

National Council of Jewish Women St. Louis

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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National Council of Jewish Women St. Louis Announces the Retirement of CEO Ellen Alper after 23 years

ST. LOUIS, MO – After 23 years of visionary leadership, Ellen Alper, CEO of National Council of Jewish Women St. Louis (NCJWSTL), will retire September 30, concluding a remarkable career that transformed the organization, expanded its impact throughout the region, and strengthened its ability to serve women, children, and families for generations to come.

Alper joined NCJWSTL in 2004 as the organization's first full-time Executive Director, taking over an organization built on more than a century of volunteer leadership. Over the next 23 years, she transformed NCJWSTL into one of the region's premier nonprofit organizations while remaining steadfastly committed to its mission of advancing social and economic justice for women, children, and families through service, advocacy, and education.

"Ellen's impact on NCJW St. Louis has been remarkable," said Lisa Gubernik, President of NCJW St. Louis. "Her vision, determination, and ability to bring people together have immeasurably strengthened our organization. She has also helped shape a more influential nonprofit landscape throughout our region. We are deeply grateful for her leadership and the foundation she leaves for future generations."

Among the many accomplishments during her tenure, Ellen:

- **Transformed NCJWSTL into one of the region's premier nonprofit organizations**, growing the annual operating budget from **\$600,000 to more than \$3 million** while increasing volunteer engagement with the NCJWSTL professional staff to partner and support the expanded work of the organization.

- **Professionalized the organization** by implementing strategic planning, best practices, launching operational systems and organizational infrastructure that continue to guide NCJWSTL today.
- **Expanded The Resale Shop** into one of the nation's top-performing NCJW resale operations, increasing gross revenue from **\$300,000 to more than \$1.4 million**, creating a sustainable funding source strengthening the organization's mission delivery.
- **Expanded NCJWSTL's community impact**, growing partnerships to more than **100 community organizations, schools, businesses, and faith communities** and increasing the organization's reach to serve **more than 20,000 women, children, and families annually**.
- **Led the growth of signature community programs**, including:
 - **Back to School! Store**, expanding from serving approximately 200 children to more than **2,200 students each year**.
 - **Kids Community Closets**, growing to approximately **30 closets serving 34 schools**.
 - **Healing Hearts Bank**, providing micro-loans to approximately **120 underserved women annually**.
 - **Project Renewal**, which helped women rebuild their lives through professional clothing and workforce readiness.
 - **Wife Widow Woman** project now services 4 cohorts annually and has expanded its offerings with new alumnae programming.
- **Championed statewide advocacy**, helping lead multiple legislative victories benefiting women and families, including the passage of the **Victims Economic Safety and Security Act (VESSA)** after nearly eight years of advocacy.
- **Guided NCJWSTL through the COVID-19 pandemic**, keeping every staff member employed while transitioning more than **60 programs, meetings, and fundraising events** to virtual formats and establishing the organization's first endowment, raising nearly **\$1.8 million**.
- **Led the \$5.4 million capital campaign** to purchase and renovate NCJWSTL's permanent headquarters, creating a **35,000-square-foot home** that will support the organization's mission and community partnerships for generations to come.
- **Earned recognition and honored by many organizations**, including:
 - **Better Business Bureau Torch Award** for ethical and financially responsible management.
 - **JPro St. Louis** Visionary Award in 2016.
 - **Jewish Federation of St. Louis** Fred Goldstein Award in 2019.
 - **St. Louis Business Journal** as one of the 2026 Most Influential Business Women.

Reflecting on her career, Alper shared, "Serving NCJW St. Louis has truly been one of the greatest honors of my life. Every accomplishment has been made possible by remarkable volunteers, dedicated staff, generous donors, committed community partners, and visionary board leaders who believed in our mission. Together, we've built something that will continue making a difference for generations, and I could not be more grateful."

Those who know Ellen best point to what is even more enduring than her accomplishments - her ability to bring people together, mentor emerging leaders, and foster a culture of collaboration that extends well beyond NCJWSTL.

NCJWSTL will work closely with Alper to ensure a smooth leadership transition while continuing to advance its mission of improving the lives of women, children, and families throughout the St. Louis region.

For more information, please contact Jayne Stuckey, Interim CEO, at 314-993-5181 or 314-753-1230, jstuckey@ncjwstl.org, or Lisa Gubernik, President, at 314-324-8959, lisagubernik30@gmail.com.

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NCJWSTL is inspired by Jewish values to advance social and economic justice for all women, children, and families. NCJWSTL has founded more than 55 programs and projects in the St. Louis community and impacted countless policies and legislation since 1895. Informed of social and economic inequities through partnerships with more than 300 local agencies, NCJWSTL leverages these relationships to maximize its collective impact to meet community needs and address root causes. For more information, visit <https://ncjwstl.org/>.