



The Women's Center

# ♀ ON OUR WAY

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

Winter 2004

## 2004 is Challenging: Women's Center Moves Forward to 2005

2004 has been a challenging year. On a national level, Decision 2004 is over and the Women's Center understands what's at stake. The rights of women, the poor, and seniors are at risk. War continues to jeopardize our youth, the lives of others, and what remains of funding available to support government programs that benefit the most vulnerable. The environment takes a back seat to corporate profits. We must be vigilant, involved, and committed to change.

2004 has been tough within the Women's Center as well. We encountered resistance to internal change. We confronted the acting out of racism, as we sought to reach and welcome a broader constituency of women. In addition, a long-term, full time volunteer retired, and four staff people attempted to absorb the work of five. Despite these adversities, our mission and our vision are not compromised.

During the past year, *Women of Action*, our organizing project, won another local victory for low-income families. They demanded and obtained complaint cards in the

Cambridge Housing Authority Leasing and Occupancy Offices (see article on page 3), providing a process for low-income families and individuals to lodge their concerns with housing authority officials. We expanded our *Mother-Child Art Program*, doubling the number of families we serve. We hired a new Volunteer Coordinator, Melissa Jean-Charles, and began developing a much stronger volunteer training program. Melissa also created a plan for on-going in-service trainings for our volunteer staffers, enriching the staffing experience at the Center. As a result, many volunteers started taking a more active role in other aspects of the organization.

We held our first week long staff retreat, which culminated in a plan to engage and promote a more diverse, dynamic, and inclusive women's community space. We re-organized our Resource Room, creating a colorful and comprehensive jobs board and a striking political education and social action board. We co-sponsored and advertised the Cambridge Anti-poverty forum organized by Cambridge Economic Opportunity

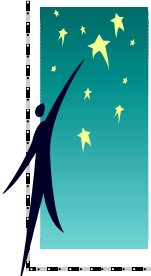
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Committee. We took a number of public stands on issues affecting women.

Today, the Women's Center is more relevant and necessary than ever. Our free services, programs, and resources are vital to women. As government abdicates its responsibility to women, children, and other oppressed groups, we are determined to challenge their neglect. We commit ourselves to the struggle for social and economic justice, while continuing to provide

## WISH LIST



- Air Purifier
- Dehumidifier
- Digital camera
- Desktop Computers: Pentium III or faster desktops, working mother boards & processor, Hard Drive 10GB or larger; 17" Monitors
- Merlin Telephones
- Large Coffee Maker
- CD-ROM drives & CD burners
- Electrical, Painting, and Maintenance Work
- HP inkjet toner cartridges (#45)
- Gift Certificates to Home Depot, Pier 1 Imports, and Tags
- Electric Drill and Electric Screwdriver
- Office Supplies
- Computer Tech Assistance
- Subscriptions to magazines: *Z Magazine*, *Utne Reader*, *Bitch*, *Mother Jones*, *Curve*, *Bust*, *Hip Mama*
- Large Straw Area Rug
- Kitchen supplies
- Hand soap and Dishwashing Liquid
- 2 or 3 Drawer File Cabinet with Lock

## On Our Way

The newsletter of the Women's Center is published 3 times per year in *May, 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 institutions which subjugate women.***



*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](mailto:info@cambridgewomenscenter.org)

Hours:

Monday-Thursday: 10am-10pm

Friday: 10am-8pm

Saturday: 11am-4pm

Helpline: (617) 354-8807

## New Creative Arts Group for Black Women

*The Creative Arts Group for Black Women* begins on January 15, 2005. This group is for any women who identifies herself as Black or African American and wants to explore expressing herself through the creative process.

Each session will include an arts project using different media (paint, clay, collage, 3D sculpture, drawing etc.) and discussion time. Each project will be based on various themes relevant to the lives of African American women such as self-image, external and internal racism, relationships, power and empowerment.

Black Women are a creative, intelligent, loving and powerful segment of our society. Our resources are vast, and our voices are rich with meaning. Because our lives are full with the ins and outs of everyday survival, it is hard to find time to nurture ourselves through artistic endeavor and make our voices heard. The Creative Arts are an important and underused tool for communication, one that innately holds a great healing and transformative power. When we engage in the arts we communicate with ourselves, and we harness that power. When we share our art with others we communicate with the world, we expand that power.

Sharing the artwork produced in a group setting can be a very freeing way to connect with others and ourselves. It is for this reason that at the end of the session a reception will be held for all women to come and see the original artwork generated by the group. It will be a time to share, connect, ask questions and learn. **We are all creative**, and in allowing this part of ourselves to blossom, we foster self and social awareness, we grow.

The group will begin in January and be held on 6 Saturdays from 1:30-2:30:

- January 15<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> • February 12<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> • March 12<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>

Please let us know if you are interested in attending or supporting the *Creative Arts Group for Black Women*. Class is free and space is limited so register early to reserve your spot. No experience is necessary!

~ Lace Campbell, Facilitator

To register, call or email: *Beyond the 4<sup>th</sup> Wall Performing Arts Studio*

## Sistah to Sistah Returns!

Cold wind and low temps are on the way, so what better way to stay warm this winter than with sisterhood and kinship. *Sistah to Sistah*, a weekly personal growth and support group for women of color, returns to the Women's Center. In this group, we discuss various issues that impact our lives as women of color. We focus on our goals for personal growth and development and also the complexities of relationships with our families and intimate partners. We examine our identities in our community and workplaces while exchanging resources and building friendships.

This is our opportunity to create a supportive environment for creating strategies to cope with racism, sexism, homophobia and other forms of oppression that interrupt our daily lives. Join our community. Mark your calendars and don't let nothing stand in your way!

~ Laura Baker, Facilitator

*Sistah to Sistah* begins Wednesday, December 4<sup>th</sup> from 6:30 to 8:30 and will meet weekly.

## 2004 is Tough Continued from Page 1

Looking to 2005, we welcome two new groups for women of color to our programming line up. One, *Sistah to Sistah*, a discussion group, focuses on topics of relevance to women of color. The other, *Creative Arts for Black Women*, provides an artistic outlet of expression to explore significant themes using creativity. We also introduce new personal growth workshops such as *What's Next? Begin to Discover Your True Life Path*, offered by life coach Inna Nirenburg. We broaden our support services with *Support for Young Lesbian and Bisexual Mothers*. In collaboration with the Arthritis Foundation, we offer weekly exercise classes for women suffering with arthritis.

As *Women of Action* (WOA) continues its fight to win housing victories for low-income women in Cambridge, we also plan to nurture both the skills and the budding activism among the children of WOA members. Our organizer, Lynn Murray, in conjunction with WOA members and childcare workers, is developing a social justice curriculum for WOA kids. We will incorporate that curriculum and some basic ASL training into our WOA childcare programming. In this way, we encourage new skills among the children of WOA members. And, we prepare for social and economic justice efforts into the next generation.

Also new in the coming year: the Center will require anti-racism training for all board, staff, and volunteers. As we challenge each other on women's issues, so too will we challenge each other on issues of race and racism. This is a fundamental and important internal change. We must be vigilant in our self examination, if we are to effectively challenge and change communities and systems outside of ourselves.

At a time when it is easy to fall prey to depression, we look forward to the gains that we might make instead. We hope that you will be with us and support us in these efforts.

~ Mary Quinn, Executive Director

## Join Our e-Community!

The Women's Center invites you to become part of our newly enhanced e-community. Submit your email address to us and you will receive monthly calendar mailings, news and announcements. This is a great opportunity to connect with the latest programs and happenings at the Center, and to learn new ways to support our community.

To join, go to: [www.cambridgewomenscenter.org](http://www.cambridgewomenscenter.org) and click on the link *Join Our e-Community*.

~ Nicole Marcotte, Development Coordinator

## WOA Wins Housing Victory for Low-Income Women!

This year we kicked off *Women of Action's* (WOA) *Housing Justice Campaign*, and we recently won our first victory. As members of WOA, we discussed the difficulty we experience when accessing services from Cambridge Housing Authority (CHA). We are all CHA tenants. Whether it is disrespectful service from CHA staff or lack of information when asking about deadlines, these problems further complicate our already stressful and critical situation—obtaining and keeping housing. We agreed that we needed an easy and accessible way to have these problems addressed and solved so that our needs are met and we receive the services and information we deserve. We decided that a complaint card would be a first step in documenting the multiple problems we experience, while creating CHA accountability to tenants and other individuals who are accessing services from CHA.

After several months of organizing, we demanded and won a complaint/comment card system in the main CHA Office of Occupancy and Leasing. Prior to these cards, there was no clear system, outside of the threat of eviction, for reporting and solving issues experienced by tenants and CHA housing applicants, who often feel intimidated by CHA staff. Most people seeking assistance from CHA do not have other housing options. So they need a way to safely report the problems they are experiencing without fearing their housing status will be threatened. With the complaint/comment card system in place, we now have a way to have problems addressed and a guarantee of a response within 14 days. Cards may be filed anonymously and a "no retaliation" clause is included to ensure that filing will not endanger housing status.

We are excited about the new system that allows the voices of low income women and other tenants to be heard by CHA. We will monitor the effectiveness of the card system by talking with other low-income women who file cards. To increase the accountability of CHA, those who file a complaint may request that a copy be sent to *Women of Action* and *Cambridge Economic Opportunity Committee* (CEOC). If anyone needs further advocacy in handling a housing problem, CEOC is available for individual advocacy and support.

The complaint card system is our first step in a series of organizing efforts to demand that tenants are involved in all CHA decisions that impact them. We are encouraged by our recent victory and look forward to the work ahead as we set future goals in this campaign. We invite other low income women to join our movement and campaign, organizing for housing justice in Cambridge.

~ Lynn Murray, Community Organizer

To learn more about *Women of Action* or to become a member, contact Lynn at 617-308-7330. Membership is restricted to low-income women.

**GROUPS**

**Monday**

\*6-7:30pm ~ **Al-Anon for Women** (week

\*7:30-9pm ~ **Lesbian Rap**, (weekly)

Topics: 12/6 -*Lesbian Health Issues*; 12/13 -*Light in the Dark: Christmas, Hanukkah, & Kwanzaa* 1/31].

7-9pm ~ **Putting the 'Happy' Back in "Happy"** workshop@heywhatsnext.com].

7:30-9pm ~ **Lesbian Partners & Ex-partners** 12/20 & 1/17.

7-9pm ~ **What's Next? Begin to Discover** [RSVP: workshop@heywhatsnext.com].

**Tuesday**

\*10:am-12pm ~ **Parenting Support**, (weekly)

7-8:30pm ~ **Healing Circle**, (Weekly).

\*7:30-9pm ~ **Bisexual Women's Rap**, 12/18, *family relate to your bisexuality?* 12/21

\*7:30-9pm ~ **Support for Queer Marriage**

7-9pm ~ **Writer's Circle**, 12/14 & 1/11; [info: Cassandra @ (617) 494-2695].

**Wednesday**

\*2-3:30pm ~ **Women Maximizing Abilities** 1/19.

6:30-8:30pm ~ **Sistah to Sistah: Discussion** (Starts 12/4 and runs weekly; info: (617) 354-8807)

\*10:30-11:30am ~ **PACE (People With Art)** (starts Wednesday, 1/11 and runs weekly).

7-9m ~ **Battered Women's Support Group**, 12/1, 12/8, 12/22, 12/29, 1/5, 1/12, & 1/26.

**Thursday**

6:30-8:30pm ~ **Healing & Art for Trauma Survivors**, 12/9, 12/23 1/13, & 1/27.

\*6:30-8:30pm ~ **Women of Action Open Mike**, 12/2 & 1/6 [Must call Lynn at (617) 354-6394 prior to attending.]

7-8:30 ~ **Lesbian Buddhist Book Group**, 12/2 & 1/6 [Book: *Insight Dialogue* by Greg Kramer].

\*6-7pm ~ **Support For Young Lesbian & Bisexual Mothers**, ~ 12/9, 12/23, 1/13, & 1/27.

\*7-9pm ~ **30+ Multicultural Lesbian Rap**, 12/9 topic: *Lesbians, bisexuals, and friends during the holiday season.* [info: Rose @ (617) 953-5102]

7:30-9:30pm ~ **Thursday Night Gathering of Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse**, (weekly) Topics on first Thursdays. 12/2: *Families.*

**Friday**

6-7:30pm ~ **Incest Resources Facilitated Discussion for Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse**, 12/17 topic: *Family*; 1/21 topic: *Distorted Thinking.*

**Saturday**

\*11am-1pm ~ **Coming Out Open Discussion for Women of All Ages**, 12/4, 12/18, & 1/15.

\*11am-1pm ~ **Women of Action**, 12/11, 1/8, & 1/22. [Must call Lynn at (617) 354-6394 prior to meeting.]

2-3pm ~ **Creative Art Class for Black Women**, 1/15 & 1/29

**New and Featured Activities**

**Creative Art Class for Black Women:** For women who identify as Black or African American. A series of 6 classes to explore creativity and themes relevant to the lives of African American women. RSVP to Lace at (617) 868-9900

**Eating Disorder Support Group:** Join others dealing with eating disorders. Gain support and discuss body image. To register: bethiecpa@hotmail.com

**Mother-Child Art Classes:** Series of 10 free classes for young children (2-4 years old) with their moms. Children explore creativity and develop fine motor skills, while painting, sculpting, and drawing. Register at (617) 868-9900.

**Nothing Too Heavy to Share (NTHTS):** For survivors of ritual and extreme abuse, Day and evening meetings weekly. Info/ Register: (617) 354-8807.

**Putting the 'Happy' Back in "Happy Holidays":** Workshop by Inna Nirenburg, life coach. Identify ways to handle holiday stress, while creating a plan of action to better enjoy the season. Register: workshop@heywhatsnext.com

**Sistah to Sistah:** Begins December 4th Discussion group for women of color. Join us as we discuss issues relevant to our lives, such as racism, oppression, family, and nurturing relationships. Info: (617) 354-8807.

**Support For Young Lesbian & Bisexual Mothers:** Join other lesbian and bisexual mothers in discussing the challenges and unique issues that arise while raising children. Info: (617) 354-8807.

**What's Next? Begin to Discover Your True Life Path:** Interactive workshop by Inna Nirenburg. Jump start your creativity to discover possibilities and solutions in your life. Info: inna@heyWhatsNext.com

**Women's Center Holiday Schedule:** December: the Center closes at 10PM on Thursday 12/23 and reopens at 10AM on Tuesday, 12/28. The Center closes at 4PM on Friday, December 31 and reopens at 10AM on Tuesday, 1/3. January: the Center is closed on Monday, January 17 in

**Snow Policy:** The Women's Center is closed whenever the City of Boston or the City of Cambridge declares a snow emergency.

## Putting the "Happy" Back in "Happy Holidays"

Ahh, it's that time of year - cozy and loving family get-togethers, peaceful evenings spent in the company of loved ones, the joy of the season permeating all your pores. You sit by the fire, sipping a perfectly-spiced steaming mug of cider, and smile at your angelically well-behaved child. You think to yourself, if only this season could go on forever...

What? What's that you say – this doesn't sound like your life? Are you more used to frenetic rushing, fear of familial judgments, unending insanity and hurt feelings, and non-stop bickering? Did the turkey burn, the in-laws create a scene, and that angelically well-behaved child track mud all over your newly upholstered couch?

Have no fear! Come join us for an inspiring, informative, and possibility-filled evening where YOU get to consciously create your holiday season. Are you ready to infuse the "happy" back into your "happy holidays"?

### In this workshop you will:

- Look at just what it is that makes this time of year so stressful for you
- Identify specific, manageable, and effective ways to handle these stressors
- Create an action plan and safety resources to help you be your best inside and out during this season
- Actively and purposefully create a new reality of what the holidays can be - a time of connection, joy, friendship, love, and sharing - as something to be truly thankful for

And don't miss Inna's January 24<sup>th</sup> workshop, back by popular demand and just in time for the new year: "hey! What's Next? Introduction to Your New Life Direction".

~ Inna Nirenburg, Facilitator

*About the Presenter: Inna Nirenburg is a powerful, grounded and insightful life coach and workshop leader. Trained at the Coaches Training Institute, she uses her wisdom and intuition to help her clients answer the question "What's Next?" in all areas of their lives, and to find meaningful work. For more information, see <http://www.heyWhatsNext.com>.*

## Become a Volunteer

The Women's Center is in need of daytime volunteers & interns to staff our Helpline. The Helpline is an extension of the work we do at The Women's Center: connecting with women, providing peer support, and serving as a resource for numerous topics. To learn more about volunteering at The Women's Center, please contact Melissa at 617.354.8807

~ Melissa Jean-Charles, Volunteer Coordinator

## Foundation and Corporate Support

*A special "thank you" to the foundations and organizations who have contributed \$250 or more in 2004*

Boston Women's Fund  
 Bushrod H. Campbell & Adah F. Hall Charity Fund  
 Cambridge Community Foundation  
 Cambridge Trust Company  
 Chahara Foundation  
 Citizens Bank  
 City of Cambridge  
 Clipper Ship Foundation  
 East Cambridge Savings Bank  
 Frances R. Dewing Foundation  
 Marion Decrow Foundation  
 Hartley Corporation  
 Haymarket Peoples Fund  
 Mind's Eye Yarn  
 George and Beatrice Sherman Family Charitable Trust  
 The R.O.S.E Fund  
 Women Empowered

*We gratefully acknowledge the many inkind contributions that help to make our work possible and the Center more comfortable including those from:*

NECS  
 SBHN  
 Verna Wilson, Pastry Chef

## From Our Kitchen to Yours

Blue, a friendly woman who often cooks in our kitchen, welcomes you to try her Island Blend Potato Salad recipe. This recipe was a childhood favorite in her home state of Hawaii. Her mother cooked it for her entire family and all enjoyed. Now it is yours to enjoy!

### *Ingredients:*

5 lb. Bag Potatoes, peel and cut  
 4-5 Eggs  
 1 Single Medium Size Celery, Diced  
 1 6 ounce can Tuna  
 1 Small Onion, Diced  
 1 Can Large Olives, Pitted, Whole  
 Mayonnaise, Salt, Pepper, Mustard, and Relish

### *Preparation Instructions:*

Boil Potatoes, Eggs. Dice both after boiling. Put into large bowl. Add remaining ingredients. Toss. Add mayonnaise, salt, pepper, mustard, and relish to taste.

## Support Group for Women with Eating Disorders

Eating Disorders affect a large number of women in the United States. The statistics indicate that approximately 7 million girls and women struggle with eating disorders and 15% of young women have some kind of disordered eating patterns. From these findings, it is clear that there is a tremendous need for support and counseling against this widespread disease.

When dealing with a sensitive issue such as women's bodies, women are reluctant to share this debilitating illness with anyone and feel alone. That is why it is imperative for women with eating disorders to have a safe place to come together, get support, and fight against this disease together.

We are so thankful to now have the comfort and support of the Women's Center. During the fall, the Women's Center introduced the eating disorder and body image support group for women of all ages struggling towards recovery. We meet weekly to gain support and feel strengthened by their peers. The group's purpose is to help those who are fighting for recovery. With the safe and supportive community at the Women's Center, we no longer feel isolated, without anyone to express our pain to.

~ Beth Mann, Facilitator

For more information about this group, please contact Beth, group facilitator, at [bethiecpa@hotmail.com](mailto:bethiecpa@hotmail.com). The group is currently closed, but will open periodically during the year to new members who have registered with Beth.

## The Woman's Belly Book Comes to the Women's Center

On Thursday, October 28<sup>th</sup>, author of "The Woman's Belly Book: Finding Your Treasure Within", Lisa Sarasohn descended upon The Women's Center to give a reading from her book as well as show several exercises that focus on the power of the belly. Sarasohn, who has been touring the United States, just came back from speaking at a group of Harvard students about body image. In her workshop, Sarasohn demonstrated several belly breathing exercises combined with the yoga poses to encourage participants to get in touch with their belly. She speaks of the belly's power in unleashing creativity, augmenting sexual pleasure, enhancing intuition.

Though the Woman's Belly Book is not a book that focuses on eating disorders, it does promote a healthy body attitude. Sarasohn maintains that there are reasons to love your belly. Sarasohn book has been labeled as an empowering book by authors within the body and mind industry. Her workshop was a fun exploration of the belly, the breath, and a healthy perspective.

~ Melissa Jean-Charles, Volunteer Coordinator

To learn more about Lisa Sarasohn's book, "The Woman's Belly Book: Finding Your Treasure Within", check out [www.loveyourbelly.com](http://www.loveyourbelly.com)



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

Enclosed is my tax-deductible donation of: \_\_\_\$500 \_\_\_\$250 \_\_\_\$100 \_\_\_\$50 \_\_\_\$25 other \$ \_\_\_

\_\_\_ My donation is in honor of: (name) \_\_\_\_\_  
(address) \_\_\_\_\_

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Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

*Thank You!*

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

If you'd prefer to be taken off of our mailing list, please check the following box and return