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## Salute to Women in Business: Honoring Women's History Month

Each year, MailMax and Cornerstone Alliance proudly collaborate to launch National Women's History Month, celebrating the extraordinary achievements of resilient and determined women right here in Southwest Michigan.

Since 1987, the United States has officially designated March as National Women's History Month, recognizing the vital contributions of women in history, society, and culture. This annual observance serves as

a reminder that every woman has a unique story and invaluable contributions to share with the world.

Empowering Women, Shaping the Future

As we enter this special month, we invite you to join us in honoring the bold, trailblazing women who have paved the way for future generations. Whether through entrepreneurship, education, leadership, or community service, women continue to redefine success and break barriers.

March was chosen to coincide with International Women's Day on March 8, a global celebration of women's social, economic, and political achievements. The movement traces its roots back to Women's History Day in 1978, first observed in Sonoma, California. What began as a local event with essay contests, presentations, and a community parade soon gained national momentum. By 1980, the National Women's History Alliance successfully advocated for official recognition, prompting President Jimmy Carter to declare the week of March 8 as National Women's History Week. Within a year, Congress passed a resolution to formalize the observance, and by 1987, the celebration expanded to encompass the entire month of March.

### Celebrating Women in Business

This Women's History Month, we salute the female entrepreneurs, executives, and professionals who are making an impact in Southwest Michigan and beyond. Their leadership, creativity, and perseverance drive innovation and economic growth in our communities.

Let's use this time to empower and support women in business, education, and leadership. Whether it's mentoring, investing, or simply recognizing their hard work, every effort contributes to a future where women continue to thrive.

To learn more about National Women's History Month, visit [www.womenshistorymonth.gov](http://www.womenshistorymonth.gov) or scan the QR code with your smartphone.



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## Why National Women's History Month is Important

### 1. We haven't given women their due attention

For many years, women weren't acknowledged enough in historical texts. This isn't because they weren't in the midst of important discoveries or helping out with important conquests. It's mainly because men wrote the majority of historical documents for thousands of years. In March, we dig deep to uncover many of the important roles women have played throughout history.

### 2. Women are inspirational

Learning about women who have stood up for their rights and fought for what they believe is fantastic motivation. We all have the power to influence the direction our world is headed in, and National Women's History Month reminds us of that.

### 3. It recognizes the strength and power of women

It's easy to get caught up in the grind of daily life, but this month is an excellent opportunity to put a spotlight on all of the major things women accomplish each and every day. From domestic chores and carrying babies to fighting wars and governing countries, women are pretty darn amazing.

## 5 Powerful Facts about Women

### 1. Women have always been present

Women have always been present in the military, temporarily and voluntarily.

### 2. Army Nurse and Navy Nurse divisions

The Army Nurse Corps was created in 1901 and the Navy Nurse Corps was created in 1908.

### 3. Progressive 1900s

Married women were allowed to own property in their own name and keep their own wages in the 1900s.

### 4. First of its kind

The first college to accept women was Salem College, founded in 1772.

### 5. Who runs the world?

More than 30% of all businesses today are owned and run by women.

## How to observe National Women's History Month

### 1. Put it in writing

Think of a woman you look up to and admire. She can be someone in your personal life or a public figure. Write her a letter describing the impact she has had on your life. Your thoughtful gesture is sure to be appreciated.

### 2. Have a girl's lunch

Lunch, breakfast, or dinner – it doesn't matter. Grab your granny, cousin Cheryl, or great-aunt Mimi and grab a bite to eat. Having the chance to spend some one-on-one time with the lovely ladies in your life is a great way to reconnect and remind them how much they mean to you. Who knows, they may even tell some interesting stories you've never heard before.

### 3. Read up on women's history

There are some excellent museums dedicated entirely to the accomplishments of women. If you don't happen to live near one of these places, many venues set up special exhibits during National Women's History Month.

[www.nationaltoday.com/national-womens-history-month](http://www.nationaltoday.com/national-womens-history-month)

## About Us

The **Women's Business Center (WBC) at Cornerstone Alliance** has been helping small businesses start and grow in Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren Counties since 2004. We offer resources such as business training, mentorship, and funding access, all aimed at empowering women entrepreneurs and fostering a vibrant local economy.

## Mission

Empower women entrepreneurs with opportunities to achieve financial independence within Southwest Michigan.

## Vision

Be the leading entrepreneur service to create a powerful community of woman-owned small businesses that are the source of economic impact in Cass, Berrien and Van Buren counties.

## Values

Empowerment, Trust, Collaboration, Inclusivity, Creative Solutions, Accountability

Whatever the needs or stage of a business, the WBC provides **four main services** to support entrepreneurs:

### 1. Technical Assistance

One-on-one business counseling, business incorporation and licensing, and business plans

### 2. Education

Operations, finance, and marketing

### 3. Financing

Access to financial resources, loan application support, and credit repair referrals

### 4. Connections

Networking events, referrals to support services, business directory



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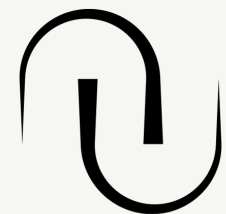


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Sarah McKay, founder of Stonegate Weight Management and Wellness, started her business to offer better healthcare for those struggling with weight management. With decades of experience as a Nurse Practitioner, Sarah was frustrated by the changing medical field and its focus on shorter appointments and less personalized care. After reaching out to the Women's Business Center (WBC) for guidance, they helped her refine her marketing, connect with local gyms, and host a successful grand opening. Today, Sarah's business is flourishing, surpassing sales projections, and she has hired staff to support its growth. Her dedication to empowering individuals to reclaim their health and well-being has made her a valued entrepreneur in the community.

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### WBC Client Spotlight

Faith Boal, the founder of Bucktown Parlor, has turned her passion for body art into a thriving tattoo studio in Buchanan, MI. As a talented artist and entrepreneur, Faith has created a welcoming space where clients can express their unique stories through custom tattoos. Breaking barriers in a traditionally male-dominated industry, she is proud to be a young woman business owner and a trailblazer in the local entrepreneurial community. Bucktown Parlor blends Faith's creative vision with a deep understanding of her clients' aspirations, providing a one-of-a-kind tattoo experience.

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## WBC Client Spotlight



Debbie Uhrig, founder of Isabella Grace LLC, has created a unique craft retreat and creative gathering space for artists, writers, crafters, and more. Located in Dowagiac, Isabella Grace LLC offers a welcoming environment where individuals and groups can connect, create, and enjoy customized workshops. The retreat combines beautiful facilities with on-site retail for craft supplies, creating an inspiring space for creativity to flourish. Isabella Grace LLC was born out of her passion for crafting and the enriching experience she had attending quilting retreats. Looking to make a lasting impact on the local creative community, Debbie's business offers a range of events, from private gatherings to public workshops, with plans to expand and grow throughout 2025. To learn more about Isabella Grace LLC, visit their Facebook page at Isabella Grace LLC

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**WBC Client Spotlight**



Tara Kelley, owner of The Dirty Baker in Coloma, was recently awarded a \$5,000 startup grant for marketing services through a pitch competition hosted by the Women's Business Center (WBC) at Cornerstone Alliance. Kelley, a passionate baker who specializes in homemade cookies, cake balls, and cupcakes, plans to use the funds to help grow her catering services and promote her business. Known for her motto "I bake someone happy," Kelley is dedicated to spreading joy through her baked goods. She emphasizes the importance of supporting small businesses in the community, believing that it helps local economies thrive. The Dirty Baker is now working with LIV Social, owned by Olivia Steinke, to expand its reach and bring sweet treats to special events.

To learn more about The Dirty Baker, visit their **Facebook page** or call 269-470-5210.



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## Fast-growing and High-paying Careers for Women

After a tumultuous year with many ups and downs, there may finally be a light at the end of the tunnel. Growing confidence that the worst of the pandemic may be behind us has led many people to take inventory of their careers.

Women looking to change jobs soon may be exploring their options as they look for fulfilling, lucrative careers. The following are some profitable, in-demand career options, courtesy of the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and Forbes.com.

- **Chief executive officer:** CEOs are instrumental in both public- and private-sector industries. They are the top of the managerial food chain, and as such, command competitive salaries. A female CEO can expect to earn a median income of \$90,000-\$95,000.

- **Civil engineer:** The BLS predicts civil engineer jobs will grow by 11 percent by 2026. Civil engineers will be responsible for revamping aging infrastructure, including roads, dams and bridges. An average salary is \$67,000 per year.

- **Nurse practitioner:** Health care jobs are booming and in demand. Working independently or in collaboration with physicians, nurse practitioners provide primary care or specialize in various concentrations. Nurse practitioners earn a median annual income of \$98,000.

- **Pharmacist:** In addition to harboring a passion for providing quality health care to their communities, pharmacists often have a love for the chemistry involved in medications. Pharmacists must be licensed and possess a Doctor of Pharmacy degree. Pharmacists work in retail settings, but also in hospitals and clinics. The average annual salary for pharmacists is \$98,000.

- **Computer and system information manager:** A growing focus on inclusivity within STEM fields means now is a great time for women to pursue careers in these lines of work. Computer and information system managers plan, coordinate and direct the work of computer professionals while researching the latest trends in technology. Opportunities within this profession are expected to grow by 12 percent by 2026. Individuals in this field earn a median salary of \$90,000.

- **Management analysts:** Management analysts are brought in to find ways to make an organization more profitable or improve its efficiency. Travel and consultation may be likely, so those should be considerations. Management analysts earn an average annual income of around \$75,000.

- **Software developer:** Keeping up with the technological times means having up-to-date equipment and software. Software developers help to write code or design applications for company use. This is a quickly growing field in which professionals earn average annual salaries of \$85,000.

High-paying, stable jobs are out there for women who are in the market for a career change or trying to decide which fields to pursue.

## Celebrating 10 Years in Business!



From left to right, Jennifer Fillwock, Nicole Trux, Brooke Roberts, Natalie Bailey, Mallory Richards and Lisa Van Pelt.

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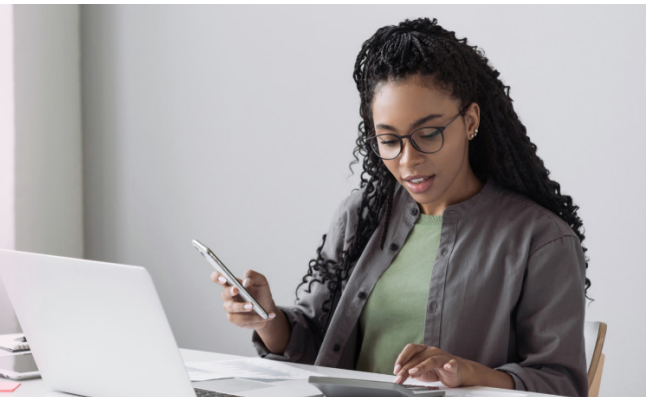
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## How to Create a Greater Work/life Balance

A more even balance between professional and personal life is a goal for many individuals. The demands of work too often extend beyond traditional working hours, leaving many professionals to confront work-related challenges long after they've left the office or left the desks in their home offices. With work never more than a smartphone notification away, it can be hard to create and maintain work-life balance.

Work-life balance is rarely discussed in terms of individuals' overall health, but that could be a mistake. In fact, the organization Mental Health America® notes that when workers' lives are balanced and workers are happy, they are more productive, take fewer sick days and are more likely to remain in their jobs. Each of those things benefits workers and employers equally.

With so much to gain from creating a greater balance between work and life, professionals can consider these tips to do just that.

- **Make a concerted effort to be an effective communicator.** MHA notes the benefits of being honest with colleagues and superiors when challenges feel overwhelming. Open and effective communication can be a great way to solve work-related problems, but MHA urges professionals to remain calm and suggest practical alternatives when confronting such issues. Simply accepting more work or responsibilities when you already feel overwhelmed can tip the scales even further away from an even work-life balance.

- **Establish manageable daily goals.** MHA reports that research has found that individuals feel less stressed about work when they feel as though they have more control over it. Setting daily goals is a great way to achieve that sense of control, and this can be as simple as creating a daily to-do list.

- **Seek alternatives to your working arrangement.** Previously unthinkable working arrangements are now possible after companies were forced to confront pandemic-related changes to their operations. If you've found it impossible to create an equitable balance between work and life, speak with your supervisor about alternatives to your arrangement. Flex time and hybrid working are some measures that could ensure you have as much time for your personal life as your professional life.

- **Unplug at the end of the workday.** One of the simpler, though not necessarily easier, ways to create and maintain a greater work-life balance is to unplug at the end of the workday. Turn off work-related smartphone notifications at the end of the work day so you aren't tempted to work during those of times of day that you've earmarked for your personal life. Smartphones can be addictive, so unplugging could test your resilience. If possible, block work-related notifications automatically after a certain time each day so you don't have to turn them off manually. Once the blocking is automated, you might not think twice about all those missed emails.

There's no secret formula for establishing a healthy work-life balance. But various strategies can help professionals achieve greater balance between their professional and personal lives.




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Get ready for a weekend of shopping, sipping, saving and celebrating women-owned businesses in beautiful downtown St. Joseph! From March 7-9, nearly two dozen businesses are rolling out the red carpet with special offers, unique events and fun activities. It's the perfect opportunity for a girls' getaway or a chance to support your local community.

Downtown St. Joseph is buzzing with excitement for Women's Weekend! Enjoy exclusive discounts, delicious treats and one-of-a-kind experiences at participating businesses. Whether you're looking for a relaxing spa day, unique gifts or a fun night out with friends, you'll find it all here. Support the amazing women entrepreneurs who make our community thrive!

Here's a taste of what's in store: Delectable treats at The Cheese Lady, The Culinary Cottage, Dad's Farm & Cafe and Perennial Accents. Fabulous finds at Forever Clean Soap Works, Gallery on the Alley, Harbor Town Interiors, Wild Ginger, Yours Truly Elizabeth, Oh My Darlings!, Lana's Boutique, Waterfront House of Framing & Fashion and more! Relax and rejuvenate at Revive Spa and Statements Style Lounge. Sip and socialize at Lazy Ballerina Winery, St. Joe Community Taproom and St. Joe Wine Shoppe. Plus, special lodging discounts at the Inn at Harbor Shores with promo code WWSTJOE and creative fun at The Lilac Loft.

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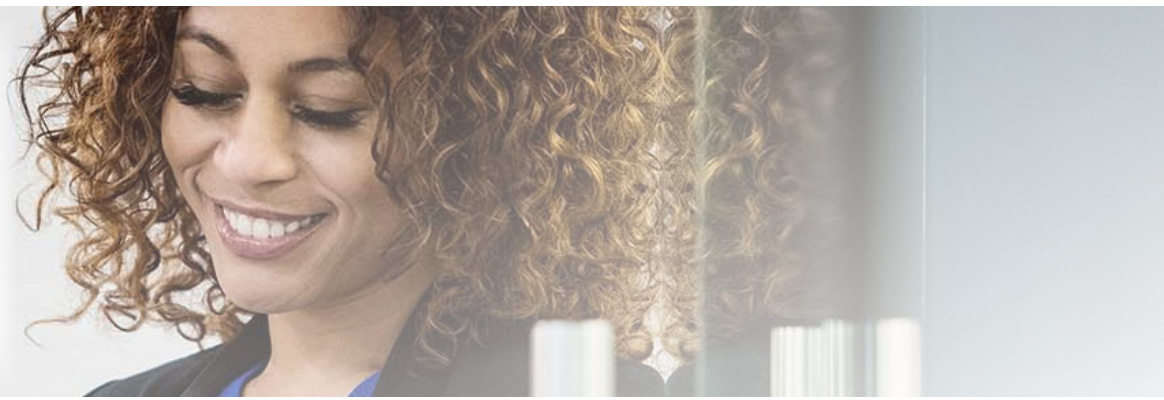


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WOMEN'S BUSINESS CENTER  
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## Women helping women – one woman at a time

100 Women Strong is a nonprofit organization, founded in 1998, that provides modest, one-time financial assistance to women in Berrien County who are ineligible for other community or state resources but find themselves in need of emergency help. Thanks to 100 Women Strong, these women do not have to quit a job, drop out of school, or let their health or their children's health deteriorate because no assistance was available. Individual Berrien County women who have an emergency financial need and meet the fund's qualifications may receive one-time financial assistance for an amount up to \$500 from 100 Women Strong. Over the past two decades, 100 Women Strong has helped hundreds of women in meeting tens of thousands of dollars' worth of emergency needs.

Throughout Berrien County, there are women who are working hard to improve their lives and the lives of their families. 100 Women Strong works by helping these women get past unexpected financial obstacles that threaten their

efforts to remain or become self-sufficient.

100 Women Strong bridges a variety of needs:

- New Eyeglasses
- Automobile Repairs
- Emergency Dental Care
- College Tuition
- Utility Bills (water, gas, and electric)
- Rent and Mortgage Payments
- And much more

100 Women Strong also offers a scholarship in partnership with Lake Michigan College open to all women attending classes. We firmly believe that self-sufficiency cannot be reached and maintained without our community women being given every opportunity to grow and thrive in their educational, professional, and personal lives.

Nothing we say demonstrates the difference this emergency financial need can make for a woman quite as well as their own words:

"I just want to speak on the help I received. I fell on hard times, and I filled out paperwork for assistance. Typically, due to the pay bracket I'm in, I get denied through government assistance. 100 Women Strong stepped in right when I needed help and didn't deny me based on my income. We all need help sometimes and I was very grateful and think this is a great program for people like me who can't get help anywhere else. I've referred friends and even attended an event hosted by 100 Women Strong. It was lots of fun!" – Brandi C.

For further information on how you may qualify for assistance or wish to become a donor or join us on our Board, please call our Hotline (maintained through our strong partnership with another Community organization: Mosaic CCDA) at 269-332-1890, visit the group online at [www.100womenstrongberrien.com](http://www.100womenstrongberrien.com), or "Like" our Facebook page: [www.facebook.com/100womenstrong](http://www.facebook.com/100womenstrong).

# THE WOMEN OF CORNERSTONE ALLIANCE

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BERRIEN COUNTY



(Front Row Standing) Chrissy Meek - Senior Manager, Women's Business Center;  
(Front Row L to R Sitting) Jillian Nadolski - Manager, Sites and Assets Development, Marla Schneider - President/CEO, Ashlee Herzog - Executive Assistant/Customer Experience Coordinator;  
(Middle Row L to R Sitting) Rachel Scharnowske - Marketing and Communications Manager, Jenna Huffman-Schmidt - Community Engagement Manager, Missy Holden - Director, First Choice;  
(Back Row L to R Standing) Brandy Jaquez - Managing Director, Women's Business Center, Christina Frank - Executive Vice President



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The economy of Berrien County is advancing because of these strong women.  
Reach out to them for assistance in growing your business.



## Women's Service League

The Women's Service League is a nonprofit group consisting of talented local women who are dedicated to fostering volunteerism and enhancing the community through positive actions and leadership. Their mission is to raise awareness, funding, support, and overall growth for various charities, organizations, and community events that serve the under served population of South-west Michigan.

Since its establishment in 1931, the committed members of the Women's Service League have generously donated their time and skills to establish numerous well-known events in Southwestern Michigan. From the annual Charity Ball to Operation Coats, each initiative by WSL contributes to advancing the goals of other civic and charitable organizations. Over the years, countless groups have benefited from the support of the Women's Service League. Furthermore, WSL nurtures volunteerism and service among the next generation of leaders through the annual Athena Scholarship, which is awarded to one or two outstanding young individuals that represent the culture that WSL stands for which is volunteering.

WSL focuses mostly towards completing service projects for other local nonprofit organizations. Whether it is crafting art projects, painting walls, tidying yards, or creating blankets, members of the Women's Service League united to have fun and serve others together.

Furthermore, they are deeply committed to fundraising efforts for this year's selected charity, the Readiness Center of Benton Harbor, which serves to provide a safe and nurturing environment where children can learn while also providing them with the tools necessary to succeed in school. Several activities and initiatives are being planned to not only raise essential funds for the Readiness Center, but also to raise awareness of the great work they do for the youth in our community.

The Women's Service League is a supportive sisterhood that, decade after decade, continues to make a significant impact on the communities of Southwest Michigan through service and fundraising. This year, the WSL is set out to achieve overall awareness for the league and are hopeful to add new members to the league and all the good work they do throughout the year. For those interested in joining, please email [wslpink@gmail.com](mailto:wslpink@gmail.com) for more information.



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