

She Speaks: A Volunteer's Perspective

By Ellen Williams, member, Marketing Committee



Ellen Williams

I retired in late 2005 from a 14-year career in the communications field, where I held a stressful job with regular deadlines. The first year of my retirement, I spent time at home catching up on little tasks I had put off for so long because of time constraints, enjoying the freedom of doing what I wanted when I wanted. After awhile, I found myself somewhat bored without the daily challenges I had enjoyed so much at my job. I needed some new challenges to keep my mind active and involved and at the same time, give back to my community some of what I had enjoyed. I hoped to make a difference for those less fortunate.

Researching online for volunteer opportunities in the Toledo area that might be interesting to me and beneficial to others, I found a request from Women Blessing Women in the Blade's Log, a listing of local volunteer opportunities. It requested volunteers with marketing and Web design skills. The organization's mission of helping women find living wage jobs and lift themselves out of poverty resonated with me.

I found the volunteer application online and faxed it in with my resume. Several minutes later, Chris called. "Would I come in for an interview?" That was the beginning of my new volunteer marketing job.

Since then, I've taken on some wonderful new challenges and solved some difficult and unique problems. I take a great deal of satisfaction that I have contributed to the marketing goals of WBW and enhanced the communications with the organization's supporters, volunteers, participants and staff. I enjoy editing and designing this quarterly newsletter, working on the annual report, brochures, flyers and other communications tools and especially the task of redesigning the Website utilizing an open source content management platform. I look forward to continuing my work with Women Blessing Women and hope I can continue to provide assistance with enhancing the organization's marketing efforts.

She Speaks:

A Participant's Perspective

Never Too Late to Achieve Your Goals

By Holly Williams

I am writing this with the hope of helping other women in the same situation as I was in. My life changed for the better on Dec. 10, 2007, when I was told I had to attend Women Blessing Women's program. I thought to myself, "not another over-crowded class!" Needless to say, when I arrived at the center, it was not what I expected. The staff and volunteers made me feel very comfortable and relaxed. They were there whenever I needed a shoulder to cry on, or just someone to listen. WBW was a God-send for me and is for many other women in the Toledo area.

I finally reached my goal and received my GED in March 2008. I'm now attending college. None of this would be possible without the help of the staff and volunteers at WBW.

I would like to tell the women who have lost hope: I am living proof it is never too late to achieve your goals.

Thanks to all the staff at Women Blessing Women.

Thank you to all who contributed their time, talent, treasures and prayers. These are truly blessings for the women we serve. Total value of in-kind donations:

Service: \$170,779.10
Items: \$35,118.66



Holly Williams

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

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We're Proud of Our Participants!



Ashley Butt



Cindy Mason



Tracy Zenz



Marisha Austin

Congratulations to the following Women:

Earned GED Jan.-April, 2008

Marisha Austin
Ashley Butt
Lynnette Claybrook
KaSaundra Hidalgo
Glenda Kignard
Williemae Lee
Cindy Mason
Nicole Robinson

Obtained employment Jan.-April, 2008

Lisa Allred
Jazmine Barnhill
Lateya Bolden
Tarah Ellis
Tiffany Griswold
Kristen Jennings
Nicole Michalski
Britney Perry
Eva Rowlett
Sandra Simmons
Aimee Smith
Tracy Zenz

Welcome New Volunteers

Jeanette Banks
Erin Battistroni
Ashley Bialorucki
Nicole Bishop
Sidney Condray
Robin Fetterly
Susan Hodgson
Crystal Jackson
Lisa Janowiecki
Charisse Kynard
Nadege Lamb
Krissey McGee
Rosanna McNeil
Bonnie Macy
Elizabeth Mattimore
Victoria Morris
Peg O'Hearn
Gwen Robertson
Dot Robylak
Sharon Speights
Sarah Springfield
Melanie Swade
Sheri Thomas
Kathleen Walczak
Emma Wolff
Julie Woodard
John Zielinski

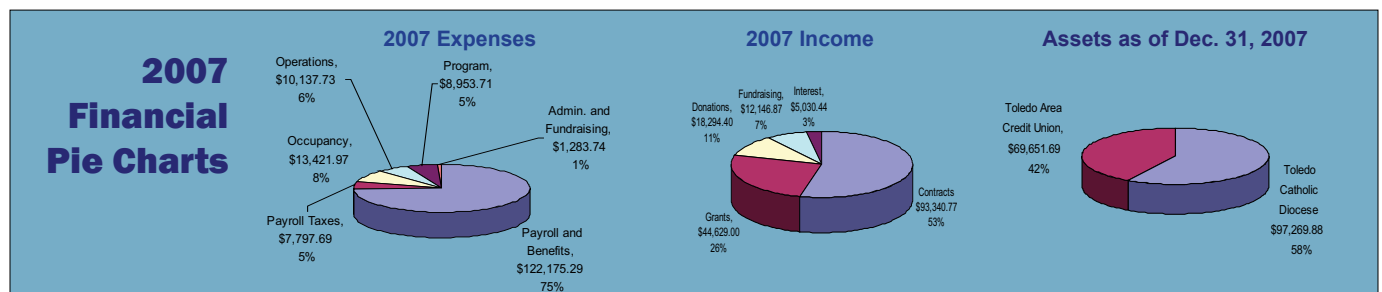
Skills and Strategies for Working With People in Poverty

From *Bridges Out of Poverty* by Ruby K. Payne, PhD; Philip DeVol; Terie Dreussi Smith

For women in poverty, the primary motivation for their success will be their relationships with volunteers and staff. An organization builds relationship through caring about clients, by promoting achievements, and being positive role models. As one looks back on her career, or volunteer experience, it is the relationships that one remembers.

Creating Relationships

- Seek first to understand
- Keep promises
- Use kindness, courtesies
- Clarify expectations
- Be willing to apologize
- Stay open to feedback
- Show appreciation for humor provided by the individual
- Exhibit respect for the demands and priorities of the relationship
- Assist with goal-setting
- Understand importance of personal freedom, speech and individual personality
- Use an adult voice (non-judgmental, free of negatives, non-verbal, factual, often in question format, attitude of win-win)



We're Proud of Our Participants!



Britney Perry



Holly Williams



KaSaundra Hidalgo

It Has Been a Blessing

By Lucy Pozek, intern

I am a sophomore social work student at the University of Toledo. I have been interning at Women Blessing Women since January, and I have loved every minute of it. The staff is friendly and welcoming, and the clients are full of life and ready to learn new things.



Lucy Pozek

To say that it has been a blessing interning at WBW is an understatement. I have never felt so fulfilled after leaving a day of work. I actually feel as if I am helping break the cycle of poverty just by showing up every Thursday and Friday. WBW is an amazing organization that has changed how I view the impoverished society of Toledo.

I appreciate everything that WBW has taught me and given me. I now feel as if social work is exactly how I want to spend the rest of my career. I will truly miss coming to work here with all of the spectacular women who have influenced me to never give up on myself!

An invitation



You are personally invited to attend Women Blessing Women's Spring Blessings Luncheon and Fashion Show. The event will take place from 11am to 1pm on Sat., June 7, 2008, at Lourdes College Gymnasium. The cost is \$20, which includes a lunch provided by Outback

Steakhouse and fashion show featuring models from the WBW Job Readiness and Education program. All proceeds will benefit WBW.

If you would like to attend this event, or if you are unable to attend but would like to give a donation, please send name and check by May 22, 2008 to: Women Blessing Women, 223 Page Street, Toledo, OH 43620.

2008 Marks Our 10th Anniversary

Women Blessing Women was founded in 1998 by the Women Religious of the Catholic Diocese of Toledo. The program at first provided outreach services of literacy and spiritual guidance to women and children served by four shelters. In March 2000, WBW rented a facility on Lagrange St., which was a "drop-in" center for women who came for basic adult literacy, GED, personal development workshops and job readiness skills.

In 2003 the organization focused on preparing women for the work force and continuing to provide GED and life skills. It moved to its current site at 223 Page St.

2004 was a year of transition. WBW became a GED "stand alone" site. Business practices were implemented, the board and committees were strengthened. In 2005

the first Spring Blessings Luncheon, and last Sole Sisters Walk were held. All programs (GED, spiritual retreats, job readiness and life skills) were merged into a more effective, comprehensive empowerment/job program.

In 2006 an endowment fund was established, the first edition of the newsletter was distributed and the first Chili Cook-off fundraiser was held.

WBW continued to grow in 2007 and produced an informational DVD, new brochures and memorial cards. An upgraded GED interactive computer program was completed. Two projects were held to benefit the Endowment Fund. WBW served more than 400 women; 320 active volunteers gave 11,792 hours of service, and eight spiritual retreats were held.

With blessings from God and you, WBW continues to be mission driven "to serve, bless and empower women to obtain living wage jobs and break the cycle of poverty."

Did You Know ...

76,191 reported people are living in poverty in Lucas County. This number is higher due to many people who are not in the system and therefore not reported.

Every 35 seconds a baby is born into poverty. —*Families in Peril* by Marian Wright Edelman



Where Does Hope Come From? by Laurie Neary, board chair

A *New Yorker* magazine cartoon shows two men in a dungeon without windows or doors. They are manacled to the wall by their wrists, ankles and neck. Both have long beards, they have obviously been there awhile. One is leaning over to the other, whispering, "Now, here is my plan." This cartoon shows us people with no apparent way out, planning a way out. There is something essentially human about a burst of hope in a hopeless situation.

When I read this excerpt from John Shea's *Daybreaks*, a Lenten Daily Reflections publication, I immediately thought of our Women Blessing Women participants. Many of them have believed or been told that their futures are bleak and uncertain, leaving them without hope. They have been manacled by their life circumstances and choices. Many participants do not have the tools needed for success or the support system to achieve that success.

When they find Women Blessing Women, they can finally say, "Now, here is my plan," to achieve my potential, secure a living wage job, and break the cycle of poverty.

Where does hope come from? It comes from some 300 volunteers giving 11,792 volunteer hours. It comes from the dedicated WBW staff who served 424 women. It comes from the \$32,116.66 of in-kind donations. It comes from the support of the religious communities. It comes from community support of our organization and its events. And finally, it comes from a Board of Trustees determined



to move this organization forward in spite of difficult economic times and competition for funding for non-profit organizations.

John Shea reminds us that hope is a state of mind, not a state of the world. It is a dimension of the soul, an inner quality we bring to situations. My vision for 2008 is that our community at-large sees what a blessing

of hope this organization is to the underserved women of our community.

Celebrating WBW as a blessing of hope and exposing this truth will allow us to attract people with vision, dedication and ability to lead this organization to greatness, of which we can hope and dream. Achieving this vision will take hard work and faith. We must be relentlessly committed to this vision in the year 2008.

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 needed:

- Copy paper (8½" x11" white 20 lb.)
- 3-Ring notebooks, 1½" or 2" (new or gently used)
- Stamps (first class)
- Toilet paper
- Paper towels
- Coffee
- Coffee creamer (powder)
- Sugar
- 13-Gallon kitchen trash bags

The following items are needed for office skills training:

- Used cash register
- 4 Printing calculators
- Large paper cutter

Women Blessing Women Receives Two Honors

Women Blessing Women recently received two honors for its Empowerment/Job Program.

The Negro Business and Professional Women's Club honored WBW whose mission mirrors its own. The award was presented at a Women's History Month program on March 4. Accepting the honor were Laurie Neary, WBW board chair, and Chris Palmerton, director. "One of our challenges is to get our name out into the community," Laurie said. "So it's a very big deal and a tremendous honor."

The award included a large, framed certificate with inspirational messages.

Women Blessing Women also received a proclamation from the Office of the Mayor, City of Toledo, dated April 3, 2008, in honor of all it has accomplished. The proclamation recognizes WBW as "a valuable asset to the Toledo community and its citizens through (the organization's) dedication to the underserved woman."

WBW Job Openings

Job Developer, part-time

Empower women in poverty to obtain employment. College degree required. 28 hours per week.

Bookkeeper, part-time

College degree preferred. Knowledge of Quickbooks a plus. Flexible schedule, two five-hour days per month.

Mail cover letter, résumé and three references by May 30 to:

Director

Women Blessing Women

223 Page Street

Toledo, OH 43620

Questions? Call Chris at 419-241-9789