Center for Women in Transition

News and Annual Report 2013

Inspiring Empowering and Reintegrating Women
One day at a time.
I am pleased to introduce myself to you as the new Executive Director for the Center for Women in Transition! Many of you may recognize my name, as I served as a board member for seven years before joining the Center’s staff this summer. During my years on the board, I wore many hats. In the beginning, I mentored a client and served as a client “voice” on the board. Then, I sat on the Development Committee and eventually chaired that committee. I was also on the board committee that oversaw the Center’s social enterprise. After that, I served for a year as the President of the board. During my years of board service I witnessed many changes at the Center—from staffing changes to programmatic changes, including the addition of Schirmer House, and the start and end of One World Neighborhood Café and Project Reconnect. Despite the fact that the Center struggled at times, delivering on the mission was never compromised. I look forward to ensuring that the mission continues for many years to come. I am a lawyer by background, and was practicing law at Lathrop and Gage prior to moving into my current role at the Center. I made the decision to apply for the Executive Director position because I believed passionately in the Center’s mission and felt drawn to jump in with both feet to help move the organization forward. On my first day on the job—with our air conditioner not working, the internet down, the shared network drive down, and with no IT or maintenance staff to call—I wondered if I had made a mistake. But with now four months under my belt, I have learned a lot about resourcefulness, and I can confidently say that I made the right decision. I am truly thankful that I have been given the opportunity to lead this great organization.

The problems the Center addresses daily are universal ones associated with poverty, physical, sexual and mental abuse, trauma, and substance abuse. The Center’s programs address these universal issues in a narrowly targeted way, with its services uniquely tailored to women who have been incarcerated or are facing incarceration, and the Center is effective. Last year, the Center served 155 women between its Mentoring and Advocacy and Schirmer programs, and the recidivism rates of women in our programs was just 6%! 57 of the women we served found employment while in our programs, and 100% of the women needing access to treatment received it. These successes are an important step in making our communities safer and our families stronger.

If you are a past or current supporter of the Center, I thank you, and I hope that you are as proud as I am of the work of the Center for Women in Transition. If you have not given a donation recently or have never given, I hope that you will consider making a donation this year. It costs only $7,000 to provide wrap-around services to one woman in our program, compared to over $21,000 to incarcerate a woman per year. A donation of $864 will provide a woman with bus passes for one year and a donation of $100 will provide food for a woman for a month. Please also take a glance at the “Volunteer Needs” section of the newsletter and let us know if you would like to contribute some of your talents. The Center for Women needs your help to continue providing critical support to our community!

I have begun to meet with the supporters and partners of the Center, but if I have not met you yet, I look forward to it. Please feel free to call me at the office at 314-771-5207 to introduce yourself!

Sincerely,
Laura Toledo
Executive Director

Our Mission:
The Center assists women in the criminal justice system in making a successful transition to their families and communities through practicing and promoting restorative justice.
As the new Development Director for the Center for Women in Transition, I am very excited about the chance to bring my experiences to the Center. I have worked in development for the past six years for non-profits including St. Louis Area Foodbank, Almost Home, Springboard to Learning and Provident. I have dedicated my entire life to the empowerment of myself and women throughout the world and will work very hard to ensure that I do my part for the women at CWIT.

The Center for Women in Transition upholds a very important mission of assisting women transitioning from the criminal justice system. We work to ensure that they are equipped with the resources and skills needed to lead a successful life beyond their time in the criminal justice system.

Attorney General Eric Holder of the Federal Interagency Reentry Council stated that, “Reentry provides a major opportunity to reduce recidivism, save taxpayer dollars, and make our communities safer.”

CWIT works hard every day to ensure that we are doing just that. We strive to ensure that our programs have a long lasting impact on the clients and that we provide services to as many women as possible.

Our journey requires collaboration and partnerships. To those who have worked with us in the past and are currently working with us, we thank you and look forward to our continued relationship. To the organizations and businesses we have yet to connect with, we look forward to engaging you soon.

We are very appreciative to the many donors and volunteers who support our mission and push us forward. Your support has taken us a long way and for you we are eternally grateful.

I look forward to meeting you all and working with you to ensure that we make a profound impact on those we work so hard for.

In closing, I will leave you with this quote that I use when I need encouragement and a reminder of my strength.

“A woman is the full circle. Within her is the power to create, nurture and transform.” — Diane Mariechild

See you out and about in the community!

In service,
Shante Duncan
By Sister Sharon Schmitz, RSM

The old adage “great things come in small packages,” aptly describes the beginnings of the Center for Women in Transition (CWIT). A major portion of that small package arrived on November, 1998 in the person of Mary Jo He- man, a Dominican Sister well known in St. Louis as a Social Justice Advocate.

From November 3, 1998 through December 31, 1999, Sister Mary Jo served as CWIT’s first Administrator/Mentor Coordinator – our one-person staff. Her job was particularly challenging because she also served in a leadership position with the Dominican Community and could give CWIT only three days per week.

Gifted with a deep respect for the human dignity of every human person; intellectual acuity; a warm, listening heart and a strong history of using restorative processes in all interactions, Sister Mary Jo was well equipped for the challenge of transforming the idea of CWIT into reality.

CWIT’s co-founders (Sarah Barnes, Judy Pannett and Mercy Sisters Eugenio Pastorik and Sharon Schmitz) recruited Sister Mary Jo and equipped her with another small package. It consisted of:

- a third floor office located in an abandoned high school classroom
- $18,000 in donations and grants
- the mission to use restorative processes to assist women exiting jail/prison, to successfully re-enter society and re-unite with their families

We entrusted Sister Mary Jo with five responsibilities:

- set up the office
- introduce CWIT’s mission to a variety of social service agencies
- recruit and train women to be mentors
- meet and assess the needs and goals of women ex-offenders as well as their readiness to work toward meeting those needs and achieving those goals
- help the Founders recruit a Board of Directors

Without a doubt, Sister Mary Jo aptly met those challenges. She put her heart and soul into the task.

Then, something of a miracle happened. In December, 1999, the Sisters of Mercy awarded a five year $243,000 grant to CWIT, propelling this fledgling organization into the future. At that time, equipped with a five year plan, we hired additional staff, and Sister Mary Jo moved into the full time position of Mentor Coordinator.

We extend our gratitude to Sister Mary Jo Heman without whom CWIT would not have been born. She built the strong foundation on which the current CWIT now flourishes.
MENTORING AND ADVOCACY

The Mentoring and Advocacy Program is an integral part of the Center for Women in Transition. Clients are matched with a volunteer mentor who assists them in their transition back to the community and their families. Along with mentors, women are provided with fully furnished apartments, bus passes, food cards, and other basic needs. Most of the women reside at the Center-owned Courtois House, but some live off-site and still may take advantage of the Center’s services. While in the program clients maintained an amazing recidivism rate of 5%, proof that the program really does work.

MENTORS

Center for Women in Transition extends a special thanks to the 21 mentors who dedicated their time and talents to mentoring in fiscal year 2013. Our program wouldn’t be possible without you!

FY 2013 Mentors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Liz Beall</th>
<th>Sr. Therese Anne Kiefer</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sharon Bertram</td>
<td>Charlotte Kyles</td>
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<td>Yvette Boozer</td>
<td>Florene Levy</td>
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<td>Carla Chropkowski</td>
<td>Sheri Luster</td>
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<td>Tiffany Crahan</td>
<td>Donna May</td>
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<td>Simone Cummings</td>
<td>Kathy McGinnis</td>
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<td>Yolanda Fisher</td>
<td>Stephanie Moore</td>
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<td>Leslie Hanlin</td>
<td>Virginia Newton</td>
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<td>Annie Harper</td>
<td>Pam Ross</td>
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<td>Kathy Harris</td>
<td>Antoinette Watson</td>
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MENTORING AND ADVOCACY BY THE NUMBERS

59 women received immediate reentry assistance including transitional housing, clothing, bus passes, case management and other needed supplies.

17 new clients were matched with mentors.

21 new mentors were trained.

11 clients graduated from the 1-year Mentoring & Advocacy Program.

67% of clients went on job interviews, of them 71% became employed.

100% of clients who needed substance abuse treatment were able to receive treatment.
FROM THE HEART OF A CLIENT

Dear Laura and Staff,

As I move forward to closing one chapter in my life and beginning a new one, I cannot end it without thanking Center for Women in Transition for deciding how my journey would begin.

I was a mentee in 2002 after returning home from prison. I was the first “violent offender” accepted into the program and for that I will be forever grateful.

With each milestone, I remember who was there for me over the hurdles and around the barriers that were in place for those like me returning home from prison. When I received my AA in Business Administration from St. Louis Community College at Forest Park in 2006, I sent an announcement to the Center informing them of my accomplishment and thanking them for what they had done for me.

Here it is 2013 and I am currently a Mentor and part time House Manager for Courtois House. Life comes back around in full circle. I feel humbled to be a part of such a great organization.

So December 14, 2013 is what the Center for Women in Transition groomed me for. I will graduate from the University of Missouri St. Louis with my Master of Social Work.

I plan to become licensed and start my own private practice as a counselor. Thank You! Thank you! Thank you!

Donna Faye May

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Empower A Woman

Your tax-deductible contribution could make a difference in the following ways:

- A gift of $100 will help provide food for a month for one participant.
- Your contribution of $400 will allow a woman to live in safe, affordable housing for one month.
- Your contribution of $864 gives transportation to one woman for 12 months, allowing her to attend treatment programs, search for employment, and maintain employment.
- Your gift of $7,000 will provide wrap around services to one woman for her entire 1-year period in our program.

To make a financial contribution, mail a check to Center for Women in Transition at 7529 S. Broadway, St. Louis, MO 63111 or visit our website at [http://www.cwitstl.org/donate_now/](http://www.cwitstl.org/donate_now/) to donate online. Any amount helps!

Double your gift with a match from your employer. We have listed a few companies that offer matching gifts:

- AT&T
- Boeing
- McDonald’s
- Target
- Emerson
- Wells Fargo
- Pfizer
- Bank of America
- Starbucks
- Verizon Communications
- U.S. Bank

Be sure to ask your company about matching gifts!

Congratulations to Donna Faye May on completing her MSW!! The staff and supporters of the Center for Women in Transition are extremely proud of you!
Meet Jeannine: A CWIT Graduate

Jeannine is a CWIT graduate and community volunteer. She spends her days working, helping out at a local food pantry and donating her time to helping ensure that the CWIT administrative office is clean and presentable. She currently resides in her very own apartment. This is her now.

Less than two years ago, Jeannine entered the Courtois House after serving ten years in prison and surviving an abusive marriage that lasted more than two decades. She struggled with mental health issues and low self-esteem as a result of the abuse she suffered.

Jeannine believes that the Center’s Courtois House made her feel like a person and the mentoring helped her find her own identity.

“Courtois House was my very first apartment,” explained Jeannine. “I had never lived on my own.” Jeannine credits the staff and her mentor with helping her find her voice and realizing her strength. As a self-prescribed therapy, Jeannine writes poetry and will be enrolling in business classes soon.

Ah! By Jeannine

There’s no hole in my heart that God cannot fill
There’s no wrong so wrong that He would not heal
There’s nothing now, nothing worthless about me

There’s nothing I’ve said or done
There’s no reason forgiveness would not come

There’s nothing that could be
There’s no reason He’d stop loving me
There’s no not lifting me up, no withholding His cup

There’s nothing He cannot change
There’s no miracle not in His range
There’s no reason why I should or must

There’s no doubtful in my trust
There’s faith in all my prayers
There’s just knowing, I know He cares

There’s to come, other pain and sorrow
There’s more strength today and tomorrow

There’s no more deep-down shame
There’s no more me to blame
There’s now closure meant to be...

Ah! There’s knowing He has new plans for me!
EVENTS AND FUNDRAISERS

Approximately 200 people joined us on November 23 to partake in some women centered trivia. The evening was fun and we raised more than $6,000 to help continue our mission!

THANK YOU TO OUR TRIVIA SPONSORS

FBA (Female Bankruptcy Attorneys)
Kelly Gast
The Law Offices of Eric V. Barnhart, LLC
An Anonymous Donor

Thank you to everyone who volunteered!!
EVENTS AND FUNDRAISERS

UPCOMING EVENTS

JANUARY 24, 2014

**WINE, CHEESE AND JEWELRY PARTY ($10)**

Schon on the Boulevard—30 the Blvd., St. Louis, MO 63117
5:30 – 9:00 pm

Join us for an evening of wine, food and jewelry shopping as we raise funds and awareness for the Center. Wine and cheese are complimentary with ticket purchase and there will be plentiful jewelry shopping from local designers. Just in time for Valentine’s Day! For more information, contact Shante at shanteduncan@cwitstl.org.

MAY 30, 2014

**Beautiful Transformations Annual Gala**

Edwards Jones Atrium (Manchester Rd. and 270)

We hope you can join us as we celebrate our 17th year in transforming the lives of women in the St. Louis area! The dinner will honor community members, clients and volunteers who have given back to the women of the Center. Sponsorship opportunities are available! Details will follow, but please **SAVE THE DATE**.

“**We all make mistakes, have struggles, and even regret things in our past. But you are not your mistakes, you are not your struggles, and you are here NOW with the power to shape your day and your future.”** — **Steve Maraboli**
BILLS, BILLS, BILLS

During the last legislative session, Center for Women in Transition advocated for bills that affect the lives of the women we serve and the thousands of women just like them. Below is a summary of the bills we pushed!

House Bills

HB210—Criminal Code Revisions
HB296—The Good Samaritan Law
HB443—Establishes a pilot program to increase the visitation right of children with incarcerated parents.
HB511, HB220—Allows for expungement of certain criminal records.
HB752, HB753—Changes mandatory minimum laws
HB838—Food Stamp Ban Opt-out

Senate Bills

SB310—Changes the laws regarding expungement or records
SB346—Modifies Food Stamp benefits
SB253—Criminal Code Revisions

SCHIRMER HOUSE

The partnership between the Missouri Department of Corrections and the Center for Women in Transition Schirmer House has developed a unique place for 28 women ex-offenders to receive assistance while transitioning back into the community.

Schirmer House is an apartment building with a full 24/7 dedicated and responsive staff. The Schirmer House Employment and Life Skills Specialist works directly with residents on resume building, interviewing strategies, creating a budget, meal planning and maintaining their apartment. The Case Manager helps each resident with accessing community resources such as social security and disability benefits, vocational rehabilitation services, mental health services, and medical services. The Case Manager also assists the clients in obtaining safe permanent housing after Schirmer. Additionally, a Probation and Parole officer supervises all residents and works closely with Schirmer staff to deliver the best possible services to the clients.

SCHIRMER HOUSE - BY THE NUMBERS

- 96 women called Schirmer House home
- 49 clients went on job interviews, 25 obtained employment
- Approximately 68 women participated in restorative activities like gardening, volunteering, and classes.
- 15 clients participated in the reCreate partnership with Perennial, learning how to use hand-tools to create a piece of art from an old, broken chair.
The Center for Women in Transition greatly appreciates the support and hard work of all of the volunteers who help to move our mission forward. Over 3,000 hours of service were contributed by our volunteers in FYE 2013.

Volunteer Needs

Become a Mentor!
For over 16 years Center for Women in Transition has been assisting women who have been incarcerated to successfully transition from the criminal justice system back into the community. Mentors work with women who are rebuilding their lives. They must be women over the age of 25 and willing to commit a minimum of one hour per week for a period of one year to assist a woman in developing healthy and productive goals.

Share your talents and passion!
Teach a class or give a presentation in an area of your interest. Do you love to cook or garden? Are you a professional with experience that would be of use to the women we work with? Whether its tax preparation or scrapbooking, you can share what you love with the Center.

Donation Crew
We need ongoing volunteers to assist the Center in sorting and organizing our in-kind donations.
*Time Commitment: 2 hours*

Development Assistant
Provide assistance to the Center’s development office, including help with special events, managing donor records, sending donor acknowledgments, and running reports.
*Time commitment: 2-4 hours, weekly*

Special Event Volunteer
Help at our two annual fundraisers in April and December with registration, set up, clean up and other tasks as needed.
*Time commitment: Varies*

To learn more about volunteer needs, please visit our website at www.cwitstl.org or contact Shante Duncan at shanteduncan@cwitstl.org or 314-771-5207.
Statement of Activities

Revenue................................................................. Total $1,186,500

Individual Contributions.................................$ 69,975
Grants..........................................................$268,766
Special Events..............................................$109,000
Government Contract—Schirmer......................$705,745
Miscellaneous Income.................................$10,214
Interest & Dividends........................................$22,800

Expenses................................................................. Total $1,128,356

Program Services.................................$963,624
Administrative...........................................$97,514
Fundraising................................................. $67,218

The Center ended the fiscal year 2013 in the black with a net income of $58,144.
THANK YOU 2012-2013 DONORS

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[Gifts up to $50]

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“We must find time to stop and thank the people who make a difference in our lives.”

— John F. Kennedy

Holiday Greetings

One of the pleasures of the Holiday Season is the chance to say “thank you” for your contributions to our success.

Our warmest thoughts and best wishes for a wonderful Holiday Season and a very Happy New Year.
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THANK YOU to our Board of Directors and Staff for all of your hard work!

Sarah as “SuperMom” for Halloween!

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BEAUTIFUL TRANSFORMATIONS

Preparations are in full swing for **Beautiful Transformations Annual Dinner and Auction** on May 30, 2014. We need your help as we prepare to make this evening a great success. Here’s how you can help.

**Become a Sponsor.** Sponsors help to underwrite the costs of the evening, thereby increasing overall profits. Check the sponsorship levels on the sidebar to the right.

**Donate Items.** We are seeking donations of themed baskets, gift certificates, sports memorabilia, event tickets, travel accommodations, spa packages and any new merchandise to be auctioned off in our silent or oral auction.

**Refer Sponsors and Donors.** Do you know an individual or a business who may be interested in supporting this event? Please forward their information to us or send them our way.

**Volunteer your time.** We are in need of volunteers to help with the event. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact us.

If you are able to assist in any of these areas, please contact Shante Duncan at shanteduncan@cwitstl.org

**Beautiful Transformations Sponsorship Opportunities**

- **$10,000 Diamond Sponsor** (event signage and oral recognition, full-page ad in program, nametag recognition, 2 tables of 10)
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