

Sheltervoice

Quarterly Newsletter of The Women's Shelter
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No Use Worrying

Written By Kathy Riley, Staff

I worry, that's my job. I worry about the resident who just lost her mother and how that will affect her. I worry about the transitional house that needs a new roof. I worry about the volunteer who is not feeling well.

However, this economy brings on a whole new set of worries. For the women we serve, finding a job is one of their first priorities. Our residents have always been given up to two weeks (as long as they use it wisely) to find work. This has never been an easy feat. The combination of a 5pm curfew, their scattered work history and often a police record shrinks the number of employers willing to hire one of our new residents. Their unstable backgrounds don't send a message of dedication and strong work ethics. However, managers are unaware of how far they have come and the struggles they have conquered even to be filling out an application. So yes, finding a job has always been difficult but in today's economy it is a lot more difficult.

Now, there are 20 people applying for the house-keeping job that might have only had 3 or 4 applicants just a year ago. Our residents keep riding the bus to every place they can think of, waiting in the hot summer afternoon sun for the next bus, hoping to find any job.

Odds are we all know someone who has lost a job and is looking for work. It is a painful and frustrat-

ing process. I watch each woman struggle to stay positive and marvel at the ways they console each other. When a resident does find work it is like the entire house rejoices and I silently say a prayer for the employer who took a chance on us.

For shelter staff, the problem with a resident not finding a job is compounded with the knowledge that without a job we can't move her into our transitional housing program. Thus, we are unable to free up a bed in the primary shelter for the next woman in need. It's a worry.

The economy also has a direct effect on donations given to the shelter. I've written many notes these past few months trying to express our gratitude for the gifts we have received. In these difficult times we have been especially grateful for checks arriving in the mail, for the ice cream and soft drinks that magically appear at the back door and for the Christmas in July project adding needed items to our shelves. The shelter's existence has always depended upon the generosity of others. In these times we are even more indebted to our faithful donors.

I realize that worry is a wasteful use of time. I remind myself of this daily and instead try to follow the wisdom of our residents - make a gratitude list. The shelter has continued to survive and even flourish in both good and bad economic times. Thus, these may be extraordinary times, but worry is not the answer.



Shelter Happenings

Written By Prentiss Hallman and Christy Slocum, Staff

Summer time at The Women's Shelter may be hot but it doesn't slow us down. Residents are still working or job hunting during the day, enjoying dinner together at 5pm and attending meetings in the evening. This makes for a long but rewarding day.

Currently the women enjoy yoga once a month. Ms. Marguerite teaches yoga the first Wednesday of each month—bringing not only a new experience for most residents but new skills for relaxing and relieving stress. The women also participate in an eight week poetry program. Our loyal volunteer, Claudia Brinson, provides an outlet for expressing, creating and healing. Furthermore, Zonta, a worldwide organization of executives in business and the professions working together to advance the status of women, has been providing a myriad of successful programs. We just completed a *Resume Writing* class followed by an *Interviewing Techniques* class. The women are very interested in broadening these skills. Zonta will also be offering *Is It Sex, Love, Addiction or Co-dependency?*, *Anger Management* and *Building Interpersonal Relationships* through the end of the summer.

In addition to these special programs, the women still attend three to four Narcotics Anonymous and Alcoholics Anonymous meetings each week. Former teacher and current volunteer, Ann Addison is still providing a weekly GED program for a few of our Transitional Resi-

dents and we continue to look for volunteers to teach basic computer skills to our residents here on-site.

We have had a few special occasions over the summer. Thankfully, Lake Murray has been up this season and our residents have enjoyed two trips to Kathy and Darrell's house for a dip in the lake. Jim Casey's Fireworks donated some sparkle for our own private July 4th celebration. These fireworks combined with a donated dinner created a very festive atmosphere here at the shelter.

Thanks to Chic-Fil-A in Dutch Square and Owner/Operator Brent Linn we have tasty Chic-Fil-A meals every Monday. Forest Lake Presbyterian Church also donates a wonderful homemade meal once a month. Both of these donations are delicious and help keep the house a little cooler when we don't have to cook in the heat of the day.

We continue to work with generous individuals and service groups that donate their time to improve the library, computer lab, and spruce up our transitional housing units. We are currently seeking book shelves and framed artwork. Please call Christy Slocum if you have an item to donate (803) 779-4706. Thanks again for your continued support.

Poetry: Therapeutic and Enlightening

Written By Claudia Brinson, Shelter Volunteer

Since 2005, the women of The Women's Shelter have been writing poetry, good poetry. Once a week the women meet for an hour with Claudia Smith Brinson, a journalist who now teaches writing at Columbia College. During the hour, the women look at poems by well-known writers and discuss the tricks of the trade, such as the right word in the right place or a surprising line break or a startling metaphor. Then, each woman reads the poem she wrote for that week – she reads it twice, without apology – and the group talks about what was heard and understood.

Women new to the classes often say they don't read and can't write poetry. They then proceed to enjoy themselves and impress their classmates. Writing about experiences can be healing. Learning to communicate clearly – think about how few words go into most poems – can be transforming. So can the praise that results. From October 20 to October 30, 2006, the poets were part of an art event, "Shelter," at Gallery 80808 in Columbia. The women's poems accompanied visual art by the cooperating artists of "Open Eyes," a statewide collaboration of women artists interested in "women's triumphs over staggering odds." In 2006, the shelter's Program Director, Prentiss Hallman, arranged a spoken-word event. The women made artists' books for their poems and read at Earthfare to several dozen admirers, including poetry slam competitors. In 2007, a collection of their works, "Poems from the Women of the Women's Shelter," was printed and is available at the shelter.

MERCY

By Resident Carrie H.

I had to fall HARD
to loose it ALL!
But a new day has come
Whatever pain comes my way
I'm glad I'm ALIVE!!
I want to take everything from the
inside and throw it OUT!
And forgive myself for all I've done,
All the wrong, all the lies,
all the hurt.
I just want to wash it all away
All the pain; I just want gone
The brokenness to disappear
Let mercy wash away all my
wrongs
And just BREATHE
Without the pain, hurt,
disappointment and heartache.

Room W/A View

By Resident, Michelle B.

Wide open space, Wide open sky
So much to see
Trees swaying, birds flying
People passing, people walking
to and fro
Sun rising and sun sets
Room w/a view
It's really a show.

Sink or Swim

By Resident Laura G.

To sink or swim
Some people think it's the end
To sink to the bottom of the ocean
Or give up before you've started
Those seem to be the only choices
But when you don't give up
The shore is just within reach
The struggles in life
Seem to just float on by
You finish the fight
No matter how hard it seems
You have the choice
To sink or swim

Taking Off Your Shoes

By Resident, Elaine K.

Walking and standing all day
Take off your shoes
Feel the air breathing on your toes
As you spread them and flex them
a feeling of pleasure at its simplest
rubbing them in the grass
As the cold against the bottom
Makes you smile.
Remembering youth.

FROGS

By Resident Liz J.

I went to the lake
I seen a frog
I said come here frog
Come here
He said ribbit ribbit
And he kept jumping
Jump frog Jump

Falling

By Resident, Deborah C.

Asleep in my bed
I had a dream
Falling, Falling
Falling Fast
Could not wake
Could not wake
Until I hit the bottom lake
Where was I
Did not know
Until I woke

The Bus Stop

By Resident, Michelle B.

Every day people of all different sorts
Riding the bus like it's a lifelong sport
No matter what time of day
People to the bus stop find their way
If ever you have a day w/ nothing to do
Take a ride on the bus
There's always a bus stop close to you.

The Iron Rock: City Bus Express

By Resident, Helen E.

Rise and shine, Rain or Thunderstorm.
I grab my peanut butter and jelly and get going.
While rushing off to my usual spot, waiting for the iron rock to make a stop.
Off I go bumping and rocking, as I meditate and pray.
Hoping that my higher power would let something good happen today.
Finally I reach my destination, busy corner rush.
Down there, its all kinds of fuss—there are conmen, wheelchairs,
dogpullers and the po po, to name it—outta sight.
Those iron rocks are built strong, there's also space for a bike.
So off I go, easing through the busy crowd.
Some folks are humble, yet others are loud.
There are people dressed in many different styles.
Some appear aggressive and some friendly with pleasant smiles.
As I sit there waiting for the next iron rock
a vision takes place that tells me to soar like an eagle, reach for the top.
Now here comes cool daddy flimp, strolling pass like he owns the iron rock
As I struggle up and down those busy streets, I become tired and hungry I hurt
from my legs to my feet.
Out there searching, its not easy to find a job but I made it,
I'm blessed by the best, I accomplished my part.

Welcome to the Porch

By Resident, Elaine K.

Meditation, conversation,
Drinking coffee and
smoking cigarettes.
You had a bad day so you sit down
Meeting of the minds and
Frustrations are let out
Welcome to the Porch

Evermore

By a Former Resident

Useless, No Good, Stupid
Worthless, Drunk, Crackhead
No More No More
Healthy, Alive, Happy
Grateful, Recovering
Evermore, Evermore

*The Women's Shelter
3425 North Main Street
Columbia, SC 29203
Address Service Requested*

*Nonprofit Organization
U.S. Postage Paid
Permit #1018
Columbia, SC*

WISH LIST

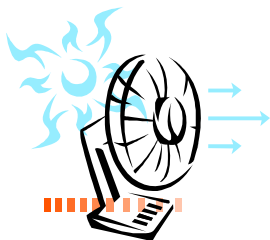
The Women's Shelter appreciates all that you do. We hope you know how much your time and donations help the families we work with. If you are interested in providing food, gifts, or other support, please contact The Women's Shelter at (803) 779-4706.

SUMMER WISHES

- ♥ Deodorant
- ♥ Disposable Razors
- ♥ Umbrellas
- ♥ Soda
- ♥ Ice Cream
- ♥ Alarm Clocks
- ♥ Framed Artwork

ONGOING NEEDS LIST

- ♥ Paper Products (plates, cups, napkins)
- ♥ Paper Towels
- ♥ Cleaning Supplies
- ♥ Laundry Detergent for HE washer
- ♥ Tall Kitchen Bags
- ♥ Salad Dressing
- ♥ Peanut Butter and Jelly



Stay Cool Happy Summer