



ON OUR WAY

Newsletter of the Women's Center

Spring 2009

46 Pleasant Street, Cambridge, MA 02139

(617) 354-8807 www.cambridgewomenscenter.org

Survivor Theatre Project

Just last fall, I saw a flyer at the Women's Center calling for women who had survived sexual abuse or assault and were interested in forming a theater group. This group was to become The Transformations Theatre Project. No stage experience was necessary, however the goal of the group was to create a performance that would speak the truth about surviving sexual abuse and violence. In particular the entire script was to be created and performed by survivors.

My choice to answer the flyer was based on three things: one, survivors of sexual abuse and assault are seldom allowed to contribute to the public discourse; two, currently the social environments in most of the world actually encourage sexual abuse and assault; and three, these two phenomena aren't coincidental. The way a person or group is represented in their culture has significant impacts on self esteem and how others will treat them. This is so even for the most non-conforming among us. We are social animals; it's what saves us from being purely selfish.

Yet this human need for social interaction is also a vulnerability; it makes us susceptible to social coercion. Cultivating anti-social behaviors like pessimism and apathy are common means of coping with this vulnerability but these are poisons to the heart and mind that host them. So how do we protect ourselves from social coercion, so rampant in a culture by and for predators, without sacrificing our inclination to connect with each other, our saving grace? I believe the best way to protect ourselves from the insidious effects of being constantly exposed to a mass produced, predatory culture is to form communities and cultures by and for ourselves. Women and survivors need communities where we can analyze and refute the toxic messages that are launched at us every day from the larger mass produced culture, where we can speak freely about our experiences and support each other as we come to realizations that sometimes seem too overwhelming, where we can formulate better ways of acting and reacting than the stereotypes we have been prescribed, where we can feel engaged and integral and so abolish the notion that we're worthless or next to it because of who we are or what we've been through.

I'm happy to say that I found such a community when I joined The Transformations Theatre Project. I've been blessed to be in this group, for here as part of this community of strong, courageous, creative women, I've done the most meaningful work of my life. Our performance of "Rescuing Persephone" is a benefit for the Women's Center. I'm grateful to both Melissa Penley the woman who founded and directed the group and to the Cambridge Women's Center and all the women here who make it a community by and for women.

- Amelia

CONTENTS

- Our Second Computer Lab is Open!— p.2
- Remembering Rose Dixon— p.2
- Surviving Tough Times Together— p.3
- New Mother's Baby Wearing Workshop— p.4
- Not For Sale— p.4
- Survivors of Childhood Physical and Emotional Abuse— p.4
- Lesbian Partners of Survivors of Sexual Abuse— p.4
- Group/Workshop list— p.4
- Our Garden— p.4
- The Women's Center & Me— p.5
- Survivor Quilt Exhibit— p.5
- Celebration of the Historic 888 Memorial Drive Takeover & the birth of the Women's Center— p.6

Women's Center Yard Sale!!

Saturday, June 27
10am-4pm

151 Appleton Street, Cambridge
(intersection of Appleton Street,
Huron Ave., and Vassal Lane).

A wide variety of really good stuff!
GET SOME GREAT BARGAINS

and

SUPPORT THE WOMEN'S CENTER!

Info: Susan 617-354-6394 x13.
All proceeds go to the Women's
Center.

Appreciation~

The Transformative Theatre Project would like to thank our collaborating therapist, Marcie Mitler of Incest Resources, for her generous support and guidance throughout the course of the project. A donation has been made to the Women's Center in her honor.

The Transformation Theatre Project donated the proceeds of their "Rescuing Persephone" performance, totaling \$623! Thank you so much!



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

Website:

www.cambridgewomenscenter.org

What's up at the Women's Center?

Check out our monthly calendar on the website.

Email:

info@cambridgewomenscenter.org

Hours:

Monday-Friday: 10am-8pm

Saturday: 10am-3pm
We are closed on major holidays.

Helpline: (617) 354-8807

Business line: (617) 354-6394

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 a wealth of free programming.

All donations are tax-deductible.

Our Second Computer Lab is Open!

After months of grant writing, obtaining equipment, and room preparation, the Women's Center has opened a second computer lab. The lab, which features five computers donated by the Harvard Art Museum, will add much needed capacity to the in-demand first floor computer lab. The computer room is located in the basement and provides a comfortable, quiet and safe place to use the computers. The Center now offers the upstairs computer lab which is wheelchair accessible and is located in the heart of the Center. In addition, the upstairs lab provides proximity to the kitchen, first floor bathroom, and back yard, as well as being close to the volunteer room for easy access to help and information! The downstairs lab offers a quiet space away from the bustle of the common area and will provide women with added privacy. The additional computer lab will allow the Center the space needed to provide basic Internet and computer training which we hope will help bridge the digital divide affecting so many women in our community.

Thank you to all of the many volunteers who made the dream of a second computer lab a reality. Without the dedicated help of many wonderful community members this would have never happened. In addition, The Agnes M. Lindsay Trust and the Sheila Gamble Fund gave us grants for the labs, the Harvard Art Museum contributed the computers, and Boston College and Massachusetts Lawyers' Weekly donated desks and chairs, which were also crucial to creating the second lab. We are tremendously grateful to all.

The Center still needs to purchase an air purifier and tutorials on basic computer skills. We are also looking for volunteers to teach computer classes. To volunteer to teach a class or to make a donation please call 617.354.6394 or e-mail us at: info@cambridgewomenscenter.org. Both computer labs will be open six days a week and volunteers will be available to provide technology assistance.

Remembering Rose Dixon

Rose Dixon, MS, RNC, NP, PA-C, a long-time community member of the Women's Center, spent most of her life working to help people with illness and disabilities. She started the "Women Maximizing Abilities Now" support group here at the Women's Center and facilitated the group for many years. She did a terrific job, and was appreciated by all who met her. She stopped leading the group in the fall of 2007 because of health considerations.

Rose passed away this past January. Some of the people who knew her share how they remember Rose:

"I met Rose Dixon at the Women's Center and was immediately drawn to her professionalism and knowledge about the many difficulties of living as a woman with a hidden disability. Her courageous humor led me on a wiser path to my own acceptance of my disability when I had all but given up to pain. Rose was my mentor, big sister, and I loved her very much."

Lisa Murphy

"Rose Dixon was a very kind and thoughtful person, always looking after others, especially those with medical needs. She was very good at giving guidance and emotional support. Rose was the person whom you'd always remember by her smile and for her thoughtful, generous nature. She had a kind heart. She was a guiding light, a beacon of hope for all those who knew her. We will all sadly miss Rose."

Karen H.

(Continued on Page 3.)



Surviving Tough Times Together

Happy Spring! Here we are again, and yes we are still here! We know we don't have to tell you the harsh economic news; you see it broadcast everywhere and may well be experiencing the pinch yourself. As it is for many nonprofit organizations, this is a challenging time for the Women's Center. Grant money is being drastically reduced, and individuals' ability to donate is affected as well. This means a severe strain on our already bare-bones budget. Without a financial cushion, the Center is particularly vulnerable to the effects of the wavering economy.

Meanwhile, women need us more than ever. Job seekers, homeless women, women looking to gain control over their finances, women looking for a place to cook a meal or someone to talk to, and so many others, continue to find a haven at the Women's Center, at a time when such welcoming, comforting, useful, and empowering places are increasingly difficult to come by. The Women's Center is committed to providing more with less, stretching each dollar we receive. We've recently opened a second computer room, as you'll read elsewhere in this newsletter – a boon to those women doing research, writing resumes, learning how to use a computer, or simply needing e-mail access. You can see from the monthly Calendar that activities and groups are thriving here. The Center is a crucial resource with an important and active place in the community. If you haven't stopped by lately, we welcome you to visit, have a cup of tea, and check out the new computers or an intriguing-sounding group.

The Board of Trustees – ourselves volunteers and worried community members – constantly looks for ways for the Center to save money and to locate new sources of funding. That said, we need your help **now** as much as, if not **more** than ever. We really can't do this without you. We are you. Your monetary donations, contributions of supplies and other wish-list items, and volunteer time are what makes the Women's Center possible. In this difficult spring, we ask that you please give as much as you are able, to ensure that the Center will be here when women need it most, in both hard times and good ones.

With deep thanks,
Laura Cherry, Board of Trustees

Remembering Rose Dixon Continued from Page 2

The following is excerpted from an article Rose wrote for the SmartNurse Advocate in December, 2000

When Illness Comes Calling ~by Rosalene M. Dixon

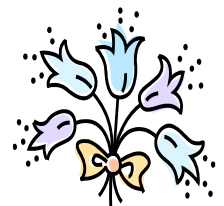
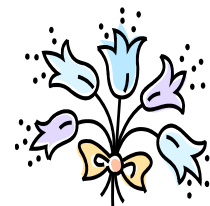
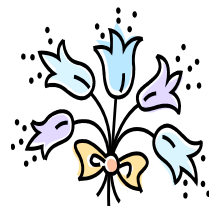
Illness can often be called the "uninvited guest." Whether it's a brain disorder or another malady, how do we incorporate illness into the framework of our lives? No matter how unwelcome the "guest," we, the hosts and hostesses, can benefit from getting to know the nature of our illness and shepherding "it" through our bodies, our relationships, and our daily lives.

Are your "guest's" needs being met, so you can continue to nurture yourself and your loved ones within your lifestyle? I've often found that when people can manage their illnesses successfully, they balance their lifestyles. Consider how you might incorporate your illness or disability into the framework of your life. It's not easy, and it takes time. It's a process of integration. Plan to take things step by step.

First, take a deep breath! Accepting illness, the "uninvited guest," into our lives is not easy. However, learning to accept the illness instead of ignoring it may help you to cope more successfully in the long term.

This does not mean that you should accept your illness into your home and serve it obediently. Nor should you allow it to dictate how you live your life. On the contrary, chronic illness can be accommodated and integrated into your life. When the unexpected comes calling your fate is not sealed! You have options. Learning to accept that the illness exists in your life can simply help you make the best personal decisions for your set of circumstances.

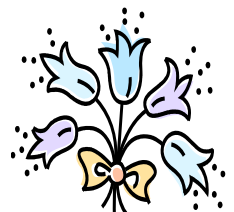
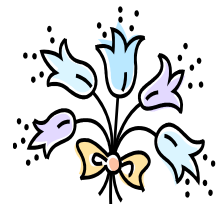
When you begin to achieve these goals, you may discover you can easily manage illness, balance your lifestyle and realize dreams.



WISH LIST

- Herbs, perennials (shade, semi-shade)
- Toner Cartridges HP 45 (51645A) or Lexmark #70 Black
- Gift Certificates for Home Depot, Staples, Target, and Tags
- Paper Towels and Toilet Paper
- Non-Perishable Food in Cans, Bags, or Boxes (Within Expiration Dates)
- Coffee, Tea, Honey, Cream
- Food Containers, Trash Bags and Sandwich Bags
- Eco-Friendly and Unscented Hand Soap and Dishwashing Liquid

- Used Cell Phones
- Mops, brooms, buckets
- Printer Paper
- #63/4 & #10 Envelopes
- Ice melt/sand
- Portable CD Player/Radio
- Good Office or other Chairs
- Shovels and other Garden Tools
- Headphones (for computer use)
- Flat Monitors 17" or larger
- USB sticks



New Mother's Baby Wearing Workshop

If you are a new mother/caregiver interested in learning how to wear your baby in a sling, wrap, or African style on your back, this is the right workshop for you. You can bring your own carrier or explore the ones provided in the workshop. Come with an open mind and you will enjoy this attachment parenting tool. On every 3rd Saturday of the month, 2:30-4pm.

Not For Sale

A support group for any woman who has performed sexual acts for money or to make money for someone else. This group meets at the Women's Center on the 2nd and 4th Saturdays of each month from 11am-12pm.

For more information, email Not For Sale at scum.manifest@gmail.com or call the Women's Center at 617-354-6394.

Survivors of Childhood Physical & Emotional Abuse

This group will take place on Tuesday, June 2nd, 11:30am-1pm and will offer an educational introduction on the effects of physical and emotional abuse on children and help participants make connections between their past and who they are now. There will be discussions about survivor's experience of anxiety, depression, shame, self-blame, low self-esteem and anger as adults. We will also explore trust, boundaries, relationship issues and problems with intimacy. Info: mmitler@yahoo.com

Lesbian Partners of Survivors Of Sexual Abuse

Being a partner of a survivor of sexual abuse is one of the most challenging relationships you will encounter. You will have feelings of anger, resentment, inadequacy and frustration. You will be asked to get closer and then be pushed away. At the same time, remember that survivors are some of the most beautiful people the world has.

How can you develop a rewarding partnership without sacrificing so much of who you are? Your feelings need to be validated and you need to know how to enjoy yourself. You need support.

This workshop will be a place for you to share with others what it is like to be involved with a survivor. The focus will be on setting boundaries, validating your feelings, having your needs met and other skills that will help you to create the kind of relationship you know, in your heart, exists.

This workshop will be held on Tues, June 16th, 11:30am-1pm. For more info, please contact mmitler@yahoo.com

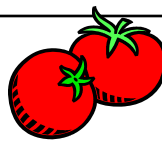
On-Going Groups

- ♦ Battered Women's Support Group (Every Wednesday, 7-9pm, except the 3rd Wednesday of the month)*
- ♦ Coming Out Discussion (1st Sat of the month, 1-3pm)*
- ♦ HIV Discussion Group (last Thursday of the month, 3-4:30pm, check monthly calendar for exact date)
- ♦ Incest Resources' Drop-In Discussion Group for Female Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse (3rd Friday of the month, 6-7:30pm. No meetings in July and August). June 19 topic: Hope for the Future
- ♦ Lesbian Chat 30+ (all ages welcome) (1st and 2nd Fridays of the month, 6:30-8pm)*
- ♦ Lesbian Rap (3rd and 4th Fri of the month, 6:30-8pm)*
- ♦ New Mother's Baby Wearing Workshop. (every 3rd Sat of the month, 2:30-4pm). Sign up: 617-354-8807.
- ♦ Not For Sale (2nd & 4th Sat of the month, 11am-12pm)
- ♦ Straight Marriage, Still Questioning. Peer led support group for the woman in a straight relationship struggling with her sexual orientation. For details please email kate.e.flynn@gmail.com
- ♦ Survivors of Incest Anonymous, Nothing Too Heavy to Share. Support group for survivors of severe sexual abuse and exploitation. Screening: Ming, 617-354-6394
- ♦ The Women's Center Board Meeting (every 3rd Mon of the month, 5:30-7:30pm)
- ♦ Women & Media (2nd and 4th Thursdays of the month, 7-8:30pm). Call 617-354-8807 for film title on 6/11.
- ♦ Writer's Circle (2nd Wednesday of the month, 7-8:30pm. No meetings in June, July and August)

Workshops in June

- ♦ Survivors of Childhood Physical and Emotional Abuse (Tuesday 6/2, 11:30am-1pm). Info: Marcie, mmitler@yahoo.com
- ♦ Lesbian Partners of Survivors of Sexual Abuse (Tuesday 6/16, 11:30am-1pm). Info: Marcie, mmitler@yahoo.com

*Wheelchair accessible groups



Our Garden

A work in progress, driven by the idea that we grow herbs and veggies for the kitchen, and flowers and small bushes for added beauty. Some plants are back from last year, and we're off to a great start thanks to the energetic help of eight students in the Cambridge "Girls Empowerment Group." They pulled out giant roots in front of the house, weeded all over, dug big holes, and planted 15 perennials they brought. Lots more needs to be done to have an attractive, bird-friendly, and productive garden. If you'd like to help plan, plant, water and/or weed, come to a planning/working meeting on Thursday, June 4 at 2:30pm or call Judy, (617) 354-6394 or email: judy@cambridgewomenscenter.org.

Please also get in touch if you have plants or large planters you could donate. Thanks!



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

__ \$2,000 __ \$1,000 __ \$500 __ \$250 __ \$100 __ \$50 __ \$25 __ other \$ _____

Please make your tax-deductible check payable to The Women's Center.

__ My gift will be matched by my employer _____

__ My donation is in honor of: (name) _____

(address) _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Thank You!

Checks payable to **The Women's Center**. Mail to: Women's Center, 46 Pleasant Street, Cambridge MA 02139

If you'd prefer to be taken off of our mailing list, please check this box and return this slip, or email us at info@cambridgewomenscenter.org.

Spring 2009

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

By going to www.cambridgewomenscenter.org and clicking on "support us" and then "Donate Now"

The Women's Center & Me

Leaving the Boston area in the mid seventies and returning again intermittently during the turn of the century, I found the Woman's Center to be there when I needed it. Whether my desire was for solace, for communing with other women, or to volunteer, donate, be on-line, cook a meal, resources, hotline or whatever... the o'l victorian house and The Women who serve and are served through it remain a current legend I am relieved to know exists.

The Women's Center is a community solace for me and a peace-filled fortress for equality and empowerment. She is also an entity through which I have found commonality as a human being. The spirit I feel from her is one of "welcome" and of "be and let be."

What the Women's Center means to me is that We have a place to be present and gather together. As one individual to another or others, there is a space to voice concerns and experiences as Women. I feel that the Center offers an opportunity to be both a giver and a receiver. I am truly grateful for Our Center, a place where women are welcome, as I continue on another length of life's journey.

Thank You Cambridge Women's Center.

Sincerely,
Karen Jean

Charite Jewels

Check out www.charitejewels.com
All profits go to the Women's Center!

Survivor Quilt Exhibit

You can view the quilts and accompanying text and learn more about the project on our website. Go to <http://www.cambridgewomenscenter.org>, then to NEWS & HAPPENINGS, and then to Survivor Quilt Project. The quilts are on display throughout May in the Resnikoff Gallery, in the lobby of the Media Arts Center at Roxbury Community College, 1234 Columbus Avenue, Roxbury. The gallery is free, open to the public, wheelchair accessible, and located across from the Orange Line Roxbury Crossing Station. Hours are Monday-Friday, 9am-6pm, with limited weekend and evening hours. For more information, call (617) 541-5380, or email rccgallery@hotmail.com or info@jennifer-hughes.com.

The quilts will be exhibited elsewhere during the year.

In addition, one of the quilts will be appearing as the cover art for a book on the history of the survivor movement, *From Self-Help to the State: The Politics of Child Sexual Abuse* by Nancy Whittier, being published by Oxford University Press in July.

Helpline Volunteers Needed

If you have an open mind, compassion, and 2-4 hours a week (between 10am-8pm) and would like to make a difference in women's lives, you can become a helpline volunteer at the Women's Center. Orientation and training will be provided.

Please contact the Center Coordinator Ming at ming@cambridgewomenscenter.org or 617-354-6394 for more information.

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

Return Service Requested

**Non-Profit Org
U.S. Postage
PAID
Boston, MA
Permit No. 59699**

Celebration of the Historic 888 Memorial Drive Takeover & the Birth of the Women's Center

We were there in 1971 and we, the women of the center community, are here now. On March 6, 1971, some very courageous women decided to take a stand for the rights of women and led a march from an International Women's Day celebration on Boston Common to a Harvard-owned building at 888 Memorial Drive in Cambridge. They occupied that building for ten (10) days, established the longest continuously operating women's center in the country, and played a part in the historical feminist movement that continues to this day. The Women's Center, now located at 46 Pleasant Street, continues the mission established in 1971. The Center's goal is justice. We celebrate the victories, voices, and the survival of women – individually and collectively.

On March 16, 2009 the Cambridge Women's Commission and Cambridge Historical Commission, through the auspices of the Cambridge Women's Heritage Project, unveiled a plaque commemorating the building takeover. The evening's program included a welcome from Sarah Burks of the Historical Commission, who unveiled the plaque. Libby Bouvier provided excerpts from *Left on Pearl*, a powerful documentary about the takeover. Tess Ewing and Judy Smith provided us with their memories and tributes from the takeover. Cellist Cynthia Forbes and folksinger Marcia Deihl enhanced the evening's experience with beautiful music and powerful lyrics. Emily Shield of the Women's Commission concluded the program, noting that the plaque will be placed on the building currently located at 888 Memorial Drive. Women coming together can and will continue to build and strengthen the empowerment movement that took hold in 1971.

Susan Noonan-Forster, Co-Chair, Board of Trustees

