



# ANNUAL REPORT 2021

New Opportunity School for Women

## From our Executive Director: stories that sustained us

For NOSW, 2021 was a year of stories.

Stories of women who overcame great challenges to take a first step toward a new beginning.

Stories of donors who—in a year of urgent needs everywhere—chose to support our women and invest in their lives.

And stories of resilience and community as we all pushed through another pandemic year.

Stories were literally a big part of our year because we were lucky enough to participate in a storytelling workshop with an organization called Storytellers for Change and a new partner, the tech company Intuit.

Through this process we learned more about the power of our personal stories and began to hear and share more stories of remarkable women.

One such woman was Angel Jones, who attended two online sessions in 2021, sometimes while dropping off her kids or making deliveries in her car. Another was Chaney Jackson, a 2018 NOSW graduate whose story of courage and perseverance inspired other women. And Beth Minor, a 1988 graduate who re-engaged with her NOSW sisters through our online graduate support groups. Read their

stories on page 2.

We also had the good fortune to build bonds with Angela Anderson, who established a fund at NOSW in memory of her mother; Janet Holloway, a former board member who named NOSW in her will; and Anne and Jeannie Christensen, who made generous gifts in memory of their sister. Read their stories on page 4.

Stories of community, generosity and connection have sustained this program for 35 years.



And in 2021, when we once again canceled our residential sessions and the Festival of Trees because of COVID, stories helped sustain our community. Even our founder, Jane Stephenson, whose vision and courage breathed life into this program back in 1987, joined us for online events and shared the story of NOSW.

We are proof that it takes a village. And we are so grateful to be growing and flourishing with the support of our community as we enter our 35th year of transformation and empowerment.

—Sister Robbie Pentecost

Several of the photos you see in this report were taken during our Graduate Leadership Retreat in September, one of the few times last year when we were together in person.



# Three women's stories

## Angel Jones: 'Finding yourself takes a while'

Angel Jones always wanted a career, but life intervened in a number of ways.



She experienced trauma as a kid and was in the state's care. She struggled with addiction, getting clean and then relapsing. She married when she was not quite 19 and stayed in a toxic marriage for 10 years. When the marriage ended, she had to start over.

"Finding yourself takes a while," she said. "I'm still not there yet, but I'm on a better path—that's for sure."

Angel has three sons and said she's learning parenting as she goes. She loves being a mom.

She hopes to become a clinical therapist and help women who have experienced trauma. For now she's working two jobs and taking classes to get her GED. Then she'll pursue her bachelor's degree and her master's.

She heard about NOSW in 2021

and thought, "This looks super, super interesting. I wonder what I could learn from this."

She attended a three-day program in the summer and a workshop series in October, both online. "And it helped me a bunch. I've really been able to put myself where I want to go ... and it doesn't look near as daunting as it did when I started out."

She works hard juggling her busy life, but she has faith in herself. "I know I'll get there."

## Chaney Jackson: 'Positive self-esteem, knowledge and skills'

Chaney Jackson attended the NOSW residential session in 2018, after learning about it from a friend.



"At the New Opportunity School I was able to fill my body with positive self-esteem, knowledge and skills to be a better woman and mother," she said.

Chaney is the proud mother of twins. Over time, her relationship with their father had eroded her

self-esteem.

But after attending NOSW, Chaney got a part-time job in addition to her full-time job, worked on her finances, went back to school to finish her associate's degree and took her kids to Disney World. She set her sights on a degree in nursing.

By the time Chaney participated in a storytelling workshop with other NOSW graduates in July 2021, she felt strong and accomplished. "I am just rolling with my self-worth now."

In December, Chaney joined two other NOSW graduates in an online conversation with author Cassie Chambers about the strength and resilience of Appalachian women. Chaney shared that NOSW had given her a renewed spirit and hope. "And when you left there, that hope didn't leave. It stayed and it's in your soul, embedded."

NOSW awarded Chaney the 2021 Evan Frankel Award for a graduate who is pursuing higher education.

## Beth Minor: 'Opportunities we might not have experienced'

When Beth Minor first heard about the New Opportunity School for Women, she was a single mom with a four-year-old and a baby, living with her parents while going through a divorce and chemotherapy.



But she came to NOSW anyway, completing the three-week program in the summer of 1988.

After NOSW in June, Beth had

surgery in July and her divorce was final in August.

She began building a life for herself and her children. Thanks to NOSW, she said, "I had a head of steam."

She trained to be a dental assistant and worked in dentistry for 13 years. Then, with her children almost grown, she began a career as a licensed massage therapist that lasted 14 years.

Now retired, Beth lives in Danville and volunteers with Happy

Paws, a nonprofit that spays and neuters dogs and cats. She is again active with NOSW through the online graduate support groups. In 2021, NOSW honored her with the Woman of Achievement Award.

"Going through the program helped me understand more about the balance of life—what we might see as the extremes of life, and what we perceive as the hardships of life, but the opportunities we might not have experienced without that hardship."



# 2021

by the numbers



Attendance at NOSW programs **145**

Cost to attend **\$0**

**10**  
workshops

**5**  
three-day sessions



**19**  
online programs

**7** graduate support group meetings

**4** diversity, equity and inclusion trainings for staff and graduate leaders



**\$5544**  
in dental and vision assistance

**\$5600**  
in scholarships

**61**  
new donors



Most common gift size **\$100**



204 Chestnut Street  
Berea, Kentucky 40403

859.985.7200

[nosw.org](http://nosw.org) • [info@nosw.org](mailto:info@nosw.org)

The New Opportunity School for Women empowers women to live their best lives.

We serve under-resourced Appalachian women who are ready to build stable and fulfilling lives for themselves, their families and their communities. All of our programs are free.

## Supporters' generosity will create opportunities in 2022 and beyond

ANGELA ANDERSON established a fund to create opportunities for women like her late mother.



"The thing that really struck me about my mom was that she was a really powerful woman, but she didn't have a lot of opportunity. And watching her struggle was really impactful for me."

Angela first learned of NOSW when she was a student at Berea College. "It just sounded like such an amazing organization to help people exactly like my mom."

The Colleen S. Howell Memorial Fund will support NOSW women and programs.

JANET HOLLOWAY has named NOSW in her will. "It just makes perfect sense to support this kind of organization."



NOSW graduates might see themselves in Janet's story. Her grandmother had a big hand in raising her and encouraged her to do well in school. Janet went to college on a full scholarship and later earned advanced degrees. She founded the organization Women Leading Kentucky and served on the NOSW board.

"I do believe that education and mentoring in some form are the keys for women's advancement."

KATHERINE CHRISTENSEN taught history at Berea College. She died in 2018.



After her bequests to various organizations, the rest of her estate went to her five siblings.

Katherine was passionate about education for women. So her sisters Anne Christensen (right) and Jeannie Christensen Fischer (left) decided to give their share to NOSW.

"It just struck me that that would be such a wonderful way to support her dedication to women's education and opportunity and also her love of that area that had become her home," Anne said.

[Read more about these supporters at nosw.org/about-our-supporters](http://nosw.org/about-our-supporters)