

WOMEN IN CHARGE

independence through healing, education and support

Spring 2014

What's New?

The Children's Program has a new room! Thanks to your generosity at the Gala, we are renting a larger space with an entire wall of built in closets. The children and their teachers thank you!

If you know anyone who enjoys a good **Trivia Night**, Women In Charge will be hosting one on **May 3rd**. See the enclosed flyer for details!

Three cheers for roasted broccoli! Huge enjoyment of the Fruits and Vegetables program continues, we have had a few donations to help us continue our weekly purchases for the Adult and the Children's Program. Bananas, grapes and strawberries are favorite breakfast foods, but we get frequent requests for roasted vegetables at lunch. Thank to those who have donated!



Above: Students enjoy writing class.

Brenna's Story

I was 15 years old and it was always about me. My mom was an addict, she was always gone. My father left at birth, and he married another woman. Then he gave me more brothers and sisters by other women as well. I was mad about that and so I acted out by using drugs, by skipping school, just hanging around

with the wrong crowd. My first drug of choice was marijuana. My great grandmother told me that if I used drugs and it would progress to other drugs, she could see that shortly I would be smoking crack like my mom. I always said I would never be like that because I saw my mom

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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.



Glad Tidings of Great Joy

Tension built as we approached the end of 2013. The existing GED exam would disappear and any passing scores on portions of the old test would disappear as well. We had five students who took the test in November and December. The scores took an unusually long time to be published.

Results of the testing started to trickle in, with two exceptions. Both women planned to attend our annual Christmas Potluck Feast and arrived not knowing results. They checked our computers one last time before heading into the celebration in the cafeteria only to learn that both passed. Screams of joy could be heard in the hallways, we had a pretty good idea of what had happened! What a great day, and the best Christmas present ever!

Above: Two smiling students, Cierra and Annisah, found out they passed the GED on the last day before Winter Break.

Writing Like Dr. Seuss

Do you remember who said, "I do not like green eggs and ham."? How about completing this phrase, "One Fish Two Fish". On March 2nd we celebrated the birthday of Dr. Seuss, and had a writing assignment in his honor. Each student created a poem that would rhyme, and be silly or utter nonsense, just like Dr. Seuss. Creating new words was an option!

For students who do not write much, if at all, such an assignment is pretty liberating. Once you start rhyming, how can you stop? You may start rhyming until you drop! Well, you get the idea.

The poem below was written by Lakisha. Her favorite was, "One Fish Two Fish, Red Fish Blue Fish". And in case you didn't remember, it was Sam who didn't like green eggs and ham. "I do not like green eggs and ham, I do not like them Sam I am!"

Once long ago in a far away place,
There was a girl who was lacking in grace.
She trips and stumbles all the time,
As if something is loose in her mind!

She's fast to talk and slow to listen,
That's how you know something is missing!
But with a book on her and the correct stance,
She was able to walk all the way to France!

- Lakisha, HiSet candidate 2014

Wish List

Wipes, Diapers,
Size 3 preferred
Sippy cups, Smocks
Pre-K Workbooks
Computer games for
toddler/pre-K*

*Suitable for an older computer
running Windows 98.

Pencils, erasers, folders,
tissues, paper clips,
unlined paper for copies
and lined paper for
writing assignments.

Brenna's Story: Cont'd from page 1

leave us – my great grandmother raised me and my brother – but the devil really had a hold on me. When I was offered more drugs I accepted. If only I said a simple no – but I made a conscious decision to say yes. I think I made my life harder by not listening to my great grandmother. So I said yes to PCP and crack cocaine, and I said yes to prostitution to get more drugs. Once I did crack cocaine I was addicted.

My great grandmother prayed for me throughout my childhood. My grandmother was addicted. My mother and my aunt were addicted. Once I became a full fledged bum/junkie/addict/prostitute I became a mother, too. My son was a crack baby.

My great grandmother sent me to my first treatment center in Salem, MO. I was there for 3 weeks when I got news that she had died. I packed up all my stuff and just totally jumped over the cliff. So I started back using crack that night. I was on the streets for 6 years. I was in and out of jail and treatment centers. When my son was a year old I decided the responsibility of being a mother got in the way of my using. I picked the drugs over being a mother at that time. My son went to live with his father. As the vicious cycle continued I got high with my mom and my aunt.

I would get out of jail and go back to the streets, the insanity continued. I remember walking down the street cold and hungry. I didn't have friends. I prayed and asked God to save me from myself, to please come into my life, to show me a better way. Then when I was in jail for the sixth time I decided I didn't want to use anymore. Between the prayer and going into jail for 120 days, I lost the desire to use drugs. The mem-



More Christmas Party fun.

ories of my great grandmother wanting to see me change my life began to haunt me. I decided to at least try not to use anymore once I got out.

When I got out of jail I needed a ride home; the dopeman came to pick me up. I was starting to see things clearer. He offered me some drugs and I said, "No, I'm not getting high no more." He wanted to be reimbursed for coming out to Jefferson County to pick me up. He kept insisting that I use, so we went to a hotel and I did what he wanted me to do, but I did not use.

Everything that the disease of addiction has stolen from me, God has replaced. I didn't know what to expect, but I never thought a new way of life without the use of drugs and alcohol would be this good. God has blessed me with a new child, a car and an apartment. I didn't believe I could have another baby. God protected me from HIV and AIDS. I was out there having unprotected sex, I slept in cars and abandoned buildings.

I had been trying to get my GED at many school programs, but couldn't stay focused. They were distracting and loud. I ran into a friend at the St. Patrick's Center who told me to go to Women In

Charge. The experience has been great. I have been inspired to become a productive member of society. I've changed; I used to wake up not interested in going to school because I thought I was stupid. My disease of addiction told me, "you ain't nothing" or "you aren't gonna be dirt"

When I got clean my son Devon was 4 years old. In the beginning of my recovery process I thought that since I had given birth to him, they would just give me my son. I had to get a lawyer—I have visitation rights but Devon's father doesn't follow them. He hasn't told me what school Devon attends, he is keeping Devon from me. It is the saddest thing in my life.

Now I have six years clean. I realize I can do much more than I think I can do, that I am a Women In Charge, not a victim. I'm getting to know me, I'm not letting people walk over me today. I'm still trying to get to see Devon. I want to be a positive role model for both of my kids. I came from a vicious cycle filled with bad role models. With me having a spiritual foundation I can be the one to break the vicious cycle for my family.



Christmas Potluck Party., this year was the best food ever!

Where Are They Now?

Meesha
Forest Park Community
College

Annie
Florissant Valley
Community College

Cara
Parish Maintenance
Worker

Bonita
Employed at Field's Foods


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