The Women’s Center has undergone a transformation over the past eight months. After a long period of increasing financial difficulty, the Center was in an extremely grave financial crisis and drastic steps needed to be taken. And they have been! The Center no longer has paid staff or consultants, except for Ming Chang, who keeps the Center running by doing her wonderful and crucial work as Center Coordinator. The budget was trimmed as much as it possibly could be by removing all paid programming, other items such as snow removal and cleaning service, and reducing fuel costs. Some of these decisions were very difficult to make – especially cutting needed staff and valuable programs – but each one was necessary to enable the Center to stay open. With our skeletal budget and a new operating plan, we began the long, slow climb back to solvency.

At the same time, the Board sent out an appeal for help from the community, and you answered! The response has been nothing less than heroic. Volunteers have pitched in to do jobs ranging from cleaning, painting and repairs to bookkeeping and computer and web site maintenance. In addition, individual gifts of money and supplies (such as paper, toner, toilet paper, and environmentally-friendly cleaning products) have literally kept the Center alive. While we have a very long way to go before the Center is again financially stable, the community response to the crisis has been heartening and invaluable. Volunteers are once again the life blood of the Center, as they were for so many years. The Center is a happy, busy, and well-used place.

Last fall we held two all-volunteer work days on Sundays when the Center is closed, one primarily for cleaning, and another for painting and general repairs. The second day included male allies as well as women. Both were very helpful in improving the physical condition of the Center, but, again, there is still much to do. Anyone interested in participating in this work, with or without experience, should contact Judy Norris at (617) 354-6394. We are holding another Clean-Up & Fix-Up Day on Sunday, June 3, 10am-4pm, lunch provided, open to all. Please come if you can, and let Judy know if you’d like to help with organizing or supervising, or with a specific task.

We would also like to start some volunteer-run committees to get needed work done and involve more women in running the Center, such as Outreach, Diversity, Newsletter, Kitchen Oversight, Furnishing and Decorating, Painting, Gardening, and Repairs. If you would like to head up or participate in any of these, please contact Ming, ming@cambridgewomenscenter.org.

Our struggle is by no means over. The Center is operating without a fundraiser for the first time in decades. Our fundraising is now conducted entirely by a hardworking but small Fundraising Committee and some other volunteers, and often we have only enough funds to cover expenses for one to two months. Our situation is still precarious, but we’ve come this far, and (Continued on Page 3.)
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 volunteering opportunities and arrangement for donations, contact the Center Coordinator Ming at:
(617) 354-6394
ming@cambridgewomenscenter.org

SURVIVOR STUFFED ANIMAL ADOPTION

New to the Women’s Center is a collection of donated new and gently-used stuffed animals. They are to be taken freely by adult survivors of abuse and kept for their own. Many survivors, especially those who endured abuse as children, find that cuddling a soft toy helps in their healing. Some find that the difficult nighttime hours are eased by the company of a fuzzy friend and protector. Survivors may visit the large meeting room on the 3rd floor, and take the stuffed friend of their choice. If you think you may be an abuse survivor, you qualify. Anyone may donate stuffed animals in good condition to replenish the supply. Please contact the Women’s Center for information about donating.

The Women’s Center accepted this program this February, when the organization that founded it, The Healing and Arts Studio, closed its doors due to staffing and funding constraints after 11 years of serving the survivor community. (www.healingandarts.org)

We, the members of the Healing and Arts community, are so pleased that the program will continue in the Women’s Center!

Janice St.Clair
Board Member
Healing and Arts Studio

WORDS FROM THE VOLUNTEERS

Volunteering at The Women’s Center for the past few months has been a pretty interesting experience. Never before have I been in the presence of such a dedicated staff and such a variety of women in general. The range of perspectives and backgrounds I have encountered has opened my eyes not only to some of the harsh realities facing women but also to the strength of community and the possibilities of hope. For some women, the Women’s Center is a place to relax, work, and socialize. For others, it is a place of refuge and escape; a place where understanding is expected and provided without hesitation. I’ve spoken to women about health, sexuality, religion, race, culture, art, politics, and dating. I’ve heard horror stories, anecdotes, and the kind of blunt honesty that knocks you back on your heels. But no matter how different my interactions are, the general consensus is one of fondness for the Center. I am honored to be a part of something that has made such a lasting and positive impression.

~ Cami

I have been volunteering at the Women’s Center for six months. I wasn’t sure what to expect when I first walked through the doors at 46 Pleasant Street last summer, but any preconceived notions of what a “Center” might be were quickly dispelled. Instead of a clinical setting, I found cozy rooms painted in warm colors. No impersonal receptionist, but a friendly welcoming staff member. The art on the walls, the laughter from the living room, even the creaky floorboards gave a sense that this place was different; this place had character.

Since that time, I have met women from all walks of life and with very different stories to tell. I have helped a woman write her resume and successfully apply for a new job. I have found emergency shelter for a woman with no place to go, and I have acted as a sounding board for a caller who just needed someone to listen. I suppose it makes sense that the Women’s Center does not feel like an office. Because it offers the kind of help and advice one would expect to find at home.

~ Sage
How can we share, for public viewing, a representation of incest that includes beauty, hope, creativity, and the reality of how incest exists and impacts families?

Over 2 years ago, The Faith Quilt Project sponsored and Incest Resources, Inc. and the Women’s Center supported the making of the Incest Survivor Quilt. In making the quilt, several incest survivors met regularly for over a year. In that time we decided to honor all parts of ourselves, the parts that are strong as well as the parts of ourselves that have been struggling and are more difficult to claim. The quilt-making process felt transformative as we realized that we are complex and honorable people and that it is possible to talk about being an incest survivor with a sense of dignity.

We depict in the quilt a series of women, each honored as aspects of ourselves both as incest survivors and as members of the broader community. They are: Invisible Woman, Fragmented Woman, Nurturing Woman, Righteous Anger Woman, Woman of Sexuality, Woman of Shame, and Celebration Woman. Our bodies are so crucial in our stories and experience and so, while creating imagery about our perceptions with beautiful fabric, we naturally began making representations of our own bodies as part of the composition.

The center of the quilt is made of concentric rings of color and quilting lines symbolizing the wholeness of each of us individually and as part of a unified world – a hopeful vision we all share.

On February 25, 2007, after several exhibits, the quilt finally came home to the Women’s Center. Over 20 women gathered to share and receive the story of the quilt at its unveiling and dedication. We want to thank all the women who created this quilt and all who came to celebrate and welcome it as a work of art in the community. Please come visit the quilt on the third floor and join the circle of women with dignity and compassion.

How can we share, for public viewing, a representation of incest that includes beauty, hope, creativity, and the reality of how incest exists and impacts families?

Over 2 years ago, The Faith Quilt Project sponsored and Incest Resources, Inc. and the Women’s Center supported the making of the Incest Survivor Quilt. In making the quilt, several incest survivors met regularly for over a year. In that time we decided to honor all parts of ourselves, the parts that are strong as well as the parts of ourselves that have been struggling and are more difficult to claim. The quilt-making process felt transformative as we realized that we are complex and honorable people and that it is possible to talk about being an incest survivor with a sense of dignity.

We depict in the quilt a series of women, each honored as aspects of ourselves both as incest survivors and as members of the broader community. They are: Invisible Woman, Fragmented Woman, Nurturing Woman, Righteous Anger Woman, Woman of Sexuality, Woman of Shame, and Celebration Woman. Our bodies are so crucial in our stories and experience and so, while creating imagery about our perceptions with beautiful fabric, we naturally began making representations of our own bodies as part of the composition.

The center of the quilt is made of concentric rings of color and quilting lines symbolizing the wholeness of each of us individually and as part of a unified world – a hopeful vision we all share.

On February 25, 2007, after several exhibits, the quilt finally came home to the Women’s Center. Over 20 women gathered to share and receive the story of the quilt at its unveiling and dedication. We want to thank all the women who created this quilt and all who came to celebrate and welcome it as a work of art in the community. Please come visit the quilt on the third floor and join the circle of women with dignity and compassion.

We realized success with the quilt. The proof? When people gather around it, there exists beauty and celebration alongside a public discussion regarding incest.

~ Michelle Harris

---

The Women’s Center invites you to the first Gardening Committee Meeting.

If you are interested in being responsible for creating a nice garden for the Women’s Center, please join us on Saturday, May 5, 1pm. Ideas on how to work together on developing the dream garden will be discussed. Call Ming at 617-354-6394 if you have any questions. Hope to see you here.

The Women’s Center invites you to become part of our newly enhanced e-community. Submit your name and email address to us and you will receive monthly calendar mailings, the newsletter, and announcements. This is a great opportunity to connect with the latest programs and happenings at the Center, and to learn new ways to support our community.

To join, go to: www.cambridgewomenscenter.org and click on the link Join Our e-Community. Thank you for being a part of this wonderful community.

---

Please email board@cambridgewomenscenter.org if you are interested in participating in this effort in any way.

As a member of the very small, very new, all-volunteer Board of Trustees that is now riveted on raising money for the Center’s future, I want to say how grateful I am to everyone who has pitched in with time, skills, donations, and other gifts from the heart. Everyone working at and for the Center has a deep commitment both to the Center’s survival and to ensuring that all women feel welcome at this special place. We are inspired by the women we see at the Center every day and by the legacies left behind by so many. Each woman who visits the Center adds a piece of her spirit to our endeavor. This may be hard to capture in statistics, but it gives our organization its unique power and has kept it going for 36 years.

Please, if you can, become involved in rescuing and rebuilding the Women’s Center, contributing your energy, help and/or funds. And again, thanks to all who have stepped up, recently and over the years.

In sisterhood, solidarity, and hope,
Laura Cherry
Women’s Center Board of Trustees

---

Volunteers: Our Greatest Strength
Continued from Page 1
The Women’s Center is an attractive, multi-storied Victorian house. Set along a quiet street in Cambridge, the unique aspect of this building is not necessarily apparent from the outside. Upon entering the house, however, one realizes that this place is actually a haven.

One might wonder why women would need a safe place to repose. The staff at the Women’s Center already knows the answer to this question: domestic violence. A horrible scourge in our society, it touches more people in this country than we care to contemplate. Domestic violence is the continuous physical assault (or attempt at which) of one family or household member by another member of the same family or household. Victims generally feel powerless or even guilty. Nevertheless, the law in Massachusetts is clear: No one should accept or expect such abuse as an inevitable part of their lives. This idea is the essence of Chapter 209A.

This law permits the victim to take out a protection order (a restraining order) against the abuser, a civil procedure. While a number of women might be aware of this option, they might fear repercussions. But the law also provides recourse for victims in the event that the abuser violates the order. Indeed, the matter then becomes a criminal one. Additionally, the Anti-SLAPP statute can protect the victim. Occasionally, an abuser might engage in legal intimidation in order to silence the victim. Such a lawsuit, however, cannot proceed without a “substantial basis”. The abuser cannot simply file a suit claiming that the restraining order is harassment and that no abuse ever took place. Hence, this Statute acts as a bulwark against abuse of the legal system and further abuse of the victim.

Women who have suffered such abuse can obtain this information or access to it at the Women’s Center. Although the staff at the Center recognizes the extreme importance in making these facts readily available, they also realize that their support for battered women needs to extend beyond the legal sphere. To that end, the staff at the Women’s Center helps women find a place in a shelter if they need a safe place to go. The Center equally runs Moving on: Support for Abused Women. This program acts as an umbrella for many activities such as support groups, crisis and peer counseling and also a 55-hour per week helpline. All of these services are free of charge and are operated by licensed psychologists and social workers, experienced group facilitators and trained volunteers.

The staff at the Women’s Center would like to do more. Despite a raised awareness of domestic violence, it is still a problem in our society. This explains the Center’s current and future efforts to strengthen its relationships with similar-minded organizations, thereby aiding more vulnerable women. With its dedicated staff and help from the community, the Women’s Center will continue to serve as a consistent, non-judgmental voice of support and encouragement for abused women.

~Rachel Miselman

1. If the matter does become a criminal one, the Massachusetts Victim Bill of Rights offers the victim additional protection. This Bill of Rights is found in State law in Chapter 258B of the Massachusetts General Laws, March 1998.

You come to the Women’s Center for a support group, to use a computer, to staff the helpline, to find a warm space to rest. You may wonder what it’s really for, or you may have many ideas about that, or you may not give it a thought.

Because you come or call, you are a part of the Women’s Center community, and the Women’s Center was founded to be a community resource, used and contributed to by as many women as possible. What’s here is here because someone wanted or needed it for herself, or someone responded to a need she saw. And because thousands of dedicated women have put so much energy into keeping it going. And because foundations, corporations and individuals have seen its value and given financial support.

Is there a way you can feel more involved in the Women’s Center? What about helping figure out what needs to be changed, and how, to make the Women’s Center a place where women of different cultures, life styles, incomes, ages, and abilities all feel welcome, supported, and enthusiastic? That’s always the goal and always the challenge of the Center. If you are interested in thinking more about this, come to the next Community Meeting on Tuesday, May 29 at 6:30pm. Let’s brainstorm and discuss what needs to be done, and how we can get it done, to make our Women’s Center stronger, better, more inclusive, and sustainable.

Whether you come to the meeting or not, think about whether you might want to participate in other ways. We are hoping women will join or create committees to help move the Center forward and to get involved in different aspects of running it. A top priority is any kind of help with fundraising. Here are some other possibilities:

• Kitchen oversight: Make sure there are supplies (right now, coffee, tea, milk, or cream, sugar (real and no-cal); checking there are some staples (such as oil, spices, rice…) and possibly picking up fresh fruit, vegetables and other foods from Food for Free on Inman Street, if it can be arranged with them.

• Diversity: Consider how to make the Women’s Center more responsive and appealing to women from different cultures, such as adding new groups and workshops, trainings on diversity and anti-racism, and so on.

• Outreach: Get more (free and attention-grabbing) publicity through articles in local papers, interviews, public service announcements, etc.

• Gardening: Plan, plant and oversee vegetables where possible; tend to the rest of the garden, weeding, pruning, etc.

(Continued on Page 5)

2. Anti-SLAPP (Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation) Statute- The Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts cited c.231, sec.59H of this Statute when delivering the decision in the below case, Fabre v. Walton (2002). This piece of legislation was enacted in December 1994.
**Women's Center Community Meeting**

Tuesday, May 29 at 6:30pm.

Let's pool our ideas on how we, working together, can make our Center stronger, more inclusive, and sustainable.

**Please help revitalize the Women's Center!**

**Clean It, Fix It, or Paint It Day**

Sunday, June 3

10am-4pm

Lunch included

Come for all or any part of the day!

All women and supportive men are welcome.

(A great opportunity for helpful fellas to pitch in!)

Feel free to bring a bucket or some tools.

Question? Contact Judy at 617-354-6394

Judy@cambridgewomenscenter.org

---

**What It Means to Be A Muslim Woman**

Who are Muslims and what is Islam all about? This is the central question which leads one to the controversial topic of Muslim women. Before and after 9/11, Muslims have been wrongly labeled with many negative stereotypes from the media and the government. I strongly believe it is the job of the average Muslim, like myself, to represent Islam and get rid of these stereotypes. The public must be educated and aware of who their Muslim neighbors are.

This is the purpose of these workshops at the Women's Center. Women need to know about other women's lives and beliefs in order to connect with each other as women. As a Muslim American woman I want to do just that, allow women of all shades and backgrounds be able to understand each other. So far, the response from the attendees at the workshop has been positively enthusiastic. I am definitely conducting more workshops because this is more than necessary to allow people to know the truth about Muslim women and our lives.

Here are the upcoming scheduled dates of this workshop:

Saturday, April 21, 1-2:30pm, and Friday, May 4, 6-7:30pm.

~ Reem Al Zaim, Presenter

---

**Explore Weighty Issues**

In 4 sessions, you will explore the meaning of your weight problem in your life, set a goal and write an action plan, and use and share your inner wisdom and get support to make changes of your choice. Contact Gloria Dickerson to register at fitness11@yahoo.com.

The group takes place on 4 consecutive Tuesdays, starting April 24, 5-7pm.

---

**Community Matters**

Continued from Page 4

- Furnishing and Decorating: Discuss and determine ways to enhance the Center. Request donations of furnishings, such as a small couch for the Children’s Room, rugs, bookshelves, computer tables, office chairs, and computers!
- Newsletter: Plan and produce it in conjunction with Ming and the Board, and possibly ask business to purchase ads in it to support its production.
- Painting: Plan, prep and paint various rooms and areas, possibly including a few murals.
- Repairs: Do repairs and renovations; possibly plan and/or participate in Fix-Up Days.
- Fundraising Event Planning: Plan different aspects of an event, get (free) performers and space, (possibly create a program and contact organizations that would pay for ads in the program), advertise, staff the event (and/or oversee volunteers helping with various tasks). Proceeds would need to cover expenses and then some.

Please contact board@cambridgewomenscenter.org or call Ming at 617-354-6394 to discuss.

Judy Norris, Board of Trustees

---

**White Women Examining Privilege**

In the spring of 2006 the Cambridge Women’s Center ran a workshop titled "White Women Examining Privilege." After this workshop, a small group of us have continued to meet monthly to support one another in our continued examination of ourselves and the society in which we live. We focus on our feelings, our experiences, and ways to take action to challenge the systemic racism that we see in our daily lives. We would like to extend an invitation to other white women interested in examining privilege and challenging racism in ourselves and the world around us. If you are interested in joining us and would like to hear more, e-mail Nancy at zeek2946@yahoo.com. Our meetings are scheduled for the third Sunday of every month from 2 - 4pm.

---

**Women of Color Reading Group**

Women of Color Reading Group (WOC) meets monthly (the second Friday of each month) at the Cambridge Women's Center to discuss issues that affect women of color in America as related in the books we read. The objective of this group is to provide a supportive environment for women of color living in the Greater Boston area. The group is open to all who are interested; participants do not need to be women of color. Occasionally, authors will join us for discussion.

For more information about the group, please contact us at awocreadinggroup@gmail.com.
She comes in the night while he’s at work. Working hard to keep her family together. She dials the helpline number, after dropping the kids off to school and arriving to her second job. She comes in the afternoon for a quick bite to eat. She works diligently on the computer to complete scholarship applications for her children, what a mother, oh what a dedicated mother.

She enters the front door, then quickly makes her way to the third floor, where she can finally shut out the shelter noise and enjoy some peace offered by the visiting sunlight. Her son was shot and killed sixteen years ago to the day. Some days she whispers into the phone so as not to wake her abusive boyfriend, and when he picks up on the other line, I pretend to be her co-worker, asking if she can cover my shift tomorrow. Tomorrow she will come in just after six o’clock in the evening, with her life weighing on her back, in a duffle bag. And the next day she will quit her job, she has assured me that it is not a healthy environment and she knows she must leave. She calls on this house, this house so full of life history, second chances, and friendships long lasting that the roof shall surely fly off any day now.

In this house, she seeks refuge from the bleak outlook the world seems to project, and then she takes that hate deep inside her, she shapes it into something more calm, more direct, and less fatal; she slowly takes that anger and fear and loneliness, and forms all of this ugliness she carries with her into a ball, then she throws it out far beyond forever. She tells me she throws up at least five times a day. Daily she asks herself when will she get a break. She has called for the third time today, breaking down, unraveling, and then joyously picking herself up with the strength of her roots, she puts herself back together, a more balanced version. She waits for the woman of her dreams to come knocking at her door, she is afraid that day will never come, so she has started knocking on the Center’s door for some friendship and support with this journey of love.

This woman, this inspiring woman who tells me all her secrets and keeps all of her secrets hidden from me behind the comfort of the receiver…this woman who has endured ten thousand tragedies still comes back fully alive and ready to heal…..this woman defeated and searching for a hand to hold….this woman who has earned her respect and found pride in her mind, body, and soul…she, she is my experience, she is the reason I so desperately want the doors of the Women’s Center to stay wide open. She is the struggle within me and the struggle of so many. She is the lowest point any one person has traveled and the most heart warming success story any one person can fathom. She is you, she is me, she is all of us. She is deep inside my being and represents a truth that cannot be learned by seeing. She is alive, and she will continue breathing.

~Amanda, Volunteer
Have you ever wondered why it can be so painful to manage your money? Do you wish you could set a budget and save towards a goal – like buying a house or going to school – without knowing where to start? Would you like to get rid of credit card debt and build a good credit report? Are you curious about investing money on a limited budget, or tracking your finances on a personal computer? Do you worry about identity theft and online fraud?

We all have to deal with money, whether we have a little or a lot. Thanks to two amazing women, Susan Guidrey and Valentia McDonald, the Women’s Center is launching a Financial Literacy Program this fall to help women answer their money questions, no matter how basic, and take charge of their finances.

Valy McDonald established the Susan E. Guidrey Financial Planning and Education Fund in memory of her partner, Susan, who lost a battle with cancer in 2006. Valy and Susan met at the Women’s Center, and Susan was passionate about helping others overcome obstacles to working with their money. Through the Guidrey Fund, Susan’s life work will continue to inspire and assist women in the important challenge of building financial stability.

The Guidrey Fund has received donations from multiple contributors, including Susan’s family members and former colleagues at the Boston District of the SEC, who said, “During her life, many of her friends and colleagues here looked to Susan for advice when making important financial decisions. The creation of the Susan E. Guidrey Financial Planning and Education Fund will undoubtedly continue her legacy of empowering women in managing their financial lives and is also a wonderful tribute to our treasured friend.”

The purpose of the Financial Literacy Program is to help women of all income levels understand basic financial tasks and strategies and to help define and achieve basic goals. Over the summer, the Center conducted a survey to get a sense of the most popular topics related to money management; topping the results list were investment strategies for limited budgets, formulating a budget/spending plan, and overcoming emotional obstacles to dealing with finances.

The Women’s Center plans to begin a series of five evening workshops from mid-October to late November. The workshops will be led by financial professionals who are committed to women’s financial education; each workshop will cover a single topic and can be attended on its own or in conjunction with the whole series. As with all Center programming, the workshops will be free, but please pre-register to save your spot.

As Valy McDonald says, of her hopes for the Financial Literacy Program: “What I really want to emphasize (which was Susan's advice) is that there is never too small an amount that people can save/invest. She showed me how to start saving when I still had huge student loan debt and no savings. She was very conscious of our culture's spend, spend, spend style and trying to educate me not to impulsively spend… The main point is that everyone can participate in their financial future if they are willing to try it.”

Laura Cherry
Board of Trustees
Hi Folks, my name is Bridget Dinsmore. I have been offering free 30 minute Reiki sessions Tuesday mornings at the Women’s Center for quite a few months.

What is Reiki? Reiki is referred to as universal energy or the pulse of life. Like the seasons, our bodies are ever changing, inside and out. You do not have to understand or be aware of universal energy to benefit from Reiki. Reiki is a gentle ‘hands-on’ healing art that reconnects you with the ability to heal yourself. It is a vehicle of active learning that builds on the strengths you already have, and it helps you tap and focus into your own hidden energies. Reiki is simple, so much so that it is difficult to grasp what it is really about unless you become involved with it personally. Through Reiki I have learned that the body is constantly changing and renewing energy. This means that you have the opportunity in every moment to recreate yourself towards better health through mind, body and spirit.

I discovered Reiki during my healing journey over 6 years ago. I was looking for non-invasive alternative healing. I went on a search that enriched my path to healing. I meet many folks who assisted me to reach my goal and heal my cancer without traditional medicine. It was a lonely road that no Dr would venture to travel with me, as they reminded me that they could heal me with an operation followed by chemotherapy and radiation. I lost many friends and family to cancer and watched many other folks struggle to regain dignity as they began to live with missing body parts and try to go through Chemo/radiation only to lose their battle to live.

I am grateful to Ming for giving me the opportunity to come to the Women’s Center and share this healing modality with you. If you open up to Reiki you can give your body, mind, and spirit permission to heal. Like other alternative healing modalities, only you can move the blocked energies as the Reiki practitioner assists you during a Reiki session. Reiki can also help healthy people stay healthy, balanced and harmonized with the rhythm of the pulse of life. You can check out my website www.reiki-support.com

If you would like a free 30 minute session call me at 617 864-1941.
As we regain our economic stability and growth, our gratitude goes out to all of you who are supporting us through this struggle. For those of you who are familiar with the Women’s Center and long-time supporters of the work of the Battered Women’s Support Group, we want to let you know that we still exist and are providing core services to women who have experienced male pattern violence*. Our support group not only serves women from the surrounding communities, but women from various shelters as well. We have just renewed an agreement with Finex House shelter for disabled battered women in Boston to provide support group services for women in their Shelter Plus Care Program during the coming year.

Some of you may recall our successful efforts in the early nineties to purchase a “Panic Alarm” for women in our support group, as you were instrumental in that success. Hard to imagine now, but in those pre-cell phone days a Panic Alarm served women in our support group who were in danger of physical attack by an abuser (despite restraining orders) in circumstances where a phone wasn’t available to them. Now, even though cell phones are ubiquitous, not everyone can afford them. To remedy this and serve battered women, we are recycling used cell phones that will be refurbished and reprogrammed with 30 minutes of free airtime a month for women in danger to call the police or other emergency personnel. Phones we don’t use will be kept out of landfills to be given to people in similar need elsewhere. This is part of a program titled Call To Protect ShelterHelp established by the Wireless Foundation. We have set up collection points in Cambridge at: Walgreen’s Pharmacy (Photo Dept.) in Central Square; Trader Joe’s (Customer Service) on Memorial Drive; and Whole Foods (Check Out) on River Street, as well as at the Women’s Center. If you’d like to recycle that old cell phone in your drawer or closet for a good cause, please drop it off at any of the above locations.

Looking back over the last thirty plus years of our group’s existence, it’s peculiar to recall that women’s rights back then weren’t considered part of “human rights.” There was no issue of “battered women,” as the problem was simply not acknowledged. No sooner was male violence against women recognized as a problem than it morphed into the euphemism “domestic violence.” Then, rape as an instrument of war wasn’t considered a war crime. It took feminists a long time to establish that “women’s rights are human rights.” I believe that it wasn’t until 1996 that the U.N. acknowledged that the particular crimes women endured were crimes against humanity. There has been both progress and regression. We must continue to defend and promote the rights of women, as women, because, the world over, women are still at the bottom of the heap. While the women’s movement is inclusive of all women, other movements have never given the injustices done women the same acknowledgement. It is up to us to shoulder this task.

*Thanks to Jennie Ruby of Off Our Backs for the term “male pattern violence” connoting the use of physical force in relations of dominance and subordination regardless of gender fostered within male supremacist social structures.
Located close to the intersection of Pleasant and River Streets, is an impressive three story building housing the unique Women’s Center. Since coming into existence in 1971 when women took over a Harvard University building, calling attention to the need for a place where women could meet for various purposes, the Center remains known largely to those who avail themselves of the services offered by this excellent resource facility. As far as I know, this is the only exclusively women’s center in Cambridge.

My arrival here at the end of 2005 coincided with my staying at various shelters in the Boston and Cambridge area. While few of us who frequent the Center are without a physical residence, all would agree that regardless of our housing status, income, race, age, etc, we are all made to feel welcome by staff and volunteers alike.

Within the structure are three floors of meeting rooms, a children’s room, a library, as well as a computer/resource room—the most frequently used. My personal favorite is the kitchen. Without a facility to store and prepare the largely organic, vegetarian food I eat, it is here I come and am made to feel welcome as I create dishes which nourish the body while my mind finds peace from the noise of the outside world.

Not to be overlooked is the lovely garden out back away from street noise, where one can eat or smoke at a picnic table or just take time to rest and reflect. The garden itself yields vegetables, largely tomatoes, cucumbers, and herbs, which all women who visit can partake of, a first for this summer. Often donations of food are made to the pantry with the most popular items being spices, tea, and coffee.

Some activities offered at the Women’s Center are support groups on various issues and workshops on several topics. Women are encouraged to propose new programs. Whatever their interest or intent for coming, they are made to feel as though this is their home or place. However, it is up to each woman to make the most of her visit and of the services offered—all for free. For me, it is a blessing to have such a haven with accommodating individuals willing to listen and talk. As with life, the Center becomes what each person makes of it—interacting with others or keeping to oneself.

For me personally, I have learned much during my visits here. Food has played a central role contributing to my transformation on an inner and deeper spiritual level which is what I value and upon which I place great emphasis. Especially important to me have been the mostly philosophical and sometimes personal conversations enjoyed with Ming, who arrived shortly after I started coming here. We share our ideas with the result for me of heightened awareness even as we speak. On reflection these conversations have taken place usually around food and in the kitchen. I never realized how sharing of food can precipitate a sharing of ideas and an opening up of oneself—valuable in personal growth, which is what I seek. Additionally a sense of community pervades around food if several come together “to break bread.”

By speaking and observing other women in this environment coupled with my background and interest in anthropology and psychology, I realize we are all on our own personal journey at various degrees of awareness with each person having personal issues to address. While I am an independent individual trying to make my way in this world, I know I can only grow so much in solitude. The Women’s Center allows me to maintain my independence while also providing me with an opportunity to be interdependent.

Since learning and having an open mind are critical for me, I know my ability to accept others, listen to their stories, and try to be understanding and compassionate is enhanced and deepened.

Lastly, on a general note, I am amazed at how well women with such different personalities and backgrounds can interact without problems. The number of conflicts I have witnessed is minimal due largely to the professional handling of staff and volunteers. Women come here because they want to, not because they have to, which plays a key role in maintaining the peacefulness experienced here.

Jan

Would you like to be part of an exciting new group that is now forming at the Women’s Center? This 3-month group will be focusing on making healthy and positive changes in all areas of our lives. This will include making delicious & healthy food choices, helping you discover workouts that will leave you feeling jazzed & energized & offering lots of inspiration to make exciting & empowering lifestyle choices for a fabulous & amazing life. Please come with an open heart, ready to laugh, empower other women & make fantastic new friends!

The group starts on Tuesday, October 9th, 7-9pm You are encouraged to participate in the group from the very beginning in order to benefit the most from the group. Please contact Nancy (617) 840-4048 for more information.

Misogyny flourishes in our culture due mostly to the media’s propagation of lies about women. This group’s goal is to provide a social circle that promotes and supports resistance to these lies. We intend to help each other deconstruct and discredit misogynistic propaganda.

Films deconstructing media representation will be viewed on the 1st meeting of each month. The 2nd meeting of each month will be devoted to open discussions regarding the prior meeting’s film as well as our own experiences and ideas about the media in general, how it affects us, and what we can do about it.

We meet twice a month on Thursday evenings, 7-8:30pm. Please see our monthly calendar for the most updated meeting dates at www.cambridgewomenscenter.org.
Support Group for Single, Lesbian/Bisexual Parents

We believe that as single lesbian/or bisexual parents, we share many issues in common, from finding time for ourselves (including finding time for dating) to negotiating the various life stages our children enter and move through. It is our hope that this group may become a gathering where support, understanding, empowerment, and the sharing of one's journey/experience is embraced and encouraged. That this gathering/salon will allow all of us on the journey of being single parents to feel understood, so that we can support and learn from one another.

We will be meeting on the 3rd Friday of the month at 7p.m., so that if those in attendance wish to bring something to share with the group (fruit, juice, muffins etc.)... along with their compassion and knowledge, that would be great. Herb tea and coffee will be provided.

Lastly, this group is not an exclusionary group and as such is open to any woman who feels that she has something to share on the topic of 'being a queer single parent'. Please be aware that this is a childless salon, but childcare can be possibly arranged in advance. Please call 617-354-8807 for details.

Drum with the Batucada Belles

Since 1982, the women drummers of The Batucada Belles have been playing at rallies and marches in the tradition of the Brazilian batucada, calling people into the streets in celebration and protest.

The Batucada Belles are looking rejuvenate the group, now in its 25th year, to include a more diverse group of women, and to also include dancers! We play for social justice groups and love to play for peace rallies and for protests at the statehouse. We also want to play at private events for pure entertainment and dancing fun! We provide FREE drumming playshops to celebrate the spirit of women drumming. You can learn to play some of our traditional Brazilian instruments, Caixa (snare drum), Surdo (large bass drum), Tamborim (small high pitched drum), Repenique (lead drum that calls breaks), Ganza (shakers) and Agogo Bells (light double cowbell) or bring your own drums and other percussion.

We will teach you drumming techniques to play in a drum circle or lead a group of other drummers. We teach all levels, and have great drum rhythms for both beginners and advanced drummers.

Help us to insure that no event goes without that contagious energy of WOMEN ON DRUMS. Women drumming can change the world. Please check out the website: http://geocities.com/womendrumming/.

The Emotional Healing Group

Body-centered emotion, pleasure, and connection

The Emotional Healing Group, former Depression Support Group, has a couple of loyal faces, and we're hoping to see more by letting everyone know what the group is about.

In the group, we practice witnessing and supporting each other in our feelings while learning how to let others see who we truly are: women who want to regain the full scope of our aliveness by working through what blocks us from fulfillment and joy in lives. We share ideas and let each other see that none of us are alone with our feelings, no matter how defeated or isolated we may feel. The simple knowledge that others also struggle with difficult feelings, and the forum that allows us to support each other in them, can be very comforting and nourishing to women dealing with any kind of emotional crisis, be it depression, grief, or unresolved anger, fear or disconnection stemming from earlier life experiences.

We use some bioenergetics (breath and body) exercises to learn how to get more feeling and energy into our bodies, and we explore what it might mean to stay present with each other rather than get caught up in the stories. Please stop by with your curiosity about connecting with other women who are on a healing journey and need other women who will take that journey seriously and believe it. While societal messages devalue emotions as a source of pleasure and aliveness, we use the group to explore other approaches to our inner states, and entertain the possibility that life might be more fun if we allowed ourselves to focus on pleasure rather than avoiding pain.

The meeting time of the group is 6-7:30pm on the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of the month.

Financial Literacy Workshop Series

Tuesdays, 7-8:30pm

Space is limited. Pre-registration is recommended to ensure a slot. Register for any or all of the 5 sessions. Walk-ins are also welcome if there is enough room.

- 10/16: “Formulating a budget plan/spending plan and getting out of debt”
- 10/23: “Setting up a saving plan and meeting saving goals”
- 11/6: “Investment strategies for limited budgets”
- 11/13: “Using a computer to track finances”
- 11/27: “Conquering emotional and other barriers to dealing with money”
**Support Groups/Meetings in October**

- Al-Anon for Women (Every Monday, 6-7:30pm, except 10/8 Columbus Day)*
- Are You Living Your Most Passionate Life? (Tuesdays, 10/9 & 10/23, 7-9pm)
- Battered Women’s Support Group (Every Wednesday, 7-9pm, except 3rd Wednesday—10/17)*
- Bisexual Women’s Rap (Friday, 10/26, 7-8:30pm)*
- Coming Out Discussion (Saturday, 10/6, 1-3pm)*
- Drumming with the Batucada Belles (Saturday, 10/20, 4-6pm)*
- Emotional Healing Group (Former Depression Support Group) (Tuesdays, 10/9 & 10/23, 6-7:30pm)
- Financial Literacy Workshop 1— “Formulating a budget/spending plan and getting out of debt (Tuesday, 10/16, 7-8:30pm)*
- Financial Literacy Workshop 2— “Setting up a saving plan and meeting saving goals” (Tuesday, 10/23, 7-8:30pm)*
- Incest Resources’ Drop-In Discussion Group for Female Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse (Friday, 10/19, 6-7:30pm) Topic: Coping Skills.
- Reiki Sessions (Tuesday, 10/19, 10:10am-12:15pm)
- Single Lesbian/Bisexual Parents Support Group (Friday, 10/19, 7-9pm)*
- The Women’s Center Board Meeting (Monday, 10/15, 6:30-8pm)
- Thursday Night Gathering of Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse (Every Thursday, 7:30-9:30pm)*
- Women & Media (Thursdays, 10/11 & 10/25, 7-8:30pm)
- Women Empowering Recovering Together: An Eating Disorder Support Group (Wednesday, 10/17, 7-8:30pm)
- Women of Color Book Club (Friday, 10/12, 6-8pm) Book: *The Woman Warrior* by Maxine Kingston
- Women’s Gentle Yoga (Saturdays, 10/6 & 10/20, 10:30-11:45am)
- Writer’s Circle (Wednesday, 10/10, 7-8:30pm)

*Wheelchair accessible groups

---

**Incest Survivors Speaking Truth to the Next Generation**

A new quilting group, specifically for incest survivors who have been involved in helping other adult survivors and child victims of incest, will begin at the Women’s Center in October. The group was organized by Michelle Harris, survivor-art therapist, and Elaine Westerlund, survivor-psychologist, with several other survivor-colleagues joining them. The topic for the group dialogue, which will be facilitated by Michelle and will be captured in the making of the quilt, is speaking truth to the next generation.

This group is one of the three quilt groups being planned by Michelle as part of an Incest Survivor Quilt Project on the topic. A second group, sponsored by Incest Resources and the Women’s Center, and open to all incest survivors, is currently forming to begin after the first of the year. Anyone interested should contact Michelle at 617-669-1478 or mharrisatr@gmail.com. All quilts created as part of this project will later be shown at art exhibits that address speaking to the next generation about incest. Anonymity will be ensured for those who wish.

The stunning and powerful quilt created by the first survivor quilt group Michelle facilitated at the Women’s Center has its permanent home in our large third floor room. If you missed the dedication and unveiling earlier this year, please come by and view the quilt.

---

**The Yard Sale Is A Success!**

On September 8, the Women's Center held a yard sale at the home of Board co-chair Susan Noonan-Forster and raised over $850! As well as being a successful fundraiser, the event was great for community building, as neighbors checking out the sale also learned about the Women’s Center's history, mission, and activities. Thanks to all who contributed time and donations or stopped by to pick up good bargains for a good cause, and many thanks to Susan for her tireless hours of hard work. Special thanks must also go to the donor of hundreds of brand-new Beanie Babies to the yard sale -- possibly the biggest hit of the day.

---

**Thinking Outside the Cake**

The Women’s Center applauds Arlene Olivero for thinking outside the cake and requesting donations to the Women’s Center in lieu of wedding shower presents! Arlene and friends have generously surprised us with gifts of more than $200. We wish Arlene every happiness, and we thank her for this lovely and meaningful gesture.

---

**Lesbian Speed Dating Fundraiser**

Saturday, November 3, 7-9pm

All women are welcome. $15 with pre-registration (non-refundable), $20 at the door. 50 person limit — guests are encouraged to pre-register to secure a spot.

Email mimi@outinboston.org to pre-register or for more information.

Support the Women’s Center, and find the woman of your dreams!
We are most grateful to the following foundations and corporations for their generous support during the past year!!

ASD Foundation
Bushrod H. Campbell & Adah F. Hall Charity Fund
Cambridge Community Foundation
Cambridge Savings Charitable Foundation
Cambridge Trust Company
Clipper Ship Foundation
Cornyn Foundation
Draper Laboratory
First American Title Insurance Company
Hartley Corporation
John Donnelly Trust
Morrison Fund
SAP Matching Gift Program
Sheila O'Malley Memorial Fund
Susan Guidrey Memorial Fund
TJX Foundation

Thank you!

Judy Norris
The Women’s Center
46 Pleasant Street
Cambridge, MA 02139

Return Service Requested

Women’s Center Board Expansion

The Women’s Center Board of Trustees is looking to expand. If you are interested in participating in an active fundraising Board to help the Women’s Center grow and thrive, please send a letter of inquiry to:
Women's Center Board of Trustees:
46 Pleasant Street, Cambridge, MA 02139
or email it to
board@cambridgewomenscenter.org.

Day Time Helpline Volunteers Needed

If you have an open mind, compassion, and few hours during the day (12-2pm, 2-4pm, or 4-6pm) that you would like to make a difference in women’s lives, you can become a helpline volunteer at the Women’s Center. Orientation and training will be provided. Please contact the Center Coordinator Ming at ming@cambridgewomenscenter.org or 617-354-6394 for more information.

WISH LIST

- Dehumidifier
- Portable CD Player/Radio
- Desktop Computers: Pentium IV or Faster processor, Hard Drive 10GB or larger; Flat Monitors
- Computer Mice for PCs
- Printer for Computer Lab with Toner Cartridges
- CD-ROM drives & CD burners
- Good Desk Chairs
- Computer Tables
- Gift Certificates for Home Depot, Staples, Target, and Tags
- Printer Paper
- #10 Envelops
- Paper Towels and Toilet Paper
- Non-Perishable Food in Cans, Bags, or Boxes (Within Expiration Dates)
- Coffee, Tea, Honey, Cream
- Food Containers, Trash Bags and Sandwich Bags
- Eco-Friendly and Unscented Hand Soap and Dishwashing Liquid
- Recycled Cell Phones
- Mops, brooms, buckets