



ON OUR WAY

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

Fall 2010



Gifts from the Dark Edge

The Women's Center has been for me a real source of insight and companionship when I've called many times over the years. So last April I became a volunteer on the helpline, myself, as a way of saying thank you to the Women's Center.

While my initial intention in volunteering was to try to help empower helpline callers, as I had been empowered, I find that I myself am being transformed in good and sometimes surprising ways. Volunteering has really been an amazing time of renewed hope and awakening for me because I've witnessed repeatedly, in the stories of the callers and the women who come to the center, incredible courage, strength, humor, imagination, reverence for life, willingness to express vulnerability, and deep commitment to searching for personal truths. This deepens in me the realization that we women, no matter what challenges we may be facing, or how we may be feeling on any given day, are really strong, gifted, and capable, despite all the centuries of sexism that would deny this fact.

Of course volunteering can, at times, be difficult and painful. I am new to the work and have much to learn. I make mistakes, which sometimes really bug me, but usually I learn from them. Another inevitable and deep challenge springs from the harsh political and social context of our times. We women, like all marginalized people, often face overwhelming social and economic obstacles - challenges which are spiking in this political season of heightened stress from war, increased racism, and the flagging economy. Often helpline callers and visitors contact the center when feeling understandably hurt, angry, sad and/or helpless about hardships and injustices they face, like domestic violence, loneliness, homelessness, poverty, racism, illness, abuse at work, or some combination of these. Often when I sense the gravity of a caller's situation, I find that I, too, feel considerable pain, anger, sadness, or cluelessness. Sometimes I have nothing to share but wordless, or almost wordless, care for the caller and her process. But I have found, to my surprise, that it is often precisely in these moments of shared darkness that little bits of light emerge mysteriously, like the first hints of dawn in the sky.

What a great lesson for me, a woman who strives to overcome fear! Thank you, Women's Center!

~ Phoebe

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Wish List

- Headphones (for computer use)
- Good flat monitors 17" or larger
- USB sticks/flash drives
- Non-scented liquid hand and dish soap
- Food containers, food storage bags
- Large kitchen trash bags (13 gallon)
- Paper towels and toilet paper
- Coffee, tea, hot chocolate, sugar, honey, cream, milk, butter
- Gift certificates for Target, Tags, Staples, Office Max, Drug Stores, Supermarkets, Home Depot, etc.
- Mailing labels (30/p, eg: Avery 5160)
- Printer & copier paper
- Postage Stamps
- Toner cartridges HP 05A (CE 505A] for computer labs

The Women's Center's 40th birthday is coming up next year! How will we celebrate? If you have ideas, and especially if can help with and/or manage any celebration projects, please contact Ming: ming@cambridgewomenscenter.org or at 617-354-6394. We need all the help we can get!

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.

Support the Women's Center Online!

www.cambridgewomenscenter.org Click on "support us" and then "Donate Now."

All donations are tax-deductible.

For further information about volunteer opportunities or to offer in-kind donations, contact Ming, Women's Center Coordinator:
ming@cambridgewomenscenter.org
(617) 354-6394

Porn Culture

This past June, Wheelock College in Boston hosted the 3rd international Stop Porn Culture conference. Stop Porn Culture is an organization that aims to educate about the harms done, at both the personal and societal levels, by pornography. Speakers at the conference explained the ways that porn eroticizes violence and stated that mainstream porn has become very violent. Dr Rebecca Whisnart elaborated on how many porn consumers lose touch with their own perceptions as they put their arousal before basic human compassion. We were also informed by Dr. Sharon Cooper from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children that in instances of child sexual abuse it has now become the norm for the perpetrator to also make pornography of the child.

Stop Porn Culture focuses in particular on how the normalization of porn is affecting our culture. Fantasies do shape beliefs and beliefs shape behavior. While a direct cause and effect relationship between porn and rape hasn't been scientifically proven, we do know that porn decreases peoples' empathy to survivors of sexual violence. How many of these people with decreased empathy end up on juries or even as judges?

While it was encouraging to meet so many people at the conference who care about the deleterious effects of porn, there was the constant return to the question, "Why do men enjoy seeing women hurt and degraded?" Listening to Stop Porn Culture's September 19th interview of Dr Gail Dines on 88.1 FM WMBR's "Radio with a View," it would seem that men (even those who identify as feminists) are loathe to answer that question themselves. As daunting as this question is, the time has come when we can no longer turn away from it. It is time to put the focus on the choices men make. It is time to look at them.

A handful of women here at the Cambridge Women's Center are interested in starting a Stop Porn Culture chapter in the coming year. In addition to doing slide show presentations, we are also interested in examining why many men delight in the misogyny inherent to porn and in illuminating what we believe porn addiction does. In short, we want to develop an artistic counter-strike against porn. We want to elucidate the personal and political defamation that results from choosing carnal hunger over human rights and, of course, it is our first amendment right to do so.

~ Amelia

A Fond Farewell



Diane Lowenstein passed away on Monday, July 5th, 2010. A long-time Women's Center volunteer, she led parenting and single parenting groups and met one-on-one with many mothers for over twenty years.

"I knew Diane from the Women's Center, where I was in a group with her 15 years ago. I then did some private counseling with her over the years. She was a beautiful person who always made everyone feel like they were her favorite."

Diane maintained an unfailingly positive spirit in the face of decades of medical adversity. Her fortitude, enthusiasm, friendliness, generosity, and kindness touched us all, brightening our lives. We are so grateful to have known her.

~ Judy, Jennifer, and Ming

Celebration!

Incest Resources' 30th Anniversary Celebration on October 17, 2010 was a very special event right from the start. Co-founders Elaine Westerlund and Kathy Morrissey shared some amusing and sobering recollections from the early days, snippets of which follow. Founded in 1980, Incest Resources was the first organization in the country for survivors of child sexual abuse.

Kathy: We were trying to introduce ourselves to the community and called places we thought would be receptive.

Elaine: Could I spell that? Sure, I-N-C-E-S-T Resources.

Kathy: One person said, "Insect what?"...and after Incest Resources was repeated, said, "So you do pest control?"

Elaine, on trying to get the word out: Hello, I'm looking at your newspaper and the ad we sent in doesn't seem to be there...I'm calling from Incest Resources...No, that wasn't a practical joke. It was a real ad for a real group for incest survivors...Yes, please do put it in the next issue. **Kathy:** The word incest just wasn't in the vocabulary and for good reasons!

There was no Child Abuse Reporting Law until 1983 and no Victim Rights Law until 1984. **Elaine:** But some people were receptive. We couldn't believe it when we heard you were going to Toronto to address the American Psychiatric Association! Who knew they would be open to hearing from a survivor?! **Kathy:** Talk about scary! Try telling 200 psychiatrists in 1982 that they've missed several beats, and be talking about incest on top of it. **Elaine:** But they actually appreciated what they could learn from you and published the presentation! I remember that *Boston Globe* article the same year... **Kathy:** Judge William Reineke sentenced a 24 year old man to 90 days in a work-release program for sexually assaulting the 5 year old daughter of the woman with whom he lived. The Judge described the child as "an unusually sexually promiscuous young lady" and declared, "no way do I believe the man initiated sexual contact." **Elaine:** Yep, they blamed the five year old! And a decade later, after millions of adult survivors had come forward, they blamed it on "false memories." But it didn't shut us up. The truth has its own way of coming out. A decade after the heyday of "false memories," the clergy abuse scandal broke – right here in Boston – and, like our own early survivor movement, went national and international. **Kathy:** Some truths have to come out over and over again, and childhood sexual abuse is one of them.

During the Q & A that followed, one audience member asked, "Were you both therapists when you started Incest Resources?" **Elaine:** Oh no, I was a disabled dental hygienist living on food stamps... **Kathy:** I had just put myself through college by working as a legal secretary.

Michelle Harris, founder of the Survivor Quilt Project, then discussed the history of the project. Her presentation included projecting images of the quilts, sharing the artists' statements for each quilt, and describing many aspects of the quilts. We were moved by her eloquence and her engaging manner, as well as the significance of the Quilt Project. At the end of her presentation Michelle announced that the first quilt made by the Survivor Quilt Project was missing from its display area in the Women's Center. We were relieved and delighted that it was found elsewhere in the Center the following week.

After the intermission we were treated to a powerful and affecting performance of *Rescuing Persephone: Surviving and Transforming Sexual Violence* by the Survivor Theatre Project, followed by a dialogue between the audience and the performers and director. The courage and honesty of the actors were awe-inspiring. Many accolades were given to Melissa Penley, the founder of the project and director of the performance, as well as to the talented cast.

What a night! The house was full and the event raised over \$2,400 for the Women's Center. Thank you, Elaine Westerlund, and all the other founders and members of Incest Resources!

~ Judy Norris, Susan Noonan-Forster, Nancy Horwitz,
Laura Cherry & Latanya Duncan, Board of Trustees,
and Ming Chang, Women's Center Coordinator

Wrapping Up the Season

The 2010 Survivor Theatre Project Touring Company performed their original piece *Rescuing Persephone: Surviving and Transforming Sexual Violence* during the month of October in Brooklyn, Northampton, Florence, and at Incest Resources' 30th Anniversary Celebration at the Central Square Theater in Cambridge. Survivor Theatre, a project of the Women's Center, is honored to be bringing the voices of survivors to the public discourse on sexual violence. We aim to bring empowerment and healing through theatre arts exploration, and support the activist community with, what we hope, is truly inspiring work. Also in October, a new group of Survivor-Artists brought childhood moments, transformative movement, and dynamic poetry to the stage in *The Memories of Trees*. The play was set in a multimedia world that included music, drumming, and full screen projections. In the post-discussion, one audience member ardently stated, "I see that there needs to be a different word than *survivor*, these women have done so much *more* than just survive." The Survivor Theatre Project is made up of the radiant, brave, and tender warriors who have chosen to create theatre about their experiences as survivors. On our team are also many survivors and allies who have helped us document our work, print programs, design posters, support the plays as musicians, and encourage us in an abundance of ways. The artists and I are so grateful for your solidarity.

The Survivor Theatre Project wishes to thank the Massachusetts Cultural Council, Cambridge Arts Council, The Puffin Foundation, Moonifest, and our wonderful donors for supporting this important work. We are seeking additional funding sources for 2011, so please let us know your ideas! Our next round of theatre workshops for survivors will happen in fall 2011 in Cambridge and Western Mass, so please be in touch if you are interested in bringing your voice, passion, and talent to this project. Email us at: survivortheatreproject@gmail.com or for more info go to: www.survivortheatreproject.com

With gratitude,
Melissa Penley

Monthly Theatre Workshops

For those who are curious, for those who are artists, for those who've always wanted to try, for those who have a passion for the real magic of artistic performance. Starting in July 2010, the Women's Center, in collaboration with the Survivor Theatre Project, has been offering monthly theatre arts workshops taught by local working artists. We've had a different theme each month, including Acting, Clowning, Dealing with Stage Fright, The Breathing and Drawing Space, and Storytelling. These free, inclusive workshops include a range of performing arts and approaches. The only regret is that we must limit the number of participants due to lack of space. However, the small group provides a real sense of intimacy and safety that is so nourishing when taking the risks that performing requires. These workshops cater to everyone; they are challenging, fun and accessible, even if you have never performed a day in your life! The Monthly Theatre Arts Workshops will take a winter break, but will pick back up in February. Also, we are seeking more artists to teach workshops in 2011, so if you are an artist or you know one, please get in touch: survivortheatreproject@gmail.com! See you on stage!

~ Melissa

Monthly Luncheons

Every woman at the Women's Center is a part of the community. At this monthly gathering, lunch is provided, and women have an opportunity to get to know and appreciate each other. It is also a time to hear each other's ideas on how to make our shared space comfortable for all women, and how each of us can best respond when differences challenge us. Together we can make this precious place work well for everyone! The next luncheon will be on Thursday, December 16 from noon-1:30pm.

Please come. We look forward to seeing you!

The Empowerment Group

The focus of this group is to instill empowerment within each other through the support of other women. The group will be a place where women can come together and talk about problems and issues in a warm, inviting, and non-judgmental atmosphere. If you are interested in attending, or if you have any questions, please email Verna at vskeete@gmail.com.

On-Going Groups

- Battered Women's Support Group (Every Wednesday, 7-9pm, except the 3rd Wednesday)*
- Coming Out Open Discussion (2nd Tue, 6:30-8:30pm)*
- Drop-In Computer Support for Women (every Monday and Tuesday, 2-4pm)*
- Incest Resources' Drop-In Discussion Group for Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse (Sept through June, 3rd Fridays, 6-7:30pm - topics below)
- Ladies, Let's Talk About It—Women's Narcotic Anonymous (NA) Meeting (Thursdays, 6:30-8pm)*
- Lesbian Chat (1st and 2nd Fridays, 6:30-8pm)*
- Lesbian Connection (3rd Fridays, 6:30-8pm)*
- 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
- Board Meeting (2nd Thursdays, 5:30-7pm)
Annual Meeting: Thursday, February 10, 2011
- Women & Media (2nd and 4th Saturdays, 12:30-2pm).
Film Screenings 2nd and Discussions 4th Saturdays
- Writer's Circle (2nd Wednesdays, 7-8:30pm).
No meetings in June, July, and August)

New Groups

- Drawing & Painting (every Tue through 12/14, 10am-12pm, and every Wed through 12/15, 7-8:30pm)
- Luncheon at the Women's Center, December 16th 12-1:30pm (one Thursday/month)*
- Monthly Theatre Arts Workshops (one Sat/month, 1:30-3pm - no meetings in December or January)*
- The Empowerment Group (3rd Sats, 12:30-1:30pm, no meeting in January)

* Wheelchair accessible groups; other groups accessible by pre-arrangement

Incest Resources' Drop-In Discussion Group for Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse

3rd Fridays, 6-7:30pm

Upcoming Dates and Topics

December 17	Anger
January 21	Control
February 18	Victim or Survivor
March 18	Self-Acceptance
April 15	Trust and Intimacy
May 20	Sexuality
June 17	Resilience

Need Ideas for Holiday Gifts?

Check out

Charite Jewels

www.charitejewels.com

All profits go to the Women's Center!



Therapists Needed

Are you a therapist looking for an opportunity to volunteer?

Call the Women's Counseling and Resource Center at the Women's Center (617) 492-8568

CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS

There are lots of great ways to volunteer at the Women's Center. Be a listening support on the helpline; facilitate a group, workshop, or training; do childcare for attending mothers; work on events; help with snow shoveling; do painting, building repairs, and more. Join us and put your talents to good use! Please contact Ming at 617-354-6394 or ming@cambridgewomenscenter.org



Rasheeda Abdul-Musawwir was an intern this past summer at the Women's Center. She is a student at Wheaton College and is interested in women's rights issues. She has expressed her gratitude for the profound experiences she has had with the Women's Center. The picture above is of Rasheeda in the helpline office.



888 WOMEN'S HISTORY PROJECT INC. LEFT ON PEARL

40TH ANNIVERSARY SCREENING

Sunday March 6, 2011

2:00pm at the Brattle Theater

On March 6, 1971, International Women's Day marchers turned LEFT ON PEARL and marched into a Harvard University building, declaring it a Women's Center! This documentary film commemorates the takeover and 10-day occupation of the building, which transformed participants' lives and sparked the creation of many community-based projects including our own Women's Center! Join us in celebrating this fascinating, little-known chapter in 2nd Wave Feminist history.

www.888womenshistory.org

www.cambridgewomenscenter.org

www.brattlefilm.org



Happy Graduation, Allie! Many Thanks, Allie!

In August this amazing letter arrived at the Women's Center accompanied by \$1,031!

"Two years ago I participated in the Pine Manor College Women's Leadership Conference. Overall, the group of girls who attended has had a lasting impact on me, but more specifically my time spent at your house for females in need was an incredible experience. We installed air conditioners, pulled apart a fence, weeded, painted, cleaned, and more. The special part was I have never seen a group of young girls so motivated to help. Your organization and cause is simply outstanding and your devotion is touching to all who observe your work. During the day I was also fortunate enough to speak with the 'real women' behind the production making it all happen. I was told some personal stories and it was so inspiring. Recently I had a graduation party and in lieu of gifts I asked for donations to your cause. I wish you the most of luck continuing your truly impactful venture helping women in need.

Yours Truly, Allison Lonstein

Foundation and Corporate Support

Alice Willard Dorr Foundation
 Bay State Federal Savings Charitable Foundation
 Bushrod H. Campbell and Adah F. Hall Charity Fund
 Cabot Family Charitable Trust
 Cambridge Arts Council
 Cambridge Community Foundation
 Cambridge Savings Charitable Foundation
 Cambridge Trust Company
 Charles Stark Draper Laboratory
 Citizens Bank Foundation
 Clipper Ship Foundation
 East Cambridge Savings Bank
 Frederick E. Weber Charities Corporation
 George H. and Jane A. Mifflin Memorial Fund
 Glass Charitable Foundation
 Hartley Corporation
 John Donnelly Trust
 John M. Sawyer Memorial Trust
 Puffin Foundation
 SAP, AG
 Sovereign Bank Foundation
 TD Charitable Foundation
 TJX Foundation

Thank you!



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November 23, 2010

Dear Friend of the Women's Center,

As we near the close of yet another difficult year economically, we have much to be pleased about and much to be concerned about. As the hard times have become ongoing, women are facing greater challenges than ever. Approximately 20% of the women we now serve are homeless, and many, many more are struggling with unemployment, poverty, and domestic violence, which is alarmingly on the rise with the economic downturn.

A growing number of women are looking to the Women's Center for support, resources, and opportunities to change their lives. We have expanded our groups, workshops, and trainings to over 190, with free childcare, and more mothers are participating. Our computer labs continue to be open six days a week, with both formal and informal instruction available. And we continue to offer peer counseling 55 hours a week by phone or in person, along with extensive resource and referral information. In addition, many women appreciate the opportunities at the Center to become involved in activism. All this is made possible by dedicated volunteers, including interns and pro bono professionals. New volunteers are needed and welcome throughout the year!

All of our programs and services remain free of charge. The Women's Center continues to operate on a budget that was cut by 60% in August of 2006 by the new Board. We continue to pay \$900 per month on the \$80,000 loan the previous administration took out after depleting the Center's funds and investments. After other expenses, revenue has covered only one salary for our gracious Center Coordinator, Ming Chang, who is very overextended. In the past we had both a paid Volunteer Coordinator and a paid Program Coordinator. Ming is presently responsible for both these roles. In addition, we had a paid fundraiser to do what we have done as volunteers for the past four years.

As we enter our 40th year in a much more stable position than in 2006, our fiscal goal is to move toward hiring a part-time Program Coordinator and a part-time Fundraiser. To get there we need to maintain our current supporters and bring more individuals, corporations, and foundations aboard as new contributors. We would be thrilled to have you join us in expanding our donor base.

Please send the most generous contribution you can today. Please tap into any matching gift sources you have at work or elsewhere. And please tell any prospective donors you know what a rare and invaluable community resource the Women's Center is. With your help, we can look forward to an exciting future with adequate paid staff positions, a well-maintained home, and freedom from debt!

Our thanks and our best,


Judy Norris
Co-Chair, Board of Trustees


Elaine Westerlund
Director, Incest Resources

P.S. If you have ideas and energy for 40th anniversary celebratory events, we want to hear from you!

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 _____



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 our mailing list, please check this box and return this slip, or email us at info@cambridgewomenscenter.org. Thank you for your patience.

Fall 2010

Support the Women's Center Online!

Go to www.cambridgewomenscenter.org and click on "support us" and then "Donate Now."

You can also support the Center by using GOODSEARCH to search the Internet.

Go to www.goodsearch.com and select

"Cambridge Women's Center (Cambridge, MA) ID: 875340" as your charity destination.