



# A CALL TO ACTION!

## HELP US KEEP THE DOORS OPEN

The Women's Center

### *A Message from Our Board President*

For 34 years, the Women's Center has been the place where women found their voices.

Today, the Women's Center faces its own silencing – the closing of our doors forever. The Women's Center is in a financial crisis.

As we strive to meet the ever increasing demand for our unique programming and services, we confront a difficult economy and a challenging funding climate. Our board and staff members are implementing strategic plans to ensure that the Women's Center thrives for years to come. **However, our survival hinges on your support now more than ever.**

I write to you today as the Board President who found her own voice at the Women's Center five years ago. Moving from Arkansas to Boston, the Women's Center quickly became my base. The connections I made at the Women's Center continue to profoundly shape my life.

There are so many of us whose lives have been forever changed by the Women's Center. And there are thousands more to come, whose livelihood will depend on the existence of programs and services only the Women's Center can provide.

We are all pillars of this vibrant organization. To survive, we must stand together - strong, courageous, and unyielding.

**Please send a check today. The Women's Center is counting on you.**

Many thanks,

Martina Bouey



Martina Bouey, Board President

*"The Women's Center is a thread connecting us all together."*

*-Lori Johnston, Board Member*

### *A Center of Hope*

When I think about where I would be if the Women's Center wasn't open, my heart breaks.

I was homeless for two years, and during that time the Women's Center was my home. Before I found the Women's Center, I would go from shelter to shelter, bench to bench, looking for a place to sleep - a place to be safe.

From the moment I walked through the Women's Center doors, I was welcomed.

The staff helped me search for jobs and shelter. I was invited to rest in one of the quiet rooms at the Women's Center. I could make my own hot meal in the Women's Center kitchen. These simple tasks brought me such comfort.

Having free computer and internet access to let my kids know that 'mama is okay,' when they were so scared for me, was invaluable.

The Women's Center became my salvation. With the support and encouragement of the staff, I was able to find an apartment, get off the streets, and begin building my life in a positive direction.

Now the center is in trouble, and I think about the other women at the Center who are in similar positions as me. Where will they go? Who will help them find shelter or tell them of how to get housing vouchers or how to get free counseling? Who will listen to their stories as the staff at the Women's Center listened to mine?

The Women's Center must continue to thrive, live, and breathe hope into the lives of others. It gave me hope and a chance to start again. The Women's Center must continue to do so for the many women who need it.

Thank you,

**Blue**

Blue



Blue, Community Member

*"Just stay in existence - you're saving my life."*

*-Amy, Community Member*

### **I WILL HELP KEEP THE DOORS OPEN!**

Enclosed is my tax-deductible donation of:  \$1,000  \$750  \$500  \$250  \$100 other \$

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

(address) \_\_\_\_\_ (phone) \_\_\_\_\_

(email) \_\_\_\_\_

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The Women's Center  
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City Weekly

**BOSTON SUNDAY GLOBE**

May 15, 2005

## *After 34 years of giving, Women's Center seeks aid*

By Colleen Walsh, Globe Correspondent

The beginning of the Women's Center in Cambridgeport reads like a Hollywood script. A group of disgruntled women take hostage a building at the nation's oldest university to stress the lack of services and support available to them.

That was back in 1971, when the activists invaded an empty building owned by Harvard to emphasize their needs, including a place to gather.

As a result of their bold plan, the women won the support of locals who helped them buy another building on Pleasant Street, which they still occupy today. Over the years, the center has become a haven for women, developing a variety of programs and services, largely aimed at low-income women, ranging from counseling for victims of domestic violence to resume-writing workshops to lesbian rap groups.

"Almost 28 years ago I went there—I was very young then. It was just such a comforting, wonderful space to go to hang out," said Dede Ketover, 48, a management consultant for a nonprofit who volunteers her services at the center. "I'll just never forget what a wonderful oasis it was for someone who had just moved to Boston and didn't know a soul."

Today the center's welcoming tradition continues. Free and open to any woman, the house is part sorority, part classroom, part home away from home. Inside, high ceilings and large windows mean lots of light, and brightly painted walls boast a collection of donated art.

Women of all ages come and go, stopping to sit and read in rooms filled with couches and chairs, use one of the five free computers, or attend workshops or programs. In the large, airy kitchen, shelves are stocked with donated food. The upper floors include a children's room for art classes and activities and another room with couches and a television, a resting spot for the weary or the homeless who can sign it out for two hours at a time.

For some, the center is simply a place to meet. Others stop by to peruse information posted on walls and collected in large binders packed with tips on job hunting, interview techniques, finding apartments, and health and legal advice. Some come to organize around local issues. In 2001, the center began a program called Women of Action, a group of mainly low-income single mothers who discuss ways to change problems affecting their daily lives.

"We really try to speak to the people who are in charge of different agencies that we are having to deal with and just come together [to] create a solution step by step," said Lynn Murray, the center's community organizer and one of only three full-time staff members.

But today competition for foundation funds and a drop in individual contributions, the center's two main funding sources, has meant financial trouble.

"For 34 years the center has been a place of empowerment and support for thousands of women, and now its existence is being threatened unless we raise the necessary funds to keep our doors open," said Martina Bouey, president of its board of directors.

For the 800 women served by the center weekly, according to development coordinator Nicole Marcotte, the loss would be a real blow. Deborah Clarke, a 38-year-old single mother of five, who recently moved back to Cambridge from Virginia, has used the center regularly for the last nine months to use a computer and look for work.

"If it wasn't for the Women's Center, I wouldn't have it completed," said Clarke, showing off a copy of her newly printed resume on a recent afternoon at the center.

An iron worker by trade, Clarke brings her 5- and 9-year-old children to the center while she looks for an administrative position.

"A lot of places you can't bring kids—they have to be quiet, [or] there's not enough room. We really need to keep this center." In April the board eliminated the center's executive director position.

"Our commitment is to our clients and to the community members. In order to preserve the programs that we are running, we had to make some choices about where to cut expenses," said Bouey.

..."It's a call to action. The Center has given a lot to the community over the last 34 years, and we have never asked for a financial gift back, but now we are," Bouey said. [We are] bringing them back in and saying we helped you, we supported you, now we are asking you to help and support us."

*"Thank you for always being the place that I can turn to in times when there is nowhere else to go. You've saved my life and changed my life many times over. I am most grateful."*

*- Margaret, Community Member*