

♀ ON OUR WAY

Newsletter of the Women's Center
46 Pleasant Street, Cambridge, MA 02139
(617) 354-8807

Fall 2002

WHAT THE "T" DOESN'T WANT YOU TO KNOW Women of Action (WOA) Speak Out

Women of Action leader, Erin Hazard talks with Lynn Murray, WOA organizer about their transit justice campaign against the MBTA.

Lynn Murray: *In the last newsletter (April 2002), Women of Action had just formed and you were trying to decide what issue to work on. What made you decide to pick the MBTA ("T") as a target?*

EH: We decided that our problem with the "T" was easy to understand and that our issues were clear cut. Not to mention that every member of Women of Action had gone through it. We've all been left at a bus stop while waiting with our kids in strollers. We've all been told there's no room on the bus because we have a stroller. And unfortunately, we've all had to ride in those filthy elevators or as my five year old likes to call them, "flying piss boxes."

LM: *Tell me about meeting with the "T" to discuss your issues.*

EH: Well, first of all, it wasn't easy bringing them to the table. We contacted them in May and didn't meet

with them until July. We made repeated attempts to schedule a meeting with them and they kept putting us off. We were getting the message that we weren't a priority: first they rejected every date we proposed, and when we did set a date, they canceled twice, saying "something had come up." Well, we were fed up. So instead of continuing to play the re-scheduling game, we told them we were going to step back and explore other options. That's when they changed their tune and offered to come to us the following week.

On July 15th all members of Women of Action met with Anne Herzenberg, Chief Operating Officer of the MBTA, Jeff Parker, Director of Subways, and Steve Epps, Director of Buses. Considering how they weren't really taking us seriously at all, we were sure we were going to be met by lower-ranking representatives. I think we were all pleased that the top officials at the "T" came

LM: *What did you want to get out of that meeting?*

EH: We had three demands that we wanted them to sign into MBTA policy:

- 1) We wanted a policy stating that women and children wouldn't be left at bus stops.
- 2) We wanted a policy stating that women would have access to the back lift upon request.
- 3) We wanted a policy stating

that all MBTA elevators would be cleaned and sanitized every day. They are visibly filthy and smell horrible. We also want an accountability system, like the checklists you see in McDonalds' bathrooms, that shows when and how often the elevators are cleaned.

LM: *Pretty specific demands, how did they react?*

EH: Steve Epps, the head of buses, said he agreed with the spirit of our first two concerns, but he wouldn't sign anything. He told us that our demands were already "T" policy, which surprised us. If it's "T" policy, either the drivers don't know their own rules or they are intentionally discriminating against mothers.

LM: *Did you get to see copies of these policies?*

EH: We got them in the mail within a couple of weeks. One of the Bus Operators' Rules stated that drivers are **required** to lower the lift for **anyone** who requests use of it, regardless of disability, and they are not allowed to ask questions about why you need it. There's also a rule stating that no person should be left at a bus stop and that women cannot be refused transportation because they have a baby carriage, folded or unfolded.

During that meeting, we asked the T officials flat-out why people don't know that they have these rights. They told us point-blank, "we don't want

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On Our Way

Is the newsletter of the Women's Center, published 3 times per year in April, September, and December.

The Women's Center is a non-profit resource and support center for all women and their children, founded in 1971.

Our mission is twofold:

to provide women with the tools and resources they need to emerge from abuse, discrimination, addiction, sexism and racism, harassment, social isolation, violence, poverty, or other injustice

to challenge and change attitudes and actions which subjugate women.



Volunteers

The Women's Center gratefully acknowledges the ongoing efforts and contributions of our volunteers.

Thank you for giving so generously of your time and of yourselves.

The Women's Center relies on the generosity of the community to provide our wealth of free programming.

All donations are tax-deductible to the full extent of the law.

For further information, contact:

The Women's Center
46 Pleasant Street
Cambridge, MA 02139
(617) 354-8807

email:

info@cambridgewomenscenter.org

Hours:

Monday-Thursday: 10am-10pm
Friday: 10am-8pm
Saturday: 11am-4pm

WHAT THE "T" DOESN'T WANT YOU TO KNOW

(Continued from page 1)
people to know."

LM: *They actually said that?*

EH: Yes, they did! They claimed that too many people demanding access would throw off their schedules. As if the schedules are perfectly maintained in the first place. We're making it our job to get the word out. Imagine: we started this fight to obtain certain rights, when they are already on the books but nobody knows. So our focus becomes informing people of the rights they already have, which means we're doing the job the "T" is paid to do.

LM: *It seems like you're ahead with your first two demands. What about the third, clean elevators?*

EH: Well, that was a different story. Jeffrey Parker, Director of Subways, claims that elevators are cleaned every day. He dismissed our suggestion of a checklist, saying that any sort of list would be vandalized. We asked for his ideas on some sort of accountability system. He had none. What he did have was a bunch of excuses about how hard it is to document when the elevators are cleaned: for example, the cleaners can't read English to fill out any sort of form or checklist. He also said elevators can never "really" get clean because they are so old. We're not asking for elevators to smell like home baked bread, but you shouldn't have to hold your breath and place your body over your child's face just so you can ride without feeling sick. It's ridiculous.

LM: *So, do you feel that you got anywhere at all on that issue?*

EH: It's slow going, but yes. This week Parker mailed us copies of internal memos that he'd circulated within the "T" after our meeting, about improving supervision of elevator cleaning and some new odor-fighting product they are using. So there's progress, but not enough for us. He's

still avoiding the issue of accountability to the riders.

LM: *What's your next step in this campaign?*

EH: I don't know what they were thinking when they told us "we don't want people to know," but it served as motivation for us. Women have a right to know, and we're going to make sure it happens! We're also going to continue the fight for cleaner, sanitized elevators.



LM: *So you're not giving up on the elevator issue?*

EH: Give up? Absolutely not. It's nice that they have a new citrus odor fighter, but that's not enough. We need to know when, if, and how often the elevators are cleaned. I'm confident that we'll get what we want. We just need to continue to organize and bring more and more women into the group so we can be stronger.

LM: *Speaking of that, what about women who are reading this and have experienced these problems with public transportation? What should they do?*

EH: They should stand up and act! We need all the help we can get. Every woman who is sick of this treatment should contact WOA and join us in the fight! They should also contact the MBTA and complain whenever they experience discrimination. The number to MBTA Customer Service is 617-222-5215.

Women of Action meet three times a month: the first Thursday from 6-8pm and the second and fourth Saturday from 11am-1pm. Childcare is available if you call in advance. For more information contact Lynn at 617-354-6394.



Goodbye from Heather

After three years filled with excitement, challenge, learning, and inspiration, I am leaving my position as Volunteer Coordinator to attend the Risk & Prevention Program at Harvard in September. While I am thrilled to return to school, I must admit that I am saddened at leaving the Center at a time when so many wonderful and vibrant programs are taking shape.

Since I began working at the Center, we have developed a computer program where women can have free access and training in English and Spanish; a free mother-child art class for women with toddlers; a community organizing program for low-income women; frequent political action gatherings where women can learn about issues and make their voices heard; and a social night where women can come together and simply have fun.

All of these vibrant programs have created new volunteer opportunities and I've been continually amazed at the generosity of heart and spirit of so many women in the community. I've met literally hundreds of women who have been willing to do anything from cleaning the fridge, to answering emotional support calls, to teaching women how to search the Internet.

The Women's Center has been able to not only exist but thrive for over thirty years because of the tremendous contributions and commitment of volunteers. I feel lucky to have been able to take part in such a wonderful history.

~Heather

Best Wishes to Heather

This fall, Heather Searles, our Volunteer Coordinator of the past three years, leaves us to pursue a Master's Degree at the Harvard School of Education.

Those of you who frequent the Center probably recognize Heather - by sight if not by name. She is the curly redhead who greets newcomers with a smile, constantly jokes with the many volunteers and visitors of the Center, and holds the periodic Game Night, which has become so popular.

Behind the scenes, she's done so much more. At a time of tremendous growth in the Center's programming, Heather went "above and beyond." She coordinated the Computer and Internet Access and Training Program, developed computer training for Spanish speaking women, provided support to the Mother/Child Art Project, and joined in organizing the first Dating Games at the Center - all the while developing strong volunteer outreach and training programs.

Heather, we thank you for all that you've accomplished. We'll miss your cheerful countenance and quiet competence in the day-to-day. Good luck in all that you do!

~Mary Quinn

Liquid Poets Opens New Season

This summer Liquid Poets shared some wonderful writing and came up with fun new inspirational activities to get our pens, minds, and hearts going strong. Who knew poetry writing could make you laugh, cry... and even dance a little when the beat is strong? We have welcomed some new members and said goodbye to Sarah, the original founder of Liquid Poets. Christine and I will be leading the group this year, and we are excited about all the reading, writing, and sharing to come. We have many new ideas for the group, including the possibility of holding informal mini open mikes, to encourage some of the more stage-fearing poets to go public! We have a small group of friendly and talented women, of widely varying experience in writing. Some of us have been publishing for years, and others wrote their first poem last week! Sharing is always encouraged, but never a requirement. We hope to see fresh new faces this fall, and are open to new ideas on meeting format. Our first meeting of the season falls on September 11th, and thereafter we will meet on the second and fourth Wednesday of each month from 7-9pm. Please contact liquidwriters@hotmail.com with questions.

~Madeline Howard



Foundations and Corporations

A special "thank you" to the foundations and organizations who have contributed \$250 or more between 1/1/02 and 8/31/02.

- Ascential Software, Inc.
- Boston Jewish Community Women's Fund
- Boston Women's Fund
- Cambridge Mustard Seed Foundation
- Charlesbank Real Estate
- City of Cambridge
- Sheila Gamble Cook Fund
- Francis R. Dewing Foundation
- Fleet Matching Gifts Program
- Foundation M
- Hartley Corporation

- Malloy Tsardounis Inc.
- Mind's Eye Yarn
- PipeVine, Inc.
- The R.O.S.E. Fund
- The George and Beatrice Sherman Family Charitable Trust
- The Uniterra Foundation, Inc.
- Verizon Foundation

Thank You!

WISH LIST

- Helpline Volunteers
- Boxes of herbal tea
- Playpen
- Gift Certificate to WB Mason or Staples
- Tampons, Pads
- Xerox paper, white and color
- 3 subject notebooks
- Toys for toddlers

GROUPS

NEW AND FEATURED ACTIVITIES

MONDAY

- Al-Anon for Women (weekly)..... 6-7:30pm
- Lesbian Partners & Ex-Partners of Incest Survivors.. 7:30-9pm
(3rd Mondays, Info: Daniella (617) 497-0911)
- * Lesbian Rap (weekly)..... 7:30-9pm

TUESDAY

- * Bisexual Women's Rap (1st & 3rd Tuesdays)..... 7:30-9pm
- Coming Out Exploration Group 6:30-8:30pm
(10 wks beg 9/24). Info: Anna, (617) 547-6240
- Facilitated Mothers' Support Group (forming)..... morning
[call group facilitator Diane at (617) 876-2139]
- * Queer Married Women (2nd Tuesdays)..... 7:30-9pm
Info: Dpp1029@aol.com
- Women's Reading Group (4th Tuesdays) 7:30-9:30pm
- Writer's Circle (2nd Tuesdays)..... 7-9pm
Info: Cassandra at (617) 494-2695

WEDNESDAY

- Battered Women's Support Group (all Weds, except 3rd) 7-9pm
- Healing Circle (weekly)..... 8-9:30pm
- Liquid Poets (2nd & 4th Wednesdays) 7-9pm
Info: liquidwriters@hotmail.com
- * Women Maximizing Abilities Now (WOMAN) 2-3:30pm
(1st & 3rd Wednesdays; for women with disabilities.)
Info: woman@braintrust.org)
- * Women Over 40 (2nd & 4th Wednesdays)..... 7-8:30pm

THURSDAY

- 30+ Multicultural Queer Women's Rap (weekly) 7-8:30pm
- Healin' and Dealin' (2nd & 4th Thursdays)..... 7-8:30pm
(for survivors of non-sexual child abuse)
Info/to register: maureen-b@yahoo.com or (617) 354-8807
- *Political Action Gathering ("T" Riders' Union), (Oct. 17) .6-8pm
- Thursday Night Gathering for Survivors
of Child Sexual Abuse (weekly) 7:30-9:30pm
(Topic at 1st meeting of month, Oct..3: Connections)
Info: Lillithline@aol.com)

FRIDAY

- Critique & Education Art Group (3rd Fridays) 6-7:30pm
- • Fun Night (3rd Fridays)..... 8-10pm
- Incest Resources Facilitated Discussion for Survivors
of Child Sexual Abuse (please be on time)..... 6-7:30pm
(usually first Friday of month, September - June)
- Story Hour (2nd Fridays) 7-8pm
- Survivors of Incest Anonymous (SIA) (3rd Fridays).... 6:30-8pm
- * Women: Exploring our Comic Voices 6-7:30pm
(2nd & 4th Fridays; info: cafaye@juno.com)

SATURDAY

- * Coming Out Discussion for Women of all Ages..... 11am-1pm
(1st & 3rd Saturdays except holiday weekends)
- Support for Women Who Have Partners Coming Out
(2nd Saturdays; Robyn at (617) 522-5694)..... 11:15am-1pm
- * Women of Action (WOA) (2nd & 4th Saturdays)..... 11am-1pm
Info/childcare: Lynn, (617) 354-6394

* Wheelchair Accessible

All activities are free and open to women

FREE COMPUTER & INTERNET ACCESS: Four computers are available on a first come, first served basis

FREE CHILDCARE: If given four days notice, we do our best to provide free childcare for women attending groups and workshops Info: (617) 354-8807

***9th ANNUAL CAMBRIDGE WOMEN'S HEALTH DAY.** Saturday, Oct. 5, 10:30am-3pm, Lesley University, 1815 Mass Ave., Cambridge. Choose 2 workshops from 14, including Stress Reduction, Chi Gong, Low Impact Aerobics, Safety/Self-Defense, Self-Massage, Aging and Acupuncture. Add lunch, massages, health screenings, informational tables, and childcare. It's all free. Info: Judy Norris at (617)354-8807.

30+ MULTICULTURAL QUEER WOMENS' RAP. Thursdays, 7-8:30pm. A social group for queer women from all cultural backgrounds, designed to build community and break down barriers. We'll discuss topics that address our differences and similarities. Be prepared for lively debate! See topics below. Info: (617) 354-8807.

COMING OUT EXPLORATION GROUP. 10 week group will meet Tuesdays beginning September 24, 6:30-8:30pm. Anna Tarquinio facilitates this group. Members discuss any issues they have around coming out. Info, call Anna at (617)547-6240.

***CRITIQUE AND EDUCATION ART GROUP,** Friday, October 18, 6-7:30pm (3rd Fridays). A self-directed ongoing group for visual artists (2D and 3D). The group's purpose is to provide members the opportunity to explore their interests, and to encourage and provide feedback on work. Not a therapy group. For women with some art background who are producing work. Info: Kai at (617) 547-1438.

NOTHING TOO HEAVY TO SHARE (NTHTS). For survivors of extreme abuse, such as torture, forced isolation, severe neglect or sexual exploitation. One daytime group and a new evening meeting each week. Info/to join: Esther (781) 278-0997.

***POLITICAL ACTION GATHERING.** Thursday, October 17, 6-8pm. Presentation by the "T" Riders' Union. Info: (617) 354-8807.

***WOMEN: EXPLORING OUR COMIC VOICES,** 2nd & 4th Fridays, 6-7:30pm. If you love writing, directing, and performing comedy, or would love to try, please join us! Skits, improv, stand up, group feedback. A place to safely explore your comic voice and have fun. Info, Faye at cafaye@juno.com, or call (617) 354-8807.

***WOMEN OF ACTION (WOA) ORGANIZING MEETINGS,** Oct. 12 & 26, 11am-1pm (2nd and 4th Saturdays). WOA welcomes women of color and/or low-income women to join together to fight for justice. For info, or if you need childcare, call Lynn at (617) 354-6394.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

30+ MULTICULTURAL QUEER WOMENS'S RAP Thurs. 7-8:30pm
 October 3 Marriage in the Queer Community
 10 Spending Quality Time with your Partner
 17 No Meeting - Women's Week
 24 Communicating with Lesbian Friends

***LESBIAN RAP** Mondays, 7:30-9pm
 October 7 Game night - bring games.
 Celebrate Canadian Thanksgiving
 21 Escaping Lesbian Psychodrama
 28 Ice cream social (Optional costume/drag).

***BISEXUAL WOMEN'S RAP.** 1st & 3rd Tuesdays, 7:30-9pm
 October 1 Gender identity; cross-dressing, role-playing; transexuality
 15 What's goin' on? Talk about personal issues as they relate to bisexuality, or just listen

***WOMEN OVER 40,** 2nd & 4th Wednesdays., 7-8:30pm
 October 9 Age differences in relationships
 23 Menopause and physical changes

INCEST RESOURCES' FACILITATED DISCUSSION FOR SURVIVORS OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE (1st Fridays, 6-7:30pm)
 (Please be on time)

October 4 The healing process
 November 1 Religion and abuse
 December 6 Self-care and self-soothing

Fall Political Action Gatherings

T-Riders Union - Thursday, October 17, 6:30pm-8pm

Khalida Smalls, a leader from the T-Riders Union (TRU), will speak about the organization, its current campaigns and how one can get involved in working towards transit justice and equality. Come to this political action gathering to gain knowledge, share experiences and ideas and learn ways we can take action to improve our public transportation.

The T-Riders Union is a membership organization of transit riders in Greater Boston. TRU is concerned about the MBTA policies that affect riders in low income neighborhoods and communities of color. In addition, TRU is a project of Clean Buses for Boston (CBB), and concerned with MBTA's pollution issues, mainly Diesel exhaust which can trigger asthma attacks and cause cancer.

Welfare Rights for Immigrant Women - November, date TBA

In collaboration with the Cooperative Economics for Women, students from Northeastern University's Law Clinic will give a workshop discussing the welfare rights of immigrant women. We encourage all women to take part in this political action gathering because welfare rights, particularly of immigrant women, are currently under attack. Due to budget cuts, 1,500 legal immigrants in Massachusetts will stop receiving state welfare checks starting this September. Learn more about this issue and how you can take action.

"CEW is an organization dedicated to empowering women through income generating projects, advocacy, and organizing. We help immigrant and refugee women of color start cooperative businesses, while providing and advocating for services necessary to womens' survival: food security, English literacy, legal assistance, and child care. CEW also assists co-op members and associate members in organizing for changes in their communities." (<http://www.co-opwomen.org>) ~ Nuala Cabral



From the Development Coordinator

Hello! My name is Nicole Marcotte, and I am the new Development Coordinator at the Women's Center. I am very excited to continue my involvement with the Women's Center by creating and managing its fundraising campaigns! As both the public policy intern during the summer of 2000 and a participant in various groups and activities at the Women's Center, I was impressed by the variety and the quality of resources that the Women's Center provides for all women. I am continuously inspired by the commitment of so many women to the development and maintenance of a progressive space for women. My goal as Development Coordinator is to raise funds to maintain and expand the existing resources available at the Women's Center and develop new resources in order to meet the needs of women. With your support and the support of the surrounding community, we can achieve this goal! We welcome your participation in the fundraising process. If you would like to make a donation to the Women's Center or have any questions or ideas about our fundraising campaigns and events, please feel free to contact me at 617-354-6394 or via email at DevelopmentCoordinator@cambridgewomenscenter.org.

Together, we can make a difference in our own lives and the lives of so many women! I look forward to working with all those involved in the Women's Center to continue its legacy and contribute to its progression in the upcoming years.

~Nicole



Support The Women's Center

By

Honoring a Friend or Loved One with a Gift to the Women's Center

Critique and Discussion Art Group

I wanted to participate in a group with other women artists who were currently working on their art. Although I am always working, I find that sometimes I get stuck and would like another perspective, or I have hit up against my limits technically, or I just need to talk about what I'm trying to do with someone who can understand. So, I looked around Cambridge and found nothing that fit the bill.

I've taken lots of classes and also have a BA in art. I am always working to improve my technical skills which, let's face it, is a life time pursuit, but after years of classes what I really want is a network of artists. Don't get me wrong, more lessons may be in my future, but thought I'd also like to approach learning and growing from another side. Thought it would be a great idea to try and form a group that not only critiqued each other's work but also investigated different media and techniques together, visited museums, and just encouraged each other in our discovery. The group will on the 3rd Friday of the month from 6:30-7:30. Our first meeting is September 20th. ~Kai Long

Décor 'n You

Professional designers from Community Interiors are helping redecorate the Women's Center. For thirty years the 46 Pleasant Street building has united women seeking education, resources, empathy and empowerment. Positive environments foster personal and collective action. Help keep the Center's mission alive by revitalizing rooms for another generation of women. Expertise and referrals for free carpentry, electrical work, plumbing, upholstery and painting are needed, as well as volunteers to solicit donations of money and materials. Women of color are strongly encouraged to participate. Please call me at (617) 354-5651 to get involved or give input.

~Nan Genger, Founder/Designer, Community Interiors.



Yes, I want to support the Women's Center!

Enclosed is my tax-deductible donation of: ___\$25 ___\$50 ___\$100 ___\$500 ___other \$ ___
___ I'm interested in volunteering at the Women's Center.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Thank You !

If you'd prefer to be taken off of our mailing list, please check the following box and return to the Women's Center. (Women's Center, 46 Pleasant Street, Cambridge MA 02139)

**9th ANNUAL CAMBRIDGE WOMEN'S HEALTH DAY
"CARING FOR OURSELVES"**

Saturday, October 5, 2002, 10:30am-3pm, at Lesley University, 1815 Mass Ave. (Porter Exchange). Come on over and put your own well-being first for a day! Choose 2 workshops from about 15, including: Tai Chi, Stress Reduction, Aging, Low-Impact Aerobics, Safety/Self-Defense, Reiki, Writing for Your Health, Transformational Breath, Health Issues for Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse, Intuitive Eating & Body Awareness, Self-Massage, Exercising for Improved Health and Hip Hop. Add a free lunch, information-filled tables, "sample" acupuncture minitreatments, massages, health screenings and childcare,. And it's all free! Wheelchair Accessible.

Help! If you could help with meal prep, getting food, childcare, cleanup, or something else, please contact Lenore at (617) 868-2900 or ltsikitas@ceocambridge.org, or Judy Norris, (617) 354-8807.

Sponsored by the Women's Center, the Cambridge Women's Commission, CEOC, Abortion Action Project, Concilio Hispano, Lesley University, Cambridge Housing, Mount Auburn Hospital, Cambridge Health Alliance. *~Judy Norris*

**The Women's Center
46 Pleasant Street
Cambridge, MA 02139**

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