



Center for
Women in Transition

2010 - 2011 ANNUAL REPORT



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.**

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MESSAGE FROM LEADERSHIP

As the Center for Women in Transition moves into its 15th year, we take a moment to reflect and look back at the lives that have been transformed. Since the formation of the Center in 1997, over 1,600 clients have passed through our doors. The recidivism rate of our clients has consistently been well below state averages, and always under 10%. Last year, the recidivism rate was a remarkably low 5%, an outstanding achievement that reiterates the importance and relevance of our work.

The Center's mission is to assist women in the criminal justice system make a successful transition to their families and communities through practicing and promoting restorative justice. This past year, the Center helped 188 women make a successful transition using a restorative justice approach. The Center's clients have made extraordinary strides in their lives over the year, as is evidenced by the low recidivism statistics, and perhaps even more importantly, by the personal transformations of each individual client. The positive changes made by each client ripple out to their families, their mentors, Center volunteers, and the community as a whole. After completing the program at the Center, many women are reunited with their families and their communities, as healthy, productive, mothers and citizens. We are happy to report that the state of Missouri recognized the success of Schirmer House with a three year contract extension.

It is a privilege to behold the perseverance of women at the Center. Understanding the power it takes to resist an addiction, the determination it takes to find a job in these challenging economic times, and the strength it takes to re-create oneself to become a successful, positive part of the community, each woman in our program provides us with the wisdom and courage it takes to advocate on their behalf.

The Center also continues to be an advocate for alternatives to incarceration. Our advocates visit the courts and the state capital on a regular basis, explaining the benefits of restorative justice as an alternative to incarceration in general, and also advocating on behalf of individual women facing potential incarceration.

The Center for Women in Transition and its clients could not accomplish their goals alone. Our mentors and volunteers provide countless hours of support, from one-on-one mentoring, to art therapy and gardening, to handyman services. Also, our mentors and volunteers offer us vital access to our community. Volunteers encourage friends, families, and colleagues to become involved with the Center. These relationships challenge individual perceptions of those who have been incarcerated, thereby opening hearts and minds to accepting women of the Center into our community.

As we move into 2012, the women of the Center for Women in Transition need your support. Whether you give of your time, money, or resources, your contribution will have lasting effects on our clients, our staff, our volunteers, and our community.

Every day at the Center we witness women changing their lives, and are encouraged and excited about their journey--a journey you, as a supporter of the Center, play a significant role in. Today, 1,600 women thank you for your support. 1,600 families are better off because of your dedication and kindness. The Center for Women in Transition thrives because of each of you.

Thank you,

Laura Toledo
Board President

Robert L Wessels
Executive Director

MENTORING & ADVOCACY

The Mentoring & Advocacy Program is the heart of the Center for Women in Transition. Clients are matched with a volunteer one-on-one mentor who assists them in their transition back to the community and family. Along with mentors, women are provided with housing, transportation, food, and basic needs. Most of the women reside at the Center owned Courtois House. Clients continue to maintain an amazing recidivism rate of 5% in the last fiscal year, proof that the program does work.



“MENTORS ARE AN **IMPRESSIVE GROUP OF WOMEN**. SOME ARE PROFESSIONALS, SOME ARE **RECOVERING ADDICTS**, SOME ARE NUNS, AT LEAST ONE IS AN EX-OFFENDER AND **SOME LIKE ME ARE JUST WINGING IT**. BUT WHAT WE ALL HAVE IN COMMON IS THAT **WE WANT TO MAKE A POSITIVE DIFFERENCE IN SOME ONE’S LIFE.**” - PAT ECKERT, MENTOR

MENTORS

Center for Women in Transition extends a special thanks to the 26 mentors who dedicated their time and talents to mentoring in 2011. Our program wouldn't be possible without you!

Mary Abkemeier
Liz Beall
Sharon Bertram
Cheryl Boone
Yvette Boozer
Toni Brown
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Pat Eckert
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Mandi Walsh

MENTORING & ADVOCACY BY THE NUMBERS

- 70 women were able to receive services through the Center
- 25 new clients matched with mentors
- 13 new mentors trained
- 100% of the women were able to live in safe, affordable housing
- 64% of clients went on job interviews, with over 52% becoming employed
- 100% of clients who needed substance abuse treatment were able to receive treatment
- Clients had only a 5% recidivism rate!

FAYE MORRIS

Faye Morris is the epitome of success for the Center for Women in Transition. For thirty-nine years, Faye struggled with her addiction to drugs. She had been in and out of jail and prison most of her life. Faye came to the Center in 2009 because of the advocacy of Barbara Baker. Barbara, Advocate Director worked with a judge to divert Faye's sentencing to the Center. She began drug treatment and was enrolled in drug court all while being involved in the activities the Center offered.

Faye not only graduated from the Center's Mentoring & Advocacy program, but speaks in the community about the effect of the program. She is currently employed by the Center at the very housing facility where she once lived.



SCHIRMER HOUSE

A partnership between the Missouri Department of Corrections and the Center for Women in Transition has developed a unique place for women offenders in the St. Louis area to receive assistance while they work on transitioning back into the community.

Schirmer House is an apartment building in the South St. Louis community with a 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 disability benefits, vocational rehabilitation services, mental health services, and medical services and assisting the clients in obtaining safe permanent housing. Additionally, a Probation/Parole Officer is assigned to Schirmer House as the Residential Facility Liaison Officer and is the supervising officer for all residents.

SCHIRMER HOUSE HIGHLIGHTS

With the help of a dedicated volunteer, four garden beds were established in the backyard. During this past summer, the residents gathered to plant, weed, and harvest fresh vegetables.

Schirmer House also has a weekly craft class where the residents are learning and practicing quilting, knitting, and crocheting. This is an excellent opportunity for the women to learn new skills and build positive relationships with volunteers from the community.

“I LIKE OUR SEWING VOLUNTEERS BECAUSE THEY ARE **PATIENT WITH US** AND TEACH US SO WE CAN EASILY UNDERSTAND IT. THEY ARE ALWAYS GIVING US **ENCOURAGING WORDS AND HELP KEEP US MOTIVATED.**”

- EVELYN, SCHIRMER HOUSE CLIENT



SCHIRMER HOUSE - BY THE NUMBERS

- 100 women called Schirmer House home
- 75 went on job interviews, 65 obtained employment
- Approximately 65 participated in restorative justice activities like gardening, volunteering, or solving our Situations classes
- 100% of clients received basic essentials and attended weekly life-skills classes

1,600 WOMEN ARE RELEASED **EACH YEAR** FROM
MISSOURI PRISONS WITH BETWEEN **300-400**
RETURNING TO THE **ST. LOUIS AREA.**

WE ARE ALL RELATED:

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE TALKING CIRCLES

A FIRST AND FUTURE PROCESS

The history of Talking Circles can be traced to indigenous cultures around the world. Talking Circles have roots in ancient traditions and contemporary application. The inherent dignity of each participant is a core element of Talking Circles. Here at the Center, Restorative Justice Talking Circles are held regularly with the women in our program because they allow us to build community, work through problems and topics together, and understand each other more deeply.

Talking Circles create intentional space for peacemaking – the Circle is designed to help us bring forth our best self and become more comfortable operating from our positive values. At the most basic level, sitting in a circle allows everyone to see each other's faces equally and make eye contact. In Circle, building relationships is equally important as tackling difficult issues. To build these relationships, we create empathy by learning to listen compassionately. Some essential elements of Circle are the Talking Piece, Values, and a clear Opening, Middle and Closing.

Talking Piece. The Talking Piece is passed from person to person around the Circle, the person holding talking piece speaks, while those not holding it, listen. This way we are all engaged in the action of the Circle for the entire session. The Talking Piece allows each person in the group time to speak and each participant is equally invited to share.

Values. At the beginning of each Circle session, or when a new person joins an on-going Circle, we create and review our values. Usually this means answering the question, 'What do you need from this group in order to be your best self in Circle?' At each session, we place the value statements in the center of the Circle on the floor to bring our attention to our values.

Opening. Middle. Closing. In our Circles we open with a 'check-in' question such as, "How was your day?"; "What is something positive and something negative from your past week?"; "What are you an expert at?"; "What is something you would do differently if you could?" Telling our stories is a powerful way to transform relationships, explore issues and share wisdom. Storytelling allows us to see each other as more human and break down assumptions about each other that block good communication.



The main, or middle, part of the Circle is where we work through a topic or an activity together. What do you like about yourself? What are you good at? These are two key questions we address again and again in our weekly Circle Sessions. Recently, a resident noticed that over the year of her participation in Circle Sessions her answers became longer, delivered with more clarity and depth. She was finding those things she likes about herself and being brave enough to say them out loud.

We close our time together with a yoga stretch, by reading a poem together or perhaps with a guided mediation. We close the Circle so we all know the intentional space of the Circle is complete.

In Circle there is space for healing and embracing our own inner power as we recognize our ability to make choices. Restoration begins with healing from the inside and becoming whole over time, a progression facilitated by the Circle process.

RECOMMENDED READING:

"DOING DEMOCRACY WITH CIRCLES: ENGAGING COMMUNITIES IN PUBLIC PLANNING"

BY: JENNIFER BALL, WAYNE CALDWELL, AND KAY PRANIS

MARY DALTON

Mary has struggled with an addiction to alcohol her entire life. Eventually, it caught up to her and she found herself serving four years in prison. After living on the streets for several years, she found her way to the Center for Women in Transition. With her housing, food, and transportation being taken care of, Mary was now able to focus on getting sober, no easy task for a life-long alcoholic.

Mary needed every minute of her 15 months in the Center's Mentoring & Advocacy program. She is now working, lives with her eight year old son, and comes regularly to the Center to put money into her savings account!

"I LEARNED TO PAY BILLS AND SAVE MONEY AND HOW TO RELY ON GOD FOR THE REST. AND WHEN I NEED SOMEONE TO TALK TO, I COME BACK TO THE CENTER FOR HELP."

- MARY DALTON, CENTER GRADUATE



ALTERNATIVES TO INCARCERATION

57% OF CLIENTS HAVE COME INTO THE CENTER'S MENTORING AND ADVOCACY PROGRAM AS AN **ALTERNATIVE TO INCARCERATION** FROM ST. LOUIS CITY AND COUNTY JAILS.

VOLUNTEER NUMBERS

During the last fiscal year 3,500 hours of service were contributed by our volunteers.

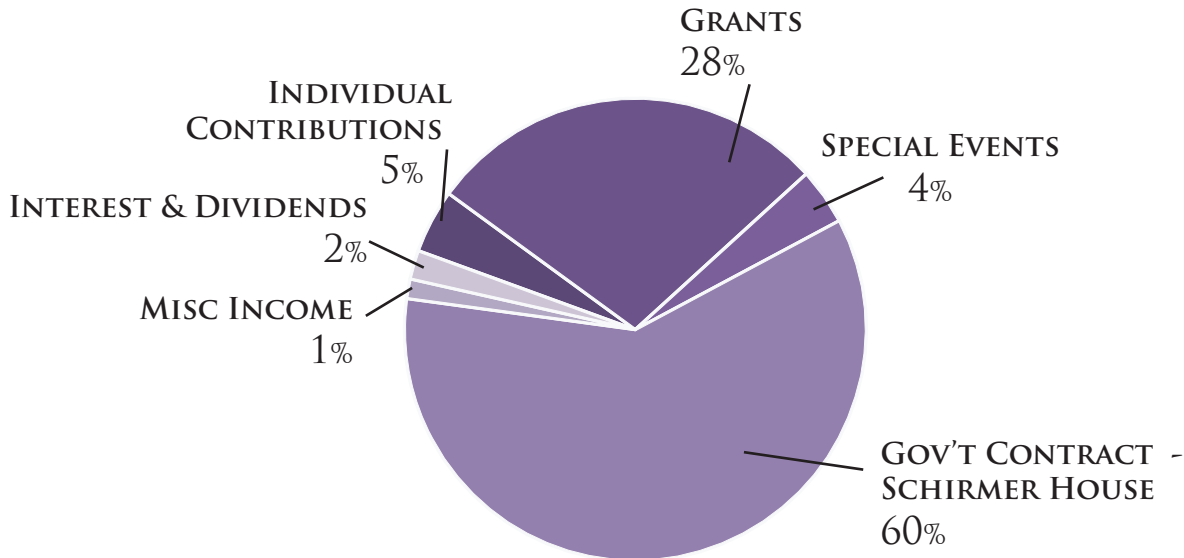
- 108 volunteers provided a record 1,207 hours at events, in the office and helping with programming. This is a 54% increase in hours from last year!
- Board members gave over 650 hours and mentors gave an impressive 1,600 hours of their time and talents.
- Twenty-one volunteers served in multiple roles, almost three times that of last year.
- We are lucky to have over 12 weekly volunteers in the last year!



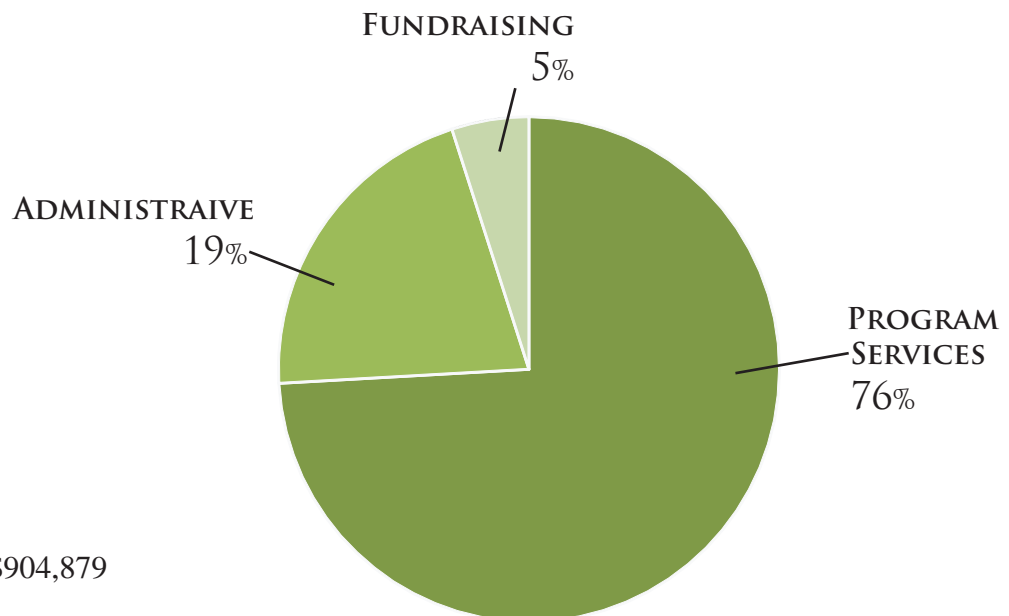
FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2010 - 2011

STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

Revenue	TOTAL: \$1,133,611
Individual Contributions.....	\$54,110
Grants	\$321,233
Special Events	\$45,359
Gov't Contract- Schirmer.....	\$683,359
Miscellaneous Income.....	\$6,360
Interest & Dividends.....	\$23,190



Expenses	TOTAL: \$1,251,176
Program Services.....	\$949,444
Administrative.....	\$238,366
Fundraising.....	\$63,366



Total Net Assets: \$904,879

THANK YOU 2010-2011 DONORS

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This Society is comprised of the Center's most elite giving circles. Admission is granted after a donor gives gifts totaling \$1,000 or more during a single fiscal year. Gifts are then considered cumulatively over a Transformation Society member's lifetime.

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SAVE THE DATE - MARCH 9, 2012

Beautiful Transformations: Celebrating 15 Years of Success!

Join us as we celebrate our 15th year in transforming the lives of women in the St. Louis area. The dinner and auction will take place at the Edward Jones Atrium (Manchester Rd. & 270) on Friday, March 9, 2012. The dinner will honor community members, clients, and volunteers who have given back to the women of the Center.



Don't miss this beautiful evening! Learn more at www.cwitstl.org.



Center for Women in Transition

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