

Mercy Center for Women

EMPOWER!

www.mcwerie.org

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

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



1993 Self-Esteem Class Dinner



2018 Alumnae Dinner - Past and Present Alumnae with Jennie Hagerty



1999 Tish Donze,
First Executive Director



1994 Garden Party at the Center



1996 Family Fun Cruise



1997 Program Director Susan Moyer and
Advocate Vicki Fiolek



1998 Cleveland Zoo Field Trip



2002 Little Boy and His Doll



1998 First Reunion Dinner—
Phyllis DiNicola, Teresa Zukowski &
Vicki Fiolek

See Jean Joyce's article on Page 4

Save the Date! October 5, 2019

The Mercy Center for Women is celebrating a year of special events to embrace the "25th" anniversary. One event we are looking forward to is the gala to be held at the Bayfront Convention Center. A sit-down dinner will be served as we honor the Sisters of Mercy. The doors will open at 5:30 pm and we plan to recognize those who have made a difference in the lives of our women and children.



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Dress for Success® Erie Program Director

Mary Graziano

Dress for Success® Erie Assistants

Toni Barry, Renee Triana

For beautiful eyes look for good in others, for beautiful
 lips, speak only words of kindness; and for poise, walk
 with the knowledge that you are never alone.

Audrey Hepburn



Dear Friends

The Christmas season was tremendously generous to the Mercy Center for Women. Over 100 women and children were the recipients of gift-giving from the Erie Community. Our women alumnae returned to the Mercy Center to shop for their families and celebrate the season of gratitude. The students from Mercyhurst Prep sponsored a toy drive. The collection was overwhelming. They also provided Christmas dinner for our residents.

Early December the women, children and staff traveled throughout the community Christmas caroling. We were greeted with hot chocolate, fresh cookies right out of the oven and doors were open to hear the sweet sounds of children surrounding them. This is the true meaning of sharing kindness to and with others. The Mercy Center glistened this Christmas as the women and children came together to fill their home with warmth and love.

We are in the beginning of 2019. How many of us go into a new year hoping for change? All of us want something which brings us hope. For the Mercy Center women their hope is to one day move forward into a life full of possibilities. Change for them is a new beginning. You help to provide this for them through giving. In return, our residents give back through a percentage of their own income. They help to provide a percentage of the budget necessary to sustain the mission to serve. Many of you may not be aware of how our women share in their gratitude by partnering with us.

Women Making History is just around the corner. One of our favorite events in honoring women making a difference in the lives of others. Please be sure to hold March 6th on your calendar to show your support. This event will be the first to kick-off the 25th anniversary of the Mercy Center in 2019. We will honor the Sisters of Mercy on October 5th at the Bayfront Convention Center. In the next 6 weeks we will be inviting you to be a part of the planning committee.

Each season is special. Today, I watch the snow fall and think about how different each snowflake is as it hits the ground. We are all different and deserve an opportunity at life, friendship, family and happiness. May 2019 open your heart and mind to the countless ways you can “change” a life, including your own. Grab a sled and feel the snow hit your face as you journey down a hill. Call up a friend and share a conversation over coffee. Build a snowman, enjoy a fire or a good book. Most of all embrace the life God has given you.

Remember the words that began this letter from Audrey Hepburn and instill them in everyday life.

Smile, Pray, be Kind,

Jennie Hagerty

House for Sale

Beautiful 2 story starter home in a quiet residential area. Home features three bedrooms, large living room and dining room area, tall ceilings, and spacious back yard. Home has been well maintained by Mercy Center for Women, updates include new windows, newer roof, well landscaped yard, and clean interior. Current light fixtures will not be conveyed in sales.

\$63,900 3 Bedroom, 1 Bath
 Listed by Agesti Realtor 814-459-9400



An Interview with Rene Walker



Can you imagine spending 27 years behind bars, never seeing a Christmas light? A few short weeks after Rene moved into Mercy Center, Mercy Center clients, staff members and their families boarded a school bus and went Christmas caroling through several brightly lit neighborhoods. As Rene stood in front of one beautifully decorated home singing Silent Night, Holy Night, she remarked to Executive Director Jennie Hagerty, 'I haven't seen any Christmas lights since 1987. You have no idea how much this means to me to be able to sit on a bus laughing, singing and looking at all the beautiful decorations.'

Rene's introduction to drug addiction began with smoking weed, progressed through purchasing illegal prescription drugs on the street, and finally to cocaine use. As addiction often does, Rene's dependence on drugs led her to commit robberies to support her habit. She was arrested and sentenced to 7 ½ to 15 years in prison for crimes committed in Erie, and 20 to 40 years for robbery of a jewelry store in Meadville. After her release from prison, she went to Pittsburgh for a violence prevention program, and then was paroled to Erie, her hometown.

Shortly after her arrival back in Erie, Rene happened to walk past Mercy Center for Women. She called and spoke with Carla, the Director of Client Services at MCW, and began a new life filled with hope for the future. She moved in on October 31, 2017 and began a year of healing. She participated in all the classes and activities, developed deep friendships with the other residents, and obtained a job in housekeeping.

She moved into her own apartment on November 3, 2018 and is forever grateful for the new start she was able to make. She says, "Mercy Center was a blessing. They gave me everything I needed to make a fresh start...furniture, food and helped me find an apartment. Jennie went above and beyond to help." Rene is working on her relationship with her daughter who was 12 when Rene went to prison. She is now 42 and has three sons, one of whom lives in Erie and sees his grandmother often.



2018 Rene enjoys cooking at Mercy Center



2018 Sharing the Joy of the Christmas Season with the Erie Community



Now a member of Mercy Center's Aftercare program including follow-up visits from her case manager, Rene stops in at Mercy Center for some good conversation and to volunteer her services as needed. She looks forward to a comfortable life in her cozy apartment where she can enjoy peace and quiet, thankful for all of her blessings.



Volunteer, 2019 Woman Making History and Honorary 'Nana' Nancy Marchini was surprised by the MCW Carolers



2002 Christmas Carols in the Living Room



2000 Christmas with Santa

Women Making History Through the Years



1993: EJ Morris hangs the first WMH portraits at the Millcreek Mall



1995: Board Members Elaine Mandel, Susan Frawley and Sister Timothy Kelley join WMH honoree Linda Kane (3rd from left) at the WMH Tea.

The following article was written by volunteer Jean Joyce for the April 1998 newsletter after she attended the first annual MCW Reunion Dinner, now known as the Alumnae Dinner. Her words still ring true today.

"To Live Abundantly"

It isn't often that we are granted the privilege of participating in an event such as occurred on Wednesday, March 11 (1998) when Mercy Center for Women former residents, alumnae, staff and friends gathered to celebrate the first MCW Reunion Dinner. I would like to share some thoughts about this evening.

To "frame the moment" is never possible, except in memory; those of us who were present that evening will carry with us many special memories. It was truly a holy time and a wonderful confirmation of the work that takes place at MCW.

Many former residents were willing to express publicly how their lives have changed as a result of being at MCW. Their stories were touching - the Kleenex were in short supply! These women freely acknowledged the caring support and compassion shown them by their Advocates, Vicki and Phyllis, and this support continues for them even now. They spoke of all they had learned through the Self-Esteem and Addictive Relationships classes taught by Sue, and the parenting classes brought to them by Rose. They also spoke highly of the impact the House Managers, Rohanda and Mary, had on their lives. They acknowledged MCW Administrative Assistant Diane's tireless efforts and kind ways, and they expressed their gratitude to Tish, MCW Executive Director, who oversees it all in her own special way.

God was truly present this Wednesday evening, and MCW's achievements came shining through. If the efforts ever seemed in vain, this evening dispelled that thinking. MCW is making a difference. God has been at work in the lives of the women who have been touched by the good people at Mercy Center for Women.



Jean Joyce

**Join us for Women Making History
2019 on Wednesday, March 6, 2019
at the Mary D'Angelo Performing
Arts Center 7:00 p.m.
Free and Open to the Public**

2019 Dynamic Thirteen Honorees

Linda Althof (nominated by Pat Tracy) - Special Education Teacher at Belle Valley Elementary, runs the Gliding Stars Ice Skating program

Mary Jo Anderlonis-Fulton (Sherry Maxwell) - Retired Nurse, volunteers for several organizations

Malinda Bostick (Fr. John Jacquel & Sr. Michele Schroeck) - Retired Principal, very active volunteer, Benedictine Oblate

Amanda Burlingham (Tracy Dailey) - PR Consultant/ Freelance Writer, founded Erie City Moms

Julie Chacona (Jessica Gray) - Development Director at Edinboro University, active volunteer

Phyllis DiNicola (MCW Staff) - Facilitator at Gaudenzia, retired Case Manager from Mercy Center for Women

Renea' Kovski (Amanda Post) - CEO of New Blossoms New Life Foundation, assisted 80+ couples to become parents

Nancy Marchini (Laura Lewis) - Retired nurse, very active volunteer, honorary Grandma at Mercy Center

Sr. Phyllis McCracken SSJ (Sr. Mary Herrmann) - President & CEO of Saint Mary's Home of Erie, Sister of St. Joseph

Nancy Morris (Almi Clerkin) - Instructor Gannon University, developed I-CAN, volunteer

Heidi Parr Kerner (Linda Laird Staszewski) - Licensed psychoanalyst, founder of Coffee Club Divas

Nicole Reitzel (John Persinger) - Vice President for Community Engagement at Erie Downtown Development Corporation

Nichole Schreiber (Erica Jackson) - Lead Pastor of Erie First Assembly of God Church, credentialed minister, active volunteer

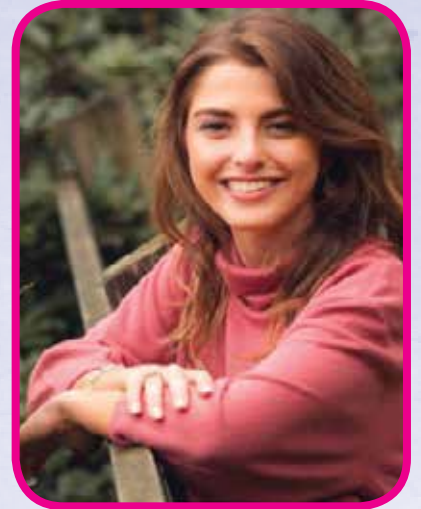
An Interview with Volunteer Elizabeth Kuhn

When you begin talking with Elizabeth Kuhn, you immediately notice her amiable manner and the enthusiasm she has for the many activities she is involved in. Elizabeth has been a volunteer with the Mercy Center for Women (MCW) while a Freshman at Mercyhurst Preparatory School (MPS). One of the requirements as an MPS student is to perform 100 service hours annually in their community. Four years later she is now a Senior who has amassed around 700 hours of community service.

Service to others is a family trait and tradition. Elizabeth credits her family as a great source of support for her endeavors. As requested, she asked me to give a "shout-out" to them. (I hope this makes her Dad smile.) Her parents often participate in events, whether it's making huge amounts of cookies to ensure a successful bake sale or flipping pancakes for a fundraising breakfast. She has a twin brother, Michael, who enjoys working behind-the-scenes at events. Her grandmother, Mary Ann, was a Mercy Center for Women Board Member ten years ago.

Elizabeth has made a wonderful beginning of distinguishing herself as someone who cares about her community. She began a toy drive at MPS with the help of fellow students. This activity evolved into the Mercy Service Group, led by Mrs. Brugger, their advisor. They distribute Christmas gifts and Easter baskets to various agencies in the Erie area. When the school year ends, Elizabeth embarks upon a mission trip to Baltimore, MD which lasts a week. Last November she was honored with the Outstanding Young Philanthropist award from the Association of Fundraising Professionals Northwest PA Chapter. She is in good company with our own Jennie Hagerty, recipient of the 2018 Outstanding Fundraising Executive award. Great job, ladies!

The future holds much promise for Elizabeth. She is looking forward to Prom and all the fun activities that go with the event. Her dress is already selected and is beautiful! When the summer ends, she will say goodbye (for now) to her beloved dogs while she attends Duquesne University as a Nursing Major. Thank you, Elizabeth for being who you are... we appreciate all you do!



A Donor's Story... "Why I Give"

"Only by giving are you able to receive more than you already have." ~Jim Rohn

When Janet first read this quote, it resonated with her and became her inspiration for leading a good life. She keeps a copy of it to remind her of her journey of helping others. When Janet graduated from high school, she listened to her father's advice on becoming a teacher because there was more job security than a business degree. He was right; she became a teacher in the New York school district for 33 years. As a Spanish teacher for eighth through twelfth grades, she was able to make a positive impact on the students she instructed, both in the classroom and in their personal growth.

As a retiree of 17 years, Janet spends some of her time giving back to various local charities. The Mercy Center for Women is fortunate to be a recipient of her generosity. Although she is on a fixed income, Janet maximizes her donations through being a savvy shopper. It is rewarding to her when she finds a bargain and utilizes her extreme couponing skills. Store employees know her by name and assist her in getting the best deals on everyday items such as laundry soap, paper towels, and toilet paper. It is easy to imagine how necessary these items are in a full house of residents!

While spending time with her, you can see the joy on her face as she speaks about helping others. Janet remarked that she is grateful and blessed with the life she has been given; we at the MCW feel the same way-blessed and grateful for her being a part of our lives. Thanks for believing in our mission, Janet!

Did You Know...

Mercy Center has a beautiful, well-equipped activity area for our resident children? Known as the Erie Insurance Learning and Play Center, there is plenty of room for artistic expression, special activities and exploration, along with a quiet corner for reading time.



Collegiate Academy Students came to Mercy Center for a Christmas activity with the kids.



Congratulations to the National Philanthropy Day Honorees:

Mercyhurst Prep Student Elizabeth Kuhn, Attorney Mark Shaw and MCW Executive Director Jennie Hagerty were honored by the Association of Fundraising Professionals NWP Chapter at a luncheon at the Lake Shore Country Club on November 15th for their fundraising and volunteer activities in the Erie Community. Thank you for all you do!



Thank You in Advance...

MCW Needs List:

- New twin bed quilts and sheets
- Cleaning Supplies
- Dishwasher Soap
- Liquid Dish Soap
- Garbage Bags

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

Donation Days and Guidelines...

Effective immediately, the MCW will only be accepting donations on Monday and Wednesday from 9:00AM-3:30PM.

Thank you for choosing the Mercy Center for Women to donate your gently used items. Your donations go directly to the women and children who reside at the MCW. Some of the items donated, especially household ones, are saved for the women when they have achieved self-sufficiency and are ready to move into their own apartments. After careful consideration, the remaining clothing items are sold in Our Daily Threads Thrift Store. The proceeds stay in-house to benefit the women and children.

Please be sure all items are clean and gently used. We must dispose of dirty, too-worn, non-working, or wet items. Do not donate clothing on hangers. Box or bag all items you are donating. This minimizes damage while moving from one location to another.

We accept only in-season clothing. For example, if we are going into the Fall/Winter seasons, we will not be accepting Spring/Summer clothing. We have no storage space for these items in our facility. Thank you for your understanding!

We cannot accept used car seats per Pennsylvania law. We cannot prove that the car seat was not in a previous accident, and if it was, its safety could be compromised.



Upcoming Events!

March 6—Women Making History

7:00 p.m. at the Mary D'Angelo Performing Arts Center on the main Mercyhurst University Campus, 501 E 38th Street. Free and open to the public!

May 21—The Purse & Pearl Luncheon

10:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at the Bayfront Convention Center

August 11—Butterfly Effect Butterfly Release

1:00 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

SEE OUR FACEBOOK PAGE FOR DETAILS



*Thank you for everything this holiday season,
for Christmas gifts, food, financial donations,
volunteer projects and last, but not least,
your prayers on behalf of our mission.
You have been a blessing.*



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

1. The Grinch visits the Mercy Center during the Christmas season.
2. MCW Residents were treated to a wonderful Ladies' Night Out at the YMCA of Greater Erie.
3. Good food was followed by relaxing massages at the YMCA.
4. Mercyhurst University donated this beautiful Christmas Tree "Madonna and Child" from the 2018 Festival of Trees.
5. Jodi from Marshalls presents a check from TJX Foundation to Executive Director Jennie Hagerty.
6. 2018 Halloween Kids.
7. Mercyhurst University delivered a generous Thanksgiving gift of groceries.
8. Erie Federal Credit Union donated totes of warm socks to Mercy Center for Women and our Dress for Success® Erie program.

