

MERCY CENTER
for WOMEN



2019-2020 Annual Review

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Mercy Center for Women

1039 East 27th Street

Erie, PA 16504

(814) 455-4577

www.mcwerie.org

**Sponsored ministry of the
Sisters of Mercy**



Mission and Vision Statement

Our Mission:

Mercy Center for Women is a sponsored ministry of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas and is committed to enhancing the dignity of each person it serves through the healing of body, mind and spirit.

Mercy Center for Women provides:

- ♥ Safe and supportive transitional housing, education and counseling for homeless women with or without children.
- ♥ Connection with social service agencies and volunteers to form a network of ongoing support, mentoring and education to our residents and women in the community.
- ♥ An environment based on spirituality and ethical values.

Vision Statement:

Women to restore hope, wholeness and stability for self and children.

Dear Family and Friends of the Mercy Center,

As the colors of fall swept through the air, true transformation continued to serve the women and children at the Mercy Center. This Annual Review recognizes the outstanding accomplishments provided by donors and friends in serving all those affected by homelessness, domestic violence, and addiction.

The 2019-2020 year confronted times of adversity due to COVID-19. One could not be sure how the mission to serve women and children would affect the overall financial picture. I believe that we all agree that when uncertainty sets in, we turn to God for power, strength, and understanding. Many nonprofits came together to unite and work as one. The MCW staff dramatically changed for three months with lay-offs and a reduction in hours. Through these turbulent times, the passion of donors provided a sense of security.

The Mercy Center for Women was a recipient of funds from a Paycheck Protection Program Loan, the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority (ECGRA), and The Erie Community Foundation. All staff retained full-time status to meet the criteria outlined in the guidelines moving the mission forward. For two months, a Meal Train served over 20 women and children healthy lunches and dinners. We were overwhelmed by the community in numerous ways of their support.

Many agencies came together to work as a team in helping the homeless survive COVID-19. The Mercy Center for Women was fully prepared to welcome anyone in need of the quarantine shelter, which resided in the former Holy Rosary School gymnasium.

This Annual Review reveals a story. It shares the desire and determination to move forward. It also represents and identifies the philanthropic giving of over hundreds of individuals, businesses, and foundations to the Mercy Center for Women. One must never give up hope in times of difficulty. Embrace the journey and enhance the limitless possibilities to give back.

Fall is here and represents the desire to find happiness in the simple pleasures of life. We believe in the potential of housing additional women and children as well as collaborations with other organizations that would best serve our community. This would be a true blessing.

Perhaps, what COVID-19 shares is the ability to overcome and appreciate the closeness of family and friends. Too many days are hurried, and tomorrow is never promised. We simply can't do this without you. Thank you for your commitment to a mission providing hope to all those served.

Smile, Pray, Be Kind,

Jennie

Jennie Hagerty



“Everything is possible for one who believes.”

Mark 9:23

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Lori's Story:

They are simple things.

Completing chores. Paying the bills. Scheduling a doctor appointment.

But when you've been ruled by the demons of drug addiction, they are herculean tasks.

"It was like being a baby and having to learn how to be an adult all over again," Lori says.

Lori began her tenure at MCW when she was moved to Erie for rehab but didn't have anywhere to go after completing the program.

She continues, "I lost everything [to drug addiction]. Everything. I was at rock bottom. I forgot how to do simple things."

When she came to MCW Lori struggled with self-confidence issues, was just beginning her road to recovery from drug addiction, and was unemployed. Of that time, she says, "I truly hated myself and blamed myself for so much."

"My caseworker recommended Mercy Center to me. I had my intake interview and a tour of the place. And I just fell in love. It was like something was in the air, telling me that everything was going to be okay. MCW has allowed me to let go of my self-hatred and begin to think, 'maybe I'm not so bad after all.'"

Lori embraced the spirituality and the "24/7 family" atmosphere of MCW. She took all the programming that she could attend and accepted her first job in a long time.

"I felt like a member of society again. I felt accountable to something," Lori said.

She reminisced on her first holiday season at MCW. Fondly rejoicing at the memory of the other women in the house reaching out to her and forcing her to come out of her room to celebrate with everyone, "I thought I would be all alone and lonely. But they did their best to make sure that we felt as normal as possible." The generosity of the community also lingers in her memories, "I was able to give my kids presents that year even though I didn't have anything. That was all thanks to all the donations we received."

Lori currently works as a home health aide, caring for elderly patients in their homes. She says her next step is to finally look for work using her college degree in Health and Physical Education. Lori has used the skills that she built here at MCW to rekindle relationships with her children and grandchildren.



Homelessness During COVID-19

“What a time to be alive” is something that is often said around the halls of the Mercy Center for Women. It genuinely has been an interesting, challenging, and at times beautiful, last few months. The global pandemic has taught us many lessons – one of the most important being our ability to be flexible and adapt. A teaching that every adult could use more of in their own lifetime.

The onset of COVID-19 meant that events, programming, and day to day life had to change here at the Mercy Center. Volunteers were restricted from helping serve us in our mission and even our own residents had to stay indoors. This was all to make sure that we kept the lives of those we minister to, as safe as humanly possible.

This year’s Butterfly Effect Celebration also had to readjust to reflect the trying time that our world is in. As a team, we were able to offer this wonderful event virtually to all whom wanted to participate. Donors, staff, and residents were all able to view the remarkable transformation and flight of our butterflies – all while staying protected at home.

Much like our own lives, how the Mercy Center for Women chose to react to this adversity would ultimately shape its outcome. We embraced this time to self-reflect, revise, and renew. This public health threat may not be over soon, but together we can weather the storm. And what comes after the storm? God’s ultimate covenant, the magnificent rainbow of course.

A significant thank you must go out to all the men, women, and children who remembered us during this global crisis. Your meals warmed our bellies and your donations warmed our hearts. Even during the darkest of times, our benefactors never skipped a beat. For you, we are sincerely grateful.

Your Two Cents Worth

Mercy Center for Women was blessed to be chosen along with four other local nonprofits to participate in the Country Fair’s Pump for Charity project from May 1, 2020 to October 31, 2020. Two cents of each gallon of gas purchased at one of the specially marked “Pump for Charity” pumps goes into a special fund that will be split equally among five local nonprofit agencies. In addition to Mercy Center for Women, agencies include the Erie Animal Network, Erie Philharmonic, National Alliance on Mental Illness of Erie County and St. Martin Center. Currently, each agency has received \$19,188.22, an absolutely amazing amount considering that COVID-19 has kept people working from home and not driving nearly as much as they normally would.

Mercy Center’s share of the Country Fair Cares Pump for Charity is earmarked to complete the renovations of our Daily Threads thrift store in the Holy Rosary school building. We are so excited to watch this space develop.

Thank you, Country Fair!



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Special Events 2019-2020

Nothing can slow down the Mercy Center for Women. This past year has been no exception. We have continued to spread the joy of our mission to the community through many worthwhile events and functions. These include the Butterfly Effect Celebration, Women Making History, Christmas 2019, our Volunteer Thank You Lunch, and the Mercy Center for Women's 25th Anniversary Celebration. Each of these rewarding experiences were met with an outpouring of support from philanthropists all over the country.

We would not be able to make our dreams into realities without you. Donors are the cornerstone to all that we can achieve here at the Mercy Center for Women. Whether it is donating a Christmas gift to one of our children, sponsoring an event, or volunteering your time, the service that is shown to us is deeply moving. As we continue to plan for the future, in a time where all things are uncertain, know that Mercy Center for Women will tirelessly continue to serve the community.



Financials

Sources:

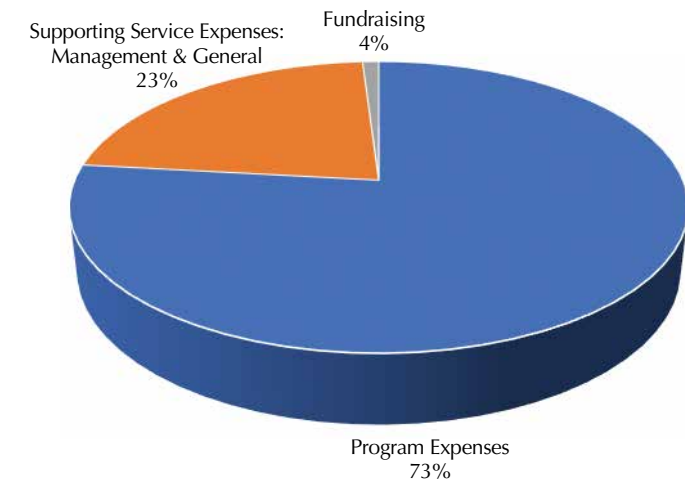
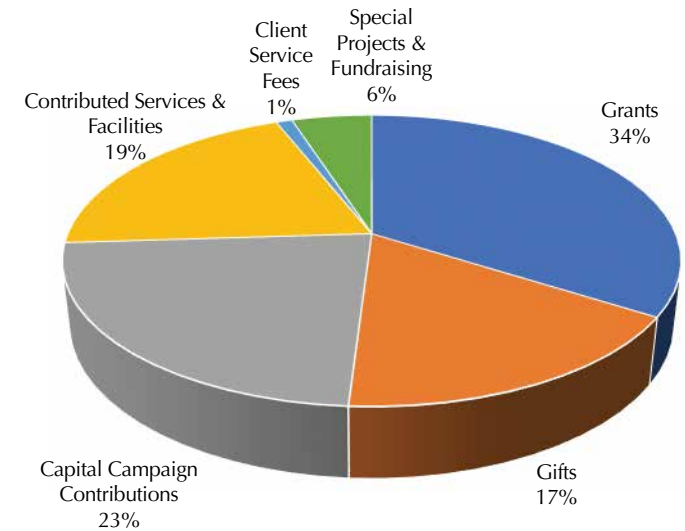
Grants	\$762,465	
Gifts	\$379,993	
Capital Campaign Contributions	\$493,515	
Contributed Services & Facilities	\$442,288	
Client Service Fees	\$26,734	
Special Projects & Fundraising	\$139,151	
Investment Return	(1%) (\$16,314)	
TOTAL REVENUES	\$2,227,832	100%

Distribution:

Program Expenses:		
Shelter & Dress for Success	\$1,080,623	
Supporting Service Expenses:		
Management & General	\$337,764	
Fundraising	\$62,078	
Total Expenses		
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$1,480,465	100%

Grants Received

City of Erie Emergency Shelter	\$12,980
PHARE	\$16,668
County of Erie Office of Mental Health/Intellectual Disabilities	\$24,633
Erie County Office of Drug & Alcohol Abuse	\$49,062
Neighborhood Assistance Program	\$240,710
NAP WEAR	\$28,833
PA Workwear Program	\$119,858
Other Grants	\$269,721
TOTAL GRANTS	\$762,465



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Young Erie Professional and Red Letter Hospitality join forces to support the Mercy Center for Women



Beatrice's Story:

**Names changed to protect the privacy of our clients.*

The storm of scents is relentless – frying onions spiced with all things good and the delicious jumps and pops in a skillet, chicken in the frying pan nearby sizzles until it's so tender it melts in your mouth. And of course, rice boiling to fluffy perfection sits on the stove behind it all. Very few things calm the constant happy buzz of activity in the halls of the Mercy Center – Beatrice's "Bee's" cooking is one of them.

Not that she sees what the hullabaloo is all about: "I'm a good cook I guess." Bee says shrugging bemusedly, "Everyone is always going on about how they like my cooking and stuff."

It's been a long time since Bee could cook with such flourish.

Before she was the "unofficial head chef" of the Mercy Center, Bee was a working mom and wife from Virginia. She'd come home from long hours at her job, trading in her work clothes and shoes for a mop and broom. Her then husband expected her to do all the cooking, cleaning and child rearing on top of her other responsibilities. He mentally, emotionally, financially, and physically abused Bee regularly. "It was like walking on egg-shells, I couldn't do anything without worrying – not even cook."

When Bee found out that her husband was also hurting her oldest daughter Elle, she knew it was time to go. She got her daughter, packed up her bags, and left home in the middle of the night.

Some time passed and Bee entered what appeared to be a healthy, loving relationship with a boyfriend, who fathered her youngest daughter, Becca.



After her now ex-boyfriend began to physically abuse her, Bee took her two daughters and left. They spent time with family in Virginia and Delaware, but never had a place of their own. After falling out with her family over their own abusive behavior, Bee and her daughters were truly on their own. They moved up to Erie where they were in and out of hotel rooms.

Bee knew she needed help. So, she reached out and was referred to the Mercy Center for Women.

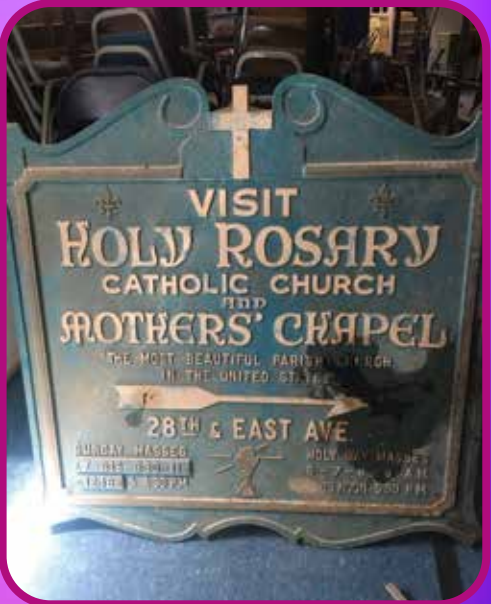
“After everything we’ve been through, trusting people is hard,” she wipes away a tear, “But everyone here – the staff, the women, the kids – are so nice. We’re like one big happy dysfunctional, in a good way, family.”

Bee’s little family quickly became a central source of joy, laughter, and light in the halls of MCW. “We were finally able to just calm down. We didn’t have to worry about anything. We came here without clothes. They gave us clothes. My kids didn’t have anything. They gave us toys. We have food. Everything we could ever want they gave us.” Bee embraced that peace, participating in classes and activities. She began healing so that she could be the best mother possible for her daughters. “My kids have been through a lot. They don’t need to go through anything else.”

Bee and her daughters recently got the news that they will be moving into an apartment soon. Bee has big plans for herself and her family after graduation from MCW. “I want to work on getting a GED and then a nursing certification so that I can work with the elderly. I want to help people.”

“After everything we’ve been through, trusting people is hard,” she wipes away a tear, “But everyone here – the staff, the women, the kids – are so nice. We’re like one big happy dysfunctional, in a good way, family.”





Holy Rosary School Renovation Update

Four months into the renovation of the Holy Rosary School building, the sound of saws cutting through lumber, the roar of construction vehicles, and the sight of yellow hard hats has become a backbeat to the daily orchestra of sounds here at the Mercy Center. On the morning of August 6th however, a new sound joined the normal hubbub. The gentle hum of between 10 – 15 volunteers gathered to help the women and staff of MCW load a gym's worth of donated furniture into a storage truck. This furniture, donated by community members, will be used to furnish the renovated apartments, common areas, and program spaces in the Holy Rosary housing facility. With the contributions that we have received thus far, we will be able to furnish up to 70% of the renovated building.

This – the kindness and generosity that the Erie community has continued to show towards the Mercy Center – does not fade into the background. Take for instance the Country Fair Pump for Charity Campaign, we have received \$19,188.22. All of which will go towards completing the renovation and the opening of the Daily Threads thrift shop. Acknowledgment and gratitude would also not be complete without highlighting our amazing contractors who have stopped at nothing to make sure that we stay within (and under) budget for this project.

On that note – because we know that you’re all wondering! – here’s a quick update on renovations:

COVID-19 introduced a few road bumps that caused the construction to come to a halt for a few months. However, we were able to start construction again recently. Currently we have completed the following:

- ♥ Demolition of doorways, ceilings, and flooring
- ♥ Removal of all lead and asbestos
- ♥ Preparation of HVAC drawings for inspector approval
- ♥ Laid the groundwork for the grand opening of Dress for Success as well as the Daily Threads thrift store in Winter 2020

We are currently three quarters of the way done with construction of the Dress for Success retail space and the Daily Threads thrift store. Look out for an announcement regarding the opening date of Dress for Success and the Daily Threads! We estimate that the end-date for the entire project will be roughly at the end of 2021.

*Your continued support and enthusiasm for our mission
is what keeps the flame alight for us.*



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Dress for Success® Erie & W.E.A.R. Program

Dress for Success transitions into new home...

The clicking of heels will soon be hitting the pavement at the new Dress for Success boutique location. For over 12 years, clients have been suited, made career ready, and resumé savvy on the corner of 28th and Pennsylvania Avenue.

Soon, the Dress Team will be serving women on their journey to countless opportunities in the Erie Community. The vision is to be ready to welcome boutique supporters to their new home in the former Holy Rosary School building in 2021. The soft grey, burgundy, and white color combination softens and warms the floor space, dressing rooms, and employee offices.

Before long, the community will be entering the new setting as clients, volunteers, and supporters. The “fashionista” Dress Team will be ready to serve and suit your every need. Mary, Renee, and Toni have been preparing for over a year for this exciting change. They have been moving their garment racks across East 28th Street and storing countless clothing, shoes, and accessories for future clients.


In a few months, we will welcome you to the modern “Dress for Success” location. The team anxiously awaits your arrival to share their new home with the Erie community.





1039 East 27th Street
Erie, PA 16504
www.mcwerie.org

Women & Children Served:

Women in Families		21
Single Women		23
Children		34
Total Number Served		78
18% of the women we served are counted as homeless youth between 18 to 24 years old		
97% of the women we served have a mental health diagnosis		
54% struggle with drug and/or alcohol abuse		
81% of our women have a history of domestic violence, while		
68% of them are currently fleeing domestic violence		
22% are chronically homeless, one of the criteria HUD focuses on for funding		
Total Shelter Nights		6,677
Dress for Success® Erie Suitings		354