



Newsletter

The Women of the Well - the name is compelling. A well is the centerpiece of the village. It belongs to the whole community. All share equally in it. Water is essential to life.

When it is scarce, human life and the community are threatened.... Will you come with us to the well? After all, it is your well too.

On behalf of The Women of the Well, I welcome you to our "well", and our first official newsletter. Since our beginning in 2003, this collaborative effort has gone through a metamorphosis not unlike a butterfly who starts as a simple caterpillar and becomes a beautiful, intricate creature in a short period of time. As individual organizations, we crawled like a toddler trying to form the simple steps of walking, falling, running, and skinning our knees. We met at our well (a table) sharing stories, trials, successes, comparing notes, and asking each other for help. During this time, the Incarnate Word Foundation and Mary's Pence acted as our parents, and through their generosity and that of other foundations, organizations, and donors, we grew. They gently nudged us, encouraged us, and shared with us their wisdom. And, during this time, like an adolescent, we struggled with keeping our individual identities, finding out how to share with our peers, and still work together toward the same goals.

We have elected a board of directors; have elected officers, formed development, program and executive committees, and have "gone on the road" to the greater community with speakers and a slide show to promote all of our work. (See box below) In December 2005, we participated in a board retreat at Mercy Center and re-evaluated our mission, vision and planned the year ahead. This year promises to be a wonderful year for the members of The Women of the Well, and especially for those men, women, and children - the families that are benefiting from the service of the staff, volunteers, and boards of the members of this collaborative effort.

In addition, we are planning our 2nd Annual Leadership



Jackie Toben being congratulated by Nina Bryans and Jane Lammers for receiving the Women of Achievement Award from the Archdiocese of St. Louis

Luncheon to honor those who work with, or on behalf of, women and children. Our Call for Nominees has been sent to over 600 groups and individuals, and also is available on our website along with copies of the Nomination form at www.thewomenofthewell.org.

The following pages include information about each organization. We believe that this is only the beginning of great things, and we ask that you keep us in your prayers. If you are interested in helping, let us know.

Sincerely,
Marilynn Wittenauer, RSM
On behalf of The Women of the Well

Told that most North American women pipe water into their homes, a Nigerian Woman grew somber:

*"How do the women speak to one another?
If I didn't talk with the women at the village well,
I wouldn't know about their lives.*

The Women of the Well Speakers Bureau:

We have a short presentation and speakers who will come to tell you the stories of our families and our missions. If you would like us to come to your office, church group or organization, please contact Alice Lancaster at 314-780-7606, or through our website at www.thewomenofthewell.org.



"Marilynn Wittenauer of English Tutoring display at a recent LCWR conference"

English Tutoring Project

Thanks to the teachers in the English Tutoring Project, immigrant and refugee children in three south St. Louis Catholic elementary schools are quickly learning the language of their new country. The project's individualized approach helps the children improve their English so that they lose as little time as possible in functioning independently in the classroom. Because the sister-tutors meet almost daily with their students, they are able to reinforce what the children learn in their regular classrooms.

The project serves about 65 children a year from a number of countries. Tutoring sessions are conducted in mobile classrooms in two vans. The English Tutoring Project provides its services at no cost.

For more information call 314-603-0161

Rio Abajo

"You are the resurrection for us!" The people of Rio Abajo, a remote village, in the Limay Valley in Nicaragua greeted four women from the Sister City Project (St. Louis is Rio Abajo's sister city) with these words of gratitude in Spring 1999. Since then, the project has built 42 homes and a community center in the devastated area. It has begun a women's collective for pottery, sewing, and massage; drilled wells; brought electricity to each household; and installed a water spigot between every two houses. Having met essential shelter needs, the project is working to develop sustainable work, health care, and education.

For more information call 314-721-2977

Let's Start Inc.

Building a successful life can be an overwhelming challenge for women returning to society from prison. Let's Start is helping women make the transition. The core component of the process consists of weekly group support sessions. About 30 women typically attend each meeting to discuss topics such as relationships, relapse prevention, employment problems, and child care. During the

meetings, the women's children go to the Learning Club, where volunteers give tutoring and arts and crafts sessions. What sets Let's Start apart from other organizations is the participants' active role. The women themselves facilitate the support groups and make presentations to community groups about criminal justice issues.

Group Session every Tuesday from 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.,

St. Vincent's Church
 July 15 - Luncheon, noon to 2:30, St. Vincent's Church
 Sept. 9 - Let's Start the Music at COCA - Center of Creative Arts featuring the music of Denise Thimes
 For more information call 314-231-9328

Center for Women in Transition

The Center for Women in Transition was founded in 1997 with the goal of helping released nonviolent offenders avoid relapsing into their previous lifestyles. The center's mentoring program is a key element in its success. About 150 volunteer mentors work one-on-one with women before and after their release from jail or prison. About 60 women are participating in the program at any given time. The recidivism rate for women completing the one-year program is only 9 percent, compared to the national rate of 68 percent to 73 percent.

July 15 - Mentor, Mentee & Family Picnic at Springdale Pool

July 23 - Franklin County Golf Tournament

September 8-10 - Music Fest

September 10 - Lutheran Foundation Matching Donation Event

For more information call 314-771-5207

Immigrant and Refugee Women's Program

Women who arrive in St. Louis as immigrants and refugees often face serious barriers to participating in the life of their new community. They speak little English and are isolated in their homes, far from a familiar culture and the support of family members. The Immigrant and Refugee Women's Program has been helping these women emerge from fear and helplessness for almost a decade. In this innovative program, volunteer teachers come to the homes of the women to teach them basic English and practical living skills such as seeking assistance in emergency situations and interacting with children's teachers. An average of 35 women students and more than 30 teachers participate each month.

November 4 - Trivia Night

For more information call 314-771-1104

See Cover Page

Intercommunity Housing Association

Many children who live in poverty have moved so often that living in stable housing seems like a distant miracle. Since 1991, the Intercommunity Housing Association (IHA) has been creating that miracle for low-income children and their parents. Tenants at IHA's two apartment buildings pay rent based on their income. But stable housing is not enough. These families need additional help to become self-sufficient. Adult residents are provided ongoing classes on parenting, resume writing, job interviewing, and budgeting. Volunteers work with the children each afternoon during the school year, assisting them with school work and computer skills and helping them develop interpersonal and leadership abilities.

September 17 - Golf Tournament

For more information call 314-664-6811

Prison Performing Arts

Through Prison Performing Arts, inmates participate in the performing arts as audience members and as artists. The 14-year-old program at five correctional facilities enables participants to channel their energies in constructive ways in an environment of self-discipline, commitment, and teamwork. It gives incarcerated individuals the opportunity to develop their literacy and gain a sense of self-worth so that they return to society better equipped to succeed as productive citizens. In the Theatre Projects program, more than 75 adult men and women study and produce classic plays. I'm an Actor offers at-risk youth classes in acting, drumming, and circus technique in a program designed to help them learn life skills such as impulse control and cooperation.

For more information call 314-727-5355

Nia Kuumba

African American and African women come to Nia Kuumba, located in a house in a multicultural south St. Louis neighborhood, to experience renewal and community and to explore the African American and African expression of their beliefs. Nia Kuumba is a center of spirituality and an oasis of peace for women age 18 and older of all faiths. It takes its name from two African traditional values: purpose (nia) and creativity (kuumba). Nia Kuumba offers many opportunities to more than 100 women each month to express themselves and nourish their body, mind, and spirit. Activities include spiritual direction, days of prayers, retreats, and luncheons for various groups such as working and retired professional women.

For more information call 314-771-2074 or 314-771-0006

Woman's Place

Woman's Place is a drop-in center for abused women in Maplewood, a suburb of St. Louis. Only 30 percent of abused women go to a battered women's shelter. Woman's Place fills the gap and provides immediate on-site assistance. Appointments are not necessary and the center charges no fees for services, which include support groups, crisis intervention, case management, and professional counseling. Woman's Place offers classes in holistic living, enrichment, self-esteem, health education, and economic management. Women come to Woman's Place for social contact, to make telephone calls in private, and to receive emotional and psychological support from the staff and one another.

October 5 - Vigil and Walk to remember women and children who have suffered violence

Domestic Violence Support Group and Educational Classes
Spiritual Reflection Every Thursday - 1:30-2:30 p.m.

For more information call 314-645-4848



"Maureen Herrmann of Marian Middle School at LCWR Conference"

Marian Middle School

Marian Middle School reaches out to girls in grades 6 to 8 who are having trouble succeeding in the regular classroom but, because of their academic ability, are candidates for college-preparatory high school and college. Tuition for the school's 36 students is based on family income; classes are limited to 15 students. The school emphasizes a sense of belonging and acceptance, respect for all individuals and cultures, Christian values, and relationships with positive role models. Its challenging academic program focuses on communication, critical thinking, problem solving, leadership, and life skills. All the school's activities aim to help students develop a strong sense of self-worth and confidence in their ability to overcome personal obstacles.

August 1 - Marian Middle School starts its 7th year at 4130 Wyoming

September 21, 2006 - Cocktail Party

March 31, 2007 - Marian Magic at Carpenter's Hall

For more information call 314-351-7674

The Women of the Well
c/o Intercommunity Housing
Association
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The Women of the Well 2006 Leadership Award

The Women of the Well are calling for nominations for their annual
Leadership Luncheon on October 12, 2006

Nominees for this award must meet the following criteria:

- Currently is employed or volunteers in service to women and/or children
- Is engaged in activities that demonstrate and are consistent with the mission of The Women of the Well, namely to work for justice by providing services that provide hope and faith to the underserved, especially women and children.
- Has made a significant positive impact on the lives of women and/or children.

The Women of the Well Board of Directors will select five nominees to be honored at The Women of the Well Leadership Luncheon on October 12, 2006 at The Cedars in the St. Raymond complex, 939 Lebanon.

A Nomination Form is available on our website at www.the-womenofthewell.org.

If you have questions, please contact Alice Lancaster at 314-664-6811, Ext 2, or (314)780-7606.

Deadline for nominations is August 1, 2006