

WOMEN IN CHARGE

independence through healing, education and support

Fall 2013

What's New?

Revenue from the 2013 Gala exceeded \$55,000 for the first time! Tours of our school provided attendees with a first hand look at our space.

Official word has been received! What we knew as the GED has become the HiSet (High School Equivalency Test). It will cost \$95 to take, a 138% increase in price, but still not quite as bad as anticipated. A few kind souls have already sent in donations for the special purpose of helping women fund their test.

Posters describing changes to the test included such data as:
GED Math: 1.5 hours
HiSet Math: 90 minutes
Not too dramatic of a change there (ha ha!). We will be finding out in the next few weeks about content changes.



Maureena's Story

I grew up in a well put together home – chores, curfew and rules. You wouldn't believe the choices I made! I got kicked out of every public school in the state because I had a knife at school. I was going to cut a boy.

I moved to a new school in 3rd grade and I turned into a class clown because being smart was not cool. I didn't do my work, I was

always in trouble. By 5th grade I was cutting class. I used call blocker so the school couldn't call the house. After school I would go to Heman Park to the Recreation Center and get home about 10 at night. In sixth grade I was a bully. I taunted and teased kids. I was rude and disruptive in class, getting in fights, getting suspended. I failed

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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.



Paula teaches science and computer classes, and team teaches math, reading and grammar. She is also in charge of our Facebook page and website.

Meet Paula

Hi! My name is Paula Grattan and I am the newest addition to the staff here at Women In Charge. I started at the end of August and love it more and more every time I walk through the doors! I am happy I have found a program where my 15 years of experience are being utilized.

I feel a special connection to the women who are apprehensive about taking the dive into the educational experience. I myself waited 10 years to go to college due to my low self-esteem where math was concerned. Once I decided to go to college I made a deal with myself that I would not stop until I graduated and became a teacher. Reading and Language Arts were my strengths, so no concerns there, but I had to take 3 math classes in college to progress to the college level 2 classes I was required to take to earn my degree. It was through that hard work and frustration of learn-

ing the material that brought me to a clear understanding of the subject. I truly feel that one of my greatest assets today is knowing how to teach students who don't understand math in a way they can understand it, as well as telling them my story and encouraging them that if I can do it, they can do it, too.

On the more personal side, I have been married to my amazing husband for 17 years and we have two great children, Gabe 10 years old and Marlaina who is 8. We were able to start our family through the loving gift of adoption.

I am so happy to be out in the world making a positive difference. I love my work and the people I am working with daily. I look forward to the positive changes we will all be experiencing while we work and grow together!

Maureena, Cont'd from Page 1

the 6th grade, went to summer school and passed. Seventh grade had a bigger crowd and so I acted out more.

At lunch I got into an argument with a boy and the next day I got a knife to cut him, but ended up getting ratted out and got expelled. I went to Juvenile Hall for a month. It was horrible, then I went to Project Learn, but I got put out because I was about to fight another boy. I didn't like him and I was just mean. There was no place else for me to go. I was 14, with nothing to do. I couldn't go to school, couldn't work. Trying to better myself was not an option because in my head I was the best. So I was in this vicious cycle. I was wanting the love and attention that my parents were not giving me, so I got a boyfriend and started getting love and attention – and I got pregnant..

Once I got pregnant and had that baby I knew I had to grow up and do the opposite of what everyone expected of me, but I was so young. I got a job at Church's Chicken but

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Where Are They Now?

Chuni—Will complete her CMT (Certified Medical Technologist) in November and enroll at Forest Park CC in January for Respiratory Therapy.

Bridget—works in catering, and at a temp agency

Charmaine—working at Target

I quit and started selling drugs, it was easier. Everybody – sisters & friends - were doing it and drugs were easy to get. That wasn't really working for me, so I got a job at Chesterfield Mall.

In 2007 I went to live with my son in low income housing in Valley Park. It was horrible, no public transportation, no car, very isolated. I got extremely depressed and I tried to commit suicide. It didn't work. Was it not my time? I don't know.

When the school made a hotline report on me because they thought my son's chicken pox marks were cigarette burns, I went to the school, cursed them out and got arrested for my bench warrants. I was depressed and out of control. When I got out of jail, I went into counseling for a couple months. But I got depressed again, tried to set the apartment on fire and the police came and put me into the Psych ward at St. John's. Then I was taking medicine and so drugged up I couldn't even hardly think – all I was doing was stagnating. Not to mention that I couldn't understand what the doctor was saying because he was foreign.

I started selling drugs again at 21, and I caught a case in the city: a felony possession of a controlled substance. It was my first time really being in trouble. So I signed up for Drug Court an 11 month program to stay clean and dry. It was so hard! But if you complete the program you get the charges off your record, so I needed that to have a productive and successful life.

After 6 months I started to really get into it, but then I got a letter in the mail from the Housing Authority. My lease was terminated because of the felony. I was homeless again. I gave up on Drug Court. I went on the run again. I started

Did You Know?

88% of our participants are
single mothers

95% receive some level of
public assistance

75% dropped out by freshmen year

96% were raised by a single parent

A typical committed student gains an average of :

- **2.3** grade levels in math
- **2.5** grade levels in reading
- **3.0** grade levels in language

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selling drugs again, but then some police came to the house and I picked a fight with them. They found ecstasy on me and locked me up. A month later I started probation. I received a suspended imposition of sentence and I just completed that in May.

I came to Women In Charge in June. I was referred by Lutheran Family Services, but what really drew me in was the Children's Program. My baby was 4 months old and I didn't want to leave her and I really wanted my GED. Just being around a lot of women at one time I can see that some people struggle more than I do and some people struggle the same. It makes me realize that my struggle is worthy. The women struggle with me and the teachers are at the end of the struggle. They are what I hope to

be like when I'm done struggling. When I look at the teachers I see success. I'm learning how to be more open, how to be more friendly, how to be less demanding of others and myself. I was stuck in my own world with no rules. My spirit is healing because I feel happy when I get up and go to school. I am happy to be doing what I want to do. Not doing what somebody else wants me to do or what somebody else thinks I should be doing. I'm way smarter than I thought I was. Before I came here I couldn't do Geometry. I hated all math. All the stuff I've been learning here, I love. And I know it's going to help me when my kids need help on their schoolwork. Paula says I am going to love Algebra.

Now it is time to take my test in November. I would like to skip a few days, miss a few lessons just to extend my stay at Women In

Charge. When I'm feeling like I'm ready to leave, where am I going to find a group of women that I can relate to just on everyday life - on an authentic level? These are some strong women and I'm going to miss it. This is something special and I want to be a part of it.

Lost and Found

After the Gala we found:

Rose and silver scarf

Pink umbrella

Pink and green umbrella

*Blue and green umbrella with
duck head handle.*

Call if you wish to claim one of these! (314) 432-7300



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