

# WOMEN IN CHARGE

independence through healing, education and support

Spring 2015

## How Much Do YOU Spend at Starbucks?

Suzanne Hough and Leslie Peyton from Carrollton Bank led classes in *Setting Financial Goals, Budgeting* and *Building a Strong Credit History* at Women In Charge earlier this winter. Realizing that a \$4 cup of coffee three times a week adds up to \$600 per year was an eye opener for our participants. Cigarettes, soda and manicures add up even more!

In goal setting, the instructors emphasized the importance of having an emergency fund, hopefully equal to 6 months of income. Using money that would be spent on items such as cigarettes can go a long way toward building the fund! Purchasing a car, a home, or

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## Carla's Story

I lived in a big household at Lucille and Mimeka with my mom, grandmother, uncle, sister, a few aunties—and two of the aunties had 8 children apiece! Me and my sister were the ones who were raised properly, the other were wild and messy but we were raised differently. As a child, I didn't talk back to our mother. We knew how to keep the house clean, but we were all in

the same house with my aunts who were alcoholics and drug addicts.

I didn't care too much about high school. At Sumner there was just too much going on. I felt I was smarter than I needed to be in that school. I got put out for getting caught in a hall sweep. They weren't teaching me nothing anyway.

In 2003 my grandmother passed

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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.

*Carla's Story: Cont'd from page 1*

away and we moved to Overland. I got enrolled in Ritenour. My boyfriend thought it was okay to hit me, so I learned to fight back. It turned me violent. I got put out for fighting with a teacher, he was an older guy, we were fighting for about 5-10 minutes. I stabbed him in the head with a rattail comb. He was the one who was bleeding, I had a few bruises. They gave me a week in Clayton Juvenile Detention Center for that. They put me out of every school in the county. I was rough around the edges. Juvy (Juvenile Hall) made me not want to go to jail no more. Like whatever you do, do not get caught!

I met this guy, Rico, and he asked me to do his hair for him. I did his hair every two weeks. He was a flashy type: clean and good looking. He was a weed man, we formed a friendship. He used to say, "You don't pay attention to me." A year after I met him we had sex a couple times. I didn't look at it as a relationship at all, it was strictly business to me; just braiding and weed.

I met a guy named Tyrell and we exchanged numbers and started talking. I didn't know Rico had more feelings for me, and I guess he had trouble with Tyrell and me. A few weeks later a girl asked me if I knew somebody with some weed. That's where it all went sour. I called Rico, although I still owed him \$15. A few days later, on my birthday, I was getting out of the car when Rico comes up and slaps me. We got into a fight. He left and I started walking towards where he lived and I saw him in the alley. I walked towards him as he was reaching in a trash bag for something. And while I was talking he flashed a gun in my face and cocks the gun. I walk away as he's pulling the trigger. The first bullet missed, the second one hit me in the collarbone, and the third shattered



my elbow. I saw my elbow bone fly across the street. He was sentenced to 15 years. He threw his life away for nothing!

The shooting changed everything about me, it changed my self-esteem. Before I thought I was perfect, afterwards I was deformed. My confidence was broken, I didn't want to be in the world as I used to, I was depressed. It took me a while to get all that back, probably a full year for me to want to go outside and be seen by other people.

***"It helped me to look at violence a different way..."***

I was afraid of living my life with a deformity, it took something from me. It helped me to look at violence a different way; before I didn't have a problem hurting somebody. It helped me to slow down my temper and be more calm, not a firecracker all the time.

After surviving the second bullet I felt like I was here for a reason and I was confused, I didn't know what the reason was. I started to heal with the help of my mother. I still don't know why I didn't die

that day. As time goes on, I'm starting to think the reason was my mom was getting sick. I had to help take care of her and my uncle. So my purpose for living at that moment was to take care of my mom and my uncle all the way up to the point that she died, which was on Christmas Eve 2013. That took the life from me, I am still dealing with that today. My mom told me before she passed to get my GED and I told her I would. She kept trying to get her GED, all the way up until she died. That still makes me cry. After she died I continued to take care of my uncle until March 2014, which is what my mom asked me to do.

Eventually I moved in with a guy named Gerum. I was trying to find myself all over again; find a job, get in school, clear my mind. It was hard. I was still depressed from my mother's death. In September 2014, I got a job at Steak n Shake. I thought I had the flu for 5 weeks, I was so sick I got fired. Actually, I was pregnant, and was sick my whole first trimester. I was going crazy just sitting in the house. I called my cousin Brandy and she told me to go to Women In

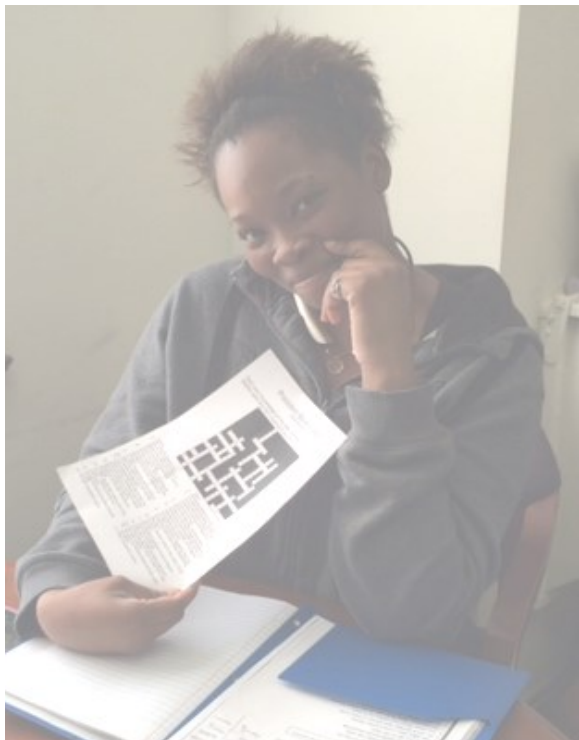
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*Carla's story cont'd from Page 2*

Charge. I had tried to get my GED at the Met Center, but there was too much going on. The classes were too big, everybody on their phones, and I couldn't stay focused. I had tried the Ritenour Adult Education Center, the teacher was too old, so I went for a few weeks and stopped going. I needed to be in a classroom where it would be more hands on, like Women In Charge. Women In Charge has made me more confident, and I feel like I can get it. I'm learning what I didn't know before and I want to do it. One of these days I will be a graduate of Women In Charge. I love Paula, she's a bundle of joy. She has a big sense of humor. I love all the teachers.



*Carla continues to be a mature, diligent student. She's a great example to the younger participants. We love her, too!*



***Learning Government vocabulary through crossword puzzles.***

## I Can't Do Anything Right!

Cognitive Behavior Therapy Makes an Impact at Women In Charge

People suffering from depression may have thoughts, such as "I can't do anything right", whereas a healthier thought pattern might be "I'm not good at this <specific task>". Learning to see yourself in a more realistic light, as having both strengths and weaknesses can actually change your perceptions and help alleviate depression.

In the past when Women In Charge has identified individuals with depression we have tried to refer them out to other agencies. Rarely do these individuals pursue the help they need, and they slowly drift away from Women In Charge.

The Missouri Foundation for Health (MFH) has funded a new initiative at Women In Charge to help us assess depression in our students and provide Cognitive Behavior Therapy. We now use the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI\_II), a 21 question multiple-choice inventory. Not only can we serve our participants better, but funders like to see measured outcomes as a way to gauge our usefulness. These tests are costly, so we are very grateful to have them funded. Also, we are now able to assess for anxiety, hopelessness and suicide risk in adults and teens.

Cognitive Behavior Therapy proposes that dysfunctional thinking, which influences mood and behavior, is common to all psychological disturbances. When people learn to evaluate their thinking in a more realistic and adaptive way, they experience improvement in their emotional state and in their behavior.

*Finance Class cont'd. from Page 1*

attending college were typical goals. One woman shared that she was too old for college, she had “missed her chance”. Another student quickly said, “Are you kidding? It’s never too late. You can totally do it”, which surprised and encouraged our older student. Another woman said, “I guess I don’t have any goals, I mean, I just want to stop my impulsive spending and start saving money...that’s all!” The instructor said, “Great, those are two fantastic goals!”

During budgeting week students were asked to keep track their expenses. Even when receipts weren’t kept, it helped our students remain mindful of how much they

spent.

Building credit history immediately became controversial as the women learned that potential landlords and employers look at their credit scores. At first it seemed unfair, but the instructors pointed out it was a good way to find out if they were likely to pay their obligations. One student shared that her mother had put her name on the family utility bill when she was just a child. When the bills went unpaid the daughter’s credit history was damaged. Many women shared how hopeless it felt to not be able to pay their bills on time.

Valuable lessons were learned by our students. Thank you to Suzanne, Leslie, and Carrollton Bank!

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