

The Heart Behind the Mission: Our Women's Life Center Volunteers



At the Women's Life Center, we believe that every woman and every family deserves compassion, support, and the opportunity to thrive. Our mission is made possible not only through the programs and services we provide, but through the incredible people who give their time, talents, and hearts to make those services possible.

Our volunteers are the heart behind the mission. From our dedicated Board members who provide leadership, wisdom, and vision, to our pregnancy client advocates who walk alongside women during important and sometimes difficult seasons of life, each volunteer plays an essential role in the work of the Women's Life Center. Their commitment allows us to create a welcoming environment where women can find encouragement, practical resources, trusted information, and someone who genuinely cares.

Our nursing volunteers bring professional knowledge and compassionate care to our clients, including providing pregnancy services and ultrasounds. Their expertise helps us serve women with dignity and kindness while giving them an opportunity to ask questions, receive support, and make informed decisions.



Behind the scenes, our reception volunteer helps create the first impression of the Women's Life Center. A warm welcome, a friendly voice on the phone, or a helping hand may seem like a small thing, but these moments can make a tremendous difference to someone who may be nervous or unsure about reaching out for help.

Our volunteers also extend the mission beyond our center. Through community engagement, church and community partnerships, fundraising events, outreach opportunities, and other special projects, they help connect the Women's Life Center with the people and organizations throughout our community who share our desire to support women, babies, and families.

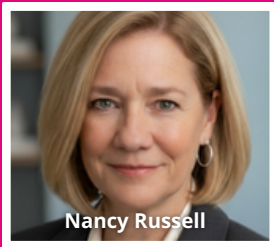
Every volunteer brings something unique. Some offer professional expertise. Others bring organizational skills, creativity, compassion, encouragement, or simply a willingness to serve wherever they are needed. Together, these gifts create something much greater than any one person could accomplish alone. At the Women's Life Center, we are committed to supporting women and families throughout our community by providing a place where they can find care, encouragement, resources, and hope. We could not fulfill that mission without the people who faithfully give their time and talents to make it possible.

Our volunteers do more than fill important roles. They build relationships, strengthen our community, and help bring our mission to life. In the pages that follow, we are honored to introduce you to some of the amazing volunteers who make the Women's Life Center what it is today. Their stories, gifts, and dedication represent just a small part of the incredible team of people who stand behind this ministry.

To every Women's Life Center volunteer: thank you. Thank you for showing up, serving with compassion, sharing your gifts, and believing in the importance of supporting women, babies, and families. We are grateful for you, and we are better because of you.

Meet the Women Behind the Mission: Our Amazing Volunteers

Kathleen Brandenburg, PhD, MSN, FNP-BC, Board President, is one of the five Christian women who founded the Women's Life Center and has been part of the ministry since its inception. Serving as an original Board member, Vice Chair, and Medical Coordinator, Kathleen brought her lifelong passion for women's health and a desire to create a place where women could receive support tailored to their unique needs. One of the most meaningful parts of her experience has been seeing what can happen when like-minded people come together around a shared vision. Kathleen remembers how individuals and churches answered their call for help when the first center opened, transforming the space into a beautiful and welcoming haven for women in need. Kathleen encourages others to use their gifts and expertise to support those in need, reminding us that "you can make a difference in so many lives."



Nancy Russell, Board Vice President & Strategic Advisor, joined the Women's Life Center as a volunteer driven by a strong commitment to combating human trafficking and supporting women facing difficult circumstances. Drawing from her professional background with the U.S. Department of Defense and more than 30 years of experience as a strategic consultant and communications leader, she is dedicated to advancing mission-driven organizations. Nancy brings a faith-based passion for the sanctity of life and hopes to help the center grow in strength, capacity, and long-term effectiveness. She strives to ensure the organization can reach more women in need and fulfill its mission with lasting impact.

Shannon Kitchen, Board Secretary, brings 29 years of experience as an educator and a profound dedication to family, having raised three biological daughters, fostered more than 20 children, and adopted five. Through her extensive background in education and fostering, she has walked alongside vulnerable young mothers, realizing firsthand that supporting a child means supporting the mother as well. She chose to join the Women's Life Center to come alongside young moms with compassion, encouragement, and practical support, loving nothing more than seeing women build confidence and healthy futures. One of the most meaningful parts of her journey has been getting to know the moms personally, celebrating their progress, and reminding them that they are never alone.



Mardi Ritter, Board Treasurer, has been part of the Women's Life Center since its beginning and currently serves on the Board as Treasurer. Her desire to support women facing difficult circumstances grew from personal and family struggles, inspiring her to become part of a ministry that provides practical, emotional, and spiritual support. One of the most meaningful parts of Mardi's experience has been knowing that women receive both financial assistance and the encouragement they need during challenging seasons. The information and training she has received through the Women's Life Center have also helped her better support her own family. For anyone considering volunteering, Mardi offers this simple reminder: "As a volunteer, we are also blessed as we help others."

Liz Weinhold brings a wealth of professional experience and a deep heart for service to the Women's Life Center. Having retired in 2025 after a career as a licensed Mental Health Counselor and Trauma Specialist, she felt a strong calling to put her expertise to use for women facing unexpected pregnancies. Inspired by past volunteer work with a pregnancy life center, Liz knew the Women's Life Center was a natural fit where she could provide supportive counseling. Outside of her volunteer hours, she enjoys staying active outdoors, participating in her church, and spending time with her daughters and grandchildren nearby. She also volunteers at Cattails, a local cat adoption agency, embracing retirement as a powerful new season of impact.



Joy Thomas connected with the Women's Life Center after moving to Brunswick County, bringing years of experience from her previous role as a Senior Client Services Coordinator at a pregnancy center. Her dedication to this mission is deeply personal, rooted in her own experience as a young single mother who received compassionate, non-judgmental support during an unplanned pregnancy. Today, Joy serves passionately as the hands and feet of Jesus, helping single mothers and families navigate life-changing moments. For anyone considering getting involved, her message is to simply take the leap, whether through in-person volunteering, organizing drives, or supporting the boutique.

Alyson Kreitzman, MSN, RN, felt an answered prayer when she heard Women's Life Center team members speak at her church, leading her to a volunteer opportunity where she could combine her nursing career with her faith. With a professional background rooted in pediatrics and women's health, Alyson quickly realized the center's mission aligned perfectly with her heart for serving others.

Today, she proudly serves on the Women's Life Center nursing medical team, helping provide compassionate care through the center's new ultrasound services. Her clinical expertise and gentle presence bring immense comfort to the women who walk through our doors.



Alyson Kreitzman



Christiana Meier

Christiana Meier has been an active volunteer at the Women's Life Center since June 2026, where she warmly greets clients, assists with intake forms, and keeps the filing system organized. She chose to volunteer because of a deep passion for battling adversity and an eagerness to offer hope and compassion to others. One of the most meaningful parts of her experience has been witnessing women walk out the door with newfound confidence, courage, and peace. This journey has inspired a broader perspective and a deeper level of empathy within her. For anyone considering volunteering, Christiana's advice is simple: "Do it! Any avenue to give to and serve others is a great one."

Cheyenne Watson first connected with StAT-USA about ten years ago through Allysa McKenzie, which eventually led her to join the Women's Life Center team this year. In her role, she primarily gathers client information and helps connect women with the classes and resources available at the center. She chose to volunteer because the mission hits close to home, driven by a desire to be a supportive presence for those in the community needing extra help or motivation. One of the most meaningful parts of her experience has been witnessing women come together to support expectant mothers and young children in their time of need. For anyone considering getting involved, Cheyenne's message is warm and welcoming: "The more the merrier—please come and help us help others!"



Cheyenne Watson



Ella Novakovich

Ella Novakovich serves the Women's Life Center as a communications intern, dedicating her time to branding, marketing, story writing, and media tasks. She was drawn to the center because of its name, its Christ-centered mission, and its rich history of protecting life. A standout aspect of her internship has been participating in weekly team prayer times, which beautifully demonstrate how Christ's love functions even in a professional environment. Ella encourages others to get involved, noting that the community offers incredible wisdom, grace, and a welcoming space to use one's unique gifts.

Joyce Bishop joined the Women's Life Center as a volunteer in the spring of 2026, bringing a wealth of experience in accounting, finance, and firm ownership. While her work takes place behind the scenes, her expertise plays an important role in supporting WLC's mission to help women in need. Joyce assists with the organization's accounting and financial needs and serves as a finance mentor to our Executive Director, offering valuable guidance on budgeting and financial management. Her knowledge and experience help strengthen the organization and support its continued growth. Although Joyce does not work directly with the women WLC serves, she is grateful for the opportunity to use her skills to support an organization that makes a meaningful difference in the lives of women and families in our community.



Joyce Bishop

We're also grateful for the volunteers who serve faithfully but were not able to be featured with a spotlight story and photo in this issue.

Katie Clegg, Pregnancy Advocate & Parenting Education Facilitator
 JoAnne Gilley, Pregnancy Advocate & Parenting Education Facilitator
 Mary Dotto, Pregnancy Advocate & Parenting Education Facilitator
 Breanna Jones, Pregnancy Advocate & Parenting Education Facilitator
 Jennie Sloan, Parenting Education Facilitator
 Cynthia Hughes, Administration & Community Engagement
 Sue Stephens, Professional Counselor

Thank you for the time, care, and dedication you give to Women's Life Center and the women and families we serve.

Allysa McKenzie's Mission to End Human Trafficking



Since 2008, Allysa McKenzie has dedicated her life to confronting human trafficking and helping survivors rediscover hope, dignity, and purpose in Christ.

Her calling began at a Wesleyan Women's Conference sponsored by World Vision, where she felt God place a question on her heart: "What about the women in America?" Soon after, while attending a federal human trafficking conference in Charlotte, North Carolina, Allysa learned more about the realities of trafficking within the United States. That experience set the course for a ministry centered on compassion, advocacy, and restoration.

Allysa went on to found Stand Against Trafficking USA (STATUSA), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit focused on prevention, advocacy, and survivor restoration. Since founding STATUSA in 2008, she has continued serving as a volunteer, dedicating her time to partnering with government agencies, helping develop Rapid Response Teams, raising awareness, and training churches in compassionate, trauma-informed outreach.

A Connection to Women's Life Center

Allysa also helped bring together a group of like-minded women who shared a vision for creating the Women's Life Center. Their goal was to establish a Christ-centered ministry where vulnerable women could receive compassionate support, practical resources, education, and encouragement.

Today, Allysa continues that work through STATUSA and the Southeastern NC Human Trafficking Coalition, bringing together churches, organizations, community leaders, and individuals committed to education, prevention, and collaboration.

A pastor, chaplain, mother, grandmother, and longtime volunteer, Allysa encourages others to look beyond a person's circumstances and respond with genuine compassion.

"Injustice prevails when good people stay silent," Allysa says. "My prayer is that more hearts will answer God's call to love boldly, serve faithfully, and stand for those who cannot stand alone."

Coalition Meetings

The Southeastern NC Human Trafficking Coalition meets on the first Wednesday of each month at 4:00 PM at Women's Life Center, 4741 Main Street, Shallotte, NC 28470.

To attend virtually, contact Allysa McKenzie at allysa@statusa.org to request the Zoom link.



Training Opportunities

STATUSA offers training to help professionals and community members identify and respond to trafficking. For more information, contact Allysa McKenzie at allysa@statusa.org.

Free Ultrasound Services Now Available:

Women's Life Center now offers free pregnancy testing and limited ultrasound services by appointment.

Thanks to a generous grant from Life Link of North Carolina, women can receive compassionate care and pregnancy support close to home.



Our Services



Pregnancy
Testing



Training
and Education



Pregnancy
Options



Resources
& Referrals



Support the Work

Your financial support helps provide free pregnancy services, client advocacy, material assistance, and prevention education across southeastern North Carolina.

Give securely at:
womenslifecenter.org/donate

