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# WE-Zine



PROGRESS, DELIVERED TO YOUR INBOX



**"We will open the book. Its pages are blank. We are going to put words on them ourselves. The book is called Opportunity and its first chapter is New Year's Day."**

**— Edith Lovejoy Pierce**

Dear %%FirstName%%,

The end of the year often prompts moments of reflection. We are reminded to be thankful, to release things that no longer serve us, to relax and recharge, and to be open to the possibilities of the next chapter. I am thankful for you, for my team, the work we get to do together every day, and our accomplishments. From educating individuals throughout Chicago and Illinois on their paid leave rights to adding an innovative funding tool to our Women's Entrepreneurship Hub, to influencing tables at the city, state and federal levels where critical decisions are made, and being named a Best Place to Work for the second consecutive year, it's clear that 2024 has been filled with growth, progress, and success. All of which I look forward to building upon in the new year with renewed energy and a shared sense of purpose.

The best part of our work, the piece that makes our hard-fought victories possible, is YOU. Your commitment, partnership, support, and belief in our mission have been a driving force in everything we do and motivate us to continue building upon the work we started in 1973. And with all of you by our side, whether you are a partner, investor, volunteer, supporter, or employee, I am confident that 2025 will be a year of even greater opportunities. I am confident we will win against gender and racial equity rollbacks. And I am confident we will successfully move forward our priorities and mission to increase the economic status of women and remove barriers to economic equity.

As you pause to rest, reflect, and connect with loved ones this holiday season, allow me to extend my warmest wishes to you and your loved ones. May this season be filled with endless happiness and peace, and the opportunity to recharge, leaving you ready to seize the year ahead. Thank you once again for your dedication and support. Your commitment to Women Employed shapes not only our success but lays a solid foundation for the future of women and girls that we call mother, daughter, niece, sister, and friend.

Happy Holidays,

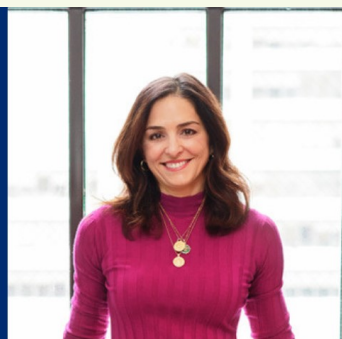
Cherita Ellens  
President & CEO

## "She Says" with Kate Attea

*She Says*

”

WE is getting to systematic root issues, and even though it takes a long time to get something passed, they are doing the hard work. If you



want to actually solve problems and not just ameliorate symptoms, Women Employed is the organization you need to invest in.

“

*Kate Attea*



For the past four years, Kate Attea has served on **Women Employed's (WE's) Board of Directors**. There, she shares her time and talents, working with both staff and the Board on strategy and leadership. She has joined fellow Board Directors to help “friendraise,” lent her expertise to the development of **WE Consulting**, and continues to find ways to introduce people to WE and educate them on the importance of our work. And Kate’s nonprofit work goes far beyond her role as one of WE’s Board Directors.

For close to 30 years, Kate has dedicated her professional career to social impact. Starting with launching a nonprofit out of college, to running a social sector leadership master’s degree program at the University of Chicago today, every professional choice Kate has made has focused on filling gaps and adding social value—it’s at the core of everything she does. Kate has even made time to earn a coaching certification to help women build their power as leaders, and throughout their entire journey.

In this month’s **“She Says,”** we talk with Kate Attea about her passion for social justice, what makes WE stand out from other advocacy organizations, and how she centers women’s voices.

[Read More](#)

We are so thankful for supporters like Kate, who have invested their time and their resources to make Women Employed’s work possible. Do you want to make a difference for working women and their families? You can! Sign up to **get involved** with Women Employed, and **make a donation** to fuel our work. Your investment can build a brighter, more equitable future.

## Let's Relive 2024 Together!



2024 has been a year filled with remarkable highs. We have curated spaces for women entrepreneurs, particularly Black and Latina/x women, to come together and connect, learn, and build their business community with the creation of our SHESolidarity events. Along with our partners on the Equal Pay Chicago Coalition, we held a series of webinars on pay equity and closing the wage gap. We’ve also begun laying the groundwork for our salary transparency campaign to spread the word about the new law when it goes into effect on January 1st (more information coming soon!). **AND WE moved! (Scroll down for our new address.)** But that’s not all!

In the spirit of reflecting on the year we’ve had, and because we have so much to celebrate, here’s a list of 10 great WE moments of 2024 in the order they happened!

1. **Chicago and Illinois workers have new paid leave rights!** In January and July of this year, we saw the Paid Leave for all Workers Act, which provided Illinois workers with five days of paid time off for any reason, AND the Chicago Paid Leave Ordinance, which adds an additional five days of flexible paid time off for working people in Chicago, go into effect! The laws grant roughly 2.5 million Illinoisans the time needed to care for themselves and their families without risking their paychecks. To educate Chicago and Illinois workers on their new paid leave rights, we ran a successful know your rights public education campaign, which included a digital toolkit to enable people to spread the word to their family and friends. For more information about your paid leave rights in Illinois, visit [sicktimeil.org](https://sicktimeil.org). And if you work in Chicago, visit [sicktimechicago.org](https://sicktimechicago.org).
2. **Addressing racial equity gaps in developmental education.** Our Equity-Minded Leadership Academy, which we led along with University of Southern California's Race and Equity Center, worked with faculty and administrators at 10 Illinois community colleges to address racial equity gaps in developmental education classroom practices. Beginning in March, the six-month intensive virtual program embedded racial equity in teaching practices and staff processes specifically tailored to math and English faculty, administrators, and staff involved in developmental education reform on their campuses.
3. **We Chat with Illinois Lieutenant Governor Juliana Stratton.** In April, we collaborated with Illinois Lieutenant Governor Juliana Stratton to host a We Chat on the South Side of Chicago. As a part of We Thrive, the Lieutenant Governor's initiative focused on financial well-being for Illinois' women and girls, this stop brought together women workers, entrepreneurs, and community leaders for an audience-focused conversation, where guests shared their needs and experiences, and what they feel would build their economic power. What we heard from guests was personal, and moving, and serves as another example of how we intentionally create and participate in spaces to hear from community to help inform our strategies and shape our work.
4. **Read our WEPA Report!** In April, we released findings from the Women's Economic Power Agenda (WEPA) Summit, co-convened by Women Employed and 11 planning partners in late 2023. The event brought together 49 organizations from across the state, as well as working women with firsthand experience of the issues being discussed, and featured remarks from Illinois Lieutenant Governor Juliana Stratton, Chicago Mayor Brandon Johnson. **[The Women's Economic Power Agenda for Illinois](https://womenemployed.org/wepa)** report provides recommendations in the areas of caregiving, workers' rights and protections, language access, wages and public benefits, women's entrepreneurship, consumer protection and financial education, as well as public and private funding. Learn more at [womenemployed.org/wepa](https://womenemployed.org/wepa).
5. **Our Career Foundations Consortium was recognized!** This year, we rebuilt our Career Foundations Consortium—a group of community-based organizations delivering our Career Foundations course—back to nine organizations, including two members who serve domestic violence survivors as part of our pilot program focused on building survivors' economic power. Our Career Foundations Consortium was recognized at the 2024 Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Summit with the Excellence in Collaboration Award. Congratulations to the Career Foundations team!
6. **Centering the needs of women entrepreneurs.** Since launching the Women's Entrepreneurship Hub (WE Hub) in 2022, we have been connecting with women who have started, or who are seeking to start, their own businesses. In May, we launched a report, **[Listening and Learning from Women Entrepreneurs](https://womenemployed.org/wehub)**. The report shares what we have learned from women business owners across the state, and provides recommendations for ways that business service organizations, government agencies, investors, and nonprofits can better meet the needs of women entrepreneurs, especially those who are low-income, Black, and Latina/x. Based on what we've heard, we've already enhanced the WE Hub—for instance, we recently developed and launched a **[Money Finder tool](https://womenemployed.org/wehub)** aimed at helping more women access business grants and loans. Read the report at [womenemployed.org/wehub](https://womenemployed.org/wehub).
7. **We're helping to transform higher education funding.** We were proud to join our partners on **[The Coalition for Transforming Higher Education Funding](https://womenemployed.org/wehub)**—which WE helps lead, as well as policymakers, universities, faculty, and others, to mark the introduction of **[SB 3965, the Adequate and Equitable Public University Funding Act](https://womenemployed.org/wehub)**. This legislation represents the next step toward an Illinois public university funding approach that focuses on ensuring institutions have the funding they need to serve their unique student populations, and build adequacy, equity, stability, accountability, and transparency into the process. **[Click here to learn more about SB 3965.](https://womenemployed.org/wehub)**

8. **WE Cares.** We joined Family Values at Work Action to co-host the Care and Democracy Brunch, alongside national care partners. The brunch highlighted the importance of building a care economy that prioritizes paid leave, affordable child care, and other basic supports families need. Starr De Los Santos, our Associate Director of Coalitions, also spoke about creating a future where care is valued and the importance of coalitions in building momentum for a care economy. We would like to thank everyone who attended to network and share care stories.
9. **So nice, Crain's recognized WE twice! For the second year in a row, Women Employed was recognized by Crain's Chicago Business as one of the TOP 100 2024 Best Places to Work in Chicago—coming in this year at #44!!** We have been recognized for our deep commitment to equity, which starts here in our own workplace. As a small non-profit, WE provides top-tier benefits, prioritizes fairness and inclusivity, and is responsive to staff needs. But that's not all! Our President and CEO, Cherita Ellens, was also recognized by Crain's as one of their **2024 Notable Black Leaders**! Since joining WE in 2019, Cherita has worked tirelessly to ensure the organization is inclusive and reflective of the women we serve—including Black and Latina/x women, and women from low-income backgrounds. Read the press release on our 2024 Best Places to Work honor here: <https://bit.ly/3TzNJE8>
10. **WE moved!** It's time to update your records. Women Employed has moved! Our new address is: 67 E. Madison St., Suite 2000, Chicago, IL 60603. While our address has changed, our mission remains the same. We are still as committed as ever to growing the economic power of women and their families, and removing barriers to equity. With this move, we are stewarding critical funds, allowing us to put more directly into our work to build the economic power of women and their families. We look forward to continuing our advocacy—alongside valued supporters like YOU—from our new location.

## Join Our Team!



**WE ARE HIRING!**  
**Director of Development**

Are you passionate about making the world better for working women?  
Is it your dream to have equity for all?  
Women Employed is hiring, and WE may be the place for YOU!

Learn more at [womenemployed.org/work-with-us](https://womenemployed.org/work-with-us)

CRAIN'S 2024  
best  
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to work in  
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**Women  
Employed**

Want to work for an employer named one of Crain's 100 Best Places to Work two years running? Passionate about making the world better for working women? [Join our team!](https://womenemployed.org/work-with-us/)

Women Employed is currently looking for our next Director of Development! If you are looking for a collaborative opportunity to secure and grow revenue to help organizations to meet their strategic and organizational goals, then we would love to hear from you!

Visit <https://womenemployed.org/work-with-us/> to learn more and [apply today!](https://womenemployed.org/work-with-us/)

## Where in the World is Women Employed?





The time has come to say goodbye to 2024. But as we prepared to disconnect to spend time with our loved ones for the holidays, we made time to go out into the world and amplify the importance of building economic equity for women. Closing out the month of November, we hosted workshops and did radio interviews discussing equal pay laws. And we spent December celebrating with partner organizations, attending holiday gatherings, and finishing up strong by discussing with WBEZ the experiences and challenges of women over 55 at work. WE also celebrated together—gathering in our new office for our annual staff holiday party! To get your monthly download of all we've been up to, [check out our recap](#).

And a special thanks to YOU for being an integral part of Women Employed. We could not do this impactful work without you. Happy Holidays!

[Read More](#)

## On the Blog

[Women Employed's Response to Reports of Harassment at City Hall](#)

## WE In The News

[A spotlight on the older women of the American workforce](#)

WBEZ Chicago

[What does the Trump administration have in store for Chicago families? Many are concerned about child care costs, paid family leave.](#)

Chicago Tribune

[Leadership, Advocacy, and Economic Justice: Sharmili's Journey and Advice for Young Women](#)

Elizabeth Weltzien Blog

[Driving it Home w/ Patti Vasquez](#)

WCPT 820 - Chicago's Progressive Talk

## What We're Reading

**Want to Help Women? Get Rid of the Tipped Minimum Wage.**

Institute for Women's Policy Research

**A forgotten minority: Why we must better serve student parents**

University Business

**Work-life balance isn't working for women. Why?**

Associated Press

**What Students Want: Students' Experiences and the Implications of Enhanced Holistic Supports for Non-Degree Pathways**

National Skills Coalition

**National paid family and medical leave could help reduce poverty, narrow racial poverty gap**

U.S. Department of Labor

**NEW DATA: Childcare costs remain an almost prohibitive expense**

U.S. Department of Labor



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