

**Dear Friends,**

WISE began as a grassroots organization in 1971, a place for women to come together, support each other, and safely share their experiences of assault and abuse. Over the years, we have remained firmly rooted in our beautiful Upper Valley community supporting survivors, offering trainings, and expanding our prevention education. And still, every single day, there are all too many people who are isolated, degraded, assaulted, and harmed in countless ways. Over the past five decades, we have supported tens of thousands of survivors. People with diverse identities, orientations, and life experiences.

Gender-based violence is so pervasive and we never get used to it. We - both WISE staff and volunteers - have shown up every hour, every day for 50 years now, and still people continue to be harmed.

We're listening. We believe. You are not alone. We're here for you. These are WISE messages for our dear neighbors and friends. We are so grateful that you are all with us - listening, believing, and supporting survivors. Together we can end violence, share hope and change lives.

Warmly,

  
**Peggy**



## Save the dates

**WISE Writing Group**  
**Wednesdays 5:30-7:00 pm**  
*please email [pam@wiseuv.org](mailto:pam@wiseuv.org) to sign up*

**WISE Artful Crafts**  
**every third Saturday of the month 1-3:00 pm**  
*please email [bailey@wiseuv.org](mailto:bailey@wiseuv.org) for Zoom link*

**Foundations of Gender-Based Violence**  
**scheduled for January and March 2022**  
*please email [stacey@wiseuv.org](mailto:stacey@wiseuv.org) for more details*

**Covered Bridges Half Marathon**  
**June 5, 2022**  
**early registration opens November**  
*please email [development@wiseuv.org](mailto:development@wiseuv.org)  
for more information*

## Board Members

Patricia Spellman, President  
Martha Goodrich, Co-Vice President  
Kate Griffiths Harrison, Co-Vice President  
Margaret Rightmire, Treasurer  
Emily Dentzer, Secretary  
Angela Zhang • Gail Gentes  
Jason Lichtenstein • Jenny Levy  
Jenny Williams • Karen Colberg  
Mike Shipulski • Mindi Laine • Pat Glowa  
Peggy O'Neil, Executive Director  
Susan Dewees, Board Emeritus  
Hannah Saltman, Tuck Revers Board Fellow

*We are excited to welcome Angela Zhang and Hannah Saltman to the WISE Board.*

*Angy has supported survivors on the crisis line since 2013, and helped launch the WISE teen group. She is currently the Programs Director at LISTEN Community Services.*

*Hannah, a Tuck student, volunteered for The One Love Foundation, fundraising and providing education for young adults on how to recognize the signs of healthy and unhealthy relationship behaviors.*



*Interviewing Helen at Northern Stage*

“I walked into the front room - there was a group of maybe six or eight women and they’re all sitting around on the floor, having a meeting. And so I just hung out and listened to what they were saying.”

*Alix Olson reflecting on her first introduction to WISE in the early 1970s*

## Five decades in production

In celebration of our 50th anniversary, we are partnering with Northern Stage to create a podcast retrospective. The series features stories of the people who helped evolve WISE into the organization it is today and who continue to create positive change against gender-based violence into the present and future.

Over the summer, sixteen people were interviewed by Jess Chayes, BOLD Associate Artistic Director at Northern Stage. Jess Chayes is an award-winning director and producer of new work. With her expertise and creative direction, the podcast series will be engaging, informative, and evoke feelings of connectedness to the WISE of today and inspire the community to be a part of WISE’s future.

The podcast series, generously sponsored by Mascoma Bank, will be available in early 2022. We will keep you posted!



*Jess, the interviewer, director, and producer*

## 50 years of WISE and counting...

Celebrating 50 years of WISE in the Upper Valley during a pandemic is no small feat! Throughout the year, we have been creating ways to virtually connect with our WISE community. Last winter, we started exploring WISE’s past through its 5 decades, looking at how the history is part of the evolution of who WISE is today, and how it forms the foundation of where we are headed. We embarked on creating an oral history, capturing the stories and reflections of some of the people who affected and were affected by WISE. It has been fun sharing some of the highlights over social media and in our monthly email newsletters.

WISE is and always has been about fostering strong relationships with people and community partners. In 1971, WISE was created to be a community center supporting women in different phases of their lives. A small group of women attended training at University of New Hampshire. After completing the training, each woman left with a \$500 grant to establish a WISE center in their area. The first WISE office was located in two rooms above the Hanover Hardware Store.

WISE was a safe space for women to hang out, make connections with other women, and support one another. WISE helped women enter the work force and offered a women’s support group, single parents group, and a self-help group on women’s health issues. The mission has evolved over time, but the commitment to being a safe space to come together in support of survivors remains today.

As for the next 50 years? We are going to keep doing what we have always done: provide a space for people to come together, have thoughtful conversations, and work together to support survivors. From the early days of the group women sitting on the floor, to all the ways we continue the conversation today, we are committed to ending gender-based violence in the Upper Valley. We believe we can achieve our mission and our efforts will evolve to maintaining violence-free communities. And one thing will always remain – offering a safe space for people to gather.



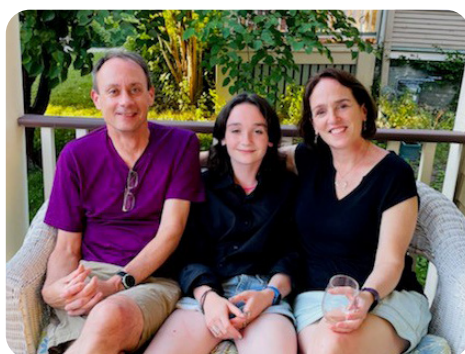


## Board spotlight: Tricia Spellman in her own words

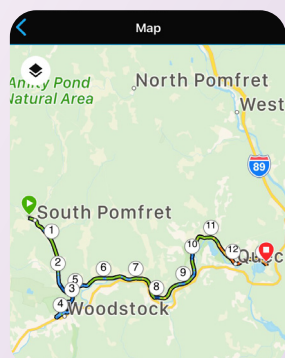
*"In my role as President of the Board, I work closely with Peggy and the WISE team as well as the full Board to steer the organization towards a sustainable future and ensure appropriate resources to advance the mission."*

*"I connected with the WISE Board because I wanted to find a way to support survivors of domestic and sexual violence in my own way. I started thinking about this work in college when the need for women's advocacy became clearer to me. Whether fighting to ensure the university Women's Center retained funding, or marching in Washington to protect a woman's right to choose, I have always been motivated by a mission."*

*"The past few years have been challenging for all of us given the political environment and COVID-19. Through it all, I have witnessed the perseverance and power of WISE. I am constantly amazed by the work the team does – from the prevention programs to advocacy to supporting survivors. I hope that the little contribution I make sustains the organization so that it remains available to the community for many years to come."*



Tricia joined the WISE Board of Directors in 2015 and was elected President in July 2020 for a three-year term



The virtual race course

private and personal glory with little fanfare.

This year, the Covered Bridges Half Marathon went virtual. Participants could run the 13.1 miles anywhere, any time during the second week of June. Team WISE had 14 self-motivated and determined people training and fundraising for WISE. These amazing 14 people ran a combined 182 miles and raised over \$10,000! You inspire us with your fortitude and commitment!

## A heartfelt thanks to Team WISE

Under the best of circumstances, training for a half marathon requires grit and dedication. Counting down to the actual race day provides inspiration and motivation, all in anticipation of crossing the finish line within a sea of runners. It takes a special commitment and drive to train for your own race, knowing that in the end, your achievement will be quiet and on your own. A



WISE Team members Sarah, Ben, and Zealand at the virtual finish line

## Six years on the air

If you listen to WGXL or The River while driving around the Upper Valley, you are probably very familiar with the words "Hi, I'm Chelsea from WISE..." It is hard to believe that we kicked off our sixth year of WISE Words in September! We are thrilled that the Hypertherm HOPE Foundation has been by our side the whole time, generously supporting our efforts to foster skills in young people to create healthier and safer communities over radio airwaves.



Anya and Nori in the recording studio

Elementary students who first heard WISE Words on the radio in 2016 are now in High School – our prevention messaging has been a consistent part of their mornings as they have grown and matured. There is an instant connection with students when WISE educators first enter the classroom. Students often respond to questions by quoting WISE Words they heard on air. By having a strong foundation already in place, we can build upon the knowledge base and delve into more nuanced material.

WISE Words has evolved over the years, and it keeps getting better and better. Working with local students makes the program truly special and engaging. We could not do it without the enthusiasm of WISE student celebrities, the strong support of local teachers who connect us with their talented students and the Great Eastern Radio production team.

We were delighted to be back in the studio in August after a full year of remote recording. It makes a difference working directly with students both in quality and in building lasting relationships. And new this fall – WISE Words now airs on WYKR (101.3FM) and WTNW (105.1FM/AM1100).



## A new year at Dartmouth

Students are back on campus and we cannot help but notice how firmly rooted our presence is within the Dartmouth community. Each week we receive a number of referrals from different departments, and our walk-in hours on Mondays are packed.

Bailey, the WISE campus advocate, continues to facilitate discussions with Greek Organizations as well as sports teams. Common themes are wanting to learn how to create safe environments for students and how to support survivors. While at times difficult, each conversation illuminates the many opportunities on campus that students can reflect on their environment and influence change to create safer and more equitable experiences within their communities. For us, the conversations provide valuable insight into how the Greek system and smaller campus communities, such as clubs and teams, have unique and often intersecting cultures and spheres of influence. On the whole this generation of students seem to have a lower tolerance for sexual violence in their communities, more willingness to take on personal responsibility for responses, and they access advocacy at higher rates than other years. It is a promising and interesting moment for Greek Life and campus culture as a whole.



Welcoming students back to school



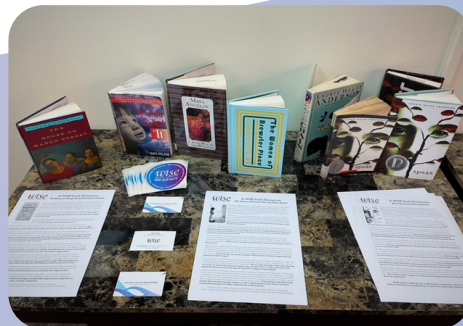
Our campus office DP2 post

Our collaboration with the Dartmouth Athletics DP2 program @dartmouthpeakperformance officially launched July 1. DP2 focuses on student athletes and provides extra support emphasizing holistic well-being. It is a new way to connect with the Dartmouth community. The first posts highlighted our mission and services, introducing WISE to students who are new to campus while deepening our relationship with students who are already familiar with WISE on campus. Content has steadily expanded as we highlight how to recognize abuse and how to support our friends.

## In case you missed it

This past spring, WISE service area expanded to include four new villages in northern Grafton County: Woodsville, Haverhill, Piermont, and Pike.

Without skipping a beat, we focused on building new relationships within these communities, including outreach to local schools. We spent the first week of October at Woodsville High School both



As seen in the Woodsville High library

in the classroom and setting up displays in the library.

With the addition of Woodsville High School, WISE now offers youth violence prevention programming to 38 schools and 10 school districts in the Windsor and Grafton counties.

## Prevention tools

The WISE Prevention and Education Team (aka the PEP squad) is not only in the classroom working with students to build skills around cultivating healthy,

safe, and fulfilling relationships. The PEP squad is also collaborating with adults to reinforce messages, a key component in ending gender-based violence.

We are often asked for our thoughts about supporting young people. With that in mind, we created a booklet that shares our approach. Parents, grandparents, caregivers, coaches, teachers, counselors, and all of us have a role to play in helping kids learn expectations for healthy and safe relationships. We have opportunities every day to help safely navigate the complexities of relationships, cultural norms, and social pressures.

Our new prevention booklet and other prevention tools are accessible on our website at [www.wiseuv.org/who-we-are/#publications](http://www.wiseuv.org/who-we-are/#publications). You can also email [marketing@wiseuv.org](mailto:marketing@wiseuv.org) and we will send you the printed versions.



Celine teaching in a Woodsville High classroom



## Reflections during a pandemic: advocacy and prevention

In FY21, WISE supported 1,362 survivors of gender-based violence. Survivors called us on the crisis line or were connected to us through our relationships with local hospitals, courts, law enforcement, community partners, and schools. A full 67% connected with WISE for the first time. We are heartened to know that so many new people connected with WISE for support considering all the challenges the pandemic created in accessing advocacy such as finding private spaces to talk, eliminating walk-in opportunities at the Program Center, third party systems and access to technology, limited opportunities to connect through community services.

We learned a lot from the pandemic. Our advocacy has always been oriented through in-person relationships. When it became impossible to meet face-to-face, we incorporated new avenues for advocacy resulting in many positive outcomes. With more online options, people in rural communities with limited transportation can virtually meet with us at their convenience, can gain access to the court system and secure protective orders, can participate in our Zoom survivor Art and Writing groups. People, without privacy at work or home, can discreetly reach out for support via webchat. Young people, who prefer texting and instant messaging, have more comfortable ways to contact WISE.

We have started renovating the apartment building we purchased in downtown Lebanon. The transitional apartment building is an extension of the housing options that already exist at WISE, as it allows for increased independence, autonomy, and progress when someone is ready to transition from emergency shelter and communal living. The new building complements the WISE Safe Home, our existing partnerships with local motels to offer emergency shelter, collaborations with local housing organizations, and other housing options.

The WISE Prevention and Education team completely redesigned the prevention curriculum to support schools using remote, in-person, and hybrid models. WISE educators provided programming in parking lots, over Google Classroom, and in classrooms with masked students - however they were able to deliver programming, they did. By creating responsive and adaptive prevention curricula, we also increased accessibility to home-schools and summer camps.



Bethany, WISE shelter and housing coordinator

## Reflections during a pandemic: housing in the Upper Valley

Access to housing in the Upper Valley is consistently the most challenging aspect of our advocacy. There are many barriers for survivors to secure safe, affordable, and sustainable housing. Sometimes, it is particularly difficult due to additional factors such as disabilities, immigration status, and other limitations. COVID-19 further intensified the complicated housing landscape in the Upper Valley.

As the pandemic took hold, and people within cities began migrating to rural areas, an already tight real estate market became impossible. Lebanon, NH has experienced one of the highest influx of COVID migration and people are buying real estate sight unseen. Apartment buildings that we ordinarily could access have been purchased and renovated into either private home or luxury apartments. Dartmouth College did not have sufficient dorm rooms to house all students on campus and offered cash stipends to students to secure off-campus housing. Students with cash in hand are competing for housing in a market that has fewer units available.

And yet, there are incredible stories that brighten the bleak landscape. One special friend to WISE donated rent for six months so that a survivor could stay in an apartment while she worked, saved, and planned her next steps. When she was ready to relocate, we had already fostered a strong relationship with the landlord who made the apartment available for another survivor.

Throughout the pandemic, we have been humbled by the care, concern, and generosity of our very WISE community. People who have baked goodies and meals for survivors, donated clothes for court appearances, toys for children, grocery and gas cards, hiking boots. We have so much appreciation for the many thoughtful ways our community stands together with us in support of survivors.

## FY21 (July 2020 - June 2021) by the numbers

### Advocacy Program

**1,362** total people supported  
**114** average people supported per month  
**911** first time callers  
**76** average first time callers per month

### Youth Violence Prevention Program

**491** lessons  
**2,363** students  
**23** schools  
**8** school districts

### Professional Training

*health professionals, law enforcement, educators*  
**39** presentations  
**795** participants

### Community Engagement

*court observers, ambassadors, volunteer advocates*  
**100+** active volunteers