

She Speaks: A Volunteer's Perspective A Message From Laurie Neary

I am proud to be the new chair of the Women Blessing Women Board of Trustees. On behalf of my fellow board members, I would like to express our most sincere gratitude to Sr. Nancy Vance for her leadership while she served as the chairperson of the board.

I was asked to consider becoming a board member by Sr. Pat Gist, CPPS, a former chairperson of the board. Because of my respect for her and the history of this organization, I considered the request. I hesitated because I had no previous experience on a board of trustees. However, I have had much experience during the course of my nursing career of working with the underserved population in our society. I also have a great interest in the welfare of mothers and their children. So it seemed to make sense for me to accept a position on the board.

That is why I started my involvement with WBW, but this is why I stay involved. This organization was a vision of a group of women religious who were not necessarily the "movers and shakers" of our community but rather pooled together their time, talent and treasure, as limited as those were. They showed prayerful determination to help our participants beat the odds that they were up against due to their life circumstances. I see that same determination in each of the board members. Their dedication is an inspiration to me.

The board and the staff can't keep WBW going without all of your support. I am asking you to please email me, lneary1@yahoo.com, with any concerns, suggestions or comments as to how we can move this organization forward and ensure its future as well as the future of our clients.



Laurie Neary

She Speaks: A Participant's Perspective

A Blessing in My Life

by Britney Perry

My prayers were answered the day I found Women Blessing Women. WBW has helped women such as myself to become empowered to achieve their full potential by changing negative and unproductive attitudes. The blessing of strength that I am acquiring is leading me toward a bright future. WBW is one of the greatest gifts that I have ever received. This gift came at a time when I nearly gave up hope of getting my GED or employment. I had attended several other GED programs, but I would quickly lose confidence and give up.

Fortunately, a friend knew someone who was attending WBW and mentioned that it is an all-women organization. The idea of not having any distractions from the opposite sex so I could focus on myself, obtain my GED and work on other skills was a plus.

Now that I am at WBW, I am building my skills and strengths. One skill I have been building is my math skill. I came here thinking that I was not good at math. I quickly learned that I am just as good as I want to be. My speaking and listening skills have improved, but there is still room for improvement. Other strengths that I have built on and now recognize are my diligence and dedication. One example of my diligence is when I was exhausted or not feeling well, I still manage to come to WBW. My dedication is that I

(Continued on page 2, col. 1)

Women Blessing Women Mission

To serve, bless, and empower women to achieve their potential, obtain living wage jobs, and break the cycle of poverty.



Women Blessing Women

223 Page Street

Toledo, OH 43620

Phone: 419.241.9789

Fax: 419.241.9791

Web: womenblessingwomen.org

Inside this issue:

"Small Things With Great Love" 2

We're Proud of Our Participants 2

Major Gifts Received 3

Quilt Raffle Benefits Endowment 3

Chili Cook-Off Results 4

We're Proud of Our Participants!



Patricia Nave



Alisha Flowers



Amy Armioia



Sharon Adams

Congratulations to the following Women:

Earned a GED Sept.-Dec. 2007

Sharon Adams
Amy Armioia
Andrea Feldstein
Alisha Flowers
Ottum Gears
Britney Perry
Krista Starkey
Tracy Zenz

Obtained employment Sept.-Dec. 2007

Daveta Atkins
Myra Brown
Teonna Gaston
Alisha Flowers
Shinkia Johnson
Patricia Nave
Elizabeth Pena
Britney Perry

(Continued from page 1) will get my GED and a good job. This dedication is strengthened each day that I attend WBW. WBW has been a blessing in my life, in others' lives and will be to those who come later.

Why Volunteer at WBW?

- Have no mandatory orientation or training.
- Use your skills and gain new ones.
- Enjoy challenging responsibilities that will stretch you.
- Get assignments tailored to your interests and skills.
- Gain a feeling of satisfaction from making a positive impact.
- Have a variety of opportunities available to fit your schedule.
- Enjoy free, safe and convenient parking.
- Have a friendly, warm and inviting environment.

"Only Small Things With Great Love"

by Julie Cummins, GED Specialist



I began working at Women Blessing Women as the GED Specialist in July 2007. After teaching in public high schools for four years, I was eager for a change — not for something greater, but something smaller. In our changing world, a high school diploma or GED nearly essential to earning a living wage.

While public and private schools, and traditional GED programs all fill important roles in education, WBW holds a unique place due to its mission to empower women to make lasting change in their lives. Each woman who walks through our doors is always treated as a capable individual. In the GED program, we generally begin with an assessment to see what the woman remembers from her schooling. From that information, we work together to set up a study plan designed around the specific areas in which she needs help. Classes are ongoing, so a woman can start anytime, not have to wait until a new semester begins. Assessment is done periodically so that each woman can see her progress and adjust her study plan accordingly. Since the GED test is administered weekly in various locations, when a woman is ready to test, she

is able to do so immediately.

Volunteers are indeed the backbone of everything that happens at WBW. Nearly all of the GED classes are taught by volunteers: retired teachers, college students, business people, and more. Classes are small, which gives each volunteer the opportunity to know the women by name and help them one-on-one. The success of the women is directly related to the dedication of these wonderful volunteers.

This individual approach and the relative smallness of WBW is exactly what I like about my new career. Even a small success, such as one woman finally getting her diploma, changes that one life and that one family in immeasurable ways. WBW is a treasure of which I am thankful to be a small part.

We're Proud of Our Participants!



Britney Perry



Krista Starkey



Ottum Gears

Thanks for Caring

by Director Chris Palmerton

Central Catholic High School, Victoria's Secret and Mercy College each donated needed program and operational supplies as their Christmas gifts to WBW. These items will make a significant difference to the program. Thank you for your generosity and caring.

A special thanks to Ellen Williams, a volunteer, for her incredible talents, dedication and generous time to create the new and user-friendly WBW web site. Ellen also designed and continues to do the layout and editing of our quarterly newsletters.

To check out the new web site, go to www.womenblessingwomen.org. Any suggestions or corrections, please contact me at 419-241-9789 or wbw@womenblessingwomen.org.

We are also grateful to all those who donated so generously at year-end.

Women Blessing Women Now a Better Business Bureau Accredited Charity

Women Blessing Women met all 20 standards of the National Better Business Bureau (BBB) for charitable accountability and received BBB Accredited Charity status.

BBB has published its first local Charity Giving Guide for businesses and consumers to make wise decisions for charitable donations. Look up Women Blessing Women's report at www.bbb.org.

Quilt Raffle Benefits Endowment



The Christmas quilt raffle raised \$1,378 for the Endowment Fund. Winner of the quilt was Jeannine Baibak. We thank all the volunteers who decorated the quilt squares. Special thanks go to Kay Shrewsbury and Sue Nowak for the idea, design, cutting and sewing of the quilt.



This beautiful finished quilt was raffled off and raised \$1,378 for the Endowment Fund.

Major Gifts Received

Thank you to the following for their support of the WBW mission through grants:

- St. Marquerite D'Youville Foundation - \$38,700
- The Social Justice Fund of the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia - \$5,000
- Sisters of Notre Dame Ministry Fund - \$2,400
- BP Fabric of America Fund - \$1,500

Did You Know?

Some Stats to Ponder

Our GED tutors deserve a pat on the back for a job well done! The GED passing rate of WBW participants in 2007 was 95.7 percent, while the state of Ohio 2007 GED passing rate was 76.8 percent and the 2007 national passing rate was 68 percent. —Dept. of Education

One in five adult Toledoans is functionally illiterate, a condition that dramatically affects their lives, their children, and the economic well-being of Toledo. —Read for Literacy

By 2010, people with less than a high school education or GED will be able to fill only 9 percent of all jobs. —The Week

Save the Dates

Women Blessing Women's **annual meeting** will be Mon., March 31, 2008, 5 pm-6 pm. More information will be forthcoming

The annual fundraiser, the **Spring Blessing Fashion Show and Luncheon**, will take place Sat., June 7, 2008, 11am-1pm, at Lourdes College. Cost is \$20. Lunch is courtesy of Outback Steak House.

Wish List

Donations of needed items are greatly appreciated and help us to deliver our empowerment program while reducing costs. Item donations are tax deductible. The following are items that are needed:

- Copy paper (8½ x11 white 20 lb.)
- letter size manilla file folders (new or gently used)
- 3-Ring notebooks, 1½" or 2" (new or gently used)
- Notebook dividers
- HP 92 black printer ink cartridges
- HP 93 color printer ink cartridges
- Pencils and pens
- Pocket folders
- Stamps (first class)
- Toilet paper
- Paper towels
- Coffee
- Coffee creamer (powder)
- Sugar
- 13-Gallon kitchen waste basket trash bags
- 30-Gallon trash bags
- LED projector (new or gently used)

Chili Cook-Off Raises \$5,777



The Sisters of Notre Dame cooked up a great chili.



The Sylvania Franciscan Sisters serve chili to a happy customer.

The second Chili Cook-Off was held on Oct.14, 2007, at St. Ursula Academy. The event was a success with over 300 people attending and 12 homemade chili entries.

We thank the following who donated the delicious chili entries: Catholic Chronicle, Lourdes College, Mercy Sisters, Notre Dame Associates, Notre Dame Sisters, Franciscan Associates of Sylvania, Franciscan Sisters of Sylvania, Franciscan Sisters of Tiffin, Ursuline Associates, Ursuline Sisters, WBW Board and WBW participants. We appreciate the sponsors for their support of the event: Pepsi Americas, Mercy Health Partners. The Andersons, Hafner Florist, Giant Eagle, Jet's Pizza, Kroger, McDonalds, Business Technologies, Sea Gate Office Supplies, SES Graphics, Sofo Foods, and Manhattan's Restaurant. Thanks to the churches/parishes, Catholic Chronicle and Toledo Free Press for promotion. Special thanks to 13-ABC WTVG as our media sponsor for promoting the chili-cook off, and for the live coverage on the day of the event.

Congratulations to the winners of the People's Choice Award, the Ursuline Sisters, and to all those who participated and cooked up some scrumptious chili.



The Sisters of Mercy chili display features a Halloween theme. Their entry was the only "light" chili.



The Ursuline Sisters joined in the fun by naming their booth "Carol's Catastrophic Cuisine." They won the People's Choice Award.