



Women
Walking
West

Reach Include Support Educate
RISE

ADVANCING EDUCATION FOR WOMEN FROM ACROSS THE GLOBE | JULY 2026 VOL. 11, ISSUE 2

MISSION

W3's mission is to remove language, social, cultural, academic, and financial barriers that foreign-born adult women experience in the U.S. This mission helps instill an environment of connections that creates a base of support to provide opportunities for women to overcome difficulties and therefore achieve their lifelong professional and personal goals.

VALUES

To create a culture that includes our core values: to Reach, Include, Support & Educate (RISE).

W3 Newsletter

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EDITOR: Fatemeh Hajihosseini



Dr. George Sehi,
Founder & Board Chair

A Message from the Board Chair & Founder

Dear Friends,

As we celebrate the 250th birthday of America, I find myself reflecting on the extraordinary promise that has defined this nation for generations—a land of opportunity, hope, and diversity. America's strength has always come from the people who arrive with dreams, determination, and the courage to build a better future. Those same values are at the heart of Women Walking West.

Since our founding in 2015, Women Walking West has had the privilege of serving more than 300 mentees representing over 60 countries. Each has brought with them a unique story, perspective, and aspiration. Together, they remind us that when women are supported, empowered, and connected, entire families and communities thrive.

This remarkable impact would not be possible without our dedicated board members, mentors, volunteers, donors, and advocates. Your generosity, commitment, and belief in our mission have transformed lives. Whether you have given your time, shared your expertise, opened doors for a mentee, or provided financial support, you have helped create opportunities that continue to ripple outward in powerful ways.

As we look ahead to the second half of the year, I encourage you to explore our upcoming events and opportunities to engage with our mission. And please mark your calendars now for our **Annual RISE Gala, "Women of the World" on November 5**, when we will come together to celebrate achievements, honor supporters, and invest in the future of Women Walking West. Thank you for walking alongside us. Your support makes our work possible and ensures that women seeking guidance, connection, and opportunity never have to walk alone.

Together, we remain committed to empowering women, building community, and creating pathways to success—one woman at a time.

Scan the QR code to purchase your tickets to our
7th Annual RISE Gala



Women of the World

Thursday, November 5, 2026 | 5:30 - 9:00 pm
Manor House Banquet & Conference Center,
7440 Mason Montgomery Rd., Mason, OH 45040

Interested in Sponsoring?
Contact: Fatemeh Hajihosseini at: info@womenwalkingwest.org

Welcome to W3!



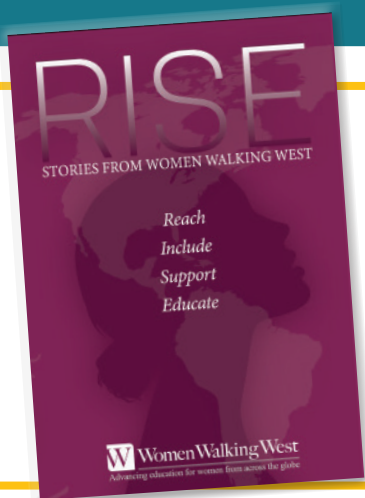
Dr. Bi Awosika with her husband,
Dr. Oluwale Awosika

W3 Welcomes New Board Member Dr. Bi Awosika

Women Walking West is honored to welcome Dr. Bi Awosika, Assistant Dean at the University of Cincinnati College of Medicine, to our Board of Directors.

A respected leader in higher education and a passionate advocate for student success, Dr. Awosika brings with her a wealth of experience and dedication to the organization.

You may remember Dr. Awosika as the keynote speaker from our 2024 RISE Gala where she shared her journey and encouraged others to pursue their goals with confidence and determination.



Happenings

This spring was a season of inspiration, growth, and impact. From accomplished women leaders sharing their journeys to hands-on career readiness workshops, Women Walking West continued to open doors, foster meaningful connections, and equip women and girls with the confidence and skills to pursue their dreams.

Our Women in Leadership Series kicked off in February with a virtual session featuring Dr. Ivy K. Banks, Vice President for Legal Affairs at Xavier University. More than 15 mentees and community members joined us online to hear about Dr. Banks's journey from law to higher education leadership. She shared personal stories about the mentors, challenges, and experiences that helped shape her path to leadership at Xavier University, her alma mater.



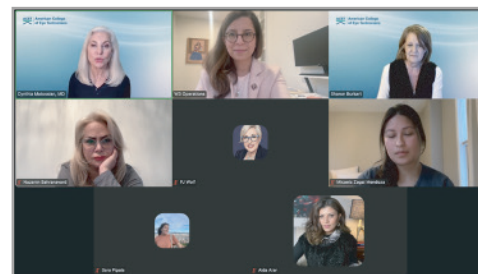
Dr. Ivy K. Banks, Vice President for
Legal Affairs at Xavier University



Picture from Left: Maria Varbanova, Dr. Janice Walker,
Dr. Noha Eyada, Fatemeh Hajhosseini, George Sehi

In April, we continued the series with a leadership panel at Mason High School featuring Maria Varbanova, Dr. Janice Walker, and Dr. Noha Eyada. Each panelist shared her unique journey to success, discussing the opportunities, challenges, and decisions that shaped her career. Mason High School students actively participated in the discussion.

Our Workforce Readiness programming also remained active this spring. Participants learned about career pathways through a workshop with the American College of Eye Technicians (ACET), attended a Resume and Career Readiness Workshop at the Lane Community Technology Center in Hamilton, and joined our Talk, Learn, Connect session at the Dayton Metro Library.



Pictured from left: Cynthia Matossian, MD, Fatemeh
Hajhosseini, Sharon Burkhart, Nazanin Sahranavard, PJ Wolf,
Micaela Zagal Mendoza, Sara Pipala, Aida Arar.

Every event, workshop, and conversation reflected the heart of Women Walking West—creating opportunities for women and girls to learn, lead, and thrive. Through leadership conversations, mentorships, professional development, workforce readiness programs, and meaningful community partnerships, we continued to empower future leaders while strengthening the connections that make our mission possible.

Stories From Women Walking West

To commemorate our 10th anniversary, W3 published our first book of essay stories from past Essay Content winners. Called **RISE: Stories from Women Walking West**, this table book showcases ten mentees from ten different countries. Their stories of resilience, strength, and overcoming tremendous challenges in pursuit of the American dream will touch your heart.

This limited edition book is available with a donation to W3. Scan the QR code use this link to get your copy.

<https://givebutter.com/EssayBookDonation>



Caring Community Partner



John Dovich, Regional President and
Senior Managing Director, MAI

John Dovich, Regional President and Senior Managing Director at MAI, has been a longtime friend of Dr. Sehi. Together they served on another Cincinnati-area nonprofit board where John learned about Women Walking West (W3) and its mission of helping foreign-born women overcome barriers to education, employment, and community integration.

What resonated most with John was the connection between W3's work and his own family's immigration story. Reflecting on the experiences of immigrants arriving in the United States in the early 1900s, he recognizes that many relied almost entirely on the support of family and friends to navigate a new country. He believes organizations like W3 provide an essential foundation for newcomers today, offering guidance, resources, and a sense of community in an increasingly complex world.

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John is "amazed at the attendance at each year's Annual Gala. To sit with and share the advancement that the W3 mentees have achieved is the best confirmation that the mission is being fulfilled" He hopes "that W3 can serve as a beacon to other cities in the United States about the importance of making these resources available to young women across the world."

Good News!

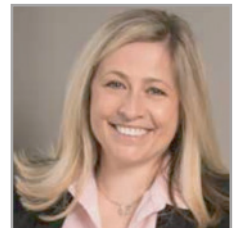
Every W3 success is made possible by a community of champions who believe in our mission.

We are deeply grateful to The Joint Women's Collaborative of Wyoming (JWC) and the Duke Energy Foundation for their generous grant support. Their investment strengthens our mentor training and workforce readiness programs, creating more opportunities for our mentees to grow into confident leaders.



We are proud to celebrate Women Walking West Board Member Sherry Taylor on her induction into the Junior Achievement of OKI Partners Greater Butler & Warren Counties Business Hall of Fame, as recognized in *Business Monthly*. This honor is a reflection of her outstanding leadership, community commitment, and lasting impact.

We are grateful for her service, and celebrate this well-deserved achievement alongside her.



Mark Your Calendars!

Bookmark the W3 Events website page and save the dates for 2026 events at:
[W3 Calendar of Events](#)

2026 Essay Contest Winners Announced:
Tuesday, June 30

Annual Pool Party and Potluck: Saturday, August 1
Mason Aquatic Center,
6249 Mason Montgomery Rd., Mason, OH 45040

Camp Joy Leadership Training: Friday, September 4
Camp Joy Outdoor Education Center,
10117 Old CCC Rd., Clarksville, OH 45113

Save the Date! 7th Annual RISE Gala:

Thursday, November 5 - The Manor House,
7440 Mason Montgomery Rd. Mason, OH 45040

Purchase a W3 T-Shirt to support Our Mission!

Cost is \$15 ea.
or 3 for \$40

Scan the QR code for details and to purchase.

Shirts also available for purchase at our potluck picnic on August 1.

W3 shirts sponsored by KINGS
Chrysler Jeep Dodge Ram and
Proforma G5 Marketing



W3 Board

George H. Sehi, Ph.D., Chair
Former Executive Dean and Professor,
Sinclair College

Dwight Packard, Vice Chair
JD Advisor Attorney at Law,
Bricker Graydon Wyatt LLP

Judy Lightner-Noll, Ph.D., Secretary
JLN Coaching

Bi Awosika, M.D.
Assistant Dean, UC Medical School
University of Cincinnati

Ivy K. Banks, M. Ed., J.D
Vice President, Legal Affairs
Xavier University

Cathy Bishop-Clark, Ed. D.
Former Associate Provost and Dean,
College of Liberal Arts & Applied
Science, Miami University - Regionals

Yanthi Boutwell
Vice President,
Region Services Midwest,
Duke Energy

Macarena Cloninger
Senior Vice President,
Cintas

Jonathan Cooper, Ed. D.
CEO/Superintendent,
Mason City Schools

Tom Daskalakis
President,
Clinton Memorial Hospital

DeAnn Hurtado, Ph.D.
Professor,
Sinclair Community College

Dan Kommeth
Platform General Manager,
SVG Automotive

Prekshya Nepal
Data Scientist III,
FedEx Ground

Su Chang
Ex-Officio Board Member
Senior Director,
Research & Development,
Procter & Gamble

Featured Board Member

Judy Lightner-Noll

Since joining the Women Walking West Board of Directors in 2023, Judy has played an important role in the organization's growth and success. Judy has connected W3 to new community members, provided valuable consulting expertise, served as a judge for the essay writing contest, and has been a dedicated mentor to a few mentees.

Judy's connection to Women Walking West began through her work at Kent State University's Center for Teaching and Learning, where she collaborated closely with international faculty and students. While searching for resources to support their success, she discovered Women Walking West and was immediately inspired by its mission. After speaking with Dr. Sehi, Judy says: "It felt as if I had struck gold to find an organization that supported so many initiatives in which I passionately believed were so important and to also talk with a leader who lived this passion through founding Women Walking West."

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Her passion for supporting foreign-born women is rooted in both her professional experiences and her family's history. Judy's grandmother immigrated to the United States as a young woman without speaking English. Through her grandmother's stories, Judy learned the importance of community, mentorship, and the kindness of those who help newcomers navigate unfamiliar challenges. Those lessons shaped her work in higher education and continue to guide her service with Women Walking West.



Judy Lightner-Noll, JLN Coaching



In Memoriam

Liz Bonis was more than a cherished friend of Women Walking West—she was a radiant light whose kindness, generosity, and belief in our mission inspired everyone fortunate enough to know her. She gave of herself with grace, lifting others through her genuine spirit. While her bright smile and infectious enthusiasm will be profoundly missed, the warmth she shared and the lives she touched will continue to shine through our work and in our hearts. We are forever grateful for her friendship, her support, and the remarkable legacy of light she leaves behind.

W Women Walking West

Follow us. Women Walking West



Advancing education for women from across the globe