

WOMEN IN CHARGE

independence through healing, education and support

Fall 2014

What's New?

The Gala on October 18 brought in revenue in excess of \$51,000! Thanks so much to all who attended, or contributed, and a special thanks to Carol Wofsey who chaired the event!

Since July 1, we have had five women pass the HiSET! (formerly the GED) Three more women are currently signed up for the test. We celebrate every triumph with a party, and the new graduate chooses the dessert. We have had lots of brownies lately!

We have received another \$500 matching grant for the purchase of fresh fruits and vegetables. If you would like to help this cause send in your check!



Sarah's Story

My parents got divorced when I was two, and my dad moved to Kansas City. Living with my mom I got to do whatever I wanted, skipping school, whatever. When I was 12 she smoked weed with me and my friends. I was so used to my mom telling me I'm fat and ugly, that I'd never be anything. She always talked down on me, and she was my mom so I believed her.

When I was 16 I got pregnant with my oldest son. I was an addict by then.

At 18 I moved out to live with my dad but at that point I was already addicted to heroin. He sent me to Valley Hope in Columbia. I got out and stayed clean for about 6 months. Then I started talking to my mom again, smoked weed and I

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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. Summer hours are: Monday through Thursday from 9:00 to 12:30PM.

Cont'd from Pg. 1: Sarah's Story

feel that led me back down the road to doing heroin. At that point my dad was done, I had to move out, went to my mom's and just became a heavier user. A few years later I became pregnant with my younger son. He had ear infections and a lot of respiratory issues so my aunt would keep him for me while I worked.

In 2010 I was in a car accident. I have no memory of the accident, but I went to a concert the night before, and at the concert I was high and drinking. I was all messed up and I was staying with friends, three girls who I don't talk to anymore. My mom kept the boys, she kept calling me to come get them. I remember snorting Xanax before I left because I was dope sick – I was having cold chills because I didn't have any more heroin. Apparently somebody cut me off on Interstate 55 and I lost control of the car. They airlifted me to SLU Hospital. I broke my back and had a traumatic brain injury. Doctors didn't think I would ever drive, walk – nothing. I was in a coma for three weeks. Six months after being at SLU I was moved to a brain injury school. I don't have much memory of that time.

About 6 months after I got home I started to feel better. I would try to go see the boys at my Aunt's before school, but she wouldn't let me even help with the boys or see the boys before they started their days. Then I got the kids back, and I was using again, and didn't have anywhere to go. I stayed different places every night, and I would call my aunt up if I needed help to take my older son to school, if I needed cigarettes, just anything. I would ask her to bring them to

me and she would. But she told me she knew I was doing something bad and if they had to, they would get DFS involved. After about 4 months, me and the boys were in a hotel and DFS showed up, and the police. They found drugs and took the kids. They called my aunt, and the kids went to stay with her. Next morning I got out of jail and went back to the hotel, got high, and started looking into Rehab facilities. Probably a week later I went to Rehab. I had been to some very expensive places, but I learned a lot at Bridgeway in St. Charles. I realized I needed to change my life around. When I got out of there, I moved in with my mom and used my money for a lawyer to get custody of my boys. I had to start doing Parenting Classes and Drug Court.

I couldn't see the boys at all. After doing two months of what I had to do, my aunt wouldn't let me see the boys, so the caseworker would meet me at the library or McDonalds with them. I went to Sunshine Home because the caseworker didn't want me to live at my mom's anymore. That's where I met An-

drew. Andrew was there because he was bipolar and wouldn't take his meds. He wasn't listening to his parent's rules, and spending money like crazy. Andrew helped me move my stuff in and a couple weeks later he asked if I wanted to go to church with him, and I did. Then we started going to church every Sunday together. We would talk throughout the week and we would smoke cigarettes together. He never used drugs or anything, and I had just gotten clean. I didn't have my boys and I would open up to him and tell him how much I wanted to use and that's when he wouldn't let me go anywhere by myself. He would insist on coming with me, and making sure I didn't find a way to use. He said that I brought out the best in him. I really thank God for sending Andrew to me. I feel like He brought Andrew and his family to help me when I couldn't do it on my own.

I saved up my money and got an apartment. I asked Andrew to move in with me. His parents were okay with that. His parent's said

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Where Are They Now?

Brenna: working at Kohl's

**Dolly: interning at Probation
& Parole**

**Diane: St Patrick's Center,
Client Services Specialist**

**Marnie: working at Adeco &
Phillips**

**Three students have enrolled
in community college to begin
in January.**

Staff

Victoria Sharp
Executive Director

Ann Getz
HiSET Coordinator

Paula Grattan
Literacy Instructor
Tech Coordinator

Tina Tramble
Child Care Staff

Natalie Wills
Childcare Director

Lynn Chapman Wolf
Social Worker
Development Coordinator

Susan Wright
Math Instructor
Financial Manager

he was much calmer around me, more laid back, not so high strung. They didn't want us to get married right away, but to wait a year. After a year they planned the wedding, paid for it and everything! Andrew's mom never treated me bad, they really took me under their wings and that was hard to grasp too. After I met his mom about three times she started taking me shopping for clothing. She says I'm the daughter she never had.

My aunt wanted to adopt my kids, she didn't have any of her own. At every DFS meeting she would say I was so unfit, I would end up yelling at her. I think she wanted me to fail. There were many times I prayed to God to let me die. I would think "What's the point?" My family was all against me, my aunt didn't want to see the progress I was making. You would think she would be happy for the boys, that their mom is getting better. My whole childhood my aunt helped take care of me. I would spend weekends at her house. So it was just mind boggling to me that she fought against me getting the boys back. It still is.

Andrew's mom started taking me to all the DFS meetings about custody of my sons. She was basically a spokesperson for me – she told the officials everything I was doing: parenting classes, domestic violence classes and passing drug screens. After a year and a half I got the boys back, it was awesome! I wanted to set an example for them, I wanted to be a better influence on them and that made me look at going to school. Andrew's family totally supported me in that. My dad said, "Why would you do that?" I googled GED's and Women In Charge came up. Since I've been

In 2013-2014:

- 77 women attended full time, and 112 were served through outreach and referrals. 42 children attended.
- 8 women earn their GED's
- After 60 hours of instructions, on average language scores increased by 2.1 grade levels, math increased by 1.7 grade levels, and reading by 1.2 grade levels.
- The Gala provided 33% of our funding for the year. Foundations provided 25%, Individuals provided 31%, Direct Mail provided 5% and Other for 6%.
- 80% of expenditures were directly for the students. The remaining 20% is divided evenly between Fundraising and Administration.

here I feel like my brain has matured a lot. I still hate math, but the ladies make me feel good about myself and the work that I am doing. I'm going to take the test next week and hopefully I pass. This place has definitely changed my mindset, the women here have made me see that I can do something positive with my life. I thank God morning and night, I don't think any of it could have been done without God's help. For sure.

Sarah passed the high school equivalency test (HiSET) in September, scoring high in math. She is looking forward to going back to school to become a Medical Assistant.

Thank you Volunteers!

Marty Balfe,
Maury Boehmer
Sari Frieden
Sharon Headrick
Marilyn Heller
Sandy Marsh
Chris Mathias,
Shelley Probst
Sigrid Renner
Cathy Vivirito.

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Gala 2014




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