

♀ ON OUR WAY

Newsletter of the Women's Center
46 Pleasant Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139

(617) 354-8807
TTY and VOICE

OCT '90



WOMEN'S SCHOOL

Many of you probably have had some connection with the Women's School. For nearly 20 years the School has offered women a connection to women's liberation through courses and workshops that are an alternative to traditional education. Are women still interested in sharing knowledge and having access to courses in a women-only space? The Women's School Collective is not sure that the community wants to keep the school going anymore, but we don't want to quietly go away without tossing up an emergency flare.

Women from the community came forward to offer classes and opportunities to discuss the politics of women's liberation, racism, women's health, women's history, class and feminism, the politics of lesbianism, women's literature, and marxism and feminism. Self-defense has been offered to empower women and provide a vehicle for discussing the nature of violence in our lives. At times in our history, we offered classes in Jamaica Plain and Dorchester as well as at the Women's Center in Cambridge.

The School made child-care available from the beginning as part of a political understanding of the needs of mothers and the desire to include all women. The cost of taking a class has been nominal. The costs of operating the school have been financed through donations and volunteer coordination and teaching.

From the beginning, women have volunteered to choose courses, pick teachers, put out the publicity and continue the tradition of working collectively, including discussions within the collective about power, class backgrounds, racism, ageism and anti-semitism. These issues were also addressed in the classes and workshops.

The present collective is feeling that the School has gotten a little bland and lost its radical bite. One of the most exciting things about the School has been the feeling of possibility that touched many of the women who came to take courses. Women would take a course one semester and teach it the next, which was revolutionary and completely undid the teacher/student dynamic. We haven't seen that happen in a while and attendance has dropped off as well.

We think the Women's School is unique and that we still need a women-only, non-traditional educational place. If you look around and notice that there's nothing like the Women's School and would like to keep it going, come to an open meeting October 17th at 7:30 at the Women's Center, 46 Pleasant Street, Cambridge.

The Women's School Collective

TWENTY YEARS AND GOING STRONG

The Women's Center's 20th birthday is fast approaching. We would like to plan a very special celebration to mark this event. But, we need your energy, thoughts, creative inspiration and commitment to do it. The event will be in March, 1991, commemorating the 10-day takeover of a Harvard-owned building at 888 Memorial Drive by women and the incorporation of The Women's Educational Center in March, 1971.

We need to form a celebration planning committee to start making plans and arrangements for the event. If the Center is or has been an important part of your life in the past twenty years, and you want to have a special day in her honor, please join the committee. The first meeting of the planning committee will be on Tuesday, November 20th at 7pm. Come pitch in and make it a great 20th birthday for the Center!

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

LESBIAN RAP

Mondays, 8-10pm

- Oct 1 Storytelling Session: Bring a poem or story to share
- 8 NO RAP: HOLIDAY
- 15 Children?
- 22 Lesbians in the Media
- 29 Michigan Women's Music Festival

BISEXUAL WOMEN'S RAP

Tuesdays, 7:30-9:30pm

- Oct 2 Sexual Harassment at Work
- 9 Being "Out": Personal or Political
- 16 Diversity in Our Community
- 23 Women's Spirituality
- 30 Halloween Party/Potluck

30+ LESBIAN RAP

Tuesdays, 7-8:30pm

- Oct 2 Age Differences & Relationships
- 9 Rap on the Rap
- 16 Obsessions
- 23 The Aging Lesbian
- 30 Lesbians & Politics

SEXUAL HARASSMENT AT WORK SUPPORT GROUP

1st & 3rd Tuesdays, 6:30-8pm

- Oct 2 Guest Speaker Louise Eckert, former director of the Div. of Sex and Age Discrimination at Mass. Comm. Against Discrim..
- Oct 9 Assertiveness Training with Louise Bonar (special meeting)
- Oct 16 Regular meeting, no special topic

SPECIAL EVENTS

Open Reading of Women's Work: Poetry, Short Stories, Journal Excerpts, etc.
Friday, October 12, 8:30-10:30pm.
Sponsor: The Women's Writing Group.

Women's School Community Meeting
Wednesday, October 17, 7:30-9:30pm
Come be a part of keeping the Women's School going!

20th Birthday Planning Committee
Tuesday, November 20, 7pm
Come plan a celebration for the Women's Center's 20th anniversary.

ONGOING GROUPS AT THE WOMEN'S CENTER

MONDAY

- Support for Battered Women.....7:30-9pm
- Women's NA 12 step.....7:30-9pm
- Lesbian Rap.....8-10pm
- Boston Bisexual Women's Network-Intro (1st Mon, even #'d months)...7:30-9:45pm
- All Center Meeting (biweekly).....6-8pm
- R2N2 (Reproductive Rights National Network).....7-9:45pm
- Lesbian Partners & Ex-Partners of Incest Survivors (1st & 3rd Mon.).....7-8:30pm
- Coming Out As Disabled (3rd Mon).7:30-9pm

TUESDAY

- Bisexual Women's Rap.....7:30-9:30pm
- 30+ Lesbian Rap.....7-8:30pm
- Other Mothers (2nd Tues., monthly)...7-9pm (lesbian non-biological co-parents)
- Sexual Harrassment at Work Support Group (1st, 3rd Tues.)6:30-8pm

WEDNESDAY

- Lesbian Al-Anon (childcare).....6:30-8pm
- Writing Support Group.....7:30-9:30pm
- Battered Women's Support Group (Weekly except 3rd Wed. of month)..7-8pm

THURSDAY

- Incest Survivors Discussion Group (weekly).....7:30-9:30pm (facilitated 3rd Thursday, Sept.-June)
- Women's Community Cancer Project (1st Thurs., monthly).....7-9pm
- Cancer Support Group (2nd & 4th Thurs monthly).....7-9pm
- Lesbians Choosing Children Network (2nd Thurs, monthly).....7:30-10pm

FRIDAY

- Birthmothers (1st,3rd Fri)..... 7-9:30pm
- Incest Survivors Anonymous.....6:30-8pm

SATURDAY

- Women's Writing Group (biweekly).....noon-2pm
- Open discussion on Coming Out for Women of All Ages(monthly, 1st Sat)...11am-1pm
- Support Group for Women with Chronic Illness (3rd Sat).....12-1:30pm

CANCER PROJECT

Feminists meet to discuss strategies for political action on cancer issues and to develop support and services for women who have cancer. Thurs., Oct. 4, 7-9pm.
For information call 354-9888.

WOMEN COMING OUT AS DISABLED

A new group is forming at the Center for women who are beginning to identify as disabled, including women with invisible disabilities and HIV-positive women. Toni Schiff and Alice Fisher have volunteered to facilitate the monthly group.

Toni Schiff, who has been blind for nine years, describes her first two years of visual impairment as a time she did not consider herself as disabled nor a part of the disability community. As her consciousness has grown, she feels she has become freer to be herself.

Alice Fisher is a life-long disabled person, who passed or had the illusion she was passing as not disabled. Her recent activism in the disability community has taught that being "Super-Crip" is not in her best interest after all.

Suggested topics for discussion will include: * Fear of being labeled;
* Is there a hierarchy of disability?;
* The difficulties of hidden disabilities;
* Asking for & learning to receive help;
* and other topics as suggested by the participants.

This drop-in group will meet on the third Monday of the month, 7:30-9:00 pm. The first meeting will be October 15th, and meetings will continue at least through April 1991. The meeting room is wheelchair accessible. If you are interested, drop in, or call Toni at 924-5380 or The Project on Women and Disability at 277-5617. Please give us advance notice if you require an ASL interpreter.

DROP-IN DISCUSSION GROUPS FOR WOMEN WHO HAVE BEEN RAPED

At the Boston Area Rape Crisis Center, 99 Bishop Allen Drive, Cambridge. (One block from Central Square, on the corner of Essex Street and Bishop Allen Drive)

Thursday, October 4thTrust
Monday, October 15thTaking Risks
Thursday, November 1stRelationships
Monday, November 19thSelf-Image
Thursday, December 6thFear & Safety
Monday, December 17th .Keeping It Together
Thursday, January 3rdAnger

Open to all women who are rape survivors. You are welcome to come and participate or simply listen. For more information on these or other groups call 492-RAPE.

MOTHER'S SUPPORT

On Friday, October 26, a new mothers support group will begin at the Center. This group will be a guided support group for mothers who have to contend with difficulties such as being poor, single, young, having emotional problems, or recovering from drug or alcohol abuse. An important focus of the group will be on how to take care of ourselves. This often feels impossible as we try to take care of our children and cope with other pressures. In the group, we will have the opportunity to focus on our own needs, talk about difficulties with other women who understand, and celebrate our achievements. Laura Laster from New Wings Psychotherapy has volunteered to lead this group. Laura is a mother who has written articles for Boston Parents Magazine. Another mother will co-lead the group with Laura.

The group will meet on Fridays from 11am-12:30pm. Child care and lunch will be provided for the children. The group will run for 6 weeks. If the participants are interested, there might be some additional meetings.

There is no charge for this group. However, because the number of women in the group is limited, participants must pre-register. If you are interested, call 354-8807 and leave your name and number with Alice. The facilitator will call you back with information about the group. If you know of someone who might want such a group, please let them know about it.

GROUP SCOOP

What are you getting into when you come to The Women's Center to attend a group? Each group is different, and group members (or facilitators) decide how to conduct their group.

This summer, Anne-Marie Kim, a work study student from Harvard, interviewed participants from 25 groups that meet at the Center and wrote descriptions of the groups based on those interviews.

So, now you can get the inside story! How does the Women's Writing Group differ from the Writer's Support Group? How do the two Battered Women's Support Groups compare? If you are coming out, will you feel welcome at the Lesbian or Bisexual Raps, or only at the Open Discussion on Coming Out? Is R2N2 for you?

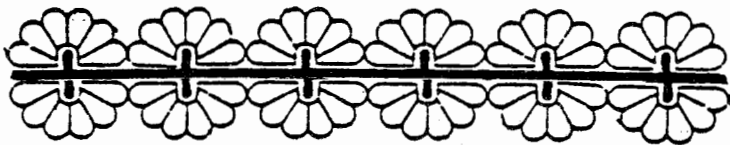
Excerpts of some of this information will be found in this and later newsletters. Feel free to call us for the lowdown on any of our groups!

ISN SEEKS NEW MEMBERS

Incest Survivors Network (ISN) urgently needs new members. We are an all-survivor organization which has been in existence for two years. During this time we have facilitated drop-in discussion groups on a monthly basis, maintained a resource book, organized a rally and a major demonstration, and spoken publicly to numerous audiences. Since its founding, many collective members have left the organization for personal reasons. If the organization is to continue thriving, new energy is needed.

Women are needed to facilitate the discussion groups and to maintain the resource book. And if you have an idea for a project which would benefit incest survivors, think about joining ISN and developing your ideas with others.

If you are interested in facilitating the monthly drop-in discussion group (no experience necessary), don't wait, call now -- there will be a facilitator training in mid-October!



FLOUNDERING GROUPS

Groups sometimes lose energy, motivation, and attendance after a while. The women who originally started or attended the group may lose interest, become too busy or just move on to other issues in their lives. Periodically, you will see pleas for help from floundering groups in the newsletter. Other times, we aren't really aware that something is wrong until a newcomer arrives for a group and finds an empty room. A couple of groups are suffering from low attendance and low energy right now: the Cancer Support Group and Lesbians Choosing Children Network. As discussed in an accompanying article, Incest Survivors Network also needs more people. If you are interested in raising the energy level of any of these groups, please attend a meeting, or call and leave a message for the group contact person. Three other groups have stopped meeting all together: Women for Sobriety, Healing Through Art and Lesbian Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse. If there is anyone out there interested in reviving these groups, we need a serious commitment to attend every scheduled meeting and to be a facilitator or group contact person. Please call the Center and speak to Judy if you are interested.

>> GROUP SPOTLIGHT << WRITING*WRITERS*WRITE

There are currently two groups for women writers at the Center. One group is for women of all levels of writing experience and does writing exercises on specific subjects at each meeting. The other group focuses on active writers striving to publish who read their work and receive feedback, but also welcomes beginners. We hope the descriptions of each group below will inspire you to dust off your pens & pencils and join in.

WOMEN'S WRITING GROUP

Come Saturday morning, we'll gather at the Women's Center to inflame passions, share visions and be transported to other worlds. It's the Women's Writing Group and it's hot.

The Women's Writing Group meets every other Saturday from noon-2pm. If you come, bring paper and writing utensil. Everyone writes together on a topic chosen by group members. After the writing exercises, members have the opportunity to share what they've written and receive feedback. A unique feature of this group is that only positive feedback is given.

Beginners and all others are welcome. Some women who attend the group have been published, others have not; some have attended for years and there are always newcomers. Any genre is acceptable: journal writing, free form, poetry, non-fiction, essays, etc. There is a wide range of writing styles.

Because so much excellent writing comes out of the group, there will be an Open Reading on Friday, October 12 from 8:30-10:30pm which is being sponsored by the group. Anyone can come and read short pieces. Food will be available at intermission. The writing group is considering putting together an anthology of their work and this public reading is a first step in that direction.

WRITING SUPPORT GROUP

The Writing Support Group saw many new faces this summer, from far away (England, California, New Orleans) as well as nearby. We are looking for writers interested in sending out their work for publication, although beginners can also benefit from the discussions. Your work, whether poetry, fiction or drama, will receive a respectful hearing. We welcome all women to our international salon. We meet each Wednesday, 7:30-9:30pm.



INCEST SURVIVORS' GROUPS

Many people think that therapy is 'the way' to overcome the negative effects of incest. But many survivors attend support groups, either in conjunction with or instead of therapy. Listening and talking to other survivors in support groups can be extremely helpful. Support groups can help to lessen feelings of isolation and shame and infuse us with a sense of our community, resilience and courage.

There are several groups for incest survivors at the Women's Center. Some things are common to all of the incest survivor groups. Anyone who was sexually abused as a child by a family member, family friend, teacher, doctor, minister, or anyone else who was a part of your life, is welcome to attend. You do not need to have clear memories of the abuse. The abuse may or may not have included touching. You do not need to worry that your abuse seemed too insignificant, or too terrible. Women with a very wide range of experiences attend the groups. Confidentiality is respected in all the groups. No one has to speak unless she wants to. Anyone can leave the groups at any time. No record is kept of who attends any of the groups. Like other groups here, the support groups for incest survivors are free of charge.

The groups at the Women's Center differ from one another. The following descriptions are to help you decide which group to attend. However, each person's reaction to a particular group will be different. It depends on your needs, personality, what you are looking for in a group. Checking out different groups by attending a meeting may be the most effective way to find the best one for you.

* Open Discussion for Incest Survivors (Structured) * Thursdays (except the third Thursday of the month), 7:30-9:30pm

This group has some guidelines. A member says what she wants, and other do not respond to her with advice or other reactions. Participants limit the time they speak to a few minutes, so there is time for everyone who wants to speak. There are usually several newcomers. The ages range from 19 to 60's. Attendance ranges from 11 (in a snowstorm) to 30 women.

* Open Discussion for Incest Survivors (Unstructured) * Thursdays, 7:30-9:30pm

This group does not have guidelines, and has a more informal atmosphere. Women do respond to each other, giving accounts of similar experiences, suggestions, or other feedback. It is usually quite a bit smaller than the 'structured' group.

* Facilitated Open Discussion for Incest Survivors * Third Thursday, 7:30-9:15pm

These groups are big, taking up two large rooms. There is a topic, which has been chosen previously and advertised. The facilitators open up the meeting, by stating guidelines (accepting differences, maintaining confidentiality, suggested 3-minute time limit) and then talking a bit about the topic. Then participants talk about their thoughts or experiences. Near the end of the group, a facilitator will suggest that those who have not yet spoken do so, if they want to. Anyone can leave at any time. (If someone is upset, she can request that a facilitator leave the room with her and talk to her outside.)

* Incest Survivors Anonymous * Friday, 6:30-8pm. This is a 12-step group modeled after AA. Survivors of incest are welcome, and women pro-survivors (lovers, friends, non-abusing parents). The meeting opens with a reading of the 12 steps, and other member-written literature. There are ground rules for discussion: no responses to the comments of others, no judgements, 3-5 minute time limit. Each meeting focuses on a particular step. Participants share thoughts, feelings and experiences, which may be related to the step, or may be about anything they choose. Attendance fluctuates between 9 and 30 women.



CENTER HOURS

Monday - Thursday 10am - 10pm
Friday 10am - 8pm
Saturday 11am - 2pm

THE WOMEN'S EDUCATIONAL CENTER, INC.
46 Pleasant Street
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139


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FUNDRAISING REPORT

Even though the Women's Center receives no government funding, we too have been significantly impacted by the state fiscal crisis. Many of the programs which have had budgets cut turned to foundations and corporations for support. Thus, the competition for funds dramatically increased. Several foundations and corporations which usually fund the Women's Center declined this year and wrote things like: "Due to the state fiscal crisis, the number of requests submitted to the Foundation has more than doubled;" "We wish we could fund all groups that come our way -- more than 1,000 this year -- but we simply cannot;" "It's wonderful to read your well-written grant proposals . . . Unfortunately, the trustees have voted not to continue support this year, primarily because of the overwhelming number of requests in the last few months."

In this last fiscal year, which ran from July 1, 1988 - June 30, 1989, the Women's Center received \$23,455 from foundations and corporations and \$10,837 from individual donations, totaling \$34,292. Our total operating expenses were \$35,059.

In comparison with the previous fiscal year, there was a significant decrease of foundation/corporation funding: in FY 88-89, we received \$41,535 compared to the \$23,455 in FY 89-90. On the brighter side, individual donations increased \$2,740, from \$8,097 in FY 88-89 to \$10,837 in FY 89-90.

Since the fiscal crisis in Massachusetts shows no signs of abating, the Women's Center will have to raise more money from individuals in the upcoming year. Last fiscal year, we received 193 contributions from the 1,424 individuals on our mailing list, a response rate of 13.5%. This is our Women's Center. It needs the support of each of us. All donations, large and small are appreciated and NEEDED. Thank you to all who have given. Please continue supporting the work of the Women's Center and, if you can, increase your donation. If you haven't given to the Women's Center yet, now is a fine time to demonstrate that you're glad that this Women's Center exists!

Yes - I want to help the Center. Here is my tax-deductible contribution.

\$10 \$25 \$50 \$100 other _____

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY/STATE/ZIP: _____

We sometimes give our mailing list to other groups for special mailings of interest to women. Please check below if you do not want to receive these mailings.

____ Please do not give out my name to other organizations.