



ON OUR WAY

Newsletter of the Women's Center
46 Pleasant Street, Cambridge, MA 02139
(617) 354-8807 ~ www.cambridgewomenscenter.org

Spring 2013

The ♀'s Center Factors

Since January 2010, the International Herald Tribune has been running a pivotal series called "The Female Factor," which examines the role of women in this century. Amidst inspirational reporting about women entrepreneurs defying Afghani traditions, leading Liberian peacekeeping efforts, or redefining U.S. soccer playing fields, women's achievements are always tempered by the soon to follow article on sexual harassment, discrimination or violence relentlessly perpetrated against females globally. A recent multi-country WHO study found that "up to 70 percent of women aged 15-49 years report having experienced physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner at some point in their lives."

The United States is no less prone to gender-based violence. It took over a year and a half for Congress to pass the "Violence Against Women Act"; women soldiers are more likely to be sexually assaulted than killed in combat; 1 in 3 girls are abused by age 18; and child sexual abuse impacts more Americans each year than cancer, AIDS, gun violence, LGBT inequality, and the mortgage crisis combined.

At the Women's Center, we've long understood the demoralizing effects of sexual violence and from our early days have been leading the struggle to help female victims receive the support, resources and environment they need to heal. We are a community where women are empowered to address their circumstances, reclaim their bodies and identities, and help other women do the same.

Women's Center Factors are...

Women who've experienced abuse or been marginalized have the understanding, empathy and wisdom to bring about the changes they need for themselves and their children.

Change is a growth process. We are committed to be there throughout a woman's journey for as long as needed.

Every woman's path is unique. We honor all women and their process toward wellness— whether that requires a massage, compassionate listening or a support group.

Healing is holistic...encompassing resources, counseling, right relationships, stress free environments, creativity, self expression, and strength.

Women will be powerful agents to mend our broken world.

For over 40 years, women have used our Center as a beacon through storms, a sanctuary for creativity, and a force for activism. Here they are heard and accepted and determine the services that make sense for them. Monthly, we offer up to 60 program activities—from beading to discussions; health consultations to computer training. In addition, 55-hours per week our helpline and communal kitchen are open.

We are leaders in using art therapeutically to assist in recovery. This spring, our Survivor Theatre Project presented several short plays as part of the City of Cambridge's 21 Days of Questions, 365 Days of Action; our Survivor Quilts were displayed at Lesley University; and women who participate in our arts and crafts classes exhibited and sold their work at the City HeArt Show and Sale at Prudential Center on May 4th. It is joyous, challenging and gratifying to be part of such a diverse, resilient and creative community.

The greatest factor at the Women's Center is the generosity of spirit and resources that our loyal supporters provide. Annually, over 130 of you volunteer your time and labor to help out and even more of you provide much needed income through donations. We ask that you continue to give to our worthy work this spring! With your support, the Center will continue to evolve, touch and transform lives, and be a factor in this century until sexual violence and gender inequality end.

CONTENTS

- The Women's Center Factors—p.1
- Welcome, Soul!—p. 2
- Susan Loomis, new member of the Board of Trustees—p. 2
- Re-ignite the Feminist Flame—p. 3
- Survivor Theatre Project Award—p. 3
- Well deserved, Elaine!—p. 3
- Hello from Soul—p. 3
- Groups Schedule—p.4
- ButchBoi Life —p. 4
- Emotional Empowerment Group—p. 4
- If There Was One Change that Would Improve my Health—p. 5
- You Are a Woman (poem)—p. 5
- Volunteer Corner—p. 5
- Support the Center Info/Donation Slip—p. 6
- The Back Yard & Garden—p. 6
- Wish List—p. 6

~Soul
Fundraiser

The Women's Center

46 Pleasant Street
Cambridge, MA 02139
(617) 354-8807

Website:

www.cambridgewomenscenter.org

**What's up at the Women's
Center?**

**Check out our monthly calendar
on the website.**

Email:

info@cambridgewomenscenter.org

Hours:

Monday-Friday: 10am-8pm

Saturday: 10am-3pm

**We are closed on major
holidays.**

Helpline: (617) 354-8807

Business line: (617) 354-6394

Volunteers

The Women's Center gratefully acknowledges the ongoing efforts and contributions of our volunteers.

Thank you for giving so generously of your time and of yourselves.

The Women's Center relies on the generosity of the community to provide a wealth of free programming.

All donations are tax-deductible.

For further information about various volunteer opportunities or to offer in-kind donations,

contact Ming,

Women's Center Coordinator:

ming@cambridgewomenscenter.org

(617) 354-6394

Welcome, Soul!

A warm welcome to Soul Brown, who began working as our fundraiser on January 7, 2013. She also directs the outstanding youth literacy program Books of Hope, where she has been able to attract new funders to the program and increase its annual budget 300%, allowing the program to expand its hours of operation, hire additional teachers, provide jobs to youth, and increase the number of constituents served. *"Over ten years ago, I made a critical shift in my career and committed to working with antiracism and anti-oppression organizations and groups focused on empowering the lives of low income families, people of color, women, youth and others who are marginalized in society."*

Since that time Soul has written successful grant proposals to private foundations, contributed to state and national government grant proposals, conducted research and helped organizations identify potential new funders and establish new funding relationships, including some multi-year support. Soul also has experience on the grant making side so she knows what funders are looking for! She has served as a site visitor for the Massachusetts Cultural Council, as a member of the Boston Cultural Council, and as a founding member of a media giving circle with Haymarket People's Fund. She has done nonprofit program management as well, especially for arts and social justice organizations.

Most recently, she was selected as a Diversity Fellow of the Association for Fundraising Professionals, a professional organization for those working in areas of charitable giving. She is an amazing, articulate, dedicated woman. You can see why we are excited that Soul is here – we don't doubt for a minute that she will be a force, helping increase the Women's Center's budget, scope, and stability.

Susan Loomis, New Board Member

My involvement as a community volunteer in the Boston area launched in January 2008 when I stumbled across the "Women of Vision Exhibit" at the Brighton-Allston Heritage Museum at the Veronica Smith Senior Center in Brighton. As a Master's Degree student in Interdisciplinary Studies at Lesley University in my last semester, I asked the curator about being involved in any capacity and then conducted research for the exhibit and overall Brighton-Allston Historical Society, which oversees the Heritage Museum. I joined the Board of Directors of the Historical Society in May 2008. I am also a founding member of a new visual arts non-profit called Unbound Visual Arts, which strives to expose the Brighton/Allston community to the creativity and talent of local visual artists.

After volunteering at the annual City HeArt art show and sale in April 2012, an artist/educator/activist friend referred me to the Women's Center for a possible Board position. I accepted a Board of Trustees position in October of 2012. It is an honor to be involved in an organization that supports the vision of women in terms of feminist studies and social activism. The experience I have achieved academically and professionally has led me to this Board position.

I currently serve as the Assistant to the VP of Administration and Budget Coordinator at Lesley University. Also, as a newly accepted doctoral student in the PhD in Educational Studies program at Lesley University, I aspire to explore the inclusion and appreciation of visual arts in the public sector by demonstrating the healing, self-confidence shaping, and aesthetic appreciation these arts can bestow on a community. My personal goals have been inspired by an academic background of interdisciplinary study and an extreme appreciation of art-making. I believe that promoting the creation, value, critique and appreciation of art will further the accessibility of visual arts in all communities.

~Susan Loomis

Re-ignite the Feminist Flame

Let's face it, sisters, life gets in the way. It gets in the way of relaxing, vacations, traveling. It gets in the way of staying connected to old friends, and in the way of making new ones. It gets in the way of creating and meeting goals. It gets in the way of PASSION and DEDICATION. We're all guilty of it.

When the Women's Center opened in 1972, women were so grateful to have a place of their own they sparked a movement in Cambridge and the greater Boston area. This movement swept through the streets as more and more women realized their desperate need for resources, support, and a community to help them fight. From this, incredible organizations were formed - many of which are still helping women today - from the Boston Area Rape Crisis Center, to Incest Resources, to the Women's Community Cancer Project, to the Survivor Theatre Project.

Over the decades many women's groups, along with the Women's Center, have noticed a growing complacency and lack of dedication to change and we feel it's time for a refreshing surge of energy! The notion that women are "better off" than we were 20, 30, 40 years ago has spread through our country like a plague, but we're a group of women who refuse to believe "better off" is the best we can hope for.

The Community Outreach Project at the Women's Center is an attempt at re-igniting the feminist flame. Our mission is to reach, grow, and maintain our diverse and supportive community of women - something denied to most of us by our patriarchal society and the belief of "natural competition" among women. We want the Women's Center to expand as a society that hears our sister's calls and answers with fervent commitment and allegiance by increasing our connections with local organizations and with individuals and businesses in the community. As the Community Outreach Project attempts to re-ignite the feminist flame, together we can utilize the old "strength in numbers" mentality that has gotten women this far. Instead of silencing ourselves, we challenge you to show our grandmothers, mothers, sisters, and friends their problems are OUR problems too.

So, consider this your Call to Action. WE NEED YOUR HELP! Help in the form of starting and promoting groups, advertising the center, managing our social media, contributing to our blog and YouTube channel, creating and organizing events, and a number of other things that will add a new dynamic dimension to the Women's Center. Whatever your passion may be - activism, social service, relationship building, teaching, learning, athletics, art, crafts, meditation, cooking, science, and technology - we have space for you and a strong desire for your talents.

The fight isn't over. We can't stop until women are finally (actually) equal and, even when we are; we will always need a place of our own to join in friendship and unity. It's time for us to put passion and dedication back on the table and organize ourselves to help this incredible women's community center continue to grow and break barriers like our foremothers. Please contact us at twc.communityoutreachproject@gmail.com

Oh - if you get a moment or you're lacking inspiration, check out some newsletters from the 70s. They're raw and totally rad.

~In Solidarity, Stephanie Martin

Survivor Theatre Project Receives Award

Survivor Theatre Project (STP) was chosen as a recipient of the 2013 Violence Transformed Performing Arts Award. Mary Harvey, Director of Violence Transformed, presented the award to Melissa Redwin, founder of STP, in a ceremony at the State House on April 23rd. When Dr. Harvey initially informed STP of this honor, she wrote that the award "represent[s] our regard and respect for the work you do and our appreciation for your outstanding participation in this year's Violence Transformed events." Survivor Theatre Project, an arts opportunity for survivors of sexual violence, began in 2008 with the support of the Women's Center and Incest Resources and continues its invaluable collaboration with them today.

Well-Deserved, Elaine!

Elaine Westerlund, Co-founder and Director of Incest Resources and a volunteer at the Women's Center for 33 years, was honored with an award from the Cambridge Senior Volunteer Clearinghouse as an outstanding senior who dedicates her time and talents in a volunteer capacity. We are so grateful to Elaine for starting survivor services at the Center in 1980; facilitating the Drop-In Discussion Group for Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse, now going into its 30th year; being involved in the development of the survivor newsletter, *For Crying Out Loud*, the Deaf Women's Counseling Project, the Survivor Quilt Project, and the Survivor Theatre Project; serving as an interim member of the Board of Trustees during a very critical time; and serving as a half-time fundraiser for the Center for over five very challenging years. All of us at the Center feel very lucky to know Elaine and are so appreciative of the many things she has done, and continues to do, both for the Women's Center and for survivors of childhood sexual abuse.

Hello from Soul

Hi, my name is Soul and as you've learned, I'm the new fundraiser at the Women's Center and surprisingly, I kind of like asking people for money! This has not always been the case—that I'm a fundraiser or felt passionately about requesting monetary support for important work like that which happens here. My background is in arts, media and education with an emphasis on amplifying rarely heard voices of community members—youth, people of color, the poor, women, elders, immigrants and others who are often disregarded or spoken for by mainstream society. Besides working here, I direct a creative writing and spoken word program for youth that's based in Somerville. I want to simply say thank you for opening up your doors to me. Thanks to the Board, Judy, Ming and everyone—from the Center's founders, to those who use its services, to those who give their time, talents and treasures to keep it going. I have much to learn from all of you and look forward to our connecting!

~Soul

ButchBoi Life

When my co-founder Alyssa and I decided to form ButchBoi Life, we wanted to create a safe space for masculine-identified queer women to meet, share their experiences, make friends, and find a network of supportive peers. One of our biggest challenges was finding a physical space for all this to occur. We needed somewhere that was accessible, yet private, while also being open and welcoming to all. We've found that ideal space here at the Women's Center.

Twice a month, people from all walks of life, races, creeds, ages, and backgrounds come together in the Center to discuss a variety of topics that affect butches, studs, bois, and all flavors of masculine queer women. We've covered everything from coming out and dealing with family rejection to dating, sexual health, and the way media influences our lives.

Time and again, our group members have expressed how comfortable they feel meeting amongst the comfy couches and pleasant décor of the Center's living room. The physical environment really does encourage people to relax, have fun, and open up to one another. I can say with complete certainty that ButchBoi Life would not be where we are today as an organization without the Women's Center.

~Bren Cole, ButchBoi Life Co-founder

Women's Emotional Empowerment Group

The group is about letting ALL women be able to speak freely about what empowers them. The group was created by Carole who currently volunteers at the Women's Center, and I am the co-facilitator. But, everyone really is their own facilitator. The group is a safe space to talk about how we can empower ourselves after or during very traumatic times. If you have questions or would like to know more about the group, contact Carole at kbreevlife@gmail.com

~Christina

Incest Resources' Drop-In Discussion Group for Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse

3rd Fridays, 6-7:30pm, September—June

Upcoming Topic:

Friday, June 21 Moving Forward

Please come on time! No one will be admitted after 6:15pm so that the group process will not be disrupted. Thank you!

Find us on Facebook

Follow us on Twitter!

The Women's Center is on the hottest social media! You can find us by going to www.cambridgewomenscenter.org and clicking on the facebook and twitter logos.

Women's Center Hours:

Monday-Friday: 10am-8pm

Saturday: 10am-3pm

We are closed on major holidays.

On-Going Groups

- ♦ Beading Group (every Monday, 10am-12pm)
- ♦ Board of Trustees Meeting (monthly, 5:30-7pm)
- ♦ ButchBoi Life (2nd Tues., 6-7:30pm, & 4th Sat., 3-4:30pm)*
- ♦ Crochet/Knitting Group (every Thursday, 1-2pm)
- ♦ Drawing & Painting (every Tuesday, 10am-12pm)
- ♦ Come On Out (1st Mondays, 7:30-8:30pm)
- ♦ Drop-In Computer Support for Women (Weds, 6-8pm)*
- ♦ Emotional Empowerment Group (1st and 3rd Wed, 6-7pm)
- ♦ Incest Resources' Drop-In Discussion Group for Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse, (3rd Fridays, 6-7:30pm, September through June. No-one admitted after 6:15pm)
- ♦ Ladies, Let's Talk About It—Women's Narcotics Anonymous (NA) Meeting (every Thursday, 6:30-8pm)*
- ♦ Lesbian Conversation (1st Fridays, 6:30-8pm)*
- ♦ Lesbian Chat (2nd Fridays, 6:30-8pm)*
- ♦ Lesbian Connection (3rd Fridays, 6:30-8pm)*
- ♦ Luncheon at the Women's Center, noon-1pm, monthly
- ♦ One-on-One Computer Tutoring (12-3pm, 2nd Fridays)
- ♦ One-on-One with Nurse Pat (4th Thursdays, 12:30-1:30pm)
- ♦ Reiki Sessions (2nd Fridays, 11am-2pm. Must sign up)
- ♦ Sewing Group (every Wednesday, 10am-12pm)
- ♦ Straight Marriage, Still Questioning. For women in straight relationships struggling with their sexual orientation. For details, kate.e.flynn@gmail.com*
- ♦ Theatre Arts Workshops (one Saturday/month, 1-3pm. Must sign-up: 617-354-8807 or 617-354-6394.)
- ♦ Women and Media (3rd Tuesdays, 7-8:30pm)
- ♦ Women's Health with Nurse Sonia (Weds, 10:30-11:30am*)
- ♦ Women's Wellness Group (Thursdays, 1.30 - 2.30 pm)♦

Other Groups/Workshops

- ♦ Gentle Yoga for Healing and Empowerment (every Tuesday in June, 4-5:15pm)..Come be guided through a gentle and nourishing practice with tools and a sense of ease that you can take home with you. Info: [Sara, sarastar4@gmail.com](mailto:Sara_sarastar4@gmail.com)
- ♦ Workshop: Women on the Screen. Wed, 6/19, 3-4pm, or Tue, 6/25, 6:30-7:30pm, Watch short clips from movies, TV shows, ads, music videos and talk about the image of women on the screen! Info/sign up: ysmn.koc@gmail.com
- ♦ *<Special Event> Responding to Street Harassment and Gender-Based Violence. Wed., 6/26, 1-2:30pm. Learn about street harassment, how to safely respond, get tips for bystander intervention. Info: boston.ihollaback.org
- * Monday cooking! 1-2:30pm, 6/10 & 24. Let's make and eat lunch together! If you like cooking and if you'd like to cook with others (up to 5) as a team, sign up in advance! Info/ sign-up ysmn.koc@gmail.com and 617 354 6394.
- ♦ *Why Partners Abuse: This is for women who are seeking information about why their partners abuse them physically, mentally and emotionally. For more detailed information, please contact Jane at j061511986@gmail.com
- ♦ Drumming with the Batucada Belles (TBA) *
- ♦ Fem(s)ex— 12-week summer workshop series on female sexuality. Info/sign-up: femsexbos@gmail.com

For the most complete and detailed calendar, please go to our website at www.cambridgewomenscenter.org

* Wheelchair accessible groups; other groups accessible by pre-arrangement

If there was one change to make in my life to improve my health, what would it be?

The Cambridge Women's Center strengthens our community by strengthening the women of our community. As a nurse practitioner I am interested in ways to strengthen women by improving health and wellbeing. I visit the Women's Center monthly and appreciate the chance to share in the community. The other day a woman asked me "if there was one change to make in my life to improve my health, what would it be?"

There are many ways to answer this question. Research has shown some surprising things about what makes us healthy. Being in a community or group has been found to increase wellbeing and health. So keep coming to the Women's Center, join an activity or group, help cook lunch, reach out to someone in need. Having contact with nature and with pets improves our health. Plant a garden, walk outside, look at the trees, care for an animal. Eating well, mostly fruits and vegetables, and cutting out sugar can lengthen and improve life. There is always the challenge of finding a way to stop smoking with the double benefit of saving money and improving health. All of these things make a difference.

But probably the most important thing a woman can do is exercise. There is more and more evidence that exercise helps much of what ails us these days. Studies have shown that exercise decreases stress, helps reduce depression and anxiety, is essential to weight loss, increases happiness, reduces fatigue, and even improves memory. Exercise is good for heart health, blood pressure control, and cuts the risk of cancer and diabetes. It makes bones stronger, prevents falls, and improves the immune system.

Exercise can be enjoyable and social. One of the best ways to start is by walking.

As the weather turns warmer we are planning to begin a walking group, followed by a healthy snack. Call 617-354-8807 for more information.

If you are looking for a good website and program go to Sparkpeople.com and sign up for free tips.

~Pat Maher ANP BC
Nurse Practitioner, Cambridge Health Alliance

You are a Woman

You live with broken locks, stone thrown windows, and consistently crashing walls,

Security and privacy is a foreign friend you greet with apprehension and intrigue.

You know that hunger does not mean growling stomachs but silenced ones.

You have reason to shut down, to function in a closed off world; a reality different from smiling faces and warm bodies around you.

People are symbols of your destruction, who load your gun and trigger you without intent of shooting.

Words which usually comfort, assault you.

You are plentiful in pain and friendly when you gain.

You are sure of the bad guys and comfortable with blame. You are black and white.

You vent like a freight train and your truth rises as steam does, horn blowing as the town wakes up.

You are ready to ask, resourceful, life affirming.

You are emerging from the past, rising from shattered glass, calling for help, reaching out, pointing to what is forgotten about, conversing to figure it out.

You are emotionally connected, community respecting.

You are a survivor, a chef, a comedian, a satirist, a peace offering.

You are a belly laugh, an embrace, a reciprocator, an artist.

You are a brave cup-half full drink the water and don't let it spill resilient woman.

You are a woman.

~Caryn B. Oppenheim

Volunteer Corner

When I open the door to the Women's Center after crunching through the snow on a cold day, I am enveloped by warmth, gentle chatter and the smell of coffee wafting through the air. This is what the Women's Center is, in a nutshell: a place where women feel accepted and know that they are not alone.

As a computer volunteer, I have seen how powerful the Internet can be, especially to women with few resources at hand. When I show a woman how to navigate the Internet, use email and search engines, fill out applications— it gives them confidence to explore possibilities. I have seen women use this to transform their lives – regain contact with a friend, find resources, secure jobs, and more.

Volunteering on the helpline showed me that though we come from various backgrounds, we all have the same concerns and face similar challenges. As I listen to women's stories and offer my support, I applaud the incredible courage, determination, and strength they have shown in changing their lives. We just give them a shoulder to lean on.

The Women's Center is not just about advocating women's rights, fighting abuse and overcoming addiction. It is also about finding a safe space to be yourself, discuss everyday issues over coffee, spend quiet time with a computer, have conversations while knitting...

As a volunteer, I am keenly aware that the Women's Center is by women, of women, and for women. It is a place where we support and empower each other, and in doing so strengthen the community. Seeing the way the center has impacted lives is uplifting and touching, and I am happy to have been a small part of it. I discovered that in helping women empower themselves, I have empowered myself as well.

~Pannaga

