



Sheltervoice

Quarterly Newsletter of The Women's Shelter
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My Year At The Women's Shelter: Part III

By A Shelter Resident

It was November 2012 and the Thanksgiving Souper fundraising event initiated the holiday season for the residents of The Women's Shelter. Much to everyone's surprise, especially the resident's own, the one raffle ticket she had purchased was a winning one; and she received a beautiful quilt. She found the perfect place to display the sewn art; the blank wall of the dining area of the house she shared with another resident.

Her sisters in the transitional housing program further buoyed her spirits when they elected her as treasurer of what is known as the "Transitional Till." Essentially, each transitional resident agreed to contribute two dollars each month to afford celebrating birthdays. She volunteered to be the "cake maker" and even created a sugar free cake with sugar free pudding as icing for the resident with diabetes.

That month the staff and residents at the main Shelter house prepared and shared the Thanksgiving dinner. The sumptuous offerings would have rivaled the most high-end catered affair, but more important to her was the camaraderie. She was grateful to be able to experience such a sense of safety, belonging, and sharing on this special occasion.

After Thanksgiving the spirit of the holidays kicked into high gear. With some Christmas decorations already in her transitional house, items belonging to her housemate, and contributions from others; she and her housemate had great fun decorating the front porch and inside of the home. In mid-December the excitement escalated when the transitional housing residents donned their finest outfits to attend an Alcoholics Anonymous Christmas Celebration. The celebration included a

speaker, meal, and dancing. Another highlight was attending the Christmas celebration at a local church complete with a marvelous meal and a "white elephant Chinese gift exchange," a new experience for her and one she thoroughly enjoyed. Because their transitional house was one of the larger ones and could accommodate a party for the transitional housing women and director, she and her housemate eagerly agreed to host the transitional Christmas Eve meal and celebration.

Christmas Day was extraordinary. They had a meal at the main Shelter house with both staff and residents. She was overwhelmed by the generosity of those who chose to contribute to The Women's Shelter and all she received by association.

In February residents received Valentine's Day gifts and benefitted from one of the staff members providing tax services. In March she began designing and decorating removable, washable covers for the two ottomans in the main shelter house living room. This was something she could do to give back. Also in March the transitional residents created a birthday celebration for the Transitional Housing Director – complete with crown and floor length satin cape making her "Queen for the Day." This was great fun!

Things didn't slow down from there; May was an especially busy month. The main shelter and transitional residents attended a sneak preview of the feature documentary "The Anonymous People" which explored the movement supporting non-anonymity among those in recovery. It was also a real treat in May for all of them to attend a performance of the SC Contemporary Dance Company. But for this resident, the most meaningful May excursion had been joining the Transitional

Housing Director and other transitional residents for two days in The Women's Shelter booth at the 17th Annual SC Book Festival. The event yielded financial contributions and new connections with people desiring to volunteer at the Shelter. The experience of interacting with the general public through this festival only confirmed her own beliefs about The Women's Shelter: that it is a wonderful and well-respected organization.

At the time of the writing of this article the resident has been in the Shelter program for a year and a half. She has enjoyed another Thanksgiving and Christmas season. The second Christmas season was especially special to her. As she walked up to the location of the transitional program Christmas party the string of white lights entwined across the railings of the porch positively glowed with welcoming warmth. Upon entering the house and receiving a hug from the hostess, the Transitional Housing Director; the pronounced permeating aromas promised a sumptuous meal. There was no denying that the star of the show in the festive living room was the Christmas tree. It was a breathtaking sight surely fit for a page in the holiday edition of "House Beautiful". There was an amazing array of brightly colored bags and packages underneath and beyond the bottom branches of the tree as well as large beautifully crafted stockings stuffed to overflowing.

After all the guests arrived and had a few moments to mingle and enjoy a delicious homemade cheese ball with crackers, they were invited into the room where they would be

dining. There they met two lovely ladies who had volunteered to serve the meal—another wonderful surprise—adding to the ambience created by both the new full-force food aromas and the details of the décor of this room. There were picture frames on the wall that were cleverly covered with shiny seasonal paper and adorned with over-sized bows. Across the expanse of the floor stood a table beautifully dressed to seat the transitional housing residents. What a sight to behold! The white linen tablecloth was the perfect backdrop highlighting the white snowballs atop hues of green and blue pine boughs dusted with snow as the centerpiece. Fabric napkins matching the centerpiece were tucked into festive rings alongside gold chargers topped with two graduating layers of green decorative porcelain plates. The simply marvelous menu consisted of a salad, pork loin, cranberry apple casserole, twice baked potatoes, and dessert. These items were made and donated for this event by caring individuals from the community. How special it was to receive the ongoing attention of the two ladies serving!

The diners returned to the living room which quickly filled with sounds of joy as they opened gifts distributed by their "hostess with the mostess". The sheer quantity and quality of donations was absolutely amazing. There could be no doubting the amount of caring attention directed toward this occasion nor of the level of substance, style, and class. It was an evening of sheer elegance. The Shelter staff and all of their helpers had made every effort to create a special evening for

the transitional housing residents. It was a smashing success!

The space constraints of this newsletter article does not allow her to record all of the ways she knows she has benefitted from being a resident of The Women's Shelter. But what she must say is that the key to the program is the same as for creating a positive life: honesty and the desire and willingness to learn.

The resident is grateful to all of the individuals who choose to take time from their own lives to come to the Shelter to share their experience, strength, and hope. Thanks also to all those who chose the Shelter as the recipient of their quality donations.

She believes The Women's Shelter is a "wellness center." It is well funded, well organized, and well run. It is a safe, structured housing program in which one can become well. During her involvement with the Shelter, she has interacted with fabulous females leading highly proactive, productive and successful lives. The alumni of the Shelter readily credit the program for their positive paths.

But most of all – she knows her greatest gifts have stemmed from the females who have created and sustained The Women's Shelter. Doing the next right thing for the right reason is all that is asked of any resident of the Shelter. She believes putting that into practice is her best means of demonstrating how much she respects the Shelter program.



**Be sure to shop Revente's Second Chances (formerly Revente's Last Call) at 3050-A Millwood Avenue, Columbia, 29205 .
All net profits benefit The Women's Shelter.**

Christmas Gratitude

We are incredibly grateful for the many people from the community who provided gifts, food, and monetary donations that made for a memorable Christmas.

“Thank you with all my heart. I had such a blessed Christmas. The presents were wonderful. It meant a lot to me to be able to give my little boy his first bike. I especially like the journal I was given. I am so thankful that I will be able to write about my journey at The Women’s Shelter.” —Ashley



“I got everything for Christmas I wanted and much, much more. Most importantly: Ms. Kathy (an angel from God) gave me a safe and peaceful place to stay; Ms. Angie gave me back my confidence to believe in myself again; Ms. Cynthia keeps me grounded so I can focus on being a better person; and Ms. Joanne keeps me humble. With these women in my life, every day at The Women’s Shelter is Christmas for me.! Thanks to all of you for giving me my life back.” —Bessie



“I have been so blessed to be in this program for a year. I had a very good Christmas. I call everybody in the program my family. I’ve never been so grateful at Christmastime before; I’ve never gotten more than one gift before I came to The Women’s Shelter. I cried when I saw all the gifts and good food. I want to thank everybody that’s a part of The Women’s Shelter.” —Cherry



“It meant a lot to my children to receive gifts from one of their parents this year since neither of us have given them gifts for a few years. I appreciate the people from the community who provided the specific books I wanted to give them and so much more! They loved the gifts they received. I am grateful for all The Women’s Shelter has done for me. It has been a humbling experience. I am grateful to learn about myself and what I can accomplish. This program has been a blessing and will continue to be for me.” —Leslie

“I am truly grateful to the people who made donations this Christmas and for everything the staff did to make sure we had a special Christmas. God bless you all, and thanks for making me feel so loved. —Melinda



“During the Christmas holidays The Women’s Shelter was such a blessing to me and my children. They made sure my children got what they asked for. I was showered with gifts for me. The staff members are like family to me; they truly care and believe in me. I am becoming a strong woman and rebuilding my life. Thanks to The Women’s Shelter for making it possible.” —Sonya



“I lost my apartment in Charlotte, NC, recently and had to get rid of everything. God had these wonderful women here at The Women’s Shelter to open the door for me....a door into a house filled with His Spirit, His love, and His protection. Out of all of the Christmases I have ever experienced, this Christmas was my best ever. I knew I was being held in His arms.: —Barbara



“This Christmas was one of the most memorable ones yet for me. The staff at The Women’s Shelter comforted us emotionally and made sure that my son and I were able to get a few surprises Christmas morning. The house was decorated beautifully. The other women and I all pulled together so that we never felt alone or got the holiday blues. There are amazing women here, and I couldn’t have asked for anything else. Thank you!

—Toni



Another Successful Souper

The November 2013 Thanksgiving Souper results are in: **we raised \$34,375!** A huge “thank you” to Chick-fil-a, our sponsor; to those who provided the venues for the event; and to everyone who attended, sponsored a table, made financial contributions, donated items, provided entertainment, or volunteered in any way for this event.

*The Women's Shelter
3425 North Main Street
Columbia, SC 29203*

*Nonprofit Organization
U.S. Postage Paid
Permit #1018
Columbia, SC*

Address Service Requested

Wish List

The Women's Shelter greatly appreciates and strongly depends on donations from individuals, churches and other civic groups. We do not have a lot of storage space, but the items listed below are needed and used continuously. If you have any other items you would like to donate, please contact us. Thank you for your continued generosity!

(803) 779-4706

- ◆ Rectangle, oblong, or round casserole baking dishes with lids
- ◆ Baking sheet pans/ cake pans
- ◆ Fresh fruits/vegetables
- ◆ Soft drinks
- ◆ Bedroom slippers-all sizes
- ◆ Gift cards for haircuts
- ◆ Phone cards
- ◆ Zoo/movie/entertainment tickets
- ◆ Basic alarm clocks
- ◆ Answering machines
- ◆ Umbrellas
- ◆ Gently used black pants/tennis shoes
- ◆ Coffee/tea
- ◆ Creamer
- ◆ Sugar
- ◆ Sugar free items
- ◆ Toilet paper/paper towels
- ◆ Paper plates
- ◆ Tall kitchen bags
- ◆ Tin Foil/cling wrap/zip lock bags
- ◆ Laundry detergent/Regular & HE
- ◆ Dryer sheets/ liquid softener
- ◆ Cleaning supplies