

Mercy Center for Women

EMPOWER!

www.mcwerie.org

1039 East 27th Street / Erie, PA 16504 / (814) 455-4577
Summer 2019 Newsletter

*Celebrating 25 Years of Changing Lives
with a Touch of Mercy... the Story Continues*



25TH ANNIVERSARY GALA

You are invited to join host couple Leslee and Pat Burns to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of Mercy Center for Women on Saturday, October 5th at the Bayfront Convention Center. The doors will open at 5:30 p.m. We will honor the Sisters of Mercy for their amazing generosity and foresight, and recognize the women and children who have used Mercy Center as a stepping stone to a successful, self-sufficient life. Please join us for a sit-down dinner, music and good company as we reflect on God's goodness over the past 25 years and look forward to what the future holds for the Mercy Mission.



BREAKING NEWS



Honor a Special Person in Your Life

We will be installing new tiles on the Audrey Hirt Butterfly Wall. If you would like to purchase a tile in honor or memory of someone special, now is the time. Purchase your tile by July 31 and you will also receive a live butterfly to release at our Butterfly Effect Celebration of Life on August 11th. Go to mcwerie.org for more information and to order your tile.

Mercy Center for Women's Dress for Success Erie program is moving into a new home in the Holy Rosary School Building! We are looking forward to a fresh start in a new larger facility where we can better serve the women who are seeking employment and a better life for their families. See inside for more exciting news and happenings around Mercy Center for Women.

Honoring 12 Dynamic Women

It's time again to honor 12 Dynamic Women in the Erie Community. If you know a woman who has made a difference in the lives of others, has overcome difficult circumstances and volunteers to make life better for others, go to our website and nominate her. The Women Making History Program will be held on March 4, 2020 at the Mary D'Angelo Performing Arts Center.



Alumnae Dinner 2002 held in the Holy Rosary School Gymnasium.



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Tuesday August 13
8:00 a.m. - 8:00 p.m.
Eriegives.org

*No matter how small the gift,
God gives the increase.*

Catherine McAuley

Dear Friends

Summer air and sunshine as you hit the beaches of Presque Isle for the Music Series, a walk/run with your loved one or friend and for a “cyclist enthusiast” like me ... serenity. Summer days come and go, and the Women of Mercy move forward on their journey. The summer brings joyful smiles, ice-cream faces, chalk painting, scraped knees and countless opportunities for the Mercy Center children. Through the generosity of the Erie Community Foundation our children will be enjoying summer camps. The Mercy Center for Women was awarded a \$2,500 grant from the Erie Community Foundation for children to enjoy camps of their choice. Our children are heading to Asbury Woods, TREC, Erie Zoo and other educational places. Thank you ECF for your belief in our mission!

The Women Making History Event was a true success. The DeAngelo Center was filled with devoted friends, families and community members. The honorees and their stories moved the audience through tears, laughter and smiles. This event highlights remarkable and generous women in our community. The beautiful cards and kind words following the event shared by the recipients are exactly why they were chosen to be “Women Making History.”

The 12th Annual Purse and Pearl Luncheon welcomed over 500 women. Chairs Andrea Hallman and Sandy Winkler pulled together a lovely event on a beautiful sunny Tuesday in May. And what about those baskets generously donated by donors and businesses through the Erie community? Carolyn Beck and Pam Will Masiroff are a team not to be reckoned with. They had their own little “Santa Shop” set up in the Holy Rosary School building. A special thank you to Father John Jacquel for allowing the Mercy Center to use this facility. Minnie Lawrie and Barbara Shapira outfitted the entryway into the luncheon with summer fashion. Just beautiful! Janet Kassir organized 11 vendors for women to enjoy. There was something for everyone. Lorei Photography and Allburn Florist decorated the room with beauty for all to enjoy. A special thank you to Ambridge Rose for the nail polishes provided to each guest. The highlight of the day, however was Client Services Director Carla Storrs. Carla shared her story with an audience intrigued by her every word. To have someone walk you through their story of adversity and to transform into a pillar of strength inspired everyone in the room. Yes, there were tears.

What’s next for the Mercy Center for Women? The 25th Anniversary Celebration on October 5, 2019 at the Bayfront Convention Center. We will recognize the Sisters of Mercy. Through their eyes and passion, the Mercy Center for Women evolved into a new beginning for women and children. We only do this once and your gift of presence will make the evening complete. We will unfold exciting news that evening. We invite you to be involved by contacting Shirley Schell at sschell@mcwerie.org or (814) 455-4577. You may find sponsorship information at www.mcwerie.com/events.

The Butterfly Celebration is Sunday, August 11th at 1 pm. We host this at the Mercy Center for Women. Bring your own chair or blanket and reflect on those we love, honor and remember. Be sure to choose Mercy Center for Women as one of your favorite non-profits on Erie Gives Day, August 13th. This is a great day for Erie to come forward and share with others their kindness in making a gift.

Summer is a time to pick strawberries, star-gaze, plant flowers and stay close to those we love. Never waste a minute to let someone know you care. When someone new walks into a room show a smile, not your shoulder facing the other direction. The best gift we can share is compassion.

Blessings,

Jennie Hagerty



An Interview with Corrine Freeman

"Strong women make a strong community." This statement holds so much truth to it, especially for the woman who shared it with me, Corrine Freeman. She is an alumna of the Mercy Center for Women who successfully completed the program a year ago. Throughout her journey, she rediscovered her own strength for herself and her family.

Corrine grew up in Maryland with her sisters, Mom, and Dad who was a pilot in the Air Force. They moved to Erie when she was 14. Her life was like any teenager's – attending school, spending time with her first boyfriend, friends and family – especially her Mom with whom she has always had a close bond. She gave birth to her first child, a daughter, at 17.

At 22, her life changed when she met the man who would shape her future in numerous ways. They had an immediate attraction and became inseparable. From all outward appearances, their life was the American Dream. Two sons were born to complete their family. As their relationship progressed, the division between Corrine and her family grew. In the beginning, things were imperfect but worked for a while. Corrine combined her work-life as an office manager for a women's center which involved some travelling to other offices while taking care of the children. Eventually she left her job and became a stay-at-home mom due to the increasingly toxic environment at home.

Corrine loved (and still does) being there for her kids. She avidly participated in PTA meetings, school events and was the self-described "Soccer Mom." She and her fiancé began drinking as a couple. Corrine hoped this might improve their relationship and she grew to depend on the numbing effects of alcohol to get through her day. Her anxiety increased along with her alcohol consumption to cope with life and she began hiding liquor in their new house. Her Mom noticed her erratic behavior and helped her get into a detox program. The difficult journey of recovery began, and Corrine made the heartbreaking decision to live in a rehab facility six hours away from her family. Her reason for going was for her children – she wanted to become healthy and strong for them.

On completing rehab, there was no home for her to return to. She continued regaining her strength and self-esteem at a facility in Erie after completing treatment across the state of Pennsylvania. Corrine's Mom supported her decision and allowed her to move back home. During this time, Corrine harbored the hope that she and her fiancé would reconcile and get back together once she was well enough. This dream was shattered when she saw him at her daughter's concert with his new girlfriend.

After another relapse, Corrine spent three months at Gaudenzia's Crossroads Erie. During this time, she realized that she needed to rebuild her life without her fiancé. She heard about Mercy Center for Women (MCW) and decided to apply. Corrine began another part of her journey at the MCW. She loved the home-like atmosphere and the way she was treated like an individual instead of a faceless number. She took joy in everyday living and seized the simple lessons learned to become stronger. The residents empowered and supported each other, while the staff gave her the tools she needed to take back her life. Within four months, she found the power to take off her engagement ring. She continued to achieve her goals when she was hired at UPMC Hamot as an appointment scheduler for the medical specialty offices in Erie.

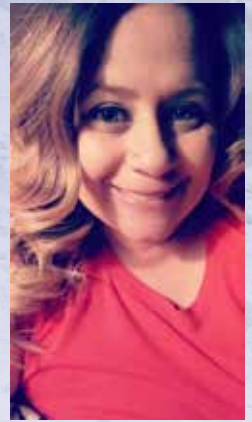
One of her proudest moments was when she gained the courage to seek partial custody of her children. Corrine bravely faced their father in court with the support of her MCW mentors, Jennie Hagerty, Carla Storrs and Alison Vanwinkle. They worked together to advocate for Corrine and her children – they won the case!



A lasting memory that Corrine holds dear was the four of them walking down the hallway to leave, their heels clicking in-sync on the polished floors of the Erie Court House. This symbolized the support of strong women working together to help one another succeed.

On the first night in her new apartment, she cooked a celebratory dinner for her son's birthday. An accident occurred

Continued on next page



Corrines's story continued...

with the grease used for making French fries and she sustained second degree burns on her hand. She was taken to Pittsburgh for treatment and pulled through without the assistance of pain medication. Today her hand is healed, and you can barely see the scars.

There are always goals to meet and challenges to face in life. Corrine is building solid relationships with her children and wants to have them with her more often. She learned to budget her earnings and renewed her apartment lease for another year. Co-parenting can be difficult, but she is able to achieve improved results through healthier communication and setting boundaries.

Corrine uses the language of her upbringing in a military family to describe the lessons learned at the MCW. She completed "Basic Training" and left with a full backpack to help her fight the war of addiction. It is packed with patience of self, understanding of her disease, and healthy ways to keep herself in recovery.



Exciting things are happening...

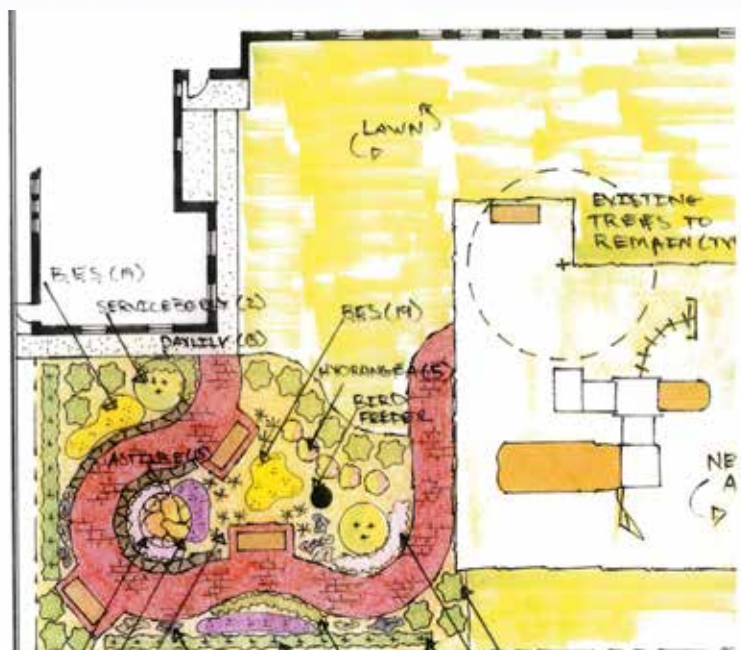
Keep an eye on our Facebook page for updates this summer as work gets underway on the first major upgrade to the playground and backyard at Mercy Center since 2000. Thanks to a grant from UPMC Hamot Foundation and a gift from The Women's Round Table along with some of the proceeds from Roar on the Shore 2017 and Erie Gives, the play area will be completely rebuilt, a Reflection Garden will be installed, and a Pavilion and Garden Area including raised garden beds for vegetables and flowers will complete the transformation.. The Pavilion will be usable for community enrichment programs as well as providing a shaded area for picnic dinners and socializing.

A grant from National Fuel provided the beautiful new white vinyl privacy fence around the yard where the residents and their children have a quiet, secure place to relax and play.

Thanks to a grant from the UPMC Health Plan through the Neighborhood Assistance Program, the restrooms on the main floor were upgraded including a new bathtub which is especially helpful for the moms to bathe their little ones, as well as a secure changing table.



2001 Little girl enjoying the slide - wonder what great things she is doing now?



This is just a portion of the plans for the backyard!



GE Elfuns built the current playground in 2000.

An Interview with Volunteer Laurene Peterman

The Mercy Center for Women has had the pleasure of having Laurene Peterman as a volunteer for 1 ½ years. She also generously donates her time to the Emmaus Ministries Soup Kitchen and creates beautiful prayer shawls with the women of St. George Parish. The prayer shawl ministry has grown from three participants to 12-15 women who meet monthly. There have been more than 1,000 shawls distributed to those in need of the comfort and good intentions the shawls provide. The recipients are prayed for during the creation of the shawls and upon completion they are blessed by the parish priest.

Growing up, Laurene excelled in the sciences while in school and continued her love of learning at St. Vincent Hospital's three-year nursing program. It was an opportunity that provided both classroom and clinical training. After marrying her husband, Laurene continued her education part-time while raising their three children. She received her Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Gannon University. After a distinguished career which included working at the Erie County Prison as their Medical Administrator of Coordinated Services, she retired ten years ago from Hamot Hospital as their Director of Quality Assessment.

As mentioned, Laurene has three children who have given her seven grandchildren to dote upon. While she loves all of them unconditionally, she jokingly says her "favorite" depends on the day. This year marks the celebration of 52 years of marriage to her husband, Thomas. When she's not spending time with her family, she enjoys keeping fit through swimming, reading a variety of books, and enjoying a glass of white wine with friends. We are fortunate to have her here at the MCW; she adds humor, wisdom, and kindness to our days. Thanks for all you are, Laurene!



Remembering Dick Hart (1926-2019)

As we continue to celebrate Mercy Center's 25 years of helping homeless women and children become healthy and self-sufficient families, we remember one of Mercy Center's first volunteers. Dick Hart was a faithful, hands-on volunteer for many years. He could work magic repairing furniture and fixing things around the Center. Staff members still remember the announcement that, 'Dick is in the building – if you need anything fixed, let him know!' When we recognize the giants on whose shoulders we now stand, Dick is one of those wonderful faithful people who helped Mercy Center become what we are today. Thank you also to his wife Nelda



and three children who allowed Dick to be an honorary member of the Mercy Center for Women family! On June 19, 2019, Nelda joined her husband in Heaven. Our condolences once again to the family.



Thank you for your donations of yarn! One of our clients has crocheted an afghan for each woman and child living at Mercy Center. We continue to accept donations of unused yarn as 'Laura' is now teaching the other women to crochet.



Sylvia Johnson, retired volunteer receptionist enjoys MCW kids in 2000.

Thank you to everyone who has given so generously over the past 25 years - whether you have given of your time, your talents, your treasures or simply prayed for our mission. You have made an eternal difference in the lives of thousands of women and children – we are blessed and grateful!

We need you! Are you looking for a meaningful opportunity to help? We are in need of volunteers to answer the phones at Mercy Center - both regular half day a week volunteers and people who are willing to cover for vacations or emergencies (yes—volunteers do take vacations!) Contact Christine at 814-455-4577 or e-mail her at cgerlock@mcwerie.org. The coffeepot is always on for you!

Spring Happenings



Mom & Kids 2019 playing in the snow

Mom & Daughter 2008 playing in the snow

Sangria Sizzler at the Sheraton



THE 12TH
PURSE
and **PEARL**
luncheon
MAY 21ST, 2019

Clockwise from Top Left:

- Jennie & Event Chairs Andrea Hallman & Sandy Winkler
- Keynote Speaker Carla Storrs
- Guests Peruse Basket Raffle Tables
- Accudyn Inc Guests
- Coffee Club Divas
- Guests Enjoying the Event
- Many Guests commented on the beautiful view of the Flagship Niagara



Thank You in Advance...

MCW Needs List:

- New twin bed quilts
- Cleaning Supplies
- Dishwasher Soap
- Liquid Dish Soap
- Garbage Bags
- Paper Napkins

Dress for Success® Erie Needs:

- Black dress pants and black dress shoes (all sizes)
- Black eyeliner and mascara
- Bath & body products
- Personal care items
- Wallets



Upcoming Events!

August 11—Butterfly Effect Butterfly Release

2:00 p.m. in the Backyard of Mercy Center for Women, 1039 East 27th Street.

August 13—Erie Gives

8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Make on-line donations to your favorite Erie community organizations including Mercy Center for Women.

September 18—The Alumnae Dinner

6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. Celebrating the success of the Mercy Center program graduates, honoring an Alumna of the Year and a Graduate of the Year.

October 5—25th Anniversary Gala

5:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. A sit-down dinner as we recognize the vital role of the Sisters of Mercy in our history

March 4, 2020—Women Making History

Final Call for Cookbook Recipes!

Do you have a recipe you'd like to share? Maybe grandma's famous fudge, mom's delicious meatballs, or your own chicken enchiladas? Your special event dish or your never-fail quick and easy recipes! If so, please submit it to us for our upcoming cookbook to celebrate our 25th anniversary in 2019. **July 1st** is our absolute cut-off so send your favorites today. Books will be for sale at our Butterfly Release on August 11th.

Submit on-line at mcwerie.org under Ways to Give, or e-mail to cgerlock@mcwerie.org.

Thank you!



Don't forget Erie Gives 2019 takes place on Tuesday, August 13th from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

As always, the Erie Community Foundation encourages donations to be made on-line at eriegives.org, but this year is also offering a way to give by check. A special form

is required to be completed and returned to the Foundation office by Monday, August 12th. We will have a supply of the forms here at Mercy Center for your convenience.

Donations to Mercy Center will be used in part toward the Playground/Garden Project. Please remember to choose Mercy Center for Women as one of the charities you give to this year. Mercy Center will receive a prorated match for each donation designated to us.

We are grateful for your support.



1039 East 27th Street / Erie, PA 16504

www.mcwerie.org

Watch for MCW updates on our website! There will be updated information, new photos and videos, and opportunities to serve.



“Like and follow” our Facebook page for updates!

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Permit #199



Ladies from Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., Mu Nu Omega Chapter, Erie Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. and Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc., Rho Sigma Zeta Chapter generously donated personal care and baby items.



Bombas donated 13 cases of socks to the women and children of the Mercy Center!



Cathedral Prep students spent their “Day of Service” helping at the MCW and Dress for Success Erie.

*The most beautiful things in life are not things.
They’re people and places and memories and pictures.*



Jennie Hagerty accepts a check from Patti Rial on behalf of Delta Kappa Gamma Society.



Our lovely volunteers help prepare the invitations for our Purse & Pearl Luncheon.



The Easter Bunny hopped by the MCW to see the children.



Boetger Acquisition Corporation employees presented a generous check and assorted items to Mercy Center