



COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF CENTRAL WISCONSIN

Women's Fund of Portage County

SPARK! COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

MARCH 5, 2024

INCLUSA ATRIUM, THE COMMONS COMMUNITY NON-PROFIT CENTER

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SPARK! CONVERSATIONS

Mental and Behavioral
Health Access for
Portage County Women.

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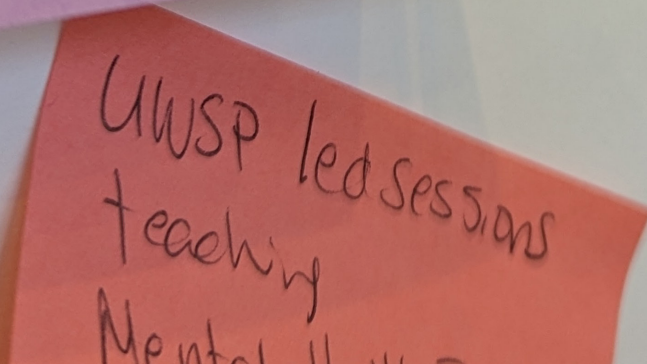
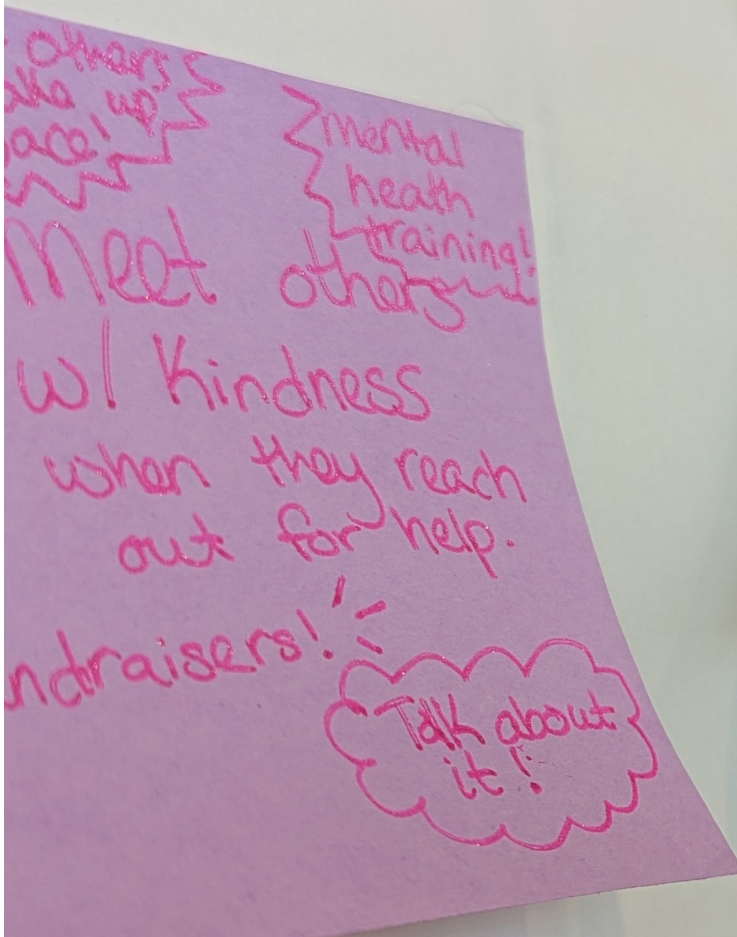
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The Women's Fund of Portage County: Centering learning for greater impact

The Women's Fund engages in community conversations to keep current with priorities of Portage County women to help inform our grant-making. This spring, our conversation focused on mental and behavioral health education and access for women at every stage of life. Women continue to meet barriers in seeking support. Mental well-being relates to other areas of security for women including housing, financial, childcare, education, and belongingness. At the winter *SPARK! Conversations* event, we were able to learn



from community experts working with Portage County residents what factors are impacting women's behavioral and mental health, when women and girls are seeking support, how women are navigating health care systems to utilize resources, and what barriers continue to exist in receiving mental health support.

The Women's Fund was proud to have our guest panel share their perspectives as service providers and administrators as well as the perspectives from their clients. Joining the panel were Angela Cook (Aspirus Behavioral Health Residential Treatment Center), Maureen Miller (Aging and Disability Resource Center), Michelle Nelson (Aspirus Health, Prevent Suicide Portage County), Dr. Jason Siewert (UWSP Counseling Center), and Nicki Williams (Aspirus Health Director of Behavioral Health). Participants also engaged in small group discussions to define how community philanthropy can fill the needs gap and to describe what the community's role is in providing a continuum of support for all Portage County women. This report shares the ideas and resources participants generated during small group discussions to spark innovation and action within our community.

SPARK! CONVERSATIONS IN FUNDED IN PART BY OUR WONDERFUL COLLABORATOR AND ALLY SPONSORS:



AND THROUGH OUR FOUNDING PARTNERS:





Photo by KaYing Vang



Guest panel: Angela Cook, Maureen Miller, Michelle Nelson, Nicki Williams, Dr. Jason Siewert.
Photo by KaYing Vang

Increasing Education and Reducing Stigma

A common question among conversation participants was how can we engage in early interventions to prevent trauma that negatively impacts mental health. According to our guest panelists, they are seeing women seek support when they are in crisis. There is still stigma around engaging in mental and behavioral health resources and a need for further education and allyship to normalize support to prevent crisis. In particular, participants reflected that women often don't occupy space they

deserve to ensure they are being heard and their health and well-being is being prioritized. Women can serve as allies to each other, encouraging discussion and connection around mental health, championing wellness routines, and support engagement in local mental health resources. Additional feedback from SPARK! small groups included:

- Establish Mental Health First Aid training for interested community members
- Encourage all employers to share CAP services Mental Health Navigator with employees
- Support “pop-up” wellness classes at Elementary Schools
- Invite mental health professionals to organizations/groups to share strategies for good self-care

A significant barrier identified in discussion was the difficulty navigating health care systems when seeking support. Participants suggested:

- Continue to advocate for less bureaucracy within health care system
- Raise awareness about gaps in health care system
- Provide more transparency in navigating health care systems

How to be an ally

LISTENING

LEARNING

ADVOCATING

TAKING ACTION FOR THE
BENEFIT OF SOMEONE ELSE

Leading with Kindness

Every individual has the capacity to make a difference for someone who is struggling or looking for a sense of belonging. Showing kindness to neighbors was the most repeated feedback from conversation participants. Taking a moment to listen, sharing support resources, inviting individuals to community events like Levitt Amp are all ways to help women feel integrated into a caring community where they are seen, heard, and valued. Fear can deter us from connecting and making a difference. How can we lead with empathy, curiosity, and kindness to create a welcoming community for everyone? And how can we all feel secure in showing kindness, especially when many women have experienced trauma connected to violence and neglect. Participants added that safe spaces are essential and can be created through faith communities, youth organizations, volunteer affinity support groups, and arts programming to benefit mental health for all women.



Photo by KaYing Vang



Promoting Awareness and Financial Support

To address barriers and gaps in support, conversation participants acknowledged ways the community can be proactive filling needs.

- Sponsor hygiene and clothing drives for women engaged in in-patient treatment
- Build an after-care fund to financially support women leaving in-patient care
- Expand affordable and reliable public transportation
- Build resources and funding to existing organizations that are already filling the gap like One Big Tent of Portage County.
- Support and share resources from local service providers such as Portage County Health and Human Services, ODC Inc., Aging and Disability Resource Center, Aspirus Health, Family Health La Clinica, Health First, Marshfield Clinic, CAP Services, Portage County Partnership for Prevention, Prevent Suicide Portage County.
- Engage women in community philanthropy through campaigns such as *100 Women* to compound giving and impact in the community.

Building Resources

With the demand for mental and behavioral health support for women in Portage County remaining high, conversation participants offered ways to expand current resources.

- Create more group counseling opportunities to reduce wait times.
- Regularly host public events to raise mental health awareness.
- Routinely promote mental and behavioral health resources especially for under-utilized services.
- Create/participate in women mentor/mentee partnerships.
- Increase organizational collaborations to share resources and build new opportunities of support.
- Engage in and support performing arts opportunities, outdoor recreation, and other activities that promote good mental health and belongingness.

Thank you!

Organizations represented at SPARK! Community Conversations

- Community Foundation of Central Wisconsin
- Central Wisconsin Symphony Orchestra
- Aspirus Residential Behavioral Health Treatment Center
- Aspirus Health, Behavioral Health
- Prevent Suicide Portage County
- Stevens Point Area YMCA
- Stevens Point Area Schools
- CAP Services
- Health First Network
- Family Health La Clinica
- Delta Dental
- UWSP Counseling Center
- UWSP Sentry School of Business and Economics
- UWSP Child Learning and Care Center
- Beloved Community Stevens Point
- One Big Tent of Portage County
- Boys and Girls Club of Portage County
- Inclusa Foundation
- ODC Inc.
- Stevens Point Housing Authority
- United Way of Portage County
- Salvation Army
- First Business Bank



Promoting Resources

We all can build awareness for the local resources we have available to anyone seeking well-being, mental health education and guidance, and behavioral health support.

CAP Services

MENTAL HEALTH NAVIGATOR

Free and confidential program to connect Portage and Waupaca County residents to mental health and community resources.

Peace of Mind Portage County

NETWORK OF CARE FOR MENTAL WELLNESS

A United Way of Portage County hosted website for individuals, families, and agencies seeking mental wellness services, laws, and related information.

ONE BIG TENT OF PORTAGE COUNTY

Partnership of diverse, faith-based organizations and community agencies that help residents navigate human services and community connections.

NAMI, PORTAGE AND WOOD COUNTIES

National Alliance on Mental Illness provides advocacy, education, support and public awareness around mental illness.

National Council for Mental Wellbeing

MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID

Find training to assist someone experiencing a mental health or substance abuse crisis.



The Women's Fund of Portage County: Refreshed Mission

We champion issues important to women and mobilize all women to give, engage, connect, and support one another.

The Women's Fund of Portage County has provided grants to organizations that support women and local issues most important to women for over 25 years. This year we set priority funding areas from our summer *SPARK! Conversations* event where we gathered local non-profit organizations with programs that center women. From our discussions, areas of most concern for women are mental and behavioral health access, child care expansion, and financial security. These priority areas were confirmed by the United Way LIFE report. The Women's Fund set our FY 2024 granting goals to prioritize these areas and we are very proud to support programs from our grantees!

Celebrating our 2024 Grantees

- UWSP Child Learning and Care Center
- CAP Services, Inc.
- Boys & Girls Club of Portage County
- Aspirus Health Foundation
- Stevens Point Area YMCA
- UWSP, Women's and Gender Studies
- Childcaring, Inc.

The Women's Fund of Portage County is committed to supporting endeavors that center women. Reach out to learn how you or your organization can partner with us. Join our email list so you don't miss out on future events. Contact Sarah Ross, Director, for more information.

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GIVE ONLINE AT:

<https://cfcwi.org/womensfundpc/>



Photos by KaYing Vang

Save the date! WF Spring Luncheon is back! FRIDAY, MAY 3RD, 11:30A-1P

The Women's Fund of Portage County is bringing back our spring luncheon! And we are so excited to welcome labor economist **Dr. Laura Dresser** as our keynote speaker. Join us for lunch at the Food + Farm Exploration Center in Plover, celebrate our 2024 grantee organizations, and network with engaged women across Portage County. Tickets will be available March 29.



Dr. Laura Dresser