

Rational Justice

Spring 2015 Issue



Sisters Program Receives Two MANDI Awards

The Benedict Center is proud to announce our Sisters Program won two MANDI Awards: the PNC Trailblazer Award and the Wells Fargo People's Choice Award.

The Milwaukee Awards for Neighborhood Development Innovation (MANDI) highlight the unsung heroes working to revitalize Milwaukee's most distressed urban neighborhoods. The MANDIs were hosted by LISC Milwaukee and sponsored by US Bank.

Finalists were selected in a number of categories and winners were announced at an Oscars-style gala at Potawatomi Hotel & Casino on April 15. Over 800 people including non-profit, corporate and public sector leaders were in attendance.

The PNC Trailblazer Award recognizes an innovative approach to a community problem. The Sisters Program works in conjunction with police and prosecutors to provide support to women engaged in street prostitution so they can begin the journey toward healthier, safer lives.

We would like to thank LISC Milwaukee, PNC Bank, Wells Fargo and all the sponsors that uplifted so many positive programs happening in Milwaukee.

We are also proud of our Sisters Diversion Team, which includes Milwaukee Police Department - District 3, the District Attorney's office, the Medical College of Wisconsin, and neighborhood groups like Washington Park Partners.

Pictured above: Jeanne Geraci, center, from left: Sgt. Theresa Janick; Police Officer Scott Lesniewski; Cindy Nicholson, Development Coordinator; Kim, Sisters Leader; Donna Hietpas, Sisters Program Director; Stacy Young, Medical College of Wisconsin; Chris Ladwig, Assistant District Attorney; and Captain Jason Smith



Sang Kim, Regional President, Wells Fargo; Jeanne Geraci, Executive Director, Benedict Center; Cindy Krahenbuhl, Guest House; and Lori Vance, Express Yourself Milwaukee

New Reentry Program Provides Support, Guidance to Women at the House of Correction

When a woman completes her sentence at the Milwaukee County House of Corrections, her return to the community can be daunting. Where will she live? How will she support herself and her children? Where will she get treatment? In order to help women make this transition, the Benedict Center now provides the Women's Reentry Program at the Milwaukee County House of Corrections (HOC).

The HOC, located in Franklin, is generally designated for people with sentences of one year or less. Since the transition of HOC management from Sheriff Clark to Superintendent Michael Hafemann in 2013 there are now several programming opportunities, including alcohol and drug treatment and electronic monitoring.

The 2013 report, "Meeting the Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Needs of Women Incarcerated at the House of Correction," identifies pre-release reentry programming as the most significant priority for women incarcerated at the HOC.

The Reentry Program is based on needs of women identified in local research conducted by a UW-Milwaukee team: Dr. Susan Rose, Dr. Thomas LeBel and Dr. Joan Blakey. The 2013 report, "Meeting the Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Needs of Women Incarcerated at the House of Correction," was sponsored by the Greater Milwaukee Foundation and identifies pre-release reentry programming as the most significant priority for women incarcerated at the HOC.

Michael Hafemann, Superintendent of the HOC, recognized this priority and contracted with the Benedict Center to provide Reentry services. According to Hafemann, "Since we took over operations at the House of Correction in May 2013, we have strived to develop and implement evidence-based programs that address the specific criminogenic needs

as well as other victim/offender issues facing [the women]. The Benedict Center Reentry Program effectively addresses this need of providing female offenders the resources, support and guidance they need while housed at the HOC, as well as connections to the resources and support they will need to access and use once they are released from custody."

Participants are enrolled in the following support groups, which meet once a week for 10 weeks: Seeking Safety (coping skills for trauma); Life Skills; and Women's Sexuality, for women who have traded sex either through prostitution or sex trafficking.

Each participant also meets individually with Reentry Specialist, Kerri Corcoran, on a weekly basis to create a post-release plan that addresses needs and goals including transportation, housing, healthcare, treatment, child reunification, employment and legal advocacy. The ultimate goal of this work is to assure a successful reintegration into the community. After release, Kerri keeps in contact with the women, via telephone or in person at the Benedict Center.

"With Kerri Corcoran working with female offenders within HOC, we have recognized an invaluable resource. Having a full time member available has given the female offenders hope and something to strive for, to become stronger and to use more tools to succeed." – Jose Hernandez, HOC Assistant Superintendent

Recently, a participant who was released in January used the resources and referrals provided by Kerri to enter a treatment program and receive a needed surgery. Recently, she told Kerri that she attributes much of her success to the groups and individual work she completed while at the HOC.

They continue to speak every Friday.



We're On the Move!

The Benedict Center will be relocating at the end of this year. The move is coming at an opportune time, as it gives us a chance to proactively address programmatic needs for our future. We have engaged Siegel-Gallagher, Inc. to assist in the search and are considering a wide range of facility options between 5,000 and 8,000 sq. ft. on the City's near Northwest side. We welcome anyone to submit possible candidate properties to jprentki@benedictcenter.org.

To make our transition successful, we have set up a Moving Fund to help cover the costs of moving. Stay tuned for details!



Left to right: Ann Forrer, Barb Doermann, Pam Ruschman, Shari Van Beek, Kathie Zirtzlaff, and Hester Besteda

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Honoring Women Who Share the Joy of Creativity

The Benedict Center would like to recognize a special group of volunteers who do crafts with Benedict Center women every month—the Mequon Crossroads Presbyterian Church women.

Each month, Crossroads volunteers visit and lead projects ranging from knitting and crocheting to holiday-themed decorations and handmade cards to share with family and friends. Benedict Center women look forward to the Crossroads women's arrival, as it's a time for socializing and enjoying new creative experiences together.

The relationship with the Crossroads women began a little over 10 years ago when parishioner Jan Martin heard Anne Luber, longtime jail visitation coordinator volunteer and supporter of the Benedict Center, speak to her parish about our mission and work with justice-involved women. Jan and several other Crossroads women met with Benedict Center staff to see what they could do to help. It was then that they decided to share their artistic talents. Today, it is still going strong.

The Benedict Center deeply appreciates the Crossroads women's commitment to our women and how they generously share their time and talents.



Wish List

We are so grateful for the generous response to the last publication of our Wish List, especially to Pastor Brenda Kearney and the Maranatha Christian Fellowship congregation!

The women need the following items:

- Warm coats *all sizes, especially XL–XXL*
- Warm socks
- Towels
- Toothbrush/toothpaste
- Feminine napkins and tampons
- Deodorant
- Toilet paper
- Wet wipes *individually wrapped*
- Reading glasses *various strengths*
- School supplies, including: notebooks, pocket folders, pens, notepads
- Business casual clothing *appropriate for a job interview*

Items can be dropped off at the Benedict Center: 135 W. Wells Street, Suite 700.
We appreciate your help!

The Benedict Center is a proud member of



Choose to support us through your workplace gift!



Benedict Center

Compassion • Justice • Action • Transformation

135 W. Wells Street, Suite 700 • Milwaukee, WI 53203

Non-Profit Org.
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SAVE THE DATE

Sisters Program Open House

Thursday, May 14, 11:00am – 2:00pm

3624 W. North Avenue, 2nd floor

Friends of the Benedict Center Spring Luncheon

Monday, June 8, 11:30am

Handbags for Justice

Thursday, September 17, 2015

11:15am Silent Auction

12:15 – 1:30pm Luncheon and Program

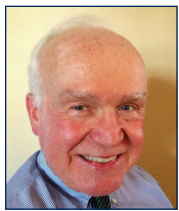
Italian Community Center

Rational Justice is a publication of the Benedict Center

*Thank you for your support and interest in our work.
Share this newsletter with friends and colleagues!*

Newsletter designer: Ilona Gonzalez

Benedict Center Elects New Board President



Steve J. Steiner, retired Senior Vice President of North Shore Bank, was elected Benedict Center President by the Board of Directors during our 2015 Annual Meeting.

Originally recruited by outgoing Board President Maricolette Walsh and Board

Member Tim Hawks, Steve shares their commitment to finding better, more socially just and effective alternatives to our current penal system.

According to Steve, “under the leadership of Jeanne Geraci and Maricolette, the Benedict Center has become a stronger organization capable of expanding the number of women it serves and continuing to improve outcomes for its clients. As public attitudes regarding the failure of our current prison system become more widespread, there will be new, exciting opportunities to achieve more just treatment for the members

of our society that the Benedict Center has supported since its founding 40 years ago.”

We look forward to Steve’s leadership and thank outgoing President, Maricolette Walsh, former Mayor of Wauwatosa, for her years of service.

When asked to reflect on her experience, Maricolette shared, “Today we are in a favorable position financially, we have a strong Board of Directors of very dedicated people, a professional and committed staff, our programs have expanded and we are better able to fulfill our mission. I’m very grateful to the Benedict Center for giving me the opportunity to share in the successes along the way and I am confident that our new board leadership will continue to expand and grow the organization even more into the future.”



Help support the women of the Benedict Center as they work to improve their lives and strengthen their families! Use the enclosed envelope or donate online at: www.benedictcenter.org



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