WeRISE NEWSLETTER

Jeni's Fundraiser

3998 Gramercy St, Easton Town Center

WeRISE is thrilled to partner with Jeni's Ice Cream at Easton Town Center again in their commitment to do good in the community. Last time, customers like you helped us raise nearly $300 to put towards hosting events and learning opportunities for Westerville! We look forward to seeing you at Jeni's on **President's Day, February 16th between 3pm-6pm**. Enjoy time with friends and family and don't forget to order our special flavor Rich Harmony and includes Brambleberry Crisp and Salted Peanut Butter with Chocolate Flecks!

Black History Month

Westerville Public Library

Straw Rockets: Black History in Space: February 1-28, view a showcase of the achievements of Black pioneers of space. A craft is available for kids to make straw rockets!

Black Periodic Table: February 1-28, the library has a matching game and information about Black History.

Canva Craft: February 24, create a free 18x24 poster of your favorite quote, person, or image celebrating Black History Month and pick up the print later.

Building Community

Westerville Queer Collective (WQC)

Almost Spring: Saturday, February 21, 1pm-2:30pm at Highbanks Metro Park gather with snacks and warm drinks. You can also bring ice skates if the weather permits. Register here.

Food Pantry – Donate to or use the food pantry organized by WQC located inside Java Central in Uptown Westerville.

Finding Support - Visit the WQC Resource Guide or call the Trevor Project hotline +18887346197 if you need help.

Join our Board

We have board member openings and would love to have our supporters or volunteers consider joining our team. We specifically have an opening for Treasurer and are looking for a candidate with legal experience who is passionate about transforming our community through racial justice. We are open to welcoming other board members who are not looking for a role as a treasurer or legal capacity. If you have interest or questions regarding becoming a board member, email us at **weriseforgw@gmail.com**.

WeLEARN

Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)

If you are feeling the weight of the increase in attacks on immigrants and the targeting of people of color over the past year by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), you are not alone. This weighs heavily on the hearts and minds of our Westerville community, as well as Greater Columbus. We hope that in this WeLEARN column and others to follow, that you will gain new understanding of the issues impacting our community.

The existence of ICE is not new to America; however, the US has seen an increase in violence and number of attacks on communities since the start of 2025. According to the League of Women Voters blog , there has been an 84% increase in the number of people being held in immigration detention between January 2025 and January 2026. Already at least 8 people have died in ICE custody in 2026. In 2025, at least 32 people died in ICE detention centers (*Al Jazeera*, January 27, 2026).

You undoubtedly, have participated in, seen, or been impacted by the recent anti-ICE protests of people practicing their First Amendment right in Westerville. If you are so moved to participate in making your voice heard at these events, there are ways to minimize your risk of danger. First, make sure someone you trust knows where you will be and tell them a firm time you will text them that you have returned home safely. Second, if you bring your phone with you, you can turn it off or put it in airplane mode to reduce the risk of being unintentionally tracked. Third, turn off biometrics on your phone if you keep it with you; this means Face ID or fingerprint scanning. Fourth, bring snacks, PPE, weather-appropriate clothing, and water.

If you encounter a person being detained or chased by ICE or masked/armed individuals, you should remember **SALUTE** (from Instagram **Columbus50501**) to film safely in a way that will help the community:
S – Size of group of officers
A – Actions/Activity: what are they doing?
L – Location: address or street names
U – Uniforms/clothes: look for letters
T – Time/Date
E – Equipment/Weapons: are they armed? Vehicles?
If possible, ask the person being detained for their name so their family can be found and informed.

Red cards clearly spell out your rights as a person on American soil. These cards are available online for free through the Immigrant Legal Resource Center (ILRC) and can be ordered here. If you see a WeRISE table at a Westerville event, we will have red cards that you can take a handful of for free too!

WeREAD 2026

Overcoming Divisions to Make Change

Are you feeling frustrated with the current divisive rhetoric in the country? Do you feel powerless to make the social justice improvements that you think are important? Using Loretta Ross's *Calling In: How to Start Making Change with Those You'd Rather Cancel* as the focus of our community discussions, WeREAD 2026 is designed to give you an opportunity to reflect on your current approaches and to teach you strategies to build coalitions with people who have a wide range of ideas.

In *Calling In*, Loretta Ross employs her lived experience to illustrate how useful it is to draw others into collaborations, resulting in real, societal change as opposed to excluding them from the conversation because they do not agree with us on all issues. She recommends calling people in instead of calling them out and explains how to do it. We will spend a great deal of the discussion examining her calling in techniques and considering how we can apply them in our own situations.

For those of you unfamiliar with WeREAD, it is one of WeRISE's signature programs designed to encourage conversations around racism, equity, and inclusion through shared texts. We provide moderated discussions within and across generations, races, ethnicities, and economic divides. Participants learn more about diversity in the community and engage in modeled conversations around sometimes challenging topics. These community conversations have helped increase critical conversations around issues that impact the lives of our BIPOC community members.

You can attend our **online community discussions**. The first session is on **April 14 from 7-8:30 pm** (title of the session and chapters of focus to be announced soon). The second session is on **April 20 from 7-8:30 pm** for "From Reaction to Reflection: Calling In with Curiosity and Grace" and will focus on chapters 6 and 7.

We will have a **special interview with Loretta Ross** that is specific for our community on **April 27 from 7-8:30** available via Zoom.

You will even be able to apply for a free copy of the book!

Registration and information about the program will be available soon at the Westerville Library website and the WeRISE website.