

WOMEN IN CHARGE

independence through healing, education and support

Fall 2011

What Was I Thinking??

For the past year, Marilyn Heller has been teaching a Cooking & Nutrition class at Women In Charge. We asked her to tell us about it...

Very First Class

Class 1 Why did I say I would do this? I haven't taught anything in 25 years, have never taught adults or cooking/nutrition classes and it is a far cry from teaching grades 4-6. There is a lot of nervousness on my part. What are they thinking? Oh, that is what they are thinking - you are making vegetable soup without MEAT! It is becoming clear that a lecture/demonstration format is not going to cut it, especially right before lunch. Eyes are closing, on to Plan B... (Did I hear some snoring?)

Next Couple of Classes

Okay, maybe this is a better direction. Have everyone come up and participate. Wait a minute, everyone? For each class I don't know

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Cally's Story

My life has been a shambles ever since 1985, the year that my dysfunctional sperm donor (father) took the life of my mother who is supposed to protect, guide and teach her child. He killed her in front of the fourth grade class she was teaching. So, I was raised by strangers and by people who were only after the money. My mom's mother took us in first and got all the monthly Social Security money for the seven of us, but she wasn't

very interested in taking care of us. She put the babies, my brother and me, into foster care for seven years.

When I was 14 she sent me to live in Atlanta with another brother, I did not know him. He beat me and I escaped with the help of a neighbor. I hid my clothes in the bushes outside the apartment, and she picked me up in the morning and drove me to the bus station.

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Our Mission Statement

Women In Charge heals the spirit, builds confidence, and educates women in need so that they may provide a better life for themselves and their children.

We offer Adult Education and Literacy instruction, GED preparation, individual and group counseling, career counseling, parent mentoring, yoga and computer classes. The program is free of charge. A free on-site children's program is available to participants. September through May, hours are: Monday through Thursday from 9:00 to 2:30 PM. Summer hours are: Monday through Thursday from 9:00 to 12:30PM.

Cont'd from page one, Cally's story

My bus ticket was in her name. The authorities stopped the bus looking for me, but because I had changed my clothes, and my ticket was in the neighbor's name, they didn't find me. I went to live with my brothers. My St. Louis brothers were my support and very resourceful to me.

I have six children. My husband and I split up after I found out that he was using heroin, crack and alcohol. I heard that is why my dad stabbed my mom and was afraid the cycle would continue with me.

I used to take my kids to Crisis Nursery sometimes. I told the counselor that I hadn't found the right GED program. She gave me a list and Women In Charge was right at the top.

Now good things are happening to me. I have a neighbor I help out a lot, and sometimes send my son over to help with yard work. One Saturday my neighbor came over and said, "I want buy you a washer because you are an independent woman. You don't see young women taking care of children like you do." She took me to Overland Appliance and I thought that was really nice of her. I had needed a washer because I was putting 4 loads of dirty laundry into a double stroller and rolling it a half mile to the laundromat every Sunday.

I had been sleeping on an air mattress for a year. I told Vicki that I needed a bed. So a friend of Women In Charge had a bed and she gave me the bed, sheets and covers. That was so strange, the washer and the bed were not expected.

Finally I have found within myself what I didn't have; peace, understanding between my children and dealing with my own feelings. I see myself completing this program. The first of my goals. It will make my mother smile from the clouds.



Women In Charge was recently awarded grants from:

Children's Trust Fund

Boeing

Cardinal's Care

Jewish Community Relations

Thank you very much!!

We need:

Beautiful, used lunchroom tables and chairs. Most helpful are squares or rectangles that can be pushed together to make a long table.

Contact Vicki at (314) 432-7300 if you can help!

Attendees at the gala included: Victoria Sharp, Executive Director; Desiree, Rose, & Lisa, graduates; Claire Kellett, Honorary Chairperson.

What's New?

- Angie and Mimi passed the GED test in August. Both had failed previously and were terrified to try again. Overcoming their fear was a huge step and important lesson.
- In October, Carol Wofsey and Lynn Wolf began teaching the FDIC Financial Education class. The program covers topics such as: Borrowing Basics, Bank Accounts, Credit History, Credit Cards, Home Ownership, and the Importance of Savings.
- The annual gala set a new revenue record at just over \$46,000! Thanks so much to Claire Kellett from Channel 4 News for being our Honorary Chairperson.

What Was I Thinking, cont'd from pg 1

how many women that will be - from 4 to 12 possibly? Four works for me, but twelve women in a kitchen working together? Sounds tricky. Okay, made it through the first participation class, pancakes and yogurt parfaits. Pancakes were a big hit, yogurt parfaits, not so much....

But, this seems to be okay. A little chaotic, but they seem to like it! They seem interested! Someone said they would actually make this at home!

Time Goes On...

We seem to be headed in a good direction, but some classes are better than others. There are many variables, and anyway, you can't please all the people all of the time. When it comes to food, sometimes you are lucky if you please anyone. How do I find recipes that we are able to make in a certain amount of time, allow the flexibility of everyone being involved, and taste good and are nutritious? It seems like a lot to ask for, then... success! They love the ziti casserole with spinach, a healthy Weight Watchers recipe. They actually REALLY like it! The proof - it got very quiet when we sat down and everyone ate! And of course, that is the payoff... we all sit down together, staff and clients, and share a meal.

The Present

The surprises are often fun and make me smile. We are making chicken salad - I demonstrate: cut the grapes in half, chop the celery, medium dice, cut the chicken up. MEASURE, yes measure, and please follow my directions. I glance at the clock. This is taking way too long. I look around. We have grapes being cut into eight, yes, eight tiny pieces. There is celery cut up in tiny, tiny, bits. No, you may not add an extra 1 1/2 cups



*Top: Marilyn teaching her class.
Right: Students participating in cooking class.*

of meat to the recipe, unless we also add the same proportion of other ingredients. I turn my back, oops, the extra chicken made its way into that bowl when I wasn't looking. Yikes, we need to get moving. So, I ask the women if they have ever watched I love Lucy, specifically, when Lucy and Ethel are on the chocolate line, and in I Love Lucy fashion, I tell the women, "Speed it up a little!" When you get home and make this in your own kitchen, you may dice to your heart's content, but we want to eat this for lunch, not for dinner.

But seriously...

The challenge is finding menu items that will interest them, they are willing to try, and that are healthy. Over the next few classes they seem sincerely interested in the nutrition aspects of it, and there are usually a few women who really take it to heart, ask a lot of questions and give input. The women run the gamut from not knowing anything about cooking, to knowing their way around the kitchen and



being quite comfortable there. I was concerned about cultural differences, but as time goes on I realize a lot of it is just individual differences. We are all brought up in homes with distinct culinary tendencies. Some families cook, some don't. Some eat healthy, some don't. Some try new foods, some don't. I have decided it is about exposure and planting the seed. As a gardener who likes to work with native plants, I know that some seeds will germinate this year, and be fruitful, others may sit for a year or two before they germinate, and some may not germinate because they do not have the right conditions available. But if they don't touch the soil they have no chance of germinating at all.

**We can't say thank you often enough to our
sponsors for this year's gala. Thanks to them, this was our most
successful event ever!**

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1340 Partridge Ave.
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