

Mercy Center for Women

EMPOWER!

www.mcwerie.org

1039 East 27th Street / Erie, PA 16504 / (814) 455-4577
Spring 2020 Newsletter



Presents Pump for Charity

From May 1st until October 31, 2020 please help support Mercy Center for Women by fueling up at any of the 38 Erie County Country Fair locations. 2 cents from every gallon sold at the **Pump for Charity** will go towards five local charities. Mercy Center for Women's portion of the proceeds will benefit our Daily Threads project in the Holy Rosary school building. We are blessed to be selected as one of the five nonprofits. Congratulations all!



Thank you!

#WeGotThisErie

A community comes together amid crisis.

We would like to take this time to thank all of our spectacular donors, supporters, and all around heroes during the COVID-19 crisis. Because of you, over 46 days of meals were given to our resident women and children. \$3,679 was raised to support our quarantine shelter, and our mission was able to shine through the darkness.



Mercy Center Board of Trustees

Michael Grab – Chair
Patrick Burns – Vice-Chair
Daniel Levstek – Treasurer
Sr. Michele Marie Schroeck RSM – Secretary
Aimee Baumann
Kathleen Burik
Attorney Lydia Caparosa
Deacon Denis Coan
Brittany Garity
Anthony Keim
Maureen Geary Krowicki
Nancy Marchini
Sr. Joan McCabe RSM
Emily Merski
Victoria Merski

Staff

Executive Director

Jennie Hagerty

Director of Client Services

Carla Storrs

Finance Director

Diane McQuaid

Project Manager

Chris Jones

Director of Advancement

Breanna Watts

Grant Writer

Holly Nowak

Executive Administrative Assistant

Shirley Schell

Volunteer Coordinator

Christine Gerlock

Case Manager

Megan Phillips, MSW, LSW

Activities Coordinator

Mary Tobin

House Managers/Child Care

Anita Kraut, Floretta Gibbs, Mary Tobin, Regina Johnson, Denise McConnell, Evelyn Wesman, and Melinda Albright

Dress for Success® Erie Program Director

Mary Graziano

Dress for Success® Erie Assistants

Toni Barry, Renee Triana



Tuesday August 11
8:00 a.m. - 8:00 p.m.
Eriegives.org

Dear Friends

I never thought in a million years that a letter to our amazing family, friends, community members and leaders would be this difficult to write. COVID-19 has invaded our world and life has changed as we know it. The media has saturated viewers with statistics ranging from a daily count of individuals diagnosed with COVID-19 to those who lost their battle fighting this disease. Social distancing is now the new normal, and social media platforms are at their highest peak. Is this shaping our fears or allowing for us to keep in touch with those we love? A question we all need to ask ourselves.

At Mercy Center for Women, our women and children are cleaning, baking and spending time together while observing the rules for spacing. We hear laughter, feel tears, and see signs of frustration as we keep our clients safe inside. They walk outside and enjoy the fragrance of Spring and the musical sounds of birds flying in the wind. They Skype with family and friends. These are not easy times for the women and children. However, with a committed and dedicated staff to support them during these challenging times, we have the toolbox of survival.

We are grateful to our donors and community friends for coming together in providing food, gift cards, and monetary gifts. There is not one nonprofit that expected this to happen. The opportunity ECGRA and The Erie Community Foundation provided to nonprofits for grants is essential. Even more impressive is their generosity to the social services sector. Today, it is critical to support missions serving others. To pull together and create a sense of harmony. As many projects throughout Erie are on hold, serving those in need must be the forefront at this time.

Early March, we celebrated Women Making History and this event set the tone for National Women's History month. The Mary D'Angelo Performing Arts Center echoed with applause for the 13 women being honored. The tribute to each was personal and a memory to cherish. We also honored our very own, Shirley Schell. Shirley is a beacon of light in the Mercy mission. She plans to retire in December 2020 from the Mercy Center. It truly is well-deserved. Breanna Watts joined the Mercy Center in early winter as the Director of Advancement. Breanna came to MCW from The Erie Community Foundation and is diligently learning the history, mission, and future. We are excited to have Breanna and to mentor her growth into this role. Mercy Center for Women also welcomed Chris Jones as the Project Manager for the Holy Rosary Renovation project. Chris has an extensive background in construction. He also brings with him a positive mindset and a strong work ethic. Chris is working strategically on the project and it's chosen contractors. Welcome Breanna and Chris.

We will share additional information in the upcoming months. Dress for Success and the Thrift Store are on hold in the new building. Once the mandate is lifted, we hope both projects will be completed within 30 days. We will share additional information about future events in the upcoming months.

Personally, COVID-19 has given me the opportunity to grow and unite with others. The County Home Team and social service agencies within the community are pulling together to serve the homeless on the streets. The Holy Rosary gym was opened to homeless individuals in need of a Quarantined Shelter. South Shore Rental donated tents for isolation. Peterson's Property Maintenance cleaned the entire gym, kitchen, and bathroom area gratis. A team of dedicated individuals representing social services are pulling together to make sure every life matters. ServErie is providing volunteers to support the needs of those we potentially could be temporarily housing.

The hope is that you can take this time to find yourself and to do good for others. Take a social distance walk, call a family member, prepare food for someone in need, and just be you. We will get through this. Life will be different, but God will never give any of us more than we can handle. I look forward to when I can hug a friend, attend mass, and head back to the gym. COVID-19 has changed America. It is our job to change it back. Stay strong and know in your weakest moments of the day, God will carry you.

Smile, Pray, Be Kind,

Jennie Hagerty



What does COVID-19 mean to you? Quotes from the residents.

- "I miss school and the school lunches. I like being home because I can play football, run like crazy, and jump off the swings."
- "I miss my teacher and going to speech to see Mr. Webster. I love playing outside on the swings and attempting to climb the tree. This is my home!"
- "I miss my friends at school. But I feel normal like I'm at home."
- "It's okay being seated, personally I have the chance to reflect, change and give thanks for everything. It's a challenge with the kids being home but I'm learning more about them. I miss being with my daughters and granddaughter physically, but we video chat. I'm thankful for being safe, and the love and caring action at the Center makes everything wonderful."
- "One thing I'm frustrated about is that we're stuck staying inside or we're {only} allowed to go so far and to certain places for walks. I'm not happy that I don't get to see my friends, but I'm happy I can spend more time with my family and stay protected from COVID-19."
- "I'm happy that I get to spend more time with my kids. But I'm frustrated that we can't go anywhere at all. I'm just happy that we got a roof over our heads."
- "I'm not glad I have to be stuck here, but I'm glad that I don't have the virus from not being isolated in the Mercy Center. There's enough here for everyone to have fun with but I miss my friends. Besides that, Easter was a blast!!"
- "I'm very thankful for the Mercy Center. When I first came here, I felt so defeated, but NOW I know I have a greater purpose in life and will apply to my everyday lifestyle. But dealing with this crazy COVID-19 has been so stressful. It's keeping me away from my family when I need them most through this very, very, difficult time of losing my sister. I'm very hurt and sad I can't be with my family."



Volunteer Spotlight: Karen Whitford, Volunteer Receptionist



Erie native, Karen Whitford, is a graduate of Villa Maria Academy and the eldest sister out of the three in her family. Throughout her life she has passionately served God and her community. For over 46 years she has worked within the Erie Catholic Diocese in various capacities. Karen was previously employed with Blessed Sacrament School as their librarian and was encouraged to apply for the Youth Director and Pastoral Minister position when one of her co-workers was preparing to retire. She returned to school and obtained her degree in Pastoral Studies from Gannon University. From there, she had the pleasure of working at St. Francis Xavier in McKean, PA. Karen was the Parish Administrator, conducted the Social Outreach program, and was the Director of Cemetery Services. In these roles she was able to aid the underserved in her community.

Karen and her husband, Bob, love spending time at their cottage at Canadohta Lake. They bring along their two-year old chocolate lab named Emma and enjoy walking along the beach. Memories are made there with her three sons and their families. She is exceptionally proud of her five grandchildren. Karen enjoys cooking and trying out new recipes. Her specialties are raviolis, fresh baked bread, and apple pie. Karen is an avid reader who particularly enjoys biographies and meaningful stories with a happy ending.

One of the most satisfying parts of volunteering at the Mercy Center is being a part of helping the women and children who live here. She knows their names and always greets them with a cheerful "Hello." Karen loves watching the transformation of our residents as they become the best versions of themselves. We appreciate her willingness to help when needed, her professionalism, and sense of humor. Thank you, Karen. We look forward to having you as a volunteer for many years to come!

MERCY CENTER FOR WOMEN WELCOMES BREANNA WATTS AND CHRISTOPHER JONES TO LEADERSHIP TEAM

Breanna Watts is a familiar face in the Erie community. In

December, Breanna began her newest journey as the Director of Advancement for the Mercy Center. A graduate of Mercyhurst Prep, Breanna fondly shares her passion daily by carrying out the Mercy charisms. In her new role, Breanna will cultivate donors, coordinate special events and solicit major gifts to compliment the mission of serving others.

Her extensive background in facilitating, recruiting and engaging with constituents is an asset to the Mercy Center for Women. Breanna served as the liaison to the foundation President of The Erie Community Foundation. She also coordinated and organized numerous activities for the Erie Women's Fund. As a former caseworker at Big Brothers and Sisters of Erie County, Breanna understands the clients being served at the Mercy Center for Women. She compliments the mission and the staff with a positive attitude and strong work ethic.

In her free time, Bre enjoys adult league soccer, her senior rescue pug, and yoga. She is a true asset to our work as well as to the women and children we serve. Welcome, Breanna!

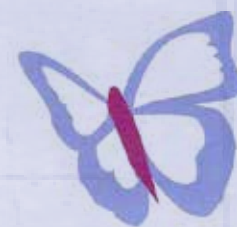


Christopher Jones is no stranger to hard work. In fact, Chris was a Weapons Specialist in the U.S. Marine Corp./U.S.A.F. The Mercy Center for Women welcomed Chris in February 2020 as the Project Manager for the Holy Rosary School project. Chris has an extensive and successful background as a general contractor for over 20 years. His expertise is essential with the design, remodel and implementation of the future anchor building serving the community. He has a diverse background in partnering with local vendors and a passion for nonprofit work.

Prior to the Mercy Center for Women, Chris served as the Membership Director for Iron Oxygen. He increased the membership base at both Iron Oxygen and iRock. Chris helped to bridge the gap between customer and company leadership to ensure membership retention.

Chris is committed to living a healthy lifestyle and to exercise. He also enjoys his puppy Apollo during his free time. Chris is instrumental to the 2020 Vision campaign and a wealth of knowledge as we move forward to serve additional women and children. Welcome, Chris!





Why I, Margaret Matthews, give to the Mercy Center for Women

I first became aware of the Mercy Center for Women when two particularly good friends, Pam Masiroff and Carolyn Beck, asked me to be a part of their basket committee for the Purse and Pearl Luncheon. I was impressed with the mission of the MCW and I knew I wanted to be more involved.

My Master's Degree is in Reading and I had developed a program for teachers and parents on how to read books to children. I thought that I might volunteer to do such a program for the moms at the center. After meeting with the preschool director, I was told that at that time, the ages of the children living at the center would not be a match for my program. I walked out of the building thinking "I must be a part of this mission".

Another friend, Leslee Burns, suggested I volunteer at the desk to answer phones, greet guests, etc. I started to volunteer every Friday afternoon for over a year. After that year, I realized that I did not want the weekly time commitment yet I still wanted to continue with giving to this amazing program for women and their children. I continued to support the center financially and with my time when asked.

As I continued to reflect, I kept asking myself why I was feeling such an emotional connection with these women? I quickly realized that I too could have been one of these women. I was a young bride at 18 with a baby on the way. We had no money, no home, and no support from our families. Fortunately, David was my salvation. We had met at church at the age of 3. My father was the adult Sunday School teacher and David's

mother was in his class. This left David and I in the nursery together. Once we started school, we continued to be classmates. As teenagers we were in the YMCA Leaders Club where he was President and I was Vice President. We started dating at 15 and forged a love that lasted until his death on February 29, 2016.

Our early marriage was not easy. I was an elevator operator at a department store and David worked second shift in a factory. Both of us continued taking classes at Kent State University. With no financial support, we were struggling and sometimes hungry. We approached a bank and asked for a loan to fund our education. It was one of the first college loans given to a student(s). That loan was finally paid off when our son was 18 and ready to start college himself! We lived in a cottage on Lake Erie which we

rented for a mere \$65 a month. It was cockroach-ridden and cold with only a small heater in the living area.

As we continued our education and eventually received our degrees, our lives began to improve. David was hired as the physical director at a YMCA and I began teaching. David's Y jobs moved us several times while I continued to teach. Our last move landed us in Erie, PA. I did take a sabbatical one year to finish my master's degree. During this year, I took a job at the International Institute as employment coordinator. I met daily with many who had left/escaped their countries looking for a better life. These were hard working individuals who had sacrificed so much to start a new life in America. I could relate to their struggle. I made the correlation that success is built by hard work, setting goals, faith, and a support system.

I want the women at the Mercy Center to fight the good fight and to be thankful for the support they are given by Jennie Hagerty, the amazing staff, and the countless volunteers. These individuals provide the women with tools and guidance which allow them to reach for the stars. The center acts as that rock that everyone needs to succeed. Thank you Jennie Hagerty and the entire staff at the Mercy Center for Women.



2020 Women Making History

The night may have been chilly, but hearts were surely warm at our 2020 Women Making History event. On March 4, 2020, a record number of people gathered to honor 13 dynamic women for their contributions to the community. All united in proclaiming the achievements of women.

Our Pre-Reception event was jam-packed with attendees. Individuals from all over our wonderful city gathered together to celebrate our fantastic honorees over food and drink provided by the ever fabulous Parkhurst Dining. Donors and friends alike had the chance to mingle with one another and share in the excitement of this special day. Everyone then migrated to the stunning Mary D'Angelo Performing Arts Center for our Women Making History program.

This year's honorees were as diverse as colors in our rainbow. Women of all races, ethnicities, ages, creeds, and professions gathered on stage to be commended for their charity. Their videos were touching, and at times, made even the driest of eyes tear up. Kathy Dahlkemper ended the program by giving each woman a memorable citation from our county.

Where would we be without our auxiliary sponsors? A monumental number of them I might add! We genuinely wouldn't have been able to carry out the event without them. Through them, we can continue this event each year and bring a little warmth to an "Erie Spring". These 13 remarkable women truly live our mission of honoring women, all women, through body, mind, and spirit. They are the definition of the Mercy Charism: Service.

**To view the Women Making History honoree videos, please visit our YouTube channel, Mercy Center for Women Erie.*

Image created by SignsNow.
Thank you for your support!

MERCY CENTER
for **WOMEN**

Women Making History Sponsors

Premier Sponsor
Anonymous

Martha Washington Sponsors
First Energy-Penelec
Dynamic Alumnae Sponsors
LECOM
Lincoln Metal Recycling
UPMC Health Plan

Clara Barton Sponsors
Edinboro University
Erie Insurance
Frontier General Contracting
InnovaTel Telepsychiatry
PNC Bank

A special thank you to the following businesses for their in-kind gifts
Allburn Florist
Dahlkemper's Jewellery Connection
Erie Insurance
Gibson Media
Lorei Portrait Studio
Printing Concepts
AHN St. Vincent Health Center

Women Making History

SignsNow

2020 Women Making History



Niken Astari-Carpenter



Melissa Gibson



Lisa Heidelberg



Christine Hetz Phillips



Melanie Hetzel-Riggin



Christine Lomiguen, MD



Rachel Lusky



Angela McNair



Lee Penman



Carmen Schattner



Shirley Schell



Phyllis Schleicher, OSB



Dixie Rose Welker
(Posthumous)

A special thank you goes out to Paul Lorei at Lorei Portraits for taking and displaying beautiful pictures of our honorees each year. We appreciate the never-ending support that you have shown us.



Spring Happenings



Staff and residents enjoy each other's company at the Women Making History Pre-Reception.



Giving back to the Erie Community through food. MCW residents made a meal for Our Neighbor's Place dinner for the homeless.



Everyone helps at MCW!



Trying out the new playground in the MCW backyard.



Jennie Hagerty and Chris Jones accept the Ford Friendship Express van from the Erie Ford Dealers. Thank you!



Celebrating the amazing women who serve our community at the Women Making History Tea.



Students from Allegheny College took the time to volunteer their services at Mercy Center for Women.



Staff of LECOM gathered together to celebrate Women Making History and honoree Christine Lomiguen, M.D.



Mercy Center for Women is the only 24 hours a day, 365 days a year facility that provides services to women experiencing homelessness regardless of cause.



Stay tuned! An Audrey Hirt Butterfly Wall Donor Reception is in the works. Want to honor a loved one? Visit www.mcwerie.org for more information.





DRESS FOR SUCCESS
ERIE

Going Places. Going Strong.



on the move...

In 2016, a generous bequest to Dress for Success provided funding for a new boutique to serve women seeking a career in the community. Mary Graziano, Dress for Success Program Director, shares, "this is a long-time coming." The current boutique is located on the corner of 28th and Pennsylvania Avenue. It has served its purpose for 12 years and was housed within a duplex. Expansion is necessary, and with the purchase of Holy Rosary School, now is the perfect time to do so.

The boutique will be ADA compliant. It will feature a beautiful space to display clothing and accessories. In addition, two dressing rooms, offices, and a break room for the staff and volunteers will be included.

Future plans will consist of a Conference Room that will be shared with Mercy Center for Women and a multi-purpose room. This room will allow for technology to assist with resume' building and community events.

Although COVID-19 has slowed the progression of the projects, plans to step it up will occur once state restrictions have been removed. We are grateful to UPMC Health Plan for their generous support. Before you know it, the Dress team and their volunteers will be suiting clients for interviews in a new place called "home."



Office



Dressing Rooms



Break Rooms



Want more updates?
Follow Mercy Center for Women
on Social Media!

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/MercyCenter4Women/>

Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/mcw_1994/

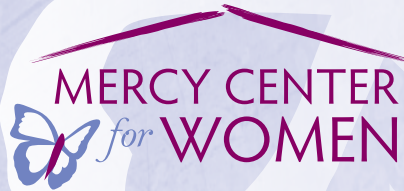
YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC4gsBSHgC3-HwEXnpdP-dPw>

Twitter: https://twitter.com/mercy_women



Holidays at the Center





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!

NonProfit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Erie, PA
Permit #199



Country Fair Cares recognized Mercy Center over the 2019 Christmas holidays with a generous donation to the Daily Threads project.



MCW Board and Staff celebrate Christmas with Santa and Mrs. Claus!



A special thanks to the Ford Friendship Program.