

Winter 2014

Women's Center &
Shelter of Greater
Pittsburgh

Rosewood

It will never rain roses; when we want more roses,
we will have to plant more trees.

Letter from the President/CEO



2014 marks a very special year for Women's Center & Shelter of Greater Pittsburgh (WC&S). Not only are we approaching our 40th Anniversary in May, but we are also preparing to undertake renovation of our facility. It has served us well these last 20 years, but now the plumbing is crumbling and the heating, cooling and electrical systems are old, inefficient and failing. But, there is opportunity in all things!

Since 2008, WC&S has been operating, on average, at 110% of capacity. That means, for the majority of the year, we have more than 40 women and children in shelter, even though it was designed to house a maximum of 36 women and children at a time. Wear and tear has been extensive and it isn't only the shelter bedrooms that are too small. The shelter community space--the living room and dining room, isn't large enough for all residents. If there's no room in shared community spaces, resident clients will remain isolated in their small bedrooms. Socialization and social learning are essential if women are to rebuild trust with society and completely heal from their abuse.

Safety is, of course, our greatest concern. Today's world consists of smart phones and Google Maps, where we have constant accessibility to whatever information we want at the touch of a button. With all of this technology and the vast domain that is the internet, it has become increasingly harder to remain anonymous and keep our location confidential. As a domestic violence center and shelter, safety and confidentiality are at the core of our programs and services, physically and emotionally.

One of our goals is to move the Children's Program off of the ground by building an indoor play area on the 2nd floor, creating a sort of moat around the building. By lifting the children off of the ground level, we are increasing their safety.

With your input, we will continue to build on this wonderful vision. Please write me at info@wcpittsburgh.org if you would like to learn more. I would love to give you a tour of our facility, update you on the work we're doing today and build our shared vision of tomorrow.

Sincerely,

Shirl Regan
President/CEO

40PE

Celebrating Four Decades
of Courage, Strength and Hope.

24-Hour Hotline 412-687-8005

P.O. Box 9024, Pittsburgh, PA 15224
Administration Ph 412-687-8017 | Fax: 412-687-3315
Email info@wcpittsburgh.org
www.wcpittsburgh.org

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Smartphone Program, LAP, and Board Member Awarded!

GET INVOLVED WITH WC&S' SMARTPHONE PROGRAM!



A common question that Women's Center & Shelter staff receive is "How can we get involved?" One very important way to support the mission of WC&S is through our Smartphone Program. WC&S collects gently used smartphones and cell phones and sends them to the Shelter Alliance Program which results in a monetary donation to WC&S. Furthermore, the Shelter Alliance disposes of the cell phones in an environmentally-friendly manner. This is an easy way to help raise the funds that allow us to operate on a daily basis. Take a look through some of your junk drawers for old smartphones and cell phones! Consider establishing collection sites that you can check monthly and deliver to WC&S, or host a used phone drive and ask family and friends to contribute—the options are endless! For more information please contact 412-687-8017 ext. 359 or email gifts@wcpittsburgh.org!

Lethality Assessment Program and End of Year Appeal Results!

Beginning on December 16, 2013, City of Pittsburgh police officers began implementing the Maryland Lethality Assessment Program (LAP), aimed at immediately connecting victims of intimate partner violence (IPV) to shelter and supportive services through WC&S' 24-Hour Hotline. WC&S has already experienced an increase in the demand for our programs and services through this innovative and powerful program. More victims of IPV are being connected to the resources that they so desperately need to escape the cycle of abuse. In just the first two weeks, WC&S Hotline Advocates answered 71 calls from police officers assisting domestic violence victims and spoke to 61 of those victims. In January, Hotline Advocates answered 111 calls and spoke to 91 victims. These 182 phone calls (in the first 6 weeks alone) are in addition to the regular, non-LAP calls that WC&S received. Those being impacted by the LAP have remained voiceless until now. IPV victims are now being provided with the opportunity to connect to caring WC&S Advocates and create a plan for their safety and wellbeing.

With this increase in services comes an increased need for financial support, and you have helped tremendously by giving to our End of Year Campaign. A local foundation had stepped forward to help with a \$100,000 matching grant. We are thrilled to announce that not only did we match the grant, but we surpassed our goal. \$256,191.17 was raised in support of Women's Center & Shelter's programs and services. We want to thank you for a wonderful 2013. Your support helped us reach new goals and continue to provide critical services to victims of intimate partner violence and their children.

Thank You For Your Support!



Board Member **RACHEL LOREY ALLEN** Honored with Award

Board Member and 40th Anniversary Celebration Committee Chair, Rachel Lorey Allen, was honored as an Outstanding Volunteer Fundraiser at the Western Pennsylvania Chapter of the Association of Fundraising Professionals' Annual National Philanthropy Day Celebration on November 14, 2013. Rachel was chosen for this prestigious award based upon her remarkable volunteer efforts and dedication to Women's Center & Shelter, Catholic Charities, Sewickley Academy and many others. Congratulations to Rachel on this well-deserved honor!



December Fun: Celebrating Survivors & Holiday Cheer!

December, 2013, was filled with many exciting events starting with the Celebrating Survivors event held at The Colony Restaurant. Andrea Carelli, Senior Vice President and Director of Public Relations and Corporate Events for PNC Bank, Michelle Mejia, Director of Community Relations for the Pittsburgh Pirates and featured speaker William Gay, Cornerback for the Pittsburgh Steelers, all attended and spoke about their personal experiences with intimate partner violence. Also present were other survivors, WC&S staff and supporters. The event was a huge success with hors d'oeuvres, delicious food stations and great company. All proceeds were donated to WC&S! Thank you to all who attended!

Also in December, Will Gay, Shamarko Thomas and Ike Taylor visited WC&S to host a wonderful holiday dinner. They served a delicious meal, catered by Crusher's BBQ, to residents and their children, socialized, took pictures and signed autographs. It was a wonderful evening and we are so grateful for their generosity.

December 24 wouldn't be the same if Charlie Batch and his family did not stop by WC&S! Every year, they bring gifts for residents and their children and this holiday season was no different. We want to extend another huge thank you to the Batch family and The Best of the Batch Foundation! Because of the support of the Pittsburgh community, the holiday season at WC&S is always filled with care and generosity. Thanks to everyone for your support!

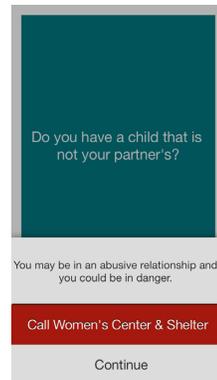




RUSafe, DaVita Way of Giving, and The Challenge!

RUSafe? Find out by downloading the new WC&S App!

As an extension of the Lethality Assessment Program (LAP) work taking place with Pittsburgh City police and Women’s Center & Shelter, WC&S has launched our first App-- RUSafe. The App is a dangerous relationship assessment that invites the user to answer a series of questions about her/his relationship. The App then calculates the responses and, if there is cause for concern, the App will enable the user to directly call WC&S’ 24-Hour Hotline. If the user is in immediate, lethal danger, she/he can call 911 directly. RUSafe is based on the Danger Assessment developed by Jacquelyn C. Campbell, PhD, RN, FAAN of Johns Hopkins School of Nursing. The App was developed by WC&S and Newton Consulting, who generously donated their time and services to help bring the App to life. RUSafe can be downloaded on Apple and Android phones at no cost!



DaVita Way of Giving

Women’s Center & Shelter was a grateful recipient of DaVita’s Way of Giving in December, 2013. WC&S was chosen by the Bloomfield, Allegheny Valley, North Side, Pittsburgh Home Modality, McKeesport, East End Pittsburgh and Penn Hills DaVita clinics to be the recipient of a \$1,000 donation for a total of \$7,000! Through the DaVita Way of Giving, teammates at 2,000+ DaVita clinics directly impact their communities by selecting more than 600 local nonprofit organizations such as food banks, shelters and disaster relief organizations to receive a portion of \$1.75 million in charitable donations. The check was presented to WC&S President/CEO Shirl Regan by Diane Cairns, DaVita Regional Operations Director in Greater Pittsburgh and Ronald Brown, Facility Administrator-DaVita Bloomfield. Local facility administrators also proudly represented their centers for the check presentation. Many thanks to all employees at these seven DaVita divisions for choosing WC&S as the recipient of this generosity!

HELP YOURSELF, HELP A FRIEND, HELP THE CAUSE: TAKE THE CHALLENGE!

October marks Domestic Violence Awareness Month as well as the WC&S annual Highmark Challenge Campaign. The Challenge is an awareness campaign that focuses on intimate partner violence in its many forms. Every week during The Challenge, WC&S releases a new Survivor Vignette, in order to bring light to the faces of women who have suffered in silence. There are different calls to action aimed at getting the community to start the conversation about domestic violence. This year’s Challenge was a huge success, complete with a flash mob that took place in the Highmark lobby. Women and men alike were asked to wear purple in support of victims of intimate partner violence and many got their pictures taken holding a sign reading; “This person does not tolerate violence against women.” Additionally, a social media movement was started which asked our supporters to change their Facebook profile picture to the purple Domestic Violence Awareness Ribbon. We want to extend a huge thank you to last year’s Challenge sponsors: Match Partner-Highmark , and Advocates- First Commonwealth, Gateway Health, Peoples Natural Gas and Pittsburgh Magazine. We look forward to the coming Challenge and hope you will continue to help us spread awareness!



WE DO NOT TOLERATE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN!





Celebrating
Four Decades of Courage,
Strength and Hope.

40PE

The Women's Center & Shelter of Greater Pittsburgh

Celebrating Four Decades of Courage, Strength and Hope

May 2, 2014 marks 40 years of providing hope to women experiencing intimate partner violence and their children in the Pittsburgh Community.

From humble beginnings in a Dormont storefront to today's comprehensive model of service, our commitment to providing hope has remained constant. Over the past 40 years, WC&S has served hundreds of thousands of women from all walks of life as the issue of intimate partner violence knows no boundaries.

To celebrate the many survivors and the relentless efforts of staff, volunteers, donors and the community over the past 40 years, we cordially invite you to attend WC&S' 40th Anniversary Celebration, presented by UPMC Health Plan. Much larger in scale than most WC&S events, the evening is a reflection of the importance of the work that has been done and the work that lies ahead. Taking place on The Great Lawn of the Frick Art & Historical Center beginning at 6:00 p.m., the evening will include: delicious food prepared by Rania's Catering; fine beverages provided by Dreadnought Wines; fantastic music brought to you by The Eric DeFade Quartet; self-guided tours of the Frick's beautiful museums and much more!

Most importantly, we will be reflecting on the successes of the past 40 years through the eyes of survivors in a special commemorative video. To further honor these brave individuals, this year's Ted Craig Humanitarian Award will be awarded to 40 survivors of intimate partner violence. It is for these survivors that we celebrate courage, strength and hope.

Individual registration is \$150. Sponsorships and patron packages are also available. To learn more about this special evening, please visit www.wcpittsburgh.org/40th.



Prerna's Story of Survival!

Prerna was born in India where her parents were, and still are, involved in social work. They were associated with an orphanage and a center for uplifting women, which dealt with unwed mothers who were typically victims of abuse and rape. She grew up watching her parents take in these women, and was made aware of the issue of abuse and violence at a young age.

Prerna came to the University of Pittsburgh to receive her post professional masters in Occupational Therapy and it was there where she met a young man during the first week of class. Shortly after they met they became friends, and after about a year of friendship they began to date. It was a pleasant and warm relationship until Prerna moved into her own apartment.

"Within the first week of being in my own place he began to break my belongings and throw things around my apartment," said Prerna.

The following month, Prerna told him that she did not want him at her apartment constantly, like he had been, and that is when he physically assaulted her for the first time. She called the police but when she went to file a Protection From Abuse (PFA) order, she became discouraged and went back to him.

Prerna's friends began to notice a change in her. She received a call from one of her close friends one day and through a recommendation began to see a counselor. It was through this counseling that she truly realized she was in a physically, sexually and emotionally abusive relationship. She began to create a safety plan with her counselor.

She wrote a long email to her boyfriend explaining that she no longer wanted to continue the relationship, but that she did want to remain professional in their academic setting. She sent the email and when she returned to her apartment that night he showed up and became very violent.

The beating was severe. Prerna had a ruptured ear drum from the head trauma as well as countless bruises and scratches. He was arrested and she knew she had to file a PFA at this point, but was reluctant to call her friends because she had become so isolated from them.

"I arranged for a cab and went to file the PFA, but I was made to feel so guilty that I went and bailed him out of jail that same day," said Prerna.



Prerna continued her relationship and went to visit her family in India. She had passed a really important exam upon returning to school and her boyfriend became jealous of her success. He told her that women are meant to be beaten.

"Even though I was raised in a family that respected women and that taught me that abuse is wrong, I was so brainwashed by him that I actually began to believe that I did deserve it," said Prerna. "I came to a point where I had two sides to me—one side knew what the right thing to do was and the other side that just did not understand."

Shortly after, Prerna's boyfriend showed up at her apartment in the middle of the night. He convinced her that he wanted to take her to a coffee shop to talk but instead he took her to his house where he proceeded to beat and rape her for four hours. Prerna ended up in the hospital and her abuser was arrested.

At her first hearing following the incident, Prerna met a WC&S Legal Advocate. With the WC&S Advocate's help, she was able to get an extended PFA.

"When I met the WC&S Advocates, they began to tell me the same things my counselor had been telling me—like a supplement to what I already knew," said Prerna. "Being associated with WC&S made me feel like I was never alone—especially in the courtroom."

Prerna's case closed and she is now living a healthy life, free from her former abuser.

"Every time something happened, WC&S Advocates were there to help me," said Prerna. "They were literally like my family."

"My story has taught me so much," said Prerna. "I have learned that there is no shame in asking for help—I have learned that there is no shame in being abused—No one deserves to put their hands on you and I now feel like I am in a place where I want to and can help others."





WC&S travels to Harrisburg!

Former WC&S client, Bridget, and Associate Director, Janet, ventured to Harrisburg for the PA Department of Public Welfare Press Conference held to change the name of the PA Department of Public Welfare (DPW) to the PA Department of Human Services. The term "welfare" has social stigma attached, and the department does so much more than provide cash assistance and food stamps--the renaming is long overdue! The majority of what DPW does is to fund services such as WC&S. Bridget spoke about the services she received both at WC&S and through WIC,--the Women, Infants and Children food program. We would like to thank Bridget for representing WC&S!



KARRISSA'S ARMY: REMEMBER MY NAME, BE MY VOICE!

Karissa Kunco was only 21-years-old when she was murdered by her estranged boyfriend in January 2012. Her family and friends said they saw the warning signs but never thought the situation would end like this. Today, they all represent Karissa's Army and keep her memory alive through creating awareness about intimate partner violence.

In October, hundreds gathered to remember Karissa at the second annual "Remember My Name, Be My Voice" benefit event. The event is held to honor Karissa and raise awareness about intimate partner violence. Attendees wore t-shirts that said Karissa's Army, participated in a silent auction and honored Karissa's life by making donations. Karissa's Army chose to donate all proceeds raised at the fundraiser to Women's Center & Shelter and the total was an astounding \$6,571.64!

WC&S thanks Karissa's Army for not only their immense generosity, but for their determination and passion to help others who are in abusive relationships.

ADOPT-A-FAMILY SUCCESS:

Through the kindness and giving spirit of individuals, organizations and corporations, gift cards were provided to 74 women and 146 children (for a total of 220 recipients) through the 2013 Adopt-A-Family Program. Because of the generosity of many donors, gift cards were not only provided to residents in the emergency shelter, but also to clients and their children who had received legal, counseling and education services throughout the year and were in need of assistance.

The holidays can be a particularly difficult time for those dealing with the pain of intimate partner violence. However, donations to WC&S' Adopt-A-Family Program helped to bring moments of joy and happiness to many women and their children this holiday season. One mother wrote, "I really wanted to thank you in my time of need. Because of you, this holiday season my children enjoyed it, and had something to wake up to! Thanks again for your generosity."



Celebrate by Giving with a Virtual Birthday Party

On May 2, 2014, Women's Center & Shelter of Greater Pittsburgh will commemorate 40 years of service to the community.

As a special gift to Women's Center & Shelter, celebrate your birthday by honoring ours. Organize a virtual birthday party inviting your friends to make a donation to Women's Center & Shelter in your honor. Organizing a virtual event is easy on our special commemorative website <http://WCSHappyBirthday.kintera.org/40thAnniversary>. Simply visit our site and create your very own virtual birthday page! We look forward to celebrating with you!





Women's Center & Shelter
of Greater Pittsburgh
P.O. Box 9024
Pittsburgh, PA 15224

SPECIAL GUEST, PITTSBURGH STEELER WILLIAM GAY!

Save the Date | May 2, 2014

40PE

Celebrating Four Decades
of Courage, Strength and Hope.



Women's Center & Shelter
of Greater Pittsburgh



UNITED WAY #110 | CFC #81018 | SECA #4601-0042

Save the Date

**Women's Center & Shelter
of Greater Pittsburgh**

40th Anniversary Celebration
presented by UPMC Health Plan

Friday, May 2, 2014
The Great Lawn at the Frick Art &
Historical Center 6:00 p.m.

Audrey Hillman Fisher and Timothy O. Fisher,
Honorary Co-Chairs
Hosted by Diane P. Holder

Join Women's Center & Shelter and UPMC
Health Plan in commemorating 40 years
of service to the Pittsburgh Community.
Formal invitation to follow.



www.wcpittsburgh.org/40th