA FLAVORS!  
SWEET CORN?!!

HOT WINGS?!  
GRASS?!

EAT LUNCH TOGETHER EVERY DAY...

HA HA TRY THIS!



UH... NO! HAHA

## \* ART & MUSIC

MARCHING BAND

JAZZ BAND

When I play SOMETHING it's WITH my SOUL.

LOVE JAZZ! SO FUN TO PLAY

LISTEN TO ALL GENRES... SO MUCH YOU CAN LEARN

DANCE is my OUTLET...

I CAN SPEAK WITHOUT WORDS

SINGING!

In the car in the shower



## \* SPORTS

BASKETBALL... SOCCER

BEING IN THE ZONE.



# WHAT KEEPS YOU UP at NIGHT? <sup>1/2</sup>

## the FUTURE

I feel prepared... & UNprepared at the SAME TIME

SCARY...  
UNPREDICTABLE...

WHAT'S NEXT after HIGH SCHOOL?

college...

MOVE OUT...

FULL TIME JOB...

NO GUIDANCE / COUNSELOR!

WE get to CHOOSE... & THAT'S TERRIFYING

Fear of NOT LIVING UP to my FUTURE SELF.

WHAT if it DOESN'T WORK OUT?

HOW MUCH CAN I ACHIEVE IF I DON'T BECOME FINANCIALLY STABLE?

WHAT are my BACK-UP PLANS?

Freedom

WHAT DO WE DO WITH IT?

the UN KNOWN...

- STRESS...
- OVERTHINKING...
- CRYING...
- LOT on my MIND...  
Hard to FALL ASLEEP

DO YOU HAVE SUPPORT to NAVIGATE the NEXT STEPS?

- I KNOW PEOPLE ARE THERE TO HELP US... but the ULTIMATE DECISION is OURS!

- EXCITED to work in the TRADES...  
FAMILY IS COMING AROUND

- they SEE I have AN INTERNSHIP & a FULL TIME JOB Lined Up...

# WHAT KEEPS YOU UP at NIGHT? 2/2

## SEXUALITY...

- Told my Mom I'm Bi... (SHE WAS NOT REALLY FOR it)

I WANT HER to SUPPORT me...



- ME, TOO... I HAVEN'T YET told MY PARENTS but I know they'll be SUPPORTIVE...

- MY YOUNGER SIBLING is NON-BINARY ↓

BUT NOT my GRANDPARENTS...

- PARENTS DON'T UNDERSTAND.

- WHEN my cousin came out they didn't talk to her for MONTHS.

You'll GROW OUT OF it...

NO. I Won't!



## SOCIAL INJUSTICE

- OUR Generation "Gets it"

- We're more OPEN & WELCOMING

- FEEL LIKE it's the OLDER Generation THAT HAS TROUBLE WITH it...

## LACK of VOICE

- We HAVE ALMOST NO VOICE in SOCIETY... NO MATTER WHAT WE DO

- THERE aren't MANY PEOPLE WHO WILL SIT DOWN & LISTEN...

- people BRUSH US OFF

## PERCEPTIONS

- inexperienced

- We're perceived as "KIDS"

- Don't HAVE KNOWLEDGE

- Not AWARE of the "REAL" WORLD

- My PARENTS think I'm TOO YOUNG To UNDERSTAND WHAT'S GOING ON

# How do you spend your free time?

STARING at my WALL...  
**ZONING OUT!**

DIVING into my HEAD

(I WORK a lot...)

Watch TV

SLEEP!

do ART

DO SOMETHING ARTISTIC

do MAKEUP

DANCE class

play my Bass

play trumpet

HANG with my FRIENDS

play PACO or SPADES

go OUT

go get Little Caesars pizza... & eat in the CAR

Spend time with my Dad

clean

COOK

do Chores

ON PHONE

LISTEN to MUSIC

time w/my BOYFRIEND

## WHERE DO YOU FEEL MOST YOURSELF? AT EASE

\* in the shower  
🎵🎵🎵

\* in my CAR

Sometimes I get OFF WORK... get in my CAR & just SCREAM!

• it's my PRIVATE AREA

• SPACE TO CRY

\* WHEN I'm DANCING

\* WITH FRIENDS

REAL TALK

- TEAM-MATES
- SISTER
- COUSIN

# WHERE DO YOU FEEL PRESSURE?

IT'S NOT FROM OTHER people  
it's from THE VOICE in my OWN HEAD

NOT SKINNY ENOUGH...  
NOT PRETTY ENOUGH...

MALE-INFLUENCED BEAUTY STANDARDS

SOCIAL MEDIA  
AN impossible Body

CELEBRITIES LOOK A CERTAIN WAY... Why don't I?

THE EXPECTATION IS LONG CURLY HAIR... But I don't HAVE THAT!

I'm MIXED RACE... & HAIR IS AN EMOTIONAL TOPIC

AN insecurity GROWS so SLOW...

WEAR in AFRO = culturally "WOKE"

STRAIGHTEN = You're WHITE - WASHED

ADD EXTENSIONS = trying to be SOMETHING ELSE

PRESSURE TO GET PERMS... HAVE YOUR HAIR DOWN.

I'm LATINA... & I LOOK Latina...  
BUT I don't speak SPANISH!

my SIBLINGS HAVE Green eyes / Light Brown Hair - from my Mom

You don't LOOK LATINA!

I RELATE. MY DAD doesn't speak SPANISH (He Brings out his COOKING)

GOT SO MUCH CRITICISM for THAT. REALLY IRRITATING

NOW I Accept MYSELF: I'm STILL LATINA!

I speak better SPANISH than YOU!

REAL MEXICANS / GUATEMALANS speak SPANISH!

RACE... gotta look A CERTAIN way TO BE PART of it!?

WE DON'T feel peer PRESSURE AROUND...

- ALCOHOL
  - DRUGS
  - SEX
- maybe adults THINK THAT BECAUSE OF the MOVIES...

WHEN I was YOUR AGE Lemme tell you about the PARTIES!

YEAH it's Not Like THAT for me, Mom.

I'd rather Go Home & WATCH a MOVIE

IT'S more that people TRY Drugs / Alcohol due to the PRESSURE to BE or ACT a CERTAIN way... (attempting to please people AROUND them)

# Issues around SEX.

## MENTAL SCARING

THIS EXPERIENCE ALSO MAKES ME REALLY NERVOUS TO WANT TO HAVE SEX...

the PRESSURE IS SELF PRESSURE. SCARED SOMETHING SIMILAR WILL HAPPEN AGAIN.

SCARED to ASK my MOM IF I CAN Go on Birth Control IN CASE I WANT to [HAVE SEX]

When you get to a CERTAIN AGE... you get CURIOUS & WANT TO EXPERIENCE MORE

We're taught that HAVING sex BRINGS DOWN the VALUE of Yourself...

AGREE the #1 WAY TO AVOID PREGNANCY IS ABSTINENCE

RESULT: WE SNEAK AROUND TO TRY it... WITHOUT UNDERSTANDING the REPERCUSSIONS

**BUT... IF WE**

WANT TO EXPERIMENT WOULD HOPE we could have those CONVERSATIONS with our PARENTS

WHAT'S Intimacy?

IF YOU WANT to HAVE SEX... WHAT does it MEAN?

How to Do it SAFELY?

ALL these THINGS that Are NOT DISCUSSED...

## I HAD to EDUCATE MYSELF ABOUT SEX

- We have HORMONES! NOT SURPRISING we're HORMY!
- But we just get EDUCATED in: "THIS is SAFE SEX"

THEN COMPLETELY DISREGARD the WHOLE THING - HOPING we DON'T go for it

## Lack of SEX-ED

GIRLS don't know the "RED FLAGS" How to STOP MEN...

- AND then there's ABUSE... I was MOLESTED at Age 7. REALLY HURT me & made me INSECURE ABOUT my BODY

Boys & GIRLS - we were SITTING Around as FRESHMEN - ALL the GIRLS had EXPERIENCED a SEXUAL ASSAULT

Boys were SO SURPRISED...

I was pressured into HAVING SEX as a FRESHMAN I felt POWERLESS - I felt FROZEN -

WHEN I FINALLY TOLD my PARENTS - my MOM made it SEEM like it was my FAULT

NOW SHE WON'T EVER TRUST me w/ A BOY AGAIN!

WE LEARNED "just say No... And they will STOP" But that's NOT at ALL TRUE.

WHEN I was Younger... I was **PRESSURED** into it... & it was **NOT FUN.**

some GUYS DO PRESSURE you

SEX is AN INTIMATE THING. You Gotta Be Ready for it

**PRESSURING** Someone WHEN THEY'RE NOT READY... is **NOT OKAY.**

Guys don't UNDERSTAND the SEVERITY of the SITUATION.

NO ONE TALKS ABOUT WHAT RAPE is. (IT'S ALL: "THIS IS SEX" NOT: "THIS IS WHAT RAPE IS")

A BIG TOPIC.

RAPE IS DIFFERENT For Everyone

CAN HAPPEN WHEN IN A RELATIONSHIP

WHY WERE you ALONE w/ HIM?



it's Not just AN Attack WHEN WALKING ALONE!

it COULD happen WHEN you're in a Boy's room WATCHING a MOVIE... (that's WHAT Happened to ME.)

Took me AWHILE to REALIZE I was RAPED

# How CAN WE as a COMMUNITY SUPPORT you?

REACH out MORE.

\* GIRLS are QUICK to think they HAVE NOTHING to SAY... but REALLY THEY DO!

- IT takes TIME for US to OPEN UP... Be PATIENT
- We're well educated we HAVE Experiences...
- seems like we GET SHUT DOWN & are never able to truly SHARE WHAT we'D LIKE

EDUCATE them on SEX / their VAGINAS / their PARTNERS

Have a program for EVERY female NO matter COLOR, SIZE, RELIGION, SEXUALITY, etc.

TEACH ABOUT the "RED FLAGS" [SEX/SAFETY] really NEEDS to be TALKED ABOUT!

SHOW it's OKAY TO TALK ABOUT these THINGS...

We don't hear about it much. AND OFTEN we're called CRAZY

BE as UNDERSTANDING with US ABOUT DATING & SEX as You are w/ MALES

DON'T BELITTLE US, or make us SEEM DRAMATIC when WE'RE EXPRESSING FEELINGS

TRUST US

WHEN IT'S SOMETHING SERIOUS

TOO STRICT & HARD CAUSES ANXIETY

IN the STATE of INDIANA it's PROHIBITED to talk about SEX. ED at ALL.

WHAT?!

THAT'S TERRIBLE!

WHAT'S the RATIONALE?

HOW CAN WE REPEAL THAT?

WHY?

# ANYTHING ELSE

WE SHOULD BE ASKING  
AS WE TALK TO OTHER  
GIRLS/YOUNG WOMEN?

We ALL Deserve  
Love...  
more Human... more  
Joy..



- SEX TRAFFICKING  
is a BIG DEAL  
IN OUR COMMUNITY

BUT NOT EVERYONE  
KNOWS THIS.

HAD A VERY SCARY  
INTERACTION w/  
A GUY WHEN I WAS  
PUTTING AWAY GEAR  
at my JOB in the PARK  
8pm...



- SEXUAL  
HARRASSMENT

A Co. worker made  
me SUPER UNCOMFORTABLE

TOLD my BOSS - she  
SAID she'd do something...  
but NEVER did

- GETTING TO KNOW  
OTHER GIRLS

Assumptions - Harder  
to make Friends w/  
OTHER GIRLS

I tended to defend  
BOYS more than Girls



RESTING  
"BITCH"  
FACE

my First  
THOUGHT is to  
INTIMIDATE  
PEOPLE...

Am I Being  
Competitive with  
other GIRLS by  
DEFAULT?

suspicious

Looks  
Achievements  
Academics

FOCUS GROUP

THREE

# FOCUS GROUP #3

DECEMBER, 2021

SURVEY · DATA · SYNTHESIS

## DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION:



PARTICIPANTS IDENTIFY AS

female, age 12-24

Attendees or Graduates of Middle School, High School, & College

← ACROSS ALL ZIP CODES in ALLEN COUNTY →

Do you HOPE to STAY in ALLEN COUNTY?

15% Yes

55% MAYBE

31% NO

What CONCERNS do you HAVE ABOUT YOUR COMMUNITY?

LACK OF SEX EDUCATION, REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH ACCESS, BIRTH CONTROL...  
???

LACK OF EDUCATION, INFORMATION & SERVICES to SUPPORT MENTAL HEALTH & WELL BEING...

The Community is HARD ON YOUNG WOMEN & GIRLS... JUDGEMENTAL & NOT VERY INVITING OR INCLUSIVE of us... Especially TEENS.

LACK OF SERVICES & SUPPORTS SPECIFICALLY for Young Women & GIRLS...

WHO DO WE HAVE TO HELP US?

WHO DO WE HAVE TO TALK TO?

YOUNG WOMEN & GIRLS SAFETY... WE AREN'T SAFE in the COMMUNITY & SOMETIMES in our OWN HOMES.

WE ARE ALWAYS HAVING to THINK ABOUT our SAFETY

How THE COMMUNITY RAISES BOYS.

SEXUAL ASSAULT - Reported & UNReported

IT HAPPENS TO SO MANY OF US!

Low EXPECTATIONS of MEN & BOYS OF ALL AGES

What do you LIKE ABOUT FORT WAYNE/ ALLEN COUNTY?

Creativity

Places for Art, DANCE, THEATRE, Music

Places to Go & BE with Friends & FAMILY

Extended family lives here!

SCHOOLS  
• Middle  
• High  
• College

● WHAT MIGHT FORT WAYNE/ALLEN County DO or PROVIDE to SUPPORT YOUNG WOMEN & GIRLS?

→ SPECIFIC PLACES for YOUNG WOMEN & GIRLS

→ JOB OPPORTUNITIES!

→ MORE AGE-APPROPRIATE ACTIVITIES, ESPECIALLY for GIRLS 18-20

WE NEED PLACES WHERE WE CAN COME TOGETHER...

AND BE TOGETHER...

TO SUPPORT & LEARN from ONE ANOTHER



● WHAT SERVICES or SUPPORTS are You AWARE of in Your COMMUNITY?

28%

NOT AWARE OF ANY SUPPORTS SPECIFIC TO YOUNG WOMEN & GIRLS...

NON PROFITS:

HOPE CENTER

PLANNED PARENTHOOD

GIRLZ ROCK

BRING IT PUSH IT OWN IT

BOYS & GIRLS CLUB

BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS

REAL TALK

TEENS & TIARAS

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SHELTER

SCHOOL SPORTS & CLUBS

SCOUTS

CHURCH SUPPORT GROUPS

TEACHERS

# WHAT'S SOMETHING THAT KEEPS YOU UP AT NIGHT?

WORRY I'M NOT GOOD ENOUGH...

GETTING A JOB & SUPPORTING MYSELF

HOW MUCH I'M JUDGED AS A GIRL

WHY BOYS CAN MESS UP... & NO ONE CARES!

SCHOOL WORK... GRADES, TESTS

DREAD over the FUTURE/PRESSURE ABOUT the FUTURE

- college
- career
- MONEY
- FAMILY

OVERTHINKING THINGS

WORRY OVER TAKING UP SPACE

GRADES - GIRLS GET VALIDATION for GETTING GOOD GRADES

FEELING UNSAFE

FEAR OF SEXUAL ASSAULT

TRAUMA we CAN'T TALK ABOUT WITH ANYONE

VICTIMIZED BY MEN & BOYS

FEELING SHAME OVER MALE BEHAVIOR TOWARDS ME

MALE GAZE & ATTENTION

FEAR of MEN/BOYS

CHRONIC ANXIETY

WHAT BRINGS YOU

# joy?



47% EXPERIENCE ANXIETY

9% EXPERIENCE DEPRESSION

13% EXPERIENCE STRESS

30% EXPERIENCE ANXIETY, DEPRESSION & STRESS

● HOW ARE YOU COPING WITH SOCIAL DISTANCING?

25%	25%	44%
NOT A PROBLEM	IT'S REALLY HARD...	I'M MANAGING

● HAVE YOU BEEN AFFECTED BY SOCIAL DISTANCING BY COVID?

13%	38%	53%
NO	A LITTLE BIT	YES

● WHAT'S YOUR SENSE OF SELF CONFIDENCE?

28%	33%	32%
VERY CONFIDENT	SOMEWHAT CONFIDENT	NOT SO CONFIDENT

WHERE DO YOU TURN TO SUPPORT YOU WHEN YOU EXPERIENCE ANXIETY, DEPRESSION, STRESS, DIFFICULTY COPING?

FRIENDS

THERAPY

EXERCISE

MUSIC

MENTORS,  
TEACHERS  
MOM

SUFFER IN SILENCE...

## WHERE are you ABLE to be at EASE/YOURSELF/HAPPY?



## HOW DO YOU SPEND YOUR FREE TIME?



## Do You FEEL PRESSURE to...



## WHERE DO YOU FEEL SAFE?

- NOWHERE ...
- HOME ...
- CHURCH ...
- SCHOOL ...
- WITH TRUSTED FRIENDS, FAMILY, TEACHERS ...

## CONCERNS ABOUT SAFETY for YOUNG WOMEN & GIRLS

- PHYSICAL SAFETY
- SEXUAL ASSAULT
- PREDATORY MEN/ INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR TOWARDS WOMEN & GIRLS BY MEN & BOYS
- SEX TRAFFICKING
- CRIME RATE is GOING UP & A LOT OF IT IS DIRECTED TOWARDS WOMEN
- SOCIAL DISTANCING
- SCHOOL & CHURCH SHOOTINGS
- WALKING ALONE/ BEING ALONE in the COMMUNITY
- We (women & girls) are STRUGGLING far MORE THAN WE LET ON

50% SAY  
THEY'VE BEEN  
BULLIED ONLINE



## How CAN the Community BETTER SUPPORT YOUNG WOMEN & GIRLS?

HOW DID YOU DEAL WITH THIS?

\* Blocked,  
\* Reported,  
\* Deleted  
OFFENDER

\* THERAPY  
\* Got NEW  
FRIENDS

\* LEFT the  
SCHOOL  
\* IGNORED it -  
DEALT with the  
FEELINGS &  
MOVED ON

\* CONFIDENT -  
I KNOW WHO  
I AM & WHAT  
OTHERS SAY  
DOESN'T MATTER

\* CRIED...  
TURNED to  
my FRIENDS...  
then MOVED ON

Listen  
to us!

Believe  
us!

Treat our FEELINGS  
as REAL!

CREATE SPACES  
& PROGRAMS  
for US

INVEST IN  
GIRLS Like  
THEY Do in Boys

HOLD BOYS  
ACCOUNTABLE

Do A BETTER  
JOB RAISING  
BOYS

TEACH BOYS  
ABOUT  
SELF CONTROL -  
NOT JUST SELF  
DEFENSE to  
GIRLS

Better SAFETY MEASURES  
SPECIFICALLY for Women  
& GIRLS/MAKE PUBLIC  
SPACES SAFE

MAKE RESOURCES  
AVAILABLE KNOWN  
& EASY to ACCESS/  
PARTICIPATE

CONNECT US  
BETWEEN RACIAL,  
CULTURAL, RELIGIOUS,  
ECONOMIC GROUPS

TEACH US SEX ED,  
BODY AWARENESS...  
ACCESS to feminine  
PRODUCTS

# WHAT DO YOU WANT THE COMMUNITY TO KNOW TO BETTER SUPPORT YOUNG WOMEN AND GIRLS?

SEXISM is ALIVE & WELL... & DEEPLY ROOTED

BE MORE AWARE

STOP SHAMING & BLAMING GIRLS!

HOLD MEN & BOYS ACCOUNTABLE for their ACTIONS

ENOUGH of the STEREOTYPES - time to BREAK THOSE DOWN

STOP SEXUALIZING INFANTILIZING, FETISHIZING WOMEN & GIRLS

WE MATTER!

UNDERSTAND & TAKE SERIOUSLY OUR FEAR... & HIGH LEVEL of ASSAULT & THREAT to our SAFETY

PUSH BACK WITH US ON HOW MEDIA & CULTURE DEFINE WOMEN & GIRLS & HOW WE SHOULD LOOK

WE NEED our OWN SPACES

We are POWERFUL We are STRONG

RESPECT our BOUNDARIES

BEING FEMALE is HARD.



# SUMMARY

# YOUNG WOMEN & GIRLS LISTENING SESSION SUMMARY

FEBRUARY 2022

## PURPOSE:

THE INFORMATION FROM THE RESEARCH IS TO EDUCATE & ADVOCATE FOR THE SUPPORT OF YOUNG WOMEN & GIRLS AMONG CURRENT ADVOCATES, PROGRAM PROVIDERS, EDUCATORS & POLICYMAKERS ON THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF YOUNG WOMEN & GIRLS IN ALLEN COUNTY

the 2019 REPORT



WOMEN'S FUND of GREATER FORT WAYNE  
 BELIEVES LISTENING TO & AMPLIFYING THE VOICES OF YOUNG WOMEN & GIRLS CREATES OPPORTUNITIES TO ADVOCATE, SUPPORT & CELEBRATE THEM

thank you...  
 TO ALL THE YOUNG WOMEN, GIRLS & GENDER EXPANSIVE PARTICIPANTS FOR ENGAGING IN CONVERSATION THROUGH VIRTUAL SPACES AND PLACES. THANK YOU FOR LISTENING TO ONE ANOTHER, GIVING THE OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN, CONTINUE LEARNING ALONGSIDE YOU & TO THE COLLECTIVE POWER OF ADVOCATING FOR CHANGE. MAY WE LISTEN INSPIRED BY ALL YOU OFFER.

PROVIDED SOME STARTLING STATISTICS ON THE SAFETY WELL-BEING & OUTLOOK ON THE FUTURE FOR YOUNG WOMEN & GIRLS IN ALLEN COUNTY.

2020

## YOUNG WOMEN & GIRLS LISTENING SESSIONS



## PARTICIPANTS

- AGES 12-24, IDENTIFY AS FEMALE
- ATTEND OR GRADUATES OF LOCAL MIDDLE SCHOOL, HIGH SCHOOL ~ COLLEGE
- LIVE ACROSS ALL ZIP CODES IN ALLEN COUNTY

in response

THE STAFF OF THE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION & THE WOMEN'S FUND ADVISORY DECIDED TO PRIORITIZE THE NEEDS OF YOUNG WOMEN & GIRLS THROUGH RESEARCH EDUCATION & ADVOCACY. THE YOUNG WOMEN & GIRLS LISTENING SESSIONS SUPPORT THESE INTENTIONS

WOMEN'S FUND of GREATER FORT WAYNE ENGAGED THEM IN CONVERSATION TO LEARN FIRSTHAND -

\* WHAT BRINGS THEM JOY... AND CONNECTION?

\* WHAT CONCERNS DO THEY HAVE?

\* How Might the COMMUNITY BETTER SUPPORT them?

# THEMES

WHILE EVERY LISTENING SESSION REVEALED UNIQUE THEMES & SOLUTIONS SEVERAL WERE EMPHASIZED.

FROM CONCERNS ABOUT THEIR COMMUNITY TO WHAT BRINGS THEM JOY & INTO COMMUNITY, YOUNG WOMEN & GIRLS SHARED EXPERIENCES & NEEDS RELATED TO HEALTH, SAFETY & ECONOMIC WELL-BEING.

1

- ACCESS TO HEALTH,
- REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH SERVICES & EDUCATION,
- & MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS

2

- GENDER BASED VIOLENCE IS A constant threat & REALITY.
- ADDRESS BLAME, SHAME & FOCUS OF RESPONSIBILITY toward the PERPETATORS

3

CONNECTED EXPERIENCE AROUND SEXISM, RACISM & MISOGYNY & OTHER FORMS OF OPPRESSION ARE A BURDEN

4

Need SAFE PLACES & SPACES that ARE FEMALE IDENTIFIED CENTRIC

5

BRING JOY & CONNECTION



# OPPORTUNITIES

## Listen

TO YOUNG  
WOMEN  
& GIRLS.  
Talk to us  
Believe us!  
We Matter.

Target GENDER-  
BASED VIOLENCE  
PREVENTION to  
BOYS & MEN

HOLD THEM  
ACCOUNTABLE  
& TAKE THE THREAT  
TO OUR SAFETY  
SERIOUSLY.

BREAK DOWN  
SILOS

BETWEEN RACE  
CLASS RELIGION  
ZIP CODE &  
EDUCATION —

Bring us  
TOGETHER

PUSH BACK  
With us on  
HOW MEDIA &  
CULTURE  
DEFINE HOW  
WOMEN & GIRLS  
LOOK/  
ARE/  
SHOULD BE

Make  
RESOURCES  
KNOWN to us

- AVAILABLE
- EASY to ACCESS



## GET INVOLVED

● Attend the YOUNG WOMEN & GIRLS' SUMMIT

● VISIT US ONLINE to LEARN MORE

● Join our GROWING COMMUNITY BY BECOMING A MEMBER

● BE AN ADVOCATE for YOUNG WOMEN & GIRLS!

## GRATITUDE

Thank You to:

- EMILY SHEPARD at THE GRAPHIC DISTILLERY
- MARCIA CONÉ at MARCIA CONÉ CONSULTING
- ONE LUCKY GUITAR
- THE WFGFW YOUNG WOMEN & GIRLS COMMITTEE
- ALISON GERARDOT, CHIEF IMPACT OFFICER GREATER FORT WAYNE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION
- CASSIE BEER, DIRECTOR of WOMEN'S FUND of GREATER FORT WAYNE
- AND —
- THE LOCAL NONPROFITS, MIDDLE & HIGH SCHOOLS & COLLEGES WHO PROVIDED PLACE & SPACE for CONVERSATION & ENGAGEMENT.

## SPECIAL THANKS:

\* GIRLZ ROCK

\* BRING IT PUSH IT OWN IT

\* WAYNE NEW TECH

\* PURDUE UNIVERSITY FORT WAYNE

**The Women's Fund of Greater Fort Wayne is funded by individuals and organizations that are passionate about a more equitable future for girls and women in Allen County. We need your help to keep moving what matters. Help us create change by becoming a member today.**

As a member you'll be invited to first-look access to research, educational and advocacy opportunities, members-only events, as well as join a group of like-minded individuals who believe in investing in our community through women and girls.

We invite people at every economic level to join us in advancing women and girls in Allen County by supporting the work of the Women's Fund of Greater Fort Wayne. You can make a one-time contribution or a recurring contribution on a monthly, quarterly or annual basis. Give at the level you can!



**SUPPORT THIS WORK**





LISTEN. REVEAL. UNITE.  
AMPLIFY. REVEAL. UNITE.  
ADVOCATE. REVEAL. UNITE.  
ELEVATE. REVEAL. UNITE.  
RESPECT. CELEBRATE. SUPPORT.



**WOMEN'S FUND**  
OF GREATER FORT WAYNE

[WOMENSFUNDFW.ORG](https://www.womensfundfw.org)

