



COVID-19

How we Respond, Recover, and Thrive.

ABSTRACT

In less than five months, Covid-19 has upended almost all expectations for 2020. Beyond the loss of life and the fear caused by the pandemic, like many others WOT faced disruptions at a speed and scale unprecedented in the modern era.

As an organization that has relied on connecting, collaborating, and contributing in-person, the pandemic has caused unprecedented disruptions to our programs and services when we made the difficult decision to cancel all our in-person activities at the onset of the pandemic. It was a difficult decision by our leadership team, but it was the right decision, as nothing is more valuable than our community health and safety.

For our leadership team, this is the time to recover and “push forward”. We believe in the organization’s goals to help advance the quality of the lives of our community. We believe in why we do what we do as an organization and understand with every difficulty comes ease. With every adversity comes opportunity.

Nina Corder

Managing Director

Email: nina@womenoftoledo.org

Phone: 419.377.5457



Overview

Women of Toledo (WOT) had a great start for 2020.

We received commitments from more than twenty partnerships with 70% partners new to the organization for our 2020 Annual Women Empowerment Summit scheduled for April 2020.

In February, WOT successfully organized a Black History month campaign highlighting not only the black women historians but also eighteen of our local leaders and mentors in the community. We continue strong at advocating for diversity and inclusion and believe Black History Month is not only a celebration of history and the past but also celebrates the present and the future. We believe that we must nurture and support the goal of learning from the past and reflecting on the present to create a more equitable future. The campaign received 80% of new followers with 28% new engagement to all our social media platforms while increasing our newsletters subscribers by 62%. We were excited to organize a similar campaign for Immigrant Heritage Month in June.

Without a doubt, 2020 will create another successful milestone in our impact report as we wrapped up year-five of operating. In less than five months, Covid-19 has upended almost all expectations for 2020. Beyond the loss of life and the fear caused by the pandemic, like many others WOT faced disruptions at a speed and scale unprecedented in the modern era.

As an organization that has relied on connecting, collaborating, and contributing in-person, COVID-19 has caused unprecedented disruptions to our programs and services when we made the difficult decision to cancel all our in-person activities at the onset of the pandemic. It was a difficult decision by our leadership team, but it was the right decision, as nothing is more valuable than our community health and safety.

Natalie M. Pereira, a Registered Nurse (RN) - "*We're all scared, because we're all just as human as everybody else. However, because we made the decision to be nurses, we go into work every day.*"

This unprecedented time presents a decision for each of us to choose: we can choose to lay low and binge Netflix, or we can choose to challenge ourselves to step up, push forward and embrace growth even when it is uncomfortable.

According to Global Change Expert, Dr. Michelle Rozen, "Our brain does not like not knowing". Uncertainty stresses the brain out and we need resources, ideas, and thoughts to fill the information gap in our mind.

For WOT, three words: **Respond, Recover and Thrive**



At WOT, we are using our creativity to continue connecting with our female community.

Beyond what we can create, we can practice generosity by being a good neighbor, family member, and friend. We are staying connected with our community through technology, asking what we can do to help those who may need it, supporting other nonprofits efforts, and staying positive.

Above all, it is important to be thankful for what we have in times like these. What we can do is take the time to shift our perspective from what we are missing out on to be grateful for what we have at this moment.

We all agreed, this pandemic has brought tragedy and chaos to our lives. Throughout history, we have seen that crisis like this do not just test our resolve. They can also build our resilience

So we Respond.

Despite this setback, we are still committed to serving our community, especially our female community members. For more than three years, WOT has focused on our mission to help our members to keep moving forward. This enduring mission guides us as we closely monitor, assess, and respond to COVID-19.

Resilient leaders are skilled at triage, able to stabilize their organizations to meet the crisis at hand while finding opportunities amid difficult constraints. Hence, we aim for speed over elegance. We took decisive action with courage based on imperfect information, knowing that expediency is essential.

In response, we have implemented our continuity plan to engage our female community. We are proud to launch a new virtual learning and connecting space. We want our community to continue to lean in with our organization for support, connection with other women, and access to new skills and resources. This online platform will allow our community to continue creating a mentorship and peer network circle to share ideas, offer support, or seek advice.

Power Hours. During the Ohio Governor Mike DeWine, Stay at Home phase, we managed to organize 20 Power Hour series sessions and maintained **173 participants** with 47% being new to WOT. We partnered with 25 women speakers and experts from various fields of business, human behavior, health wellness, advocacy, and mental health care to share their resources and knowledge with the group. A total of 9 sessions offered resources and strategies, and 5 sessions offered skills and well-being on how to cope during the pandemic. In addition, few of the sessions offered a playback on our YouTube channel for later viewing.



**** Pg.3 to 5 provide an overview of all 20 series Power Hour COVID-19 sessions or for more details, kindly visit www.womneoftoledo.org/powerhour or continue reporting on pg. 5.**

Date	Topic	Overview
24-Mar	Resilience	We are resilient, courageous, and vulnerable. We are capable of delivering even it filled with many uncertainties. We kick off our first virtual power hour series during COVID-19, so our female community can continue educating, engaging, and empowering yourself to continue to thrive and keep moving forward.
26-Mar	Wellness	We care about our well-being as individuals and communities.
31-Mar	Advocacy & Equal Pay	On March 31 2020 is part of a nationwide campaign to mark “Equal Pay Day,” the symbolic day up to which the average woman must work in a particular year to catch up with what her male counterpart earned the previous year. On average, women in the U.S. are paid 20% less than men. If you break it down by race and ethnicity, the gap is even worse. Black women are paid 39% less and Latinas are paid 47% less than white men.
2-Apr	Managing your Finances	Empowered by Managing your Finance during Covid-19.
7-Apr	Gratitude	"Gratitude is the most important thing to keep in mind as we face the uncertainty surrounding the COVID-19. It is important to be thankful for what we have in times like these. It can be hard for all of our plans and expectations to be completely halted. This situation is completely unparalleled and none of us know exactly how to react. What we can do is take the time to shift our perspective from what we're missing out on to be grateful for what we have in this moment" -Dupont
9-Apr	Emotional Intelligence	Emotional Intelligence: Never before have these skills been more important than they are now- self-awareness, empathy, optimism, stress tolerance to name a few. In this power hour, we can spend a little time defining each of the skills and then let participants determine which skill is most important to their well-being in these difficult times.
14-Apr	Facts or Fiction	Have you watched or heard of the new Netflix Series called Self Made? It's supposed to be inspired by the life of Madam CJ Walker, an African American millionaire who was a beast in the hair care industry. We love that. But what we don't love is how the series falsified conversations between her and Booker T. Washington. And it made another African American self-made millionaire woman named Annie Malone, a villain. This virtual series help discuss what Facts and Fiction in this Netflix Series and how we can preserve our legacy and story. This is your time to write YOUR story.
16-Apr	Family	The impact of having all routine disrupted is a challenge for all families. In the mere weeks since our lives have been upended, you most probably have never felt so connected and disconnected in your life with someone you love, your family.



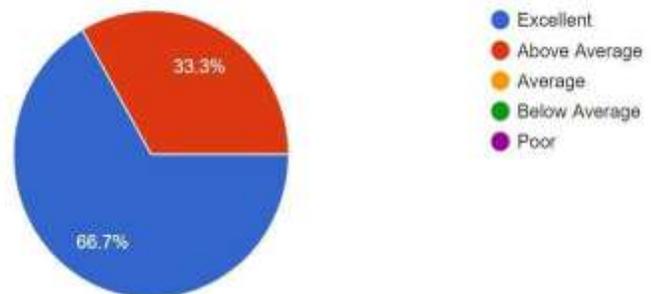
Date	Topic	Overview
21-Apr	Collaboration vs. Competition	<p>For this session, Jonelle will share her letter to women in Toledo on Collaborating versus Competing.</p> <p>Would you consider yourself a competitive person?</p> <p>Do you believe people give too much attention to winning?</p> <p>Are you hesitant to collaborate with others?</p> <p>Do you think Toledo Women’s small businesses, women organizations, and women in general, do a good job of collaborating personally and professionally?</p>
23-Apr	Pivot Strategies	<p>Whether you work for yourself or a corporation, you have been affected by the COVID-19 Pandemic. During this session, we will discuss pivot strategies that will help restore our business(es) on the other side of this crisis. As business owners, we have to focus on a plan of business survival because we will not go back to business as usual.</p>
28-Apr	Connections	<p>Become the powerful connector in your universe which gains you social capital when it comes time for you to make a request on our own behalf.</p>
30-Apr	Coffee	<p>Krisi Vadnais, in her spare time, she enjoys competitively public speaking and trying to sneak a nap in. She fuels her day with Yoga and Coffee. She enjoys learning everything that she can about the magical caffeinated coffee bean and helping others to understand the process more clearly. Krisi prides herself in helping others find the beverage that they will enjoy.</p>
5-May	The Matriots	<p>The COVID-19 pandemic affects everyone, everywhere. But it affects different groups of people differently, deepening existing inequalities. "That starts with women as leaders, with equal representation and decision-making power." This discussion will help you think about where, how, and WHY you MUST engage in the political process.</p>
7-May	Emotions, Before & After	<p>The topic for this session: “Dealing with your Emotions during the Coronavirus and After.’ We’ll talk about how to learn from your emotions, the benefits of emotions (“good” and “bad” ones), and why you shouldn’t suppress them.</p>
12-May	HerHub	<p>Our purpose is to help women find the right opportunities to connect and grow, from professional development to volunteer to advocacy. By providing this resource, we hope to enhance existing women’s groups and events by building a large online network of women to promote activities through a one-stop-shop called Her Hub.</p>
14-May	Let’s Learn	<p>Let’s learn how to use the Library Online resources to research your competition, build vendor databases, and specific business - to-customer databases. You will be given live demos of building databases that you can use as call lists, mailing lists, or understanding a demographic.</p>
19-May	EMRG	<p>Join a conversation session with Sandy Spang, our local Commissioner of Business Services with Department of Economic Development, the City of Toledo on pivoting with tenacity while learning about her latest initiative, EMRG grant - Emergency Microenterprise Recovery Grant for local businesses.</p>



Date	Topic	Overview
21-May	RISE	Diana will share with us how to Master Your Mindset with a Daily Practice Understand how your mindset may have been impacted by this pandemic How trauma affects your mindset, especially if this trauma existed in your childhood Learn why a consistent daily practice helps mitigate your trauma load, improves your mindset, and boosts your immune system. Learn why mastering your mindset sets you up for success in all areas of your life, and increases your emotional intelligence Adopt a specific practice that you can practice for the next 30 days. Learn why mastering your mindset is essential to becoming a Rise Advocate™
26-May	Creating Space for Yourself	How do you create space for yourself during a pandemic (and beyond)? And what does “creating space for yourself” even mean? Join this virtual power hour and learn strategies to keep you focused on your health today, as well as your goals tomorrow.
28-May	LeadHERship during uncertainty	A conversation session with Erika D White of Fitzone by Erika with an empowering topic on the Power of Hidden Leaders. Leaders are made not born! Developing your struggles & hardships into leadership qualities that endure all times. Learn, grow, & develop whatcha got!

Impact & Outcomes. Prior to COVID-19, one out of five individuals have suffered from loneliness. This number has increased dramatically during this time (Time Magazine-Anxiety Edition 2020). One of the cures for loneliness is finding a ritual that is intentional and repeated for individuals to be seen, heard, and valued. One way to do that is to join interactive connection activities to connect and communicate. We believe by offering weekly Power Hour sessions, we are the anchor for human connection and perhaps, combat loneliness during this time.

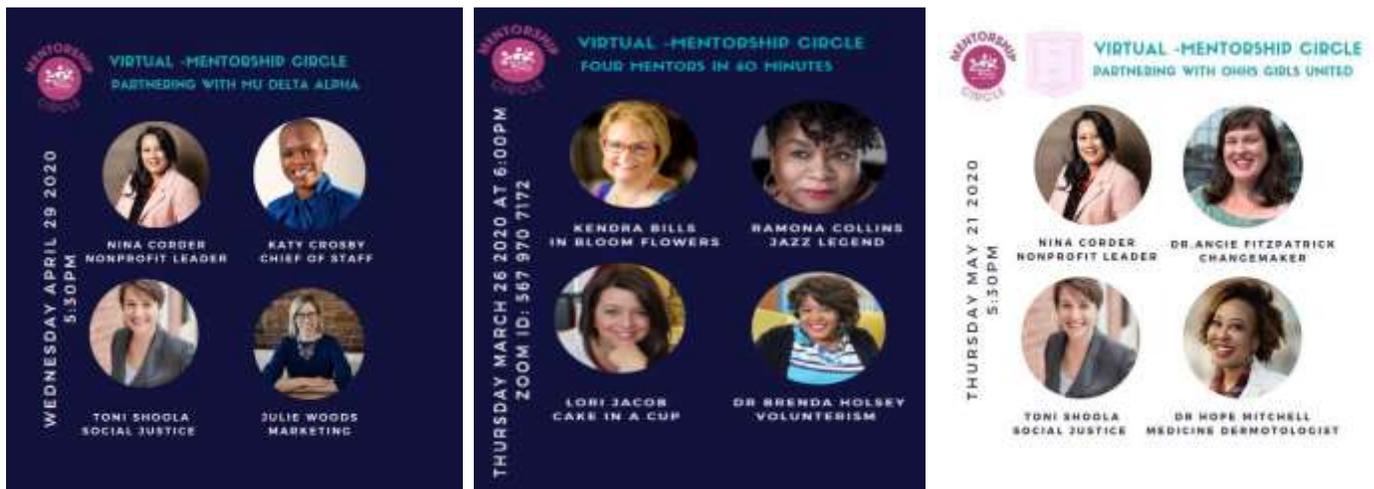
Survey poll. Overall, how would you say the resources/information improved your development or awareness during COVID-19 through our Power Hour sessions?





Mentorship. Our Mentorship Connection provides mentoring and guidance for any female of all ages. The goal for our Mentors and Mentees is to fully capitalize on the opportunity and the ability to connect, communicate, and collaborate with more women and leaders in our community. Using zoom technology, we were able to organize 3 separate groups of Virtual Mentorship sessions during COVID 19.

A total of **10 mentors** give their time and talent to mentor **57 individuals** with **47 individuals** identified as **young women between the ages of 15 and 24 years old**. We were able to serve this young women group by collaborating with the Girls United of the Ottawa Hills High School (OHHS) and the Epsilon National Chapter of Mu Delta Alpha Sorority, a Muslim interest, professional sorority whose mission is to inspire leadership in all women and empower them through professionalism.



According to Walaa Kanan, Founder and President of the Mu Delta Alpha at the University of Toledo, “*Mu Delta Alpha seeks to facilitate the success of women at the collegiate level. Our organization aims to create women who conduct themselves with integrity, responsibility, accountability, and excellence. Such behavior cannot be instilled without positive mentorship. We have been able to access such mentorship through the Women of Toledo. Women of Toledo has supported our organization as well as extended invitations to include us in theirs. We are incredibly grateful for the support we have gained through Women of Toledo*”.

Advocacy. Crisis like a pandemic can perpetuate systemic discrimination, including racial and class bias. Hence, we established a special **Responsive Advocacy Task Force** to help lead, support, and assist at educating, engaging, and empowering our female community (and HeForShe) pertaining to our current political, economic, and social issues.



How we RECOVER.

The first two weeks entering the Ohio Governor Mike DeWine, Stay at Home Executive Order, without relentless care and commitment, our internal task team continues fighting for the needs of the most vulnerable in our communities and work diligently to fill any necessary gap for their basic human needs and foundation well-being.

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly altered our lives. We are seeing friends and family struggling, small and local businesses temporarily closing and uncertain of their future, workplaces are at standstill, nothing is normal. New research from LeanIn.Org shows that women are doing significantly more housework and caregiving than men during the pandemic, and they are showing signs of anxiety and burnout as a result.

For our leadership team, this is the time to recover and “push forward”. We believe in the organization’s goals to help advance the quality of lives of our female community. We believe in why we do what we do as organization and understand with every difficulty comes ease. With every adversity comes opportunity.

We were unable to provide assistance or services directly on issues pertaining to basic human needs but understand there is an immediate need as a referral source to other agencies such as the United Way 2-1-1 and local food pantries.

Our Task Team worked together, pulled resources, and developed a comprehensive packet to supplement the United Way 2-1-1 system. For example, resources that are specific to women-owned businesses in our community. We leverage our talent at using technology, and information systems at gathering valid and correct resources to meet the specific needs of any request.

In other words, we begin to utilize our Task Team talents and strength at researching, connecting, and providing customer services to our community. Staying resilient to our core missions to keep moving forward, and showing up for those in our care, no matter what is more important than reimagining our existing program delivery.

Direct Services and Assistance. We continue providing one-on-one general assistance via phone or virtual zoom with sixteen of our women-owned businesses and start-ups. One, successfully and continued launching her startup during COVID-19. In addition, with the support of individual donors through our No Women Left Behind fund, we were able to house 2 families (a single mom with minor son and a single woman) with temporary accommodations while waiting for further assistance from United Way 2-1-1.

And we hope to continue to THRIVE at supporting our female community.



During COVID-19 pandemic, between the month of March to June 2020, our organization successfully served a total of **772 individuals**. We are pushing forward and continuing to serve our female community members to keep moving forward and empowered during COVID-19.

Empowering communities build collective resilience. And resilience is like a muscle that you can build. It is just a matter of knowing how.

As we navigate the coming months, thinking on the day after the COVID-19 pandemic ends and beginning to stabilize our communities and our organization, may we remember these things that we are resilient, incredibly skilled at pushing forward.

Unfortunately, given the constant shifting of uncertainty, thinking about returning to the status quo could be ineffective.

We are following the current research about the 'new normal' and 'the future of work'. So, we can adapt and stay relevant to the current ecosystem. Our organization sees an accelerated adoption of smart work, such as remote work, and virtual meetings. Like many other organizations, WOT also implements a strong outreach and awareness about the physical and mental health of our community. During the crisis, we also manage and adopt workforce flexibility, and learning to adapt to technology.

Will this be the 'new normal' of doing business for WOT? How will the pandemic alter the future of our organization? Answering that question requires that we first acknowledge some difficult truths that we encounter during the pandemic.

We find our organization in the midst of sudden health, social, and economic crisis, and without a development or strategy plan and framework to model other than our mission and passion to serve.

Well, there is no time like the present to review or create one.

We recognize that successfully navigating this crisis requires an objective assessment of our organization's capacity and priorities, an understanding of our stakeholder's needs and preferences, and a clear plan of action. To help with this process, we are looking for funding support to help us develop a new organizational strategic plan with an opportunity to explore the new structure of our digital operating system and program services.

With more clarity of purpose and a clear plan of action, we can expand our community impact, increase organizational stability, increase our supporters, and extend our services to new geographies and populations.