Ladies, Let’s Talk About Addiction

Every Thursday evening the Women’s Center hosts a women-only Narcotics Anonymous meeting, “Ladies, Let’s Talk About It.” Neile, who started the group about five years ago, recently told us about the group and what the Women’s Center means to her.

I’m a recovering addict. I’ve been clean for ten years. When I got clean, there was a noontime meeting Monday through Friday, and a nighttime meeting Monday through Sunday at [a church in Central Square]. But...there’s no meetings at all in that building no more. The new pastor wanted to raise the rent, but we don’t have it...

And I just said, let me go on in there [to the Women’s Center] and see what’s going on, see if we can rent a space... And they said, “You all are women, you can have it for free.” We was delighted that we could come in and have the free space [but NA requires groups to pay rent for space], so we only pay 10 dollars a month.... We are really grateful for this place because we had nowhere to go and rent is so high in Cambridge, like everyone was saying 200 dollars a month... There’s a lot of active addicts in Central Square, they’re dying like flies.

When you go to an NA meeting and it’s co-ed, you really can’t share what you need to share. A women’s meeting is all women and you can talk about anything you wanna talk about. You know, we talk about sad stuff. We cry in that meeting. There’s a lot of crying going on because we’re healing. Lots of women get raped in active addiction, you can’t talk about that in a co-ed meeting. There’s a lot of shame and guilt, you know, we lose our kids through active addiction, just a lot of stuff, so when you come in here you’re wounded. A lot of men [at co-ed meetings] are predators. They prey on the newcomers. Like, she got two days clean, leave her alone, give her a minute. So, it’s safe here, that’s the difference....

Every Thursday we are here faithfully, and I mean like why not, it saves our lives, you know. And then Thursdays and Fridays are hard days for addicts. I don’t know if you know that. A lot of the addicts get high on Fridays, it’s just party time... so it’s important that you come to a meeting on Thursday so you can get ready to deal with Friday.

So I’m grateful for the Women’s Center. And then when I got here I was like, “oh wait oh wait, they got all kinds of stuff here -- sewing class, art class -- there’s everything here. And it’s free. I’m like, wait, we don’t have to pay?” She’s like “no.” They’re very helpful here. You can get anything you want from here. A tutor, a sponsor, a mother figure, a sister. So, I like the Women’s Center. This is a great place. I mean it’s a marvelous place. ---->

Insights from Volunteers

CHIKA (left)—I love meeting the many members of the Women’s Center community when I’m here. Everyone has a different story to tell and I’ve gotten some really great insight & advice during my time here.

GENNY (right)—I started volunteering at the Women’s Center this semester and it has been a great way to apply my learning in the classroom to real life. I haven’t done a lot of hands-on work thus far in college, so this experience has been eye-opening and really solidified my interest in working in the nonprofit sector for my career. The other volunteers are so genuine and kind.

A lot of people don’t know about this place but I’m putting the word out there... Some of the girls say, “Oh I don’t got nowhere to go!” You ain’t got nowhere to go? I’ll show you where to go, get something to eat, you can hang out, you can meet a friend. ... As soon as we come in, I’m eating something... I mean it’s fresh cooked food, and it’s healthy food, so you know we’re happy. As soon as you walk in, you’re like, “They cooked!” [laughter] Yeah, so I’m happy here. This place builds you up....

Excerpts from an interview by Sarah Boyer
“Sometimes you can’t see yourself clearly until you see yourself through the eyes of others.”
- Ellen DeGeneres

Cambridge Women’s Center
46 Pleasant Street
Cambridge, MA 02139

Helpline:
(617) 354-8807

Business line:
(617) 354-6394

www.cambridgewomenscenter.org
info@cambridgewomenscenter.org

Hours:
Monday-Friday: 10am-8pm
Saturday: 10am-3pm
We are closed on major holidays.

What’s up at the Women’s Center?
Check out our monthly calendar on the website.

Volunteers
We gratefully acknowledge the ongoing efforts and contributions of our volunteers. Thank you for giving so generously of your time and of yourselves.

For further information about various volunteer opportunities or to offer in-kind donations, contact Courtney Zehnder, Helpline and Drop-in Coordinator: courtney.cambridgewomenscenter@gmail.com
(617) 354-6394 x11

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

All donations are tax-deductible.
The Women’s Center is a tax-exempt non-profit organization.
Federal ID #237131753

Visitors from the Middle East, along with translators from the U.S. State Department, talk in the Women’s Center living room on March 20.

Photo by Linda Pinkow

Inspiring International Activists

A delegation of seven women’s rights advocates from the Middle East and North Africa visited the Women’s Center on March 20 to learn how we help survivors of gender-based violence.

This extraordinary delegation, which included doctors, lawyers, academics and activists, was invited to the United States under the auspices of the U.S. State Department’s International Visitor Leadership Program. Along with several translators, they visited more than a dozen Boston-area social service organizations to learn about different programs serving victims of domestic abuse and violence. At the Women’s Center, they met in the living room with staff members Linda and Courtney, and Survivor Theatre Project co-director Leila Zainab.

“The gathering was nothing short of inspiring!” Leila said. “As a Muslim American woman and survivor, it was powerful to meet with so many activists who are committed to supporting Muslim women around the world in ending domestic and sexual violence.”

Each of the guests described their work in support of domestic violence survivors. Dr. Mahamat Abdelkerim Oum-Kalsom is a cardiologist in Chad who is also Secretary General of Al-Nahda Association, a group of women physicians promoting women’s leadership, empowerment and gender equality. She spoke about a workshop they organized at the central market in the capital city, which used popular music to raise issues of domestic violence and gender equality. “We found that art has a lot of impact, more than words,” she explained.

Another delegate, Aalan Falah Hasan, works with the Iraqi Al-Amal Association, which promotes conflict resolution, sustainable development and respect for human rights in Iraq. She spoke about her experiences coordinating a family support center in a refugee camp in Kirkuk. Noting that domestic violence is more prevalent in refugee camps, she explained how her group trains women in the camp to counsel other women about gender-based violence and conflict resolution.

The delegates were eager to hear about the structure and history of the Women’s Center, as well as strategies for serving survivors, publicizing our programs and recruiting new members.

Everyone enjoyed this special opportunity to share stories of healing and empowerment. One of the organizers told us after the meeting, “You gave them many ideas to try at home.”

- Linda
You may have heard about or seen versions of “Left on Pearl,” a powerful and absorbing documentary about the women who took over and occupied a Harvard-owned building at 888 Memorial Drive in Cambridge in 1971. Seventeen years in the making, the documentary is finally finished and gaining acclaim at film festivals! Named the best documentary at the Boston International Film Festival, given a Director’s Choice Award at the Black Maria Festival in New Jersey and a Remi Award at the Worldfest-Houston International Film Festival, “Left on Pearl” was also celebrated at festivals in New Orleans, Rochester, Dallas, Cambridge (MIT’s “Day of Action”), and Paducah, KY.

Even getting accepted in festivals is a big accomplishment. Film festival showings are crucial steps to securing the recognition and funding needed so “Left on Pearl” can be used in high school and college courses, to make the DVD available to the public, and to exhibit the film anywhere outside the festival circuit.

Accolades to everyone who helped create the magnificent documentary, which brings the story of the International Women’s Day march ending with the dramatic takeover of a Harvard University building in 1971 to life. It is especially meaningful to the Women’s Center, as the bold action inspired a donation of $5,000 that was used for the down payment on our building! The producers, Rochelle Ruthchild, Libby Bouvier, and Susan Jacoby, all with strong personal ties to the Women’s Center, formed the 888 Women’s History Project in 2002 to document this pivotal event in the history of the Boston Women’s Movement. They interviewed numerous eyewitnesses and participants with unflagging perseverance. Susie Rivo, an award-winning local filmmaker, agreed to direct the film and did an amazing job of locating critical newsreel footage from the period. Ifatch Shavit, Editor, and Lynn Weissman, Director of Photography, also joined the team.

The film is profoundly relevant today. Many are unaware of barriers that restricted the lives of women at the time of the takeover. For example, classified employment ads were still listed according to gender; shelters for victims of domestic violence did not exist, and abortion was illegal. Many of the women’s demands, such as accessible childcare, reproductive rights, equal pay for equal work, and affordable housing and healthcare, are still unrealized.

The film highlights several intertwined stories: the lack of spaces dedicated to women, the need for affordable housing in the predominantly African-American Riverside neighborhood (where 888 Memorial Drive was located), and Harvard University’s expansion into working class Cambridge communities. A key demand of the occupiers was for Harvard to build low- and moderate-income housing to replace some of the vast housing stock that had been destroyed by the university’s expansion.

We hope you will go see the film - it is truly amazing! For more information visit leptonpearl.org.

- Judy

Can you contribute to our Wish List?

- Regular and decaf coffee, tea, hot chocolate, sugar, milk, cream, honey, butter, vinegar, cooking oil, salt & pepper
- Plastic food containers with lids & food storage bags
- Hand & dish towels, paper towels, toilet paper, tissues
- Rubber gloves, sponges, sturdy brooms and mops
- Disinfecting wipes (in tall circular containers)
- 13 gallon large kitchen trash bags (unscented)
- Unscented hand and dish soap, hand sanitizer
- White Board (18”x24”), and narrow dry erase markers
- Pens that work well, glue sticks, rolls of scotch tape
- First aid supplies, light bulbs
- Beading and art supplies, scissors, duct tape
- Computers—working, Windows 7 or later
- Headphones (for computer labs); USB sticks; HDMI cord
- 8½”x11” printer & copier paper, white and colored
- Microwave oven in good shape
- T Passes; gift cards for Target, Tags, Staples, drugstores, supermarkets, etc.

For more info about how to donate items on our wish list, please contact Courtney at courtney.cambridgewomenscenter@gmail.com, or (617) 354-6394, ext. 11 - THANK YOU!
Meredith, New Board Member

At the beginning of 2017 I found myself with more free time than I am accustomed to. My new job didn’t require crazy hours and I was no longer playing rugby for a local competitive women’s team or a treasurer on the board for the team. A co-worker referred me to a site to find nonprofits that were in need of board members. The Cambridge Women’s Center aligned with my desire to find a place that makes a meaningful impact on the greater Boston area. The focus on being a safe place for women solidified my interest.

I’m impressed by the range of services provided by the Center and the amazing people I have met here! It is such a great place to be a part of. I look forward to being able to use my professional work experience and knowledge to help the Center. Besides working in the office, you will see me getting my hands dirty in the garden or helping with some maintenance around the building.

I am so grateful to be part of an amazing group of women. I look forward to being able to meet more of you, and see growth and empowerment of all women who walk in the doors.

- Meredith Humphrey

You Could Help Run the Women’s Center!

Are you interested in helping the Women’s Center meet the challenges of the future? We are eager to welcome more women onto our Board of Trustees to help guide the Center and provide fresh perspectives.

You would need to be committed to our mission:
- To provide women with the resources and support they need to deal with domestic violence, sexual abuse, racism, poverty, discrimination, social isolation, and degradation
- To challenge and change attitudes, actions, and institutions that subjugate women

The Center is 45 years old, the oldest community center for women in the country! Women rely on this unique, empowering space, and Board members have a compelling task, to determine how to sustain it and how to adapt to changing times.

We need Board members with relevant skills and experience - such as fundraising, publicity, financial management, or human services. The Board meets once a month, and we ask for a monthly commitment of 10 hours. Women of all colors, backgrounds, and means are encouraged to apply.

If you have time and energy and may be interested in joining, please email board@cambridgewomenscenter.org with a resume and a brief letter about yourself, your interests, and skills you could bring. Thank you!

A Warm Thank You to…

*The following businesses and organizations generously hosted fundraisers for the Women’s Center this year: The Friendly Toast, OTTO Pizza, Blue State Coffee, Black Ink Inc., Boston FLOW, Kappa Delta Sorority at Northeastern University, and students at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University.
* Flatbread Somerville, Cardullo’s Gourmet Food Shoppe, Porter Square Books, Star Market, Black Ink Inc., and Cambridge Naturals for donating to our Christmas party last December. Their donations enabled us to be open on Christmas Day, providing food, gifts, support & merriment to women with no place to go.
* Lovin’ Spoonfuls, Food for Free, Brookline Food Co-op, and Whole Foods for their ongoing food donations that keep our kitchen well-stocked with delicious and nutritious food!
* Community Cooks and the Cambridge Zen Center for making and bringing home-cooked meals for our twice-monthly luncheons.
* Lesley University, which held an Empty Bowls fundraising event on March 28th, with proceeds benefiting the Women’s Center. Special thanks to Jamie Putman, a Lesley student who has been interning at the Center, who advocated for us to be the beneficiary of the event.
* Christine Radice, a dedicated group facilitator, whose online fundraising drive raised over $1,000 for the Center in March.
* Ashleigh DeSimone of Thread & Thrive, who organized a clothing giveaway day at the Center that provided many women with great new pieces for work and for general use.

*Our volunteers, who keep the Center running — thanks for your dedication and kindness.

Everyone in the Women’s Center community—your contributions help support us all!

Thanks to Our Foundation and Corporate Partners

The following charitable organizations provided crucial financial support in the past year, without which we could not survive:

The Susan & Donald Babson Charitable Foundation
Bay State Federal Savings Charitable Foundation
Cambridge Arts Council
Cambridge Community Foundation
Cambridge Savings Charitable Foundation
Cambridge Trust Company
Bushrod H. Campbell and Adah F. Hall Charity Fund
The Clipper Ship Foundation
Community Foundation of Western Mass.
The Audrey Congdon Family Fund
Cummings Foundation $100K for 100 Program
John Donnelly Trust
Alice Willard Dor Foundation
Eastern Bank Charitable Foundation
Gould Charitable Foundation
Hartley Corporation
Flushing & Batata Foundation
Foundation M
Martin Fund at The Boston Foundation
Massachusetts Cultural Council
George H. and Jane A. Mifflin Memorial Fund
Santander Bank Foundation
Anna B. Stearns Charitable Foundation
TD Charitable Foundation
TJX Foundation
Reclaiming Our Lives from Trauma

We have all known the long loneliness and we have learned that the only solution is love and that love comes with community. -Dorothy Day

Fear of stigma and misunderstanding, a desire to protect others, and a pervasive cultural narrative that equates strength with isolated self-sufficiency make it challenging for trauma survivors to share their experiences.

The Trauma Support Group was formed in 2015 to push back against this silence, creating a space for all women who have experienced trauma to tell their stories, connect with others, and draw strength from an understanding community.

“This group has made me feel less alone in my trauma, which can be overwhelmingly isolating at times,” one member shared recently.

Trauma is surprisingly common. In the U.S., 70% of adults have experienced at least one traumatic event within their lifetimes. Many experience longer-term traumatic periods, including childhood abuse, domestic violence and tours of active duty. Despite the overwhelming prevalence of traumatic experiences (and their repercussions) within our society, these stories of trauma remain largely unspoken.

Our group is peer-facilitated, and focuses on building connections and drawing from shared experiences. Each week, we focus on a specific topic—recent examples include building community, dealing with manipulative relationships, and healing from challenging family dynamics. Participants are welcome to share their stories and receive support and advice from others, and to act as mentors and healers themselves.

Another woman who attends the group regularly told us, “There was a woman here that started talking about what was going on with her, and we all identified with it, and I think she had felt like she was alone and she was the only person who had a weird family. I remember saying to her, I think we’re all in the same boat, we all come from that.”

The trauma group runs weekly on Thursdays from 6:30-7:30 PM. Join us, or email groupcambridge@gmail.com for more information, including upcoming topics. We invite all women who have lived through trauma to join us. Whether you want to tell your story, meet others who identify with your experiences, or simply connect with a warm and supportive community, you are welcome in our group. - Casey

Groups and Workshops

All are FREE. All who identify as women are welcome.

- After Abortion Well Being (two Tues/month, 6-7:30pm)
- Art Class (Tuesdays, noon-2pm)
- Basic Yoga with Marilyn (Mondays, 6:15-7:15pm)
- Bay State Butches (1st Fridays, 6:30-8pm)
- Beading Group (Mondays, 2:30-4:30pm)
- Board of Trustees (one Monday per month, 6-8pm)*
- Boston New Daughters of Blitiss (last Saturdays, 6:30-8pm)
- Dinner and a Movie (5:30-8pm, one night per month)*
- Femsex* - 12-week workshops - femsexbos@gmail.com
- Fertility Awareness (one Wednesday every few months)
- Healthy Self-Esteem (Wed, 6-7:30pm, begins June 21)*
- Healing Through Creative Arts Workshops for survivors of sexual abuse (one Saturday per month)
- Incest Resources’ Drop-In Discussion Group for Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse (3rd Fridays, Sept.-June, 6-7:30pm)
- Knitting and Crocheting (Thursdays, 12:30-1:30pm)*
- Ladies, Let’s Talk About It—Women’s Narcotics Anonymous Meeting (every Thursday, 6:30-8pm)*
- Managing Your Money (pre-registration required)
- Meditation for Relieving Stress workshops (monthly)
- Navigating Aging 65+ group (2-3:30pm, one Wed/month)*
- Navigating Divorce (11am-1pm one Saturday/month)*
- Open Luncheon (3rd Tuesdays, 12:30-1:30pm)*
- Ovarian Cancer Support Group (1st & 3rd Sat, 1-2:30pm)
- Queer in the Headlights (2nd Fridays, 6:30-7:30pm)*
- Reach in, reach out (6 week trauma survivors’ closed grp)
- Sewing Group (Thursdays, 10am-12pm)
- Songwriting Group (last Saturdays, 11am-12:30pm)
- Spanish-English Conversation (Wednesdays, 11am-1pm)*
- Straight Marriage, Still Questioning*
- Tech Tips and Tools (by appointment)
- Trauma Support/Discussion Grp (Thursdays, 6:30-7:30pm)
- Women for Political Action (1st Tuesdays, 6-7:30pm)*
- Write Your Story (two Wednesdays per month, 2-3:30pm)*

* Indicates groups are in wheelchair-accessible rooms. Free childcare can usually be arranged if requested in advance.

I.R. GROUP GOING INTO ITS 34th YEAR!

Incest Resources’ Drop-In Discussion Group for Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse meets on Friday, June 16, takes the usual break during July and August, and then resumes in September. Meetings are facilitated by Survivor-Therapist Dr. Elaine Westerlund on the third Friday of the month, September through June, from 6:00-7:30 pm.

Upcoming Dates and Topics:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tr>
<td>June 16</td>
<td>Resilience</td>
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<td>September 15</td>
<td>From Denial to Truth</td>
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<td>October 20</td>
<td>Memory and Validation</td>
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<td>November 17</td>
<td>Disclosure and Confrontation</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 15</td>
<td>Managing the Holidays</td>
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SUMMER MEETINGS FOR SURVIVORS!

In July and August, while the IR group is on break, group members have organized meetings for survivors to come together for connection, support and discussion from 6-8pm.

Summer Dates and Topics:

<table>
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<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tr>
<td>Friday, July 21</td>
<td>Self-Care</td>
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<td>Friday, August 18</td>
<td>Trust and Safety</td>
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For more information about the July group contact Cynthia at cynnmocho@aol.com. For the August group contact Gail at gjmus22@gmail.com.
We are proud to call Cambridge home, a Sanctuary City that welcomes immigrants and refugees. We want to take an opportunity at this crucial time to open our doors to all. We want immigrant and refugee individuals and families to know that this community welcomes and supports them. This is also an opportunity for allies of immigrant and refugee communities to come out and celebrate! While the Women’s Center is usually closed on Sundays, we will be opening our doors for this special event so that we may welcome all genders to join us.

There will be refreshments, music, and child-friendly activities.

FREE OF CHARGE. All are welcome! Wheelchair accessible.

Presented by Women for Political Action
at the Women’s Center, 46 Pleasant Street, Cambridge

For more info: office@w4pa.org
617-354-6394

Please help the Women’s Center and the women who depend on us.

Donate online
Go to www.cambridgewomenscenter.org and click on "Support Us" and then "Donate Now."
Your contribution will be processed through Network for Good, a non-profit that provides secure online donation services.

Donate by mail
Here is my tax-deductible gift of:
___ $2,000  ___ $1,000  ___ $500  ___ $250  ___ $100  ___ $50  ___ $25  ___ other $___________

Please make your check payable to The Women’s Center,
and mail to: Women’s Center, 46 Pleasant Street, Cambridge MA 02139

Name ____________________________________________
Address __________________________________________
City__________________________  State_____  Zip Code__________________________
Phone_____________________  Email__________________________________________
___ My donation is in honor of: (name)_______________________________________________________
    (address)___________________________________________________________________
___ My gift will be matched by my employer___________________________________________________

THANK YOU SO MUCH!
Dear friend of the Women’s Center,

As you know, this is a time of danger and anxiety for the women in our community who are most vulnerable.

Women in Greater Boston are struggling with astronomical housing costs, increasingly expensive health care, plentiful supplies of dangerous drugs, inadequate mental health services, and ongoing gender-based violence and abuse. Most of the women we see at the Center are also frightened by the new administration in Washington, with its determination to slash basic programs for the poor, deport more immigrants and refugees, and attack our civil and human rights.

You can help vulnerable women in our community by donating to the Cambridge Women’s Center. 

**We need your support to continue providing essential services to women who are struggling.**

Since 1971, the Center has been a safe, compassionate space for women from Greater Boston and beyond, with a focus on meeting the needs of marginalized women. We have helped **generations of women** face their past traumas, find their way out of abusive relationships, get access to food, shelter and other basic needs, develop all kinds of skills, find common ground with other women, find inner strengths they didn’t think they had, and learn how to use their knowledge and experiences to help others.

“Outside of the Women’s Center, it’s hard for survivors of severe abuse to find places to heal. The Women’s Center has provided a safe haven for my recovery for over 15 years,” Alice (not her real name) told us.

“Early in my recovery,” Alice said, “I’d wondered how I could have my severe trauma history and still have a successful career, a good relationship, and a fulfilling life. I felt despair that my issues were a sort of a life sentence. But through survivor groups at the Women’s Center, I met other women who also were survivors of severe trauma—including a few who not only had good careers but who were exceptionally successful. Those women inspired me and helped me see that I don’t have to be so limited by my issues.”

For more than 45 years, the Women’s Center has been a leader in developing innovative, community-based solutions to critical problems facing women of all ages, races and backgrounds. We provide peer counseling, crisis support, skills training and informational resources, **free of charge**, 55 hours a week.

Every day, women are grateful for the opportunity to cook nutritious meals in our well-stocked kitchen; use our computers, phones and copiers; get help with housing applications and job searches; attend classes and workshops to learn and improve life skills; call our Helpline for referrals, advice and support; and build connections with others who share common experiences.

(please see other side)
Your generous donation will allow vulnerable women to get the help they need to **survive and thrive**.

“Sometimes I don’t have food anywhere, and so I eat here [at the Center] and I can cook,” said Carolina, a Latina immigrant in her 60s. “Here, I really get to relax. What I like most about being here is there’s a lot of diversity and I can talk to whoever I want.”

Women find sustenance in the strength of our community. They meet other women from diverse ethnic, religious, cultural and economic backgrounds. Abused women gain the strength to move out of isolation and hopelessness, and join a community of survivors. They learn to share their stories and express their needs.

“I’m very impressed with the calming effect at the Women’s Center. It is a very life-affirming experience for me,” said Cathy, one of our volunteers.

“Where else can I sit down and have a cup of coffee with someone who’s recently stayed at a homeless shelter?” asked Helena, another volunteer. “This is a place where you get to interact with women from different cultures and socioeconomic classes, and you have the opportunity to engage in dialogue and learning. And it’s a place where people support one another. That’s why I volunteer here.”

The Women’s Center relies on donations of money, material goods and volunteer labor. With a very modest budget, we’re able to provide a wealth of resources and opportunities for women and their children... **thanks to the generous support of our community.**

With your help, we can continue to provide the material, educational and emotional resources that are so desperately needed today. Together, we can strengthen our community and move toward a better future.

We’ve come a long way since 1971 ... but we still have a long way to go. Please join us! Your generous support is crucial to every woman who comes to the Center seeking knowledge, emotional support, or a warm and comforting refuge. **You can make an enormous difference** at this critical time in our history.

Please make a tax-deductible contribution today at our website, cambridgewomenscenter.org, or send a check in the enclosed envelope. **Thank you!**

In gratitude and solidarity,

Judy Norris
Board of Trustees Chair

Linda Pinkow
Development Coordinator

P.S. We’re deeply grateful to you for being a friend of the Women’s Center community! We know you understand that this is a critical time in our nation’s history, and especially for women who are struggling to overcome the effects of trauma, poverty and discrimination. Please join with us now by sending a donation to uplift and strengthen our community. Your contribution will provide **urgently needed resources** to vulnerable women and their children.

*Women’s Educational Center Inc. (the Women’s Center) is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt non-profit organization (federal I.D. #23-7131753).*
Meet Cookie: seamstress, creator, leader

Christina (“Cookie”) Baynes is a longtime Women’s Center member. She was interviewed recently by Sarah Boyer. Here are excerpts:

Sarah: How long have you been coming to the Women’s Center?

Cookie: I’ve been coming here for seven years now. I started coming to the Women’s Center because I used to be on the tenant council at Putnam Gardens and we had to use the computers here to do some of our research, and I found out they had beading classes here and I’ve been here ever since.

What are some of the things you’ve done [in the beading group]?

I’ve made necklaces and earrings and bracelets, and I turned wooden beads into a belt. And then a couple of years ago we did the City HeArt show at the Prudential Center. So we sold our items at the art show. [But usually] I don’t make my jewelry to sell it, I just make it for myself, and if someone likes it I give it to them.

Seven years at the Women’s Center, that’s quite a long time. Have you been in other groups?

Yeah, I come here every Thursday [for the sewing group]. I like the teacher. She teaches us a lot of whatever we need to know. I’ve made an apron, a shirt, table runners, tablecloths, tote bags. I made bean bag tosses, I made pillowcases, I even made my own Wonder Woman costume! I make whatever comes to mind. I wanted to learn how to make a quilt. So I just started my quilt last week. I’m gonna sew about 60-70 quilting strips straight across. So it’s gonna take me a while. My goal is to always start something and to finish.

And last week I did my own workshop here called “Paint With Your Kids.” It’s a workshop that I came up with. The mothers come with their kids, and we paint picture frames with watercolor paints and we use foam stickers to decorate the picture frames. It’s a fun activity for kids to do with their moms. Since I have a (Continued on page 2)
“When I dare to be powerful — to use my strength in the service of my vision — then it becomes less and less important whether I am afraid.”

Audre Lorde

Cambridge Women’s Center
46 Pleasant Street
Cambridge, MA 02139

Helpline:
(617) 354-8807

Business line:
(617) 354-6394

www.cambridgewomenscenter.org
info@cambridgewomenscenter.org

Volunteers

Volunteers, staff and guests meet at the Sanctuary Open House.

Volunteers, staff and guests meet at the Sanctuary Open House.

Photo by Carmen Rendon

Welcome Our Neighbors

The Women’s Center hosted a Sanctuary Open House in July to express our pride in Cambridge as a Sanctuary City that welcomes people from throughout the world.

Over 50 guests and volunteers enjoyed a beautiful summer afternoon at the Center, featuring speakers and information about how our community can support immigrants and refugees. Cambridge Vice Mayor Marc McGovern talked about the city’s efforts to welcome new Americans, and Cambridge resident Vatsady Sivongxay, a Women’s Center volunteer, spoke about her experiences as a refugee, immigration attorney, and community advocate. Guests enjoyed refreshments donated by local restaurants, and live music by Alex Zachary.

The Open House was the first community event organized by Women for Political Action (WPA), a group that was formed at the Women’s Center after last year’s presidential election. The group’s mission is to create opportunities to engage with the broader community regarding issues of social justice. For more information on WPA, visit the @WomenforPoliticalAction Facebook page or email office@w4pa.org.

Cookie (continued from page 1)

toddler, and I like to do a lot of things with my kids, I thought it would be a good way to get more moms to come here and use the resources and the playroom.

So, it sounds like the Women’s Center really fulfills a lot of your needs.

Yeah it does. It’s a safe relaxing place for women to come and enjoy themselves to ease their minds. Most of the things I do here, I do during the day while my son is in school. It just makes it easier. Because when I come here, this is my ME time. This is my alone time to get away from the kids and relax. My son is in junior kindergarten. And then my daughter, she goes to Bunker Hill Community College, she’s in her second year.

But sometimes I bring my son here with me and the volunteers keep him occupied and busy while I do what I do here, so that’s another thing that I like. That they keep him more occupied than I do when I’m momming! And the volunteers are really nice here, I like the volunteers here.

Are there women who have been as long as you have, that you know of?

My friend Cynthia, who used to be my neighbor downstairs, I brought her to the Women’s Center, to the jewelry class. And now, she’s the assistant to the bead group teacher, Edie. So she helps run the bead group. I’m proud of her.

I’ve brought some friends here, and made some friends here. There’s a lady who comes here and she asks me to help her with her jewelry projects sometimes because she doesn’t have enough supplies and I have supplies at my house to do jewelry. So I’ve been doing jewelry and letting her use my supplies to finish her projects. I like helping people and I like being around people. And if someone asks me to do something, I’ll help them if I can.
Thistle

By Jennifer Jean

For survivors of abuse and trafficking residing at Thistle Farms in D.C.

Beloved of butterfly. Tint of twilight. In the language of flora—
she is Regal. Sometimes called Spear or Welted or Blessed—
sometimes Melancholy or Milk. She is every third grade girl

tying her shoes—all knee bone & chin sharp. As tincture, she cures

buboes & baldness, stone & gravel. As warrior bloom,

she defends the tribe
tartaned folk with her fierce burrs.

Then we knead her into heel & shin. She is Soft & Clean, a Delectable

Heart—centerpiece of sustenance & no weed. O, taste of celery. Herb of witch.

In War & Peace, she is the finale field. The constant, gorgeous

bold soul of us. The eyes of us, the Thriving

— Casey, co-facilitator of the Trauma Discussion Group

A Warm
Thank You to...

*The following businesses and organizations that hosted fundraisers for the Women’s Center this year: The Friendly Toast, OTTO Pizza, Blue State Coffee, Black Ink, Inc., Boston FLOW, Kappa Delta Sorority at Northeastern University, Lesley University College of Art and Design, and students at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University.

*Brookline Food Co-op, Food for Free, and Lovin’ Spoonfuls for their ongoing food donations that keep our kitchen well-stocked.

*Community Cooks, the Cambridge Zen Center, and Reunion Christian Church for cooking, baking and bringing warm meals for our Community Luncheons, and Whole Foods Market for providing food for our holiday meals.

*America’s Test Kitchen for donating chairs for our Computer Labs.

*Restaurants and businesses that donated food and supplies for our Sanctuary Open House in July: 1369 Coffee House, Andala Coffee House, Desi Dhaba, India Pavilion Restaurant, The Middle East Restaurant and Nightclub, Moody’s Falafel Palace, and Star Market (Twin City Plaza).


*Our volunteers, who keep the Center running – thanks for your dedication and kindness.

*Everyone in the Women’s Center community — your contributions keep the Center going strong!
The Spanish-English Conversation Exchange celebrates Halloween.

Adiós, Martha!

Martha Blass, a native of Mexico, moved to the Boston area with her husband in May, 2015. “I didn’t know anyone and my English was terrible,” she told us. Then she found the Women’s Center and started attending a beading class. She mentioned to Katie, our coordinator, that she wanted to improve her English, and Katie invited her to lead a Spanish-English conversation group. Martha replied, “I’d be glad to do it but my English is not good enough.” Katie said it would be a great learning experience for all and Martha agreed to try. She has been leading the group ever since.

Participants from many lands, including Mexico, Spain, Venezuela, Argentina, the Dominican Republic, Brazil, and the USA. have improved their language skills. There is a great sense of community too. They have celebrated occasions such as Dia de los Muertos and Halloween.

Martha is now returning to Mexico, and members have given her an album of photos and appreciations. One member wrote, “You have been so patient, kind, generous, and reliable in guiding our group. You have a knack of fostering group cohesion and making everyone feel welcome -- with seemingly no effort!”

Martha thanked the Women’s Center for giving her this opportunity to meet people and greatly improve her English. And we at the Women’s Center in turn are so grateful to Martha for the fantastic job she has done.

Fortunately, a current member, Margarita Ibarra, has volunteered to lead the popular group so it can continue meeting Wednesdays from 11am-1pm.

Can you make a gift from our Wish List?

- Regular and decaf coffee, tea, hot chocolate, sugar, cream, honey, butter, vinegar, olive oil, salt & pepper
- Plastic food containers with lids and food storage bags
- Paper towels, toilet paper, tissues, hand & dish towels
- Stainless steel spoons, forks, and knives
- Rubber gloves, sponges, new broom and mop, environmentally friendly all-purpose cleaner
- Disinfecting wipes (in tall circular containers)
- 13-gallon large kitchen trash bags (unscented)

- Unscented hand and dish soap, hand sanitizer
- White-out, glue sticks, rolls of scotch tape
- First aid supplies, light bulbs
- Beading and art supplies, scissors, masking & duct tape
- Computers—working well, Windows 7 or later
- Headphones (for computer labs); USB sticks; HDMI cords
- 8 ½ x 11” printer and copier paper (white and color)
- MBTA passes; gift cards for supermarkets, Target, Staples, hardware, drug stores, etc.

For more info about how to donate items on our wish list, please contact Tiffany at tiffany@cambridgewomenscenter.org - THANK YOU!
A Facilitator Writes

The ugly emotions stemming from my abusive childhood are always there, haunting me. For most of my life, I tried to bury them. I’d thrust myself into projects or find other means of avoidance. There were stints with therapists, months when I buried myself in self-help books, but eventually I’d find it overwhelming and I’d summon what I thought was strength to carry on.

I came to realize that my ego was diverting me to protect me from a pain so debilitating that I’d sometimes wind up in a fetal position, crying uncontrollably. I realized that I had to find solace and strength in a community. As a former journalist who believes in the power of the written word and requires it because of my faulty memory, a symptom of PTSD, I searched the Boston area for a writer’s group for survivors. I couldn’t find one, so I decided to start one.

In June, I completed a state certification program in domestic violence training and contacted Judy Norris at the Cambridge Women’s Center. In July, Express Yourself: A Survivor’s Write to Heal was born.

Currently, we meet Mondays, 5:30-7:30 p.m. Each week is dedicated to a topic such as understanding triggers, loving yourself, self-advocating. We spend time talking about issues related to the theme, then write, using prompts that are solution-oriented. Then we share.

The women are amazing writers because they speak from the heart. They sometimes can’t see their brilliance because as survivors we are prone to undervaluing ourselves. But in our supportive group we point that out. A common refrain: “That’s so smart, I need to write that down.”

During our meetings, we also laugh and cry and remind ourselves of how strong we are.

Our mantra is expression is essential to healing. A body of research supports that notion, but our writers intrinsically understand that. We know everyone has to find her own healing path, but it’s easier when you do it in a community.

— Cindy

Songs of Truth
By a ‘Survivor’s Write to Heal’ group member

My people of many cultures, colors, genders
And from many walks of life,
You told me,
They told us, we are survivors.
I love the diversity, although my skin is black.
The lies,
The fears,
The tears,
The harshness.
My hums, my songs, my lullabies
And my breath to soothe.
The terrors of the nights,
And reaching for the light
Beyond the darkness;
I will shout loud,
I will shout soft,
And sing my many songs of truth
As I leap toward healing.

Current Groups and Workshops

All activities are FREE. All who identify as women are welcome.
* = wheelchair-accessible — groups can be moved if needed.
Childcare can often be arranged if requested in advance.

- After Abortion Well Being (two Tues/month, 6-7:30pm)
- Art Class (Tuesdays, noon-2pm)
- Basic Yoga with Marilyn (Mondays, 6:15-7:15pm)
- Bay State Butches (1st Fridays, 6:30-8pm)*
- Beading Group (Mondays, 1:15-3pm)
- Coping with Life’s Stressors (2-3 Weds/mo, 6:30-7:30pm)
- Create Your Own Earrings (one meeting/month)
- Creative Expression & Mindfulness (Mondays, 11am-1pm)
- Femsex* - 12-week workshops - femsexbos@gmail.com
- Feminist Book Club (7-8pm, 1st Mondays)
- Fertility Awareness (one Wednesday every few months)
- Healing Through Creative Arts Workshops for survivors of sexual abuse (one Saturday afternoon per month)
- Heart Logic Meditation (2 Tuesdays/month, 1:30-2:30pm)
- Incest Resources’ Drop-In Discussion Group for Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse (3rd Fridays, Sept-June, 6-7:30pm)
- Knitting Group (Thursdays, 12:30-1:30pm)*
- Lesbian & Bi Women’s Discussion (3rd Fridays, 6-7:30pm)
- Lesbian, Bi & Trans Circle (4th Fridays, 1-2pm)
- Living in Our Bodies (Two Tuesdays/month, 6:30-7:30pm)
- Managing Your Money (by appointment only)
- Meditation for Relieving Stress (6-7:30pm. monthly)
- Narcotics Anonymous Meeting (Thursdays, 6:30-8pm)
- Navigating Aging 65+ group (2-3:30pm, one Wed/month)*
- Navigating Divorce (11am-1pm, one Friday/month)*
- Open Luncheon (1st and 3rd Tuesdays, and, usually, 4th Mondays, 12:30-1:30pm)*
- Ovarian Cancer Support Group (1st & 3rd Sat, 1-2:30pm)
- Self-Defense Workshop (Saturday, 12/9, 1-2:30pm)
- Sewing Group (Thursdays, 10am-12pm)
- Spanish-English Conversation (Wednesdays, 11am-1pm)*
- Straight Marriage, Still Questioning* (email for info)
- Survivors Write to Heal (Mondays, 5:30-7:30pm)
- Tech Tips and Tools (by appointment)
- Trauma Support/Discussion Grp (Thursdays, 6:30-7:30pm)
- Women for Political Action (1st Wednesdays, 6-7:30pm)*
- Write Your Story (two Wednesdays per month, 2-3:30pm)

Find our current calendar at www.cambridgewomenscenter.org

I.R. GROUP IS IN ITS 34th YEAR!
Incest Resources’ Drop-In Discussion Group for Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse meets from 6-7:30pm on the third Friday of the month, September through June. Meetings are facilitated by Survivor-Therapist Dr. Elaine Westerlund. You need to come on time! No one will be admitted after 6:15pm to avoid interrupting the group process.

**Upcoming Dates and Topics:**
- December 15 Managing the Holidays
- January 19 Goals and Change
- February 16 Self-Compassion
- March 16 Trauma and Reenactment
- April 20 Growing Up
- May 18 Creativity in Recovery
- June 15 Moving Forward
The Cambridge Women's Center is thrilled and honored to be one of 100 local nonprofit organizations to receive a Cummings Foundation $100K for 100 Grant in 2017. This extraordinary philanthropic initiative recognizes charities that excel in improving the lives of community members through education, healthcare, human services, and social justice programs.

After a competitive review process, the Center was chosen from a total of 549 applicants from Greater Boston. Staff members attended a gala celebration for the winners at Cummings headquarters in June.

The Women's Center will use this generous grant ($25,000 per year for four years) to support our free Drop-In Program, which provides crisis support, peer counseling, skill-building, computer access, and resource information for low-income, homeless and abused women.

Cummings Foundation, Inc. was established in 1986 by Joyce and Bill Cummings of Winchester. Bill Cummings is the founder of Cummings Properties, a Woburn-based commercial real estate firm that leases and manages more than 10 million square feet of space. The majority of profits from the real estate firm benefit the foundation.

“Nonprofit organizations like the Cambridge Women’s Center are vital to the local communities where our colleagues and clients live and work,” said Joel Swets, Cummings Foundation’s executive director. “We are delighted to invest in their efforts.” For more information about the foundation, please visit www.CummingsFoundation.org.

Please help the Women’s Center and the women who depend on us.

Donate online
Go to www.cambridgewomenscenter.org and click on "Support Us" and then "Donate Now."
Your contribution will be processed through Network for Good, a non-profit that provides secure online donation services.

Donate by mail
Here is my tax-deductible gift of:

___ $2,000   ___ $1,000   ___ $500   ___ $250   ___ $100   ___ $50   ___ $25   ___ other $___________

Please make your check payable to The Women's Center, and mail to: Women's Center, 46 Pleasant Street, Cambridge MA 02139

Name ____________________________________________________________________
Address___________________________________________________________________
City__________________________  State_____  Zip Code__________________________
Phone_____________________  Email________________________________________ __

___ My donation is in honor of: (name)________________________________________________________________________
___ (address)________________________________________________________________________
___ My gift will be matched by my employer________________________________________________________________________

THANK YOU SO MUCH!
Dear friend of the Women’s Center,

Thank you for being part of our community. For more than 45 years, the Women’s Center has relied on our community to sustain our mission to provide women from Greater Boston and beyond with refuge, resources, and opportunities for healing and empowerment.

During this season of giving, we’re asking for your support to provide urgently needed services for the women of our community.

Your support will help us provide material assistance (donated food and clothing, free computer access and technical support, and a safe daytime refuge), informational resources (educational programs as well as referrals for housing, employment, healthcare, legal and other services), and emotional support (a space for women to share their stories, express their needs, and find community). We provide these services free of charge, 55 hours a week, 52 weeks a year.

Many of the women who visit the Women’s Center are homeless, living in poverty, struggling with mental illness and/or physical disabilities, escaping from domestic violence, recovering from childhood sexual abuse, working to overcome drug or alcohol dependence, or dealing with several of these challenges at the same time. Our programs and services help vulnerable women increase their economic stability, recover from trauma, and move from isolation and pain to healing and fellowship. We provide a safe space and a sense of belonging and acceptance that marginalized women often cannot find elsewhere.

With a very modest budget, the Women’s Center is able to serve many hundreds of women every year, thanks to the support of friends like you. Our community lifts us up, and allows us to continue to provide essential services to women in need.

We open our doors at 10 a.m. Mondays through Saturdays, and it’s not long before you can smell the coffee brewing. Most days, the kitchen and the Computer Labs are the busiest rooms first thing in the morning. On Thursdays at 10 there’s a rush of women up to the third floor for the weekly Sewing Group. Sometimes up to a dozen women come to use our sewing machines or stitch by hand, chatting, laughing and learning. On Wednesday mornings the Spanish-English Conversation Group fills the living room with easygoing discussions — one hour in Spanish and one hour in English. On Mondays the new Creative Expression & Mindfulness Group meets in the Art Room to explore the mind-body connection through breathing exercises and creative arts.
As lunchtime nears, more women gather in the kitchen. Sometimes one will cook for many, or each one will choose what she wants from our refrigerator or pantry. Three days a month, we get together in the living room for our Community Luncheons, where one of our community partners delivers a prepared meal (usually one meat and one vegetarian option, sometimes salad or rice, and always a dessert or two). These luncheons are also an opportunity for dialogue among our diverse visitors, volunteers and staff, as we usually choose one topic and have a stimulating conversation over lunch.

Things can get quieter in the afternoon, as women go to our various groups and workshops, do their own work in our Computer Labs, get information or emotional support in small groups or one-to-one with our Drop-In volunteers, or just sit quietly and read or think. But as the weekday afternoon builds toward evening, and as the autumn days grow shorter, more women come inside in search of a hot dinner, comfort or companionship, or to attend one of our many evening groups.

These are the ebbs and flows of our days and evenings at the Women’s Center. Above all, we provide a safe, supportive space that helps women emerge from isolation and gives them resources to improve the quality of their lives and their children’s lives. For many of our visitors, access to a quiet place, a hot meal, opportunities to learn new skills, and a respectful community are profoundly valuable and even life-changing experiences.

None of this would be possible without the contributions of friends like you. If you can make an end-of-year donation today, you will help vulnerable women get the help they need to survive and thrive. With your help, we can continue to provide the material, educational and emotional resources that are so desperately needed. Together, we can strengthen our community and move toward a better future.

In this season of giving, please help the women of our community find support, education, healing and empowerment. Help us uplift and strengthen our community.

In gratitude and solidarity,

Linda Pinkow  
Development Coordinator

Judy Norris  
Board of Trustees Chair

P.S. Your contribution will make a tangible difference in the lives of the women of our community. Please make a tax-deductible contribution today at our website, www.cambridgewomenscenter.org, or send a check in the enclosed envelope. Thank you!

The Women’s Educational Center Inc. is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt non-profit organization (federal ID #23-7131753).