

# Women's Resource Center in Alamance County Business Plan

## Executive Summary

The Women's Resource Center ("WRC") in Alamance County was established in 1991 to address the need for programs and services specifically for women in Alamance County and to provide a center conveniently located to serve as a clearinghouse for information for all women in the community. The WRC's mission is to *help women and their families improve and enrich their personal and professional lives through education, support services, networking and community resources*. The WRC is a 501 (c) 3 tax-exempt non profit organization that serves Alamance County as well as parts of the surrounding counties of Caswell, Person, Orange and Guilford.

The WRC offers programs and services for displaced homemakers, women in business, parents of adolescents and those interested in advocating for women's issues. Other programs facilitated by Board Members and community volunteers serve specific interests of the membership such as reading, finance, cooking, gardening, hiking and theater.

The WRC is governed by a voluntary Board of Directors and the Executive Director runs the day-to-day operations. The WRC receives support from the North Carolina Department of Administration through the North Carolina Council for Women, United Way of Alamance County, private foundations, corporate sponsorships, individual donations, and fundraisers.

The WRC is the only organization of its kind in Alamance County. Because of the vision of a small group of women in 1989, Alamance County has a viable center for all women in our community. Women can find a resource for virtually every one of their needs by contacting the primary source for women in Alamance County, the WRC.

## Historical overview

- 1988 First Women's Agenda in Alamance County - grassroots advocacy effort that inspired plans for a WRC.
- 1989 Organizers began meeting and created WRC.
- 1991 Received non-profit status from IRS, officially establishing the WRC.
- 1995 Established a physical center with the receipt of Z. Smith Reynolds grant.
- 1996 to present, WRC receives annual Displaced Homemaker Grants pursuant to competitive funding applications.
- 2003 Working Women's Wednesday networking and business development series established.
- 2005 to present, WRC receives United Way funding for Displaced Workers.
- 2008 First Capital Campaign for new location up fit and fixture costs.

## Organizational Structure

The WRC is located at 411-B Fifth Street, Burlington, NC 27215 in First Presbyterian Church's Presbyterian Outreach Center. The facilities allow for space to meet with clients, private offices, an open work area for volunteers, and a conference room for meetings and workshops. This space is offered rent free by First Presbyterian Church as one of their ministries.

The WRC in Alamance County is governed by a voluntary Board of Directors that oversees the business and property of the WRC in Alamance County and is responsible for hiring of the Executive Director. There are three standing committees mandated in our By-Laws: 1) The Executive Committee; 2) Finance Committee; and 3) Governance Committee. Other committees are established as needed to accomplish other business of the organization such as Program, Membership, Fund Development and Public Relations. The Center operates with 3 full-time staff and 1 part-time Administrative Assistant. WRC staff includes an Executive Director, Director of Development and Community Programs, New Choices Program Coordinator and an Administrative Assistant.

## Career Programs

The WRC has three career programs offering options for the varied needs of clients and stakeholders – **New Choices, Piedmont Job Club and Working Women's Wednesdays.**

### *New Choices Program*

From 1996 – 2005, the **New Choices Program** served displaced homemakers with funding from the NC Department of Administration – NC Council for Women. United Way funding enabled the WRC to expand the New Choices Program to include unemployed and underemployed workers. More than half of Alamance County households don't earn enough money to meet their basic needs according to the NC Justice Center's *Making Ends Meet on Low Wages, 2008*. Most agencies dealing with self-sufficiency assistance require clients to be at or below the federal poverty level and/or have a young child in the home. Many of our clients do not meet these guidelines because they earn slightly above the poverty level or they have no children in the home. New Choices focuses on helping clients secure jobs, manage a budget, and become taxpayers, not tax consumers.

*A displaced homemaker is a person who has worked in his or her own household and provided unpaid household services; **and** is unable to secure gainful employment due to a lack of required training, age, or experience; or is unemployed, or underemployed; **and** has been dependent on the income of another household member but is no longer adequately supported by that income, **or** is receiving support but is within two years of losing the support, **or** has been supported by public assistance as the parent of minor children but is no longer eligible, or is within two years of losing the eligibility. (NC Statute § 143B-394.4).*

The **New Choices Program** addresses the self sufficiency needs of clients including employment, budget counseling, education/training, legal assistance, transportation, childcare, housing, food assistance, utility payments (deposits only), and other assistance such as car repairs, library fees, and car insurance. Direct services provided by the WRC include: budget counseling,

4/5/11

job search assistance, career assessment, skills assessment, stipends for transportation and childcare, and funds for legal consultations with a family law attorney who has agreed to provide this service at a reduced rate. Other needs are addressed through referrals to organizations that provide funds and/or resources for housing, food, and training such as Department Social Services, Employment Security Commission, Allied Churches, Loaves and Fishes, Burlington and Graham Housing Authority and Alamance Community College. Emergency financial assistance addresses other needs such as utility deposits, minor car repairs, car insurance or other assistance that stabilizes families as donated emergency assistance funds allow. Services are administered by staff, volunteer mentors, and interns. The **New Choices Program** has served more than 3,000 individuals since 1996.

#### *Piedmont Job Club*

Since 2009, the **Piedmont Job Club** has offered free job search workshops and is open to the public. The four part series runs each month and covers a variety of topics including resumes, interviewing, networking and using social media tools for your job search. The Piedmont Job Club has assisted more than 200 in securing the skills to look for work and secure employment.

#### *Working Women's Wednesdays*

Since August 2003, **Working Women's Wednesdays** has offered professional strategies to meet the needs of working women. Dynamic speakers are specially selected to address today's issues for working women and provide new tools for managing their personal and professional lives. Working Women's Wednesdays creates a time for Alamance County women in business to network. There is no other similar opportunity designed especially for women in business in Alamance County. This successful program currently has 23 corporate sponsors, an average attendance of 85 and an annual profit of \$12,000. The program has also been instrumental in increasing the WRC's financial capacity through an increased donor base and in-kind donations.

### **Community Programs**

The WRC's popular and well-received **Growing Up and Liking It Program** offered since 1999 is a workshop designed for both mothers and their daughters ages 9 - 12. The workshop provides information about the changes that come with puberty and the beginning of menstruation, as well as other physical, emotional, and sexuality issues appropriate for preteens. In 2009, 301 teens between the ages of 15-19 became pregnant in Alamance County, 59th highest out of 100 counties in NC. Seeking to address teenage pregnancy and related issues, this workshop fosters family communication, encourages children to seek sexuality information from their parents, and enables them to learn about, appreciate, and respect their bodies. The Growing Up and Liking It Program is the only program of its kind in our community. It is offered 3 times a year.

Education and advocacy programs such as the **Women's Agenda Assembly** and **Women's Advocacy Day** address public policies affecting women and their families. Other networking activities for our membership include a book club, hiking club and a theater group. The WRC also offers programs on finance, cooking and gardening. These opportunities build social capital among our membership and other women in the community.

## **Public Relations**

The WRC has a comprehensive marketing plan to promote its programs and services to the public, to solicit qualified participants and to gain financial support for the organization.

- Database of more than 4,500 contacts maintained since 1995.
- Newsletter mailed to more than 750 members, donors, sponsors, nonprofits and others for cultivation and information. Newsletters are also posted on our website.
- Use of United Way's Community Council list-serve to send program and services information to nonprofit and service organizations in the community.
- Member of Alamance County Area Chamber of Commerce. Include events in the Chamber Connections magazine, website and in their monthly package to members.
- Executive Director and Program Director serve on various business and service committees and speak at area service and business meetings to educate the community about the WRC.
- New website launched December 2010 with comprehensive content management feature, online registration, and paypal for program payments and donations.
- Constant Contact account established for email notices to over 1,000 contacts, including the most local and state-wide media outlets, program participants and members. Allows for tracking of how many emails read, clicked through to website and opt outs.
- Sponsorships from Times-News and Time Warner Cable annually for Annual Herb Festival that generates attendance of more than 1,500 and raises \$25,000 in profits.
- Membership Committee holds up to 6 membership outreach events around Alamance County annually for membership recruitment and retention.

## **Financial Plan**

*Financial Support.* The WRC receives support from the North Carolina Department of Administration through the North Carolina Council for Women, United Way of Alamance County, private foundations, corporate sponsorships, individual donations, and fundraisers.

- State funding accounts for 28% of current revenue. The WRC receives approximately \$60,000 annually from the North Carolina Council for Women for the New Choices Program to serve displaced homemakers. This is a competitive grant renewable annually and has been received continuously since 1996.
- Fundraising accounts for 27% of current revenue. The WRC's largest fundraiser, the Annual Herb Festival, has taken place for 14 years and currently raises \$25,000 to support programs and services, particularly those expenses that grants don't cover or where funding falls short.
- United Way accounts for 11% of current revenue, supporting clients in our New Choices program who are unemployed or underemployed with job search strategies, training and budget counseling.
- Contributions from individuals account for 13% of revenues. This includes membership dues (minimum of \$30 annually) from our 350+ members as well as additional donations. The balance of revenue is made up of 16% Program Fees which come primarily from our very successful and well-attended Working Women's Wednesdays program. This program currently has 23 corporate sponsors including the Chamber of Commerce and Alamance Regional Medical Center. Corporate donations make up 2% of revenue (exclusive of

4/5/11

program and fundraiser sponsorships). Support from family and corporate foundations make up 3% of revenues and are designated for the New Choices Program.

*Capital Improvements.* The WRC has one long term debt obligation with First Presbyterian Church for the up-fit cost of our current facility. The terms of the loan are interest only with principal balance due and payable by October 2018. The Capital Campaign held in 2008 reduced the original loan of \$86,000 to \$60,000, and \$30,000 of the Capital Campaign funds were used for furniture, phone and computer system updates required for the new space. The Finance Committee oversees this obligation, and makes recommendations to the Board regarding responsible repayment plans. WRC's goal is to repay at least \$7,500 in principal each fiscal year end.

*Reserve Fund.* As part of our sustainability plan, the WRC has a goal of increasing the reserve fund from \$12,000 to \$100,000 by year end 2013. The objective is to build cash reserves that are invested safely and are liquid. This would cover a minimum of six months of operating expense and allow all of the current programs and services to continue in the event of State or United Way funding cuts. Revenues for funding the reserve fund will be generated by a combination of the following strategies: Annual Women Aid projects held by Board Members; grants by corporations and foundations; planned giving, and financial gifts from individual and business donors.

*Plan for Increased Funding and Membership.* The goal over the next two to five years will be to increase grants and grant funds from foundations, United Way and state and federal government. This may involve adding programming consistent with the mission of the WRC. Contributions from individuals will be increased over the next five years through the creation of a Women's Giving Circle. This project will begin in the summer of 2011 with a development strategy to recruit a minimum of 20 women who will commit to an annual gift of \$1,000. Women who have a history of giving to the organization and others in the community will be targeted and cultivated for this initiative. The goal for membership is to reach 500 members (with a minimum contribution of \$30 annually) by the end of 2011. This will be accomplished through a campaign by soliciting current 350 members to recruit at least one new member. Membership committee will also continue to plan an event every other month that involves members and keeps them active and engaged. The membership committee will survey the membership every three to four years to assist with membership recruitment and retention.

*Operations.* Another goal for Personnel and Finance Committees is, by 2014, to reach industry standards for salary and benefits for all staff based on statewide survey information such as the Salaries and Benefits in North Carolina's Nonprofits (produced by the NC Center for Nonprofits).

## **Conclusion**

The needs in our community recognized more than twenty years ago have grown as the dynamics of families have become more complex. As seen from our clients and community, we are adapting to meet the challenges faced by so many individuals and families. Over the next few years, as we strive to secure our own financial security, we will be finalizing a five year Strategic Plan to address these needs. We are committed to being the primary resource for women in Alamance County.

Approved by Board of Directors: 4/4/11