

Mercy Center for Women

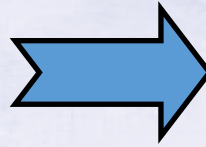
EMPOWER!

www.mcwerie.org

1039 East 27th Street / Erie, PA 16504 / (814) 455-4577
Fall 2018 Newsletter



*Celebrating 25 Years of Changing Lives
with a Touch of Mercy*



Hope House on East 2nd Street and GROW (Grass Roots Opportunities for Women) at East 8th and French Streets combined into Mercy Center for Women at 1039 East 27th Street

In 1994 the Sisters of Mercy decided to combine the services of Hope House, an emergency shelter for homeless women and children, and GROW, an outreach organization full of support services. Since then countless women and their children have achieved self-sufficiency and hope for the future.

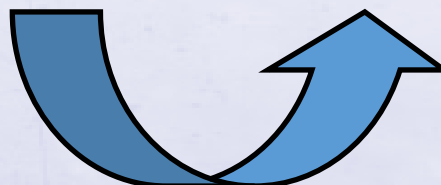
You are invited to join us over the next 15 months to celebrate God's faithfulness and meet some of the people you have helped along the way. See inside for DeQuan's inspiring story!



DeQuan's graduation from Indiana University of Pennsylvania 2017



DeQuan Stubbs and his Mom Tracey from 2009



DeQuan and his little brother Nick



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Dear Friends

Welcome Autumn! Is there a season more beautiful and unique? There is something about the beauty of foliage in the fall, apple cider, sweet smell of grapes in the vineyard and pumpkin décor that warms the heart. As the seasons change the Mercy Center for Women continues to transform lives of women and children.

We have many blessings to be grateful for at the Mercy Center. This summer highlighted picnics, beach visits and making memories. A former resident, Brittany Garrity organized an Alumnae picnic for the women and children at the Mercy Center. It was good to see many of the women and children return. Laughter, tasty food and memories filled the air. One area I admire about the women and children we serve is their friendship. Women enter our program from all over. It is a new beginning to embrace with unfamiliar faces. They come together as friends and family.

The Mercy Center for Women is getting ready to kick-off our 25th Anniversary. On the front cover of the newsletter shares the story of how the Mercy Center for Women began their journey. The Sisters of Mercy had a 5-bedroom home on the lower east side in the mid-80's to house women and children. Their outreach grew significantly and in 1994 they purchased the former Holy Rosary Convent. The Sisters of Mercy's vision brought together women and children fleeing domestic violence, homelessness and addiction. The dedicated and committed staff throughout the years continued moving their mission forward.

If you did not attend the Alumnae Dinner, Lora Roberts shared her story as she was named the Alumna of the Year. Lora stays true to the Mercy mission through volunteerism and mentoring women at the Mercy Center and WE (Former PWG). Lora's commitment to her recovery inspires all of us to stay faithful to ourselves in our daily lives. Beginning with positivity at the start of each day makes a difference on what we are called upon to do and be.

Take the time to enjoy a walk on a gorgeous fall day. Bake a pie, carve a pumpkin, invite someone for Thanksgiving dinner. It is often the smallest gestures and acts of kindness that touch the heart of family and friends. It never hurts to "Pay it Forward" to a stranger in need. We are about to embark upon the best time of the year. To give is a gift. To receive is a present. And to embrace change is our future.

Smile, Pray, Be Kind,

Jennie Hagerty



"The giving of love is an education." ~ Eleanor Roosevelt



A huge THANK YOU to everyone who gave to Mercy Center on Erie Gives Day! It was a record-breaking day both in number of donors and total amount of donations! Your generosity will help us provide life-changing programs for the women and children who seek our help. Thank you also to the companies who provided the pro-rated match, and to the employers who offer matching funds for donations made by their employees. If your employer matches donations, please remember to report your Erie Gives donation to begin the match process. You are a blessing to Mercy Center!

No amount of regret changes the past. No amount of anxiety changes the future. But any amount of gratitude can change things right now.

Lora Roberts, Alumna of the Year 2018

On September 13, 2018, Lora Roberts reached the goal she had established for herself soon after she entered the Mercy Center for Women program in 2012. After attending her first Alumnae Dinner where a former MCW graduate was honored as the Alumna of the Year, Lora declared, "One day, I will be the Alumna of the Year." And so, she is. In her acceptance speech at the 2018 event, Lora briefly told her story of the highs and lows she has experienced. Here is the rest of her story...so far.

Lora grew up as one of two children. She suffered from social anxiety and describes herself as a lost kid, always looking for love. She wanted for nothing because her Dad cared for all her needs. But he worked 12-hour days and was seldom home. Extended family get-togethers always included plenty of alcohol, and Lora admits to starting to drink at age 13. She followed the crowd – the wrong crowd – in high school, describing the years from age 16 to 18 as a haze of prescription pills, marijuana and alcohol. All her boyfriends did cocaine and drank alcohol. She has battled depression since her early teen years and self-medicated with alcohol and drugs. She quit school and went to work.

Over the next couple years, Lora worked at a few jobs, never for very long. She gave birth to Aunalyese and Aleah, fathered by different men. Her Dad, always the one who took care of her, gave her a house down the street from the family home. After losing yet another job, one by one her utilities were shut off due to non-payment. She continued to live in the house with her two preschoolers with no electricity, water or heat. Eventually a neighbor called the Office of Children & Youth, and the children were removed from Lora's custody. She comments that her priorities were way off – she had to steal formula to feed her babies, but always had money for beer.

The girls were split up, one going to live with Lora's mother, the other with Lora's aunt. OCY told Lora her only hope of regaining custody of Auna and Aleah was to enter the Mercy Center for Women program and get her life together. So, Lora arrived at the door of Mercy Center with nothing but the clothes on her back. She and her case manager, Phyllis DiNicola, began the hard work of overcoming years of poor decisions. She participated in Self-Esteem classes and all the requirements of the program, including the Going Places Network. She worked closely with the Child Specialist to learn how to parent her girls, and eventually regained custody of them.

Shortly before graduating from MCW, Lora met Jeremy at an orientation at Splash Lagoon. Ironically, Lora's father and Jeremy's father had been childhood best friends, but Lora didn't initially recognize Jeremy. Their friendship grew and shortly after Lora left MCW, she and Jeremy moved in together. Lora obtained her home health aide certification but worked as a stay at home mom to her two girls and Jeremy's two boys. Together they had a son, Jeremy Jr. and plan to be married in the next couple years.

On April 11, 2016 their lives took another turn. It was the day of the huge mattress fire in a warehouse on Erie's west side. Lora kept smelling smoke at their home, but Jeremy assured her it must be from the big fire raging out of control. Then the kitchen light began flickering and Lora turned it off. Suddenly the electrical panel exploded, sending fire shooting across the house. Lora sent the 5 children outside and ran upstairs to grab some pants and discovered the second floor was filled with black smoke. The fire department came and put the fire out, but not before everything in the house was destroyed. Lora recalls that the freezer door melted, and a frozen turkey actually cooked before the fire was out! The house was severely damaged, and the family spent six weeks in a motel and the next year in a rental house while their house was repaired. She says it was a wake-up call when they lost all their material possessions, but their family was spared, with the exception of Reese, their pet guinea pig. They were thankful for the homeowner's insurance, something that Lora had never before carried.

Lora's father moved in with her family as his health failed, and Lora cared for him until he died on June 3, 2017. She says caring for her Dad made her realize what drinking does to a person. She commented that it was traumatizing, but helpful to her continued recovery from alcoholism to care for him. It was the least she could do, as he cared for her for so many years. She now works at Manchester Presbyterian Lodge as an assistant caregiver and enjoys the interaction with Alzheimer's patients. One of Lora's future goals is to work at Mercy Center for Women as a house manager where she can help other women as she was helped.

Lora is Mercy Center's biggest advocate. She still has good days and bad days, but she has found the strength in herself because of the strength of Mercy Center for Women...because Mercy Center believed in her.

She says, "I didn't grow up there, but I 'grew up' there."

Shown left: Lora's Dennis Roberts and Jeremy Jr.



Lora and her fiancé Jeremy



VOLUNTEERS THROUGH THE YEARS



**Joan Butler & Jean Joyce wrap
Christmas gifts 1995**



**General Electric Elfun Society
Volunteers Build the Playground 2000**



**Alice Fuhrman & Sister Joanne Courneen RSM
Undated photo**



**Nancy Miller teaches June & Debra how
to sew placemats 2007**

Volunteers have always been a crucial part of the Mercy Center for Women Team as we carry out the Mercy Mission every day. Our wonderful volunteers save Mercy Center and Dress for Success Erie in excess of \$150,000 per year. Without your help, we literally would not be able to serve our clients. We are always in need of phone receptionists, clothing sorters, people to teach all kinds of classes - whatever your talent, we can use it! Contact Laura Cox, our new Volunteer Coordinator, at 814-455-4577 to see where you fit.



**Chrisfield Taylor teaches Karate
Class late 1990s**

An Interview with Janet Nowak

Janet Nowak has been volunteering with the Mercy Center for almost two years. This Erie native is a retired principal from the Millcreek School District. She graduated from Clarion University with a BS in Elementary Education and began her teaching career in 1971. Her husband Randy is also retired from the education field. The best part about having two educators in the family was having holidays and summers off with their children. A more challenging part was when one of the children was sick. Their solution was a diplomatic one—they took turns staying home when someone was home from school.

Janet saw many changes in the school system during her tenure. Some highlights include: female teachers being permitted to wear pants in the classroom, to the concept of green schools, and becoming the "Fashion Police" at McDowell High School to help enforce the dress code.

In addition to volunteering at the Mercy Center for Women, Janet enjoys reading and spending time with her six grandsons—including a set of twins. She and her family are world travelers; some trips have included Hong Kong, Florence, and the Alps in Chamonix, France. One of her favorite experiences was a gorilla safari in Africa where her oldest son lives in Nairobi. The next trip Randy and she would like to take is to Vietnam where he was stationed while in the Army.

We are fortunate to have Janet as a volunteer. She brings warmth, organizational skills, and humor to the Mercy Center. Thank you, Janet!



1994....1999....2004....Where Are They Now?....2009....2014....2019



DeQuan 2009



DeQuan Stubbs

DeQuan Stubbs entered the world as a tiny one pound seven-ounce baby 24 years ago. He and his mom lived at Mercy Center for several months when he was a young boy and he celebrated his ninth birthday there. As with all children of Mercy Center for Women program graduates, DeQuan was included in the Aftercare Program, participating in programs such as Attorneys and Kids and occasional field trips. He spent a week at Camp Burton in Burton, Ohio and generally kept in touch with MCW staff. He graduated from East High School in 2012 and went on to earn his bachelor's degree from Indiana University of Pennsylvania. Currently he is employed as part of the Clinical Care Staff at Sarah Reed Children's Center and is pursuing his master's degree at Edinboro University. Congratulations to this fine young man for all his accomplishments. DeQuan, keep sharing that beautiful smile with the world!



DeQuan Stubbs
East High School Graduation 2012

Women Making History 2019 - Last Call for Nominations

People often ask what Women Making History is all about, whom do we honor and how are they chosen. This note from the first page of the very first Women Making History program book, published in 1993, explains it very well. The first WMH event was before Hope House and G.R.O.W. merged to become Mercy Center for Women.

"Dear Friends,

This special event focusing on 12 great women of Erie County is not meant to single out those who some would say are better than others. Rather, it is meant to inspire each one of us to look at ourselves, to claim our gifts, and to strive diligently for our goals as each one of these twelve dynamic women has.

Our intention at G.R.O.W. is to promote women who are making the Erie Community a better place and also to inspire leadership among women to benefit women.

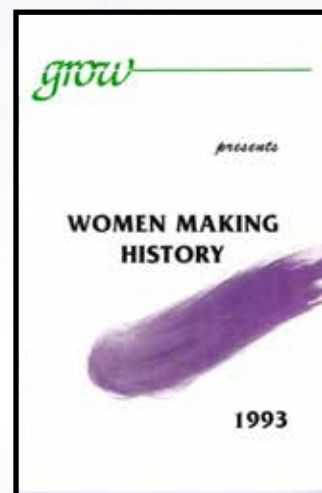
These women who are being honored in our **First Annual WOMEN MAKING HISTORY**

Event are a testament that it is possible to achieve our goals and to accomplish what we desire while working actively in our communities by sharing our gifts and abilities with others.

Our desire is that all women may grow, to make a place for themselves and each other in the world. Margaret Sanger has said, **"Woman must not accept; she must challenge. She must not be awed by that which has been built up around her; she must reverence that woman in her which struggles for expression."**

We trust that when sharing in this event each of you will reverence the urge which flows from within to move toward greater horizons—to be all that you are meant to be.

Lovingly, Tish Donze"



Upcoming Events!

October 25 - Primanti Brothers

11:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. Millcreek Mall, mention Mercy Center & follow instructions for 25% of your meal price to be donated to MCW

October to November 2nd - Order your Christmas Wreath. Still only \$25 - fill your home with the wonderful smell of a Christmas wreath, will arrive 1st week in December

March 6, 2019 - Women Making History

7:00 p.m. Mary D'Angelo Performing Arts Center. **Nominations are due November 16, 2018 - go to www.mcwerie.org to complete nomination form**

May 21, 2019 - Purse & Pearl Luncheon

Bayfront Convention Center

SEE OUR FACEBOOK PAGE FOR DETAILS

Thank You in Advance...

MCW Needs List:

- Twin bed sheets/quilts
- Bath towels/wash cloths
- Bath/body wash & lotions
- Cleaning supplies
- Dish/Clothes soap

Children's Needs:

- New Toys & Children's Clothing, Birth to 18 years
- Experience Gift Cards: Children's Museum, ZooBoo, Play Port, Splash Lagoon
- Art Supplies: Paint, brushes, paint smocks
- Diapers, wipes and Pull Ups - most in need of sizes Newborn, 4, 5 & 6
- Children's Socks & Underwear
- Hats, Gloves & Scarves
- Snow bibs/pants

Dress for Success® Erie Needs:

- Business Casual clothing size 18 & up
- Closed-toe dress shoes - flats & heels all sizes
- Personal care items, bath/body wash & lotions, gift items and journals



Christmas is coming...

It's time to order your beautiful fragrant Noble Fir Christmas Wreath! It comes with a red bow and snowy pinecones. But there is no limit to the ways you can decorate your wreath. Marilyn, a long-time friend of Mercy Center, likes to decorate her wreath with angels and stars as part of her manger scene over the mantel. Annie displays hers flat on her baby grand piano decorated with colored LED lights and a candle in the center. Order your wreath today and send us a photo of how you decorate yours. Don't forget - the wreaths also make wonderful gifts for friends, relatives, business associates and that hard-to-buy-for person who has everything!

Still only \$25 - payment due when you pick up your wreath. They will arrive first week of December.



COMING SOON - THE MERCY CENTER FOR WOMEN 25TH ANNIVERSARY COOKBOOK! WE CAN USE YOUR SPECIAL RECIPES!

Now is the time to submit your favorite recipes to be included in the upcoming MCW cookbook. We welcome all kinds of recipes from your favorite quick & easy go-to supper to the dish you have to take to every holiday dinner because 'its tradition'. While you are planning your holiday meals, snap a quick photo of your favorites and e-mail the picture to us at lcox@mcwerie.org. Make sure the recipe is legible and that we have your name as each recipe in the book will have the name of the person who submitted it. Recipes may also be mailed to Laura Cox c/o Mercy Center for Women, 1039 E 27th Street, Erie PA 16504.

An exciting extra - every book purchased includes a free e-Book version. Download information will be printed on the title page of your cookbook.

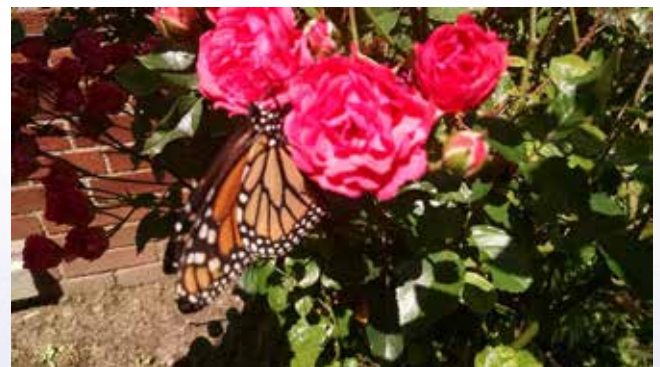


In this season of Thanksgiving, we asked our clients and staff to share what they are thankful for. Below are some of their responses.

- ♥ Having health, strength and peace of mind. Being a part of such a positive, supporting and giving program and all it offers. Thankful for such a loving, supportive staff that always goes the extra mile for us ladies. Just a chance to make changes and choices that will better my life.
- ♥ Being able to be an employee at the M.C.W. to make a difference in someone's life.
- ♥ My sobriety, my children Therese, Robby and Lily. My caring family, my family here at the Mercy Center.
- ♥ Being given the opportunity to be employed at MCW. To continue to help others who are in need of a better tomorrow. (from a former client who is now employed at Mercy Center).
- ♥ I'm grateful for the Lord in my life, family, and the Mercy Center for Women.
- ♥ Being Salt & Light to serve others!
- ♥ The love of my family, my independence.
- ♥ I am thankful for my family, my job, I am thankful for my home. I am thankful for the people who come into my life to help me be a better person than I was yesterday.
- ♥ My cats 🐾 🐾
- ♥ My fiancé who loves me through anything, my amazing strong family, the family I got to choose – my friends.
- ♥ I am thankful for a good book. I just read "Barking to the Choir" by Jesuit Priest Father Greg Boyle. He founded Homeboy Industries in Los Angeles and has worked with gang members for 30 years.
- ♥ My job here at MCW, my life, living clean and sober, and to God for all His many blessings he has given me and my son, seen and unseen. Amen #Grateful, #Thankful.
- ♥ I am thankful for the Sisters of Mercy and their Godly vision to care for the poor, the wonderful people of the Erie community who are so very generous, and for my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

We are very thankful also for the wonderful support we have received in the form of grants and funding for capital needs at Mercy Center for Women:

- **Neighborhood Assistance Program (NAP)** - funding from UPMC Health Plan for the W.E.A.R. Job Readiness Program and remodeling the rest room/shower facilities at MCW
- **National Fuel** - to install privacy fencing around the back yard for safety and security of the women and children
- **ECGRA** - for program expenses to serve homeless women and children
- **PHARE** - for program and operating expenses
- **Erie Community Foundation** - partial funding for a pick-up truck needed for Food Bank and transportation



"OH GIVE THANKS TO THE LORD,
FOR HE IS GOOD! FOR HIS MERCY
ENDURES FOREVER."
I CHRONICLES 16:34



1039 East 27th Street / Erie, PA 16504

www.mcwerie.org

Watch for MCW updates on our new website! There will updated information, new photos and videos, opportunities to serve and the new 2019 Women Making History Nomination Form.



"Like and follow" our Facebook page for updates!

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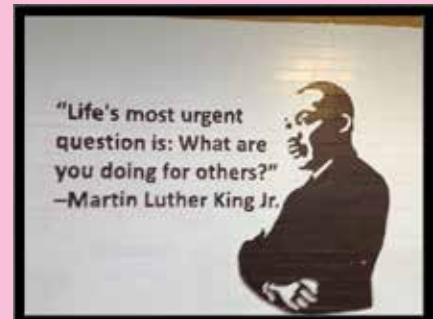
Residents and staff enjoying time together at the Crop Walk.



Christmas in July with Springhill Suites by Marriott Erie.



MCW was one of the recipients of the Employees Community Services Fund of GE Community Cup Award. Left to right: Al Kuntz, Jim Martin, Jennie Hagerty, and Michael Grab.



A thank you to Erie Community Foundation's Urgent Grant Award to help us purchase this much needed truck from Dave Hallman Chevrolet.



The Erie Yacht Club treated our women and children to a beautiful day on Lake Erie.



Staff and residents give back by volunteering at the Convoy of Hope at Pfeiffer-Burleigh.



MCW staff and residents support Leukemia and Lymphoma Society's "Light the Night."



The PRI Community did a fantastic job on our landscaping.

