

Summer 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.

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## Letter from the President/CEO



For 40 years, Women's Center & Shelter has been addressing the needs of victims of intimate partner violence (IPV) in various ways. WC&S continuously works to modify and improve our methods and systems to better serve the thousands of women and families that rely on our services to build better lives and sometimes, simply to survive. It is an exciting and important time as we now have two innovative, powerful tools here in Pittsburgh to provide direct connections to help, the Maryland Lethality Assessment Program (LAP) and the RUSafe App.

Since the implementation of the Maryland Lethality Assessment Program (LAP) in December, 2013, in addition to regular Hotline calls, WC&S has received 678 LAP Hotline calls. Working closely with City of Pittsburgh Police officers, LAP provides a direct connection to the help victims so desperately need. Through this work, IPV victims are being provided with an opportunity to connect with caring WC&S Advocates and create a plan for their safety and wellbeing. Studies show the re-assault of domestic violence victims in high danger was reduced by 60% if they made contact with a domestic violence program. As one victim who came to WC&S' shelter reported, "If it weren't for the LAP Program (the Officer asking her the lethality indicator questions and connecting her with our Hotline), she never would have arrived at WC&S." She explained that she was afraid that she would have been killed if she didn't leave.

The RUSafe lethality assessment app developed by Women's Center & Shelter and Newton Consulting furthers our efforts to connect victims with vital resources. This danger assessment smart phone app was developed as an extension of Pittsburgh's implementation of LAP and can be downloaded at no cost on Apple and Android phones. Efforts are currently underway to make RUSafe a national app that will automatically call the hotline nearest to the victim. Read more and please help us spread the word about this life-saving tool.

Gratefully,

Shirl Regan  
President/CEO

**Donate Now**

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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](mailto:info@wcpittsburgh.org)  
[www.wcpittsburgh.org](http://www.wcpittsburgh.org)



### *Sister to Sister*

## Outreach Ministries Making a Difference at WC&S

Sister to Sister Outreach Ministries began volunteering at Women's Center & Shelter in October of 2007. Sister to Sister has done many themed dinners for the women and children in shelter over the years--consistently doing a Thanksgiving dinner with all of the holiday trimmings, a Valentine's Day dinner with comfort foods and chocolate and finally a Mother's Day dinner to celebrate the moms in shelter! Each dinner is prepared the day of and is homemade. Additionally, the dining room is decorated in the special theme of the meal. The goal is to provide a wholesome meal and good company (family style) to the women and children in shelter.



"Over the years we have met some amazing women within the shelter, where we share our theme Sister to Sister. We have over 50 women volunteers throughout Pittsburgh from various churches. Our home base church is Pentecostal Temple Church of God in Christ in East Liberty. We also work with other shelters in the city and provide nursing home church services with lots of singing for residents within local nursing homes." --Sister Laurice Vance-Carr (Director and Founder of Sister to Sister Ministries)

Sister to Sister Outreach Ministries has formed 8 Chapters in the United States and 3 International Chapters in China, Korea and Liberia. Sister to Sister will be celebrating 20 years of outreach in February of 2015 and WC&S looks forward to their continued support of our women and children in shelter! Huge thanks to Sister to Sister for their work in our community!

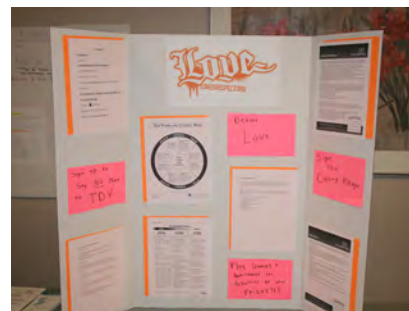
## Development Intern Hosts loveisrespect Trainings

1 in 3 teens will experience teen dating abuse and the highest rates of intimate partner violence are experienced between the ages of 16-24. These statistics and a personal experience are what spurred Sarah to get involved in promoting healthy relationships and combating intimate partner violence because she believes everyone has the right to a safe and healthy relationship. Sarah Pesi is a Development Intern at the WC&S working on the RUSafe project. She is 19 years old and is finishing up her final year at Chatham University where she is majoring in Public Policy and minoring in Social Services Administration.

“I was really excited about the opportunity to intern with WC&S and I have learned a lot from the experience. Everyone here is so nice and awesome to work with. I'm really excited with the progress that RUSafe has made, since I started here. My interning experience has also cultivated in me a really strong interest in nonprofit development,” said Sarah.

Sarah is a member of the National Youth Advisory Board for [www.loveisrespect.org](http://www.loveisrespect.org), which is a partnership between Break the Cycle and the National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline. She is 1 of 23 young people across the country between the ages of 13-24 who serve on this board and is the only representative from PA. Sarah was given the opportunity to host several trainings at WC&S about loveisrespect and share the information she has learned at retreats and conventions. Sarah spoke about loveisrespect as a resource and gave tips for outreach and interactive activities targeted at young people.

“The mission of WC&S really resonated with me and I hope to be involved with the organization for years to come. Although I'm finishing up my internship, I hope to remain a volunteer on the RUSafe project for the next few months and continue to support WC&S in any way that I can,” said Sarah.





# RU Safe?

A Dangerous Relationship Assessment App  
by Women's Center & Shelter of Greater Pittsburgh

## *What is it?*

The app is a free 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 a cause for concern, the app will enable the user to directly call WC&S' 24-Hour Hotline. If the user is in immediate danger, he/she 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. RUSafe can be downloaded on Apple and Android for free.

Has your partner  
physically abused you and  
has the violence increased  
in severity in the past  
year?



## KEY FACTS

- 1) 1 in 4 women will experience domestic violence in their lifetime.
- 2) Only 4 percent of domestic violence murder victims nationwide had ever availed themselves of domestic violence programs and services.
- 3) The re-assault of domestic violence victims in high danger was reduced by 60% if they made contact with a domestic violence program.

## *Call to Action*

### • SOCIAL MEDIA

- o Share the following Tweet/ Facebook message with your networks:  
"Save a life and download RUSafe? for free here <http://www.wcspittsburgh.org/RUSafe> - 1 in 4 women experience DV. Be a link to aid @wcspittsburgh #RUSafe?"
- o Create your own tweets and posts of your own!

### • ADVOCATE BUREAU

- o Invite an advocate to share the app at an event, workplace, meeting, organization, church, etc., by contacting [ghinassim@wcspittsburgh.org](mailto:ghinassim@wcspittsburgh.org).

### • DOWNLOAD

- o Information on how to download the free app and toolkit can be found at: <http://www.wcspittsburgh.org/RUSafe>.
- o Use the toolkit to share information in your workplace.

*RUSafe Educational Materials:*  
Underwritten by:

### For more Information

Please contact [pesis@wcspittsburgh.org](mailto:pesis@wcspittsburgh.org) or [ghinassim@wcspittsburgh.org](mailto:ghinassim@wcspittsburgh.org)  
Call 412-687-8017, ext. 338  
Visit <http://www.wcspittsburgh.org/RUSafe>



# WC&S Groups Aim to Help Heal...

At Women's Center & Shelter, not only is it extremely important to ensure the physical safety of our clients but it's also important to help with their emotional safety and healing process. We help our clients by offering a variety of groups—giving them the options to pick which ones interest them. WC&S has recently added new groups to the schedule and we want to share those with you!

**RECOVERY GROUP** – WC&S' Recovery Group facilitators use an evidence based curriculum called Seeking Safety developed by Lisa Najavits. It is a present focused therapy centered on developing coping skills for recovery from trauma and substance abuse. The group uses tools from cognitive, behavioral and interpersonal modalities. It takes a safety first approach, where group members develop strategies to enhance safety from trauma/PTSD and substance use. Topics include: Asking for Help, Creating Meaning, Self-Nurturing, Coping with Triggers, Recovery Thinking and Setting Boundaries in Relationships.

**S.E.L.F./HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS GROUP** – WC&S' S.E.L.F./Healthy Relationships Group discusses psycho-educational information concerning intimate partner violence, including but not limited to: why women stay, the dynamics of abuse and what abuse is and the cycle of abuse. WC&S addresses intimate partner concerns through the S.E.L.F. model that discusses safety, emotions, loss and future. The groups can apply grounding techniques, identifying triggers and coping skills, practicing boundaries, self-care, art therapeutic techniques, group discussion as well as other skills and techniques. The purpose of the group is to promote healing and healthy relationships with the hope of preventing intimate partner violence in the client's future relationships.

**CAREER DEVELOPMENT GROUP** – WC&S' Career Development Group discusses the client's background including their educational history, skills, past experiences and family traditions/expectations. WC&S tries to guide the client in determining their career path plan by conducting assessments, identifying abilities, mapping out the next steps, comparing jobs vs. careers, discussing and finding solutions to any challenges or barriers they are experiencing, and identifying what the client's strengths and weaknesses are. Sometimes this can include standardized assessments, creating resumes and practicing mock interview skills. WC&S also helps connect clients to available resources such as the Women's Empowerment Initiative, Life Works, Dress for Success and other agencies that offer Career Services.

**AT THE TABLE** – WC&S' At The Table Group takes a fun and informative approach to skills needed in the kitchen. This group aims at teaching clients various recipes all while learning how to use different kitchen tools. The group also learns ways to improvise with whatever ingredients happen to be available at the time, so nothing gets wasted. Another great thing about At The Table is that clients use ingredients grown in the WC&S garden to prepare fresh and healthy meals. The overall goal of this group is to empower clients to learn their way around the kitchen and develop new skills that can be taken with them after they leave WC&S.

**LIFE SKILLS** – WC&S' Life Skills Group addresses real concerns that may deter one's independence. WC&S tries to guide clients toward solutions as well as help guide them to learn how to overcome problems on their own. This may include conversations about budgeting and other financial concerns, finding and maintaining housing, overcoming barriers, building self-esteem, and taking responsibility for their actions and/or reactions. This is demonstrated through methods such as psycho-education, role-play, and answering questions about different life scenarios. The goal of the group is to empower women to become more independent—to empower women to be able to advocate for themselves and to develop skills that will set them up for success and self-sufficiency.

**SURVIVING TRAUMA** – WC&S' Surviving Trauma Group allows women to explore a life after domestic violence and after trauma—it is essential in the healing process. Doing so not only provides hope, but also allows women to consider what a healthy life can look like, and to consider what it feels like to heal from trauma. The group focuses on S.E.L.F., which is the acronym used to teach trauma survivors about the healing process, according to Sandra Bloom's Sanctuary model, utilized by Women's Center & Shelter staff in assisting trauma survivors:

- **S** – referencing awareness of and increasing "Safety"
- **E** – "Emotional Intelligence" – how to allow feelings such as fear, sadness, and/or anger to teach us about ourselves, and learn how to manage them in a healthy way
- **L** – Acknowledging and understanding "Loss" as it relates to life post-trauma
- **F** – As the final component, the "F" in self stands for "future," considering what a life without trauma and pain might feel like



### MEN/S Program – Change is Possible, Help is Available

WC&S' MEN/S Group stands for Men Embracing Non-Violence and Safety. The primary service of the group is intervention for adult men who abuse (defined as physical, emotional, verbal, sexual and/or economic) their intimate partners and are involved in Family and Criminal Court cases in Allegheny County or self identify a need to attend. The MEN/S Group recognizes that abuse cannot be prevented without intervention in the attitudes, beliefs, and choices of abusers.

The MEN/S Group has expanded from two groups to five groups in five different locations – East Liberty, Lawrenceville, Bethel Park, Coraopolis, and Wilkinsburg. WC&S served a total of 107 men through this important program in the 2013-2014 Fiscal Year.

During participants' last sessions, men shared with the group what they learned in MEN/S. These exit interviews indicated that men are using many of the tools for non-abusive behavior such as emotional safety plans, identifications of triggers, behavioral cues, implementing a time-out plan, recognizing warning signs of jealousy, and power and control tactics they were unaware of that are abusive.

For more information about WC&S' MEN/S Group call 412-687-8017 ext. 332.

## Amber's Story...

*Amber's incredible story of survival began when she was only a child. She endured sexual abuse from one of her brothers and when he was caught, the sexual abuse stopped but the physical and mental abuse had just began.*

*Throughout Amber's life, she found herself in relationships with abusive men. She recalls the abuse from her first relationship; "The first time he put his hands on me was a really bad one. He choked me, threw me up against the wall and then onto the floor. He climbed on top of me and choked me until I couldn't breathe," said Amber.*

*Several abusive relationships later, Amber found Women's Center & Shelter. "A long life of abuse, and I finally seemed to have my last relationship open my eyes to recognizing that I needed to get out," said Amber.*

*When Amber arrived in shelter with her children, she finally felt safe and secure. "I don't have to live every day hurt and crying. I don't have to live in fear. There is a better future for me and for my family...that is what I get from this place," said Amber.*

*Amber's daughter utilized the Women's Center & Shelter's Children's Program. She explained that the structure of the Children's Program was good for her daughter—"Before, she was all over the place and now she is much happier. She has adapted and everybody loves her," said Amber.*

*While in shelter, Amber worked with staff on housing and employment as well as attended the support groups. "The staff is wonderful," said Amber. "Everyone individually has never given me the inclination that they are judging me or shunning me. I've never experienced something like this place before."*

*She explained that her time in shelter helped her to better understand what abuse is, how to define it and how to know if she is in an abusive situation. "Words cannot express how this place has helped me to see things differently," said Amber.*

*Amber described her experience at Women's Center as "life-changing" after reaching a point in her life that she called the "wake-up call."*



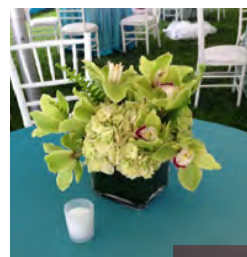
## Community Mixtape Project!

The Community Mixtape Project taking place at WC&S is a recording studio that empowers tweens and teens through connected learning in music and writing. Tweens and teens at WC&S have the opportunity to conceptualize, create and produce podcasts, chapbooks and mixtapes, using professional recording equipment during monthly workshops. WC&S staff are also trained to facilitate in writing, recording and podcasting—creating a sustainable program of empowerment and education that can act as a resource for shelter residents for years to come!

As of August, 2014, WC&S has hosted 12 Community Mixtape Workshops at WC&S' Children's Program. A total of 22 unique teens and tweens have taken part in one or more of the workshops beginning in April, 2014. Each workshop was two hours in length and participants learned about poetry/storytelling, recording, beatmaking, and podcasting! Each workshop was facilitated by two instructors with additional support offered by one or more WC&S staff/volunteers.

## Celebrating FOUR DECADES of *Courage, Strength and Hope*

With a crowd of over 400 in attendance, WC&S celebrated four decades of courage, strength and hope at The Frick Art & Historical Center on Friday, May 2, 2014. The event was a huge success raising over \$285,000 for WC&S' programs and services. This very special 40th Anniversary Celebration presented by UPMC Health Plan was made most meaningful by the many intimate partner violence survivors in the room. Presented by special guest, survivor and Pittsburgh Steeler, William Gay, all survivors were asked to stand and be recognized as this year's Ted Craig Humanitarian Award winners. It was a warm and wonderful moment to witness such courage and bravery. All survivors were given a special survivor pin.



All in attendance enjoyed a wine pull, silent auction, virtual shelter drive and a commemorative 40th Anniversary video featuring stories of survivors. The video is now available at [http://youtu.be/8BzVA\\_q5YpQ](http://youtu.be/8BzVA_q5YpQ). We hope you will take the time to watch this incredibly meaningful tribute to the unbelievable strength of survivors. This video represents why Women's Center & Shelter will continue its works for years to come. Many thanks to everyone who made this evening unforgettable, especially honorary co-chairs Audrey Hillman Fisher and Timothy O. Fisher, UPMC Health Plan and Event Host Diane P. Holder and Special Guest William Gay.

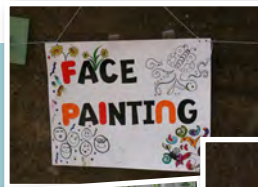


## Children's Festival & Domestic Violence Awareness Month



### WC&S' Annual Children's Festival

The WC&S 14th Annual Children's Festival held on Friday, August 8, 2014 was a success, attracting over 50 WC&S shelter and non-resident clients and their children. The Festival featured 30 of our partner organizations, with service providers including Safe Start, the DARE Program, the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank, the Housing Authority, Neighborhood Safety, and Grow Pittsburgh. There were many activities for the children throughout the day, including arts and crafts, reading stations, Museum on the Move, and face painting and games hosted by the Girl Scouts. Many volunteers helped to make the day a success, including the father of one of our staff members who cooked a delicious BBQ lunch for all participants.



### Domestic Violence Awareness Month!

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month and is the perfect time to shine a light on intimate partner violence. WC&S encourages you to get involved throughout the month of October and help us spread awareness!

#### • AWARENESS:

##### -RUSafe?

- Download RUSafe on your phone and encourage others to safely do so.
- Distribute RUSafe flyers and safety cards to local businesses, grocery stores, beauty salons, by downloading the tool-kit found at [www.wcpspittsburgh.org/RUSafe](http://www.wcpspittsburgh.org/RUSafe).

##### - Wear Purple Day – Friday October 24

- \* Purple is the Domestic Violence Awareness color so we encourage you to wear it and show support.
- \* Involve your whole workplace in Wear Purple Day. Create prizes to foster friendly competition!
- \* Take pictures and post to WC&S' Facebook page!

##### - Survivor Videos

- \* Join WC&S' email list by signing up at [www.WCSCanHelp.org](http://www.WCSCanHelp.org) under the Community Section! Select Join!
- \* Each week in October, a new survivor vignette will be released through an e-blast. Forward to those you know!

#### • Raising Funds and Special Events:

##### - 3rd Party Fundraisers

- Hold a 3rd party fundraiser to raise funds and awareness for WC&S!
  - Collect items from our Wish List to help us meet the needs of our clients.
  - Collect smartphones and cell phones which result in a monetary gift to WC&S.
- \*Details can be found at [www.WCSCanHelp.org/OurWishList](http://www.WCSCanHelp.org/OurWishList)

##### - Peer to Peer Fundraising

- Use WC&S' Peer to Peer fundraising portal to host a virtual birthday party in celebration of our 40th Anniversary!

##### - "Remember my name, Be my Voice"

- Attend this fundraiser in memory of Karissa Kunco on Saturday, October 25 beginning at 6:00pm at The Royal Place restaurant on Library Road.



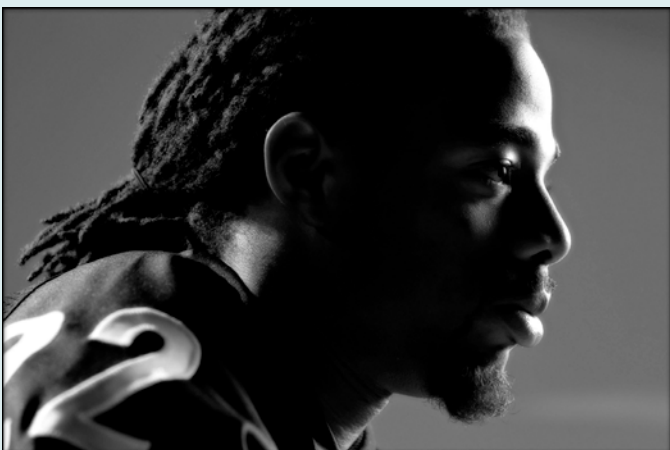
**Women's Center & Shelter**  
of Greater Pittsburgh

P.O. Box 9024  
Pittsburgh, PA 15224

Please consider making a donation to  
Women's Center & Shelter by clicking

**Donate Now**

## RUSafe goes National!



**United Way #110 CFC #81018 SECA #4601-0042**

## HELPING THOSE ACROSS THE COUNTRY

RUSafe is a free dangerous relationship assessment app that was developed by Women's Center & Shelter of Greater Pittsburgh and Newton Consulting. RUSafe will soon be serving the continental United States. Available for Apple or Android, RUSafe 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, it will enable the user to directly call the Domestic Violence Hotline nearest them. If the user is in immediate lethal danger, she/he can call 911 directly from the app. RUSafe is based on the Danger Assessment developed by Jacquelyn C. Campbell, PhD, RN, FAAN of Johns Hopkins School of Nursing.

Pittsburgh Steeler and Women's Center & Shelter supporter, Will Gay, will be the official RUSafe spokesperson. Stay tuned for updates on this exciting news!



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