



Voices from the Women's Respite

Stella Niagara, NY

Volume 14 Issue 1, Spring 2010

Respite for Women with Cancer

From a wintry, snowy Friday evening to a sunny warming Sunday afternoon, more than the weather enjoyed a change. In February, twenty women, ages 19 to 74, who are living with a cancer diagnosis, arrived at Stella Niagara for a weekend Respite. Each brought her story, her concerns, her hopes to share in an atmosphere of welcome and support. Each woman found herself with opportunities for relaxation and refreshment. There were times to enjoy massage Reiki or reflexology, splash in the pool, learn about nutrition and try out a creative flare painting an angel or coloring a mandala. Throughout the weekend new friends shared common experiences of illness and healing.

Laughter came easily during evening video times, complete with popcorn. The fun of "shopping" at S. Marie's 100% discount boutique and the excitement of door prizes gave everyone tangible goodies to bring home. Perhaps the most memorable time was the shared gratitude so tenderly expressed during a service of blessing as each woman lit a candle of thanksgiving. Each left renewed and strengthened for the future challenges of her health and wholeness.

We are especially grateful to our co-sponsor, Roswell Park Cancer Institute and the Susan G. Komen for the Cure Fund that assisted with several scholarships for women with breast cancer.

"I felt very alone in my illness. Now I feel like I belong to a beautiful group of women. Hearing all their stories has brought me inspiration and hope."

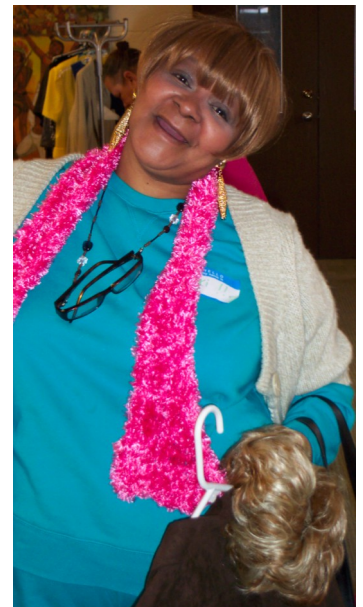
- Christine



Top: Judy with prayer partner, S. Agnes Lucille

Middle: Ziggy with prayer partner, S. Geraldine

Right: Vicki finds a scarf and the perfect wig in S. Marie's Boutique





26 moms attended our Winter Respite in January

“COMING TOGETHER WE BUILD COMMUNITY.”

These words from our mission statement are fulfilled in obvious ways when we gather for Winter Respite Retreats since those attending have participated in previous retreats and have become a “sisterhood”. Each winter women reconnect with those they have met before or meet new members of our “Respite Family”. Relationships have grown and deepened and many women from this group now help coordinate future programs.



Sue Seagrave (above) displays art work she created at our Winter Respite Retreat. Sue, a quilter fondly referred to as the “Bag Lady” sewed hand made quilted tote bags for each of the women who attended the Cancer Retreat. She is a member of our Coordinating Committee, and states that it is important for her to “give back” to a program that has meant so much to her.



Some members of the coordinating committee cooked 80 lbs. of pasta for the dinner

Spaghetti Dinner - Behind the scenes!

Our annual Spaghetti Dinner fund raiser held at St. Leo’s Church in Amherst on Nov. 14 was another great success. Thanks to the support of our generous donors and many wonderful volunteers, we are blessed with much needed funds to continue our mission and a chance to greet and thank our loyal and new found friends. We are grateful to St. Leo’s Parish, DiTondo’s Tavern, DiCamillo’s, Dash’s, Vin Chet Bakery, Wegmans, TOPS, Tripi Foods, Personal Touch Food Service, and the ECC City Culinary Arts Dept.



Schedule for Respite Programs 2010

Jan. 22-24 Winter Alumnae Retreat
 Feb. 26-28 Respite for Women with Cancer
 May 28-30 Grandmothers Raising Grandchildren
 July 21-24 Low-income single moms
 Spaghetti dinner November 13 at St. Leo’s

“The majority of mother-only families live below the poverty level, mainly because a single mother with one child working a minimum-wage, full-time job does not earn a sufficient salary to break the poverty cycle.”

(Cimasi & Wejnert, Charity or Entitlement Conundrum, 2008)

Christine (right) and Diane (Below) find outfits shopping at S. Marie's Boutique.

Our new boutique director, Barbara Fenner, had many pretty articles of clothing, accessories and household items for women to choose from.



One of our projects is creating and learning to use journals as a way of self reflection and personal growth. Here, Brenda is making a journal cover that is a unique expression of her life and hopes.



“The poverty rate for single female-headed households in Buffalo is 57% percent as compared to 19.5% percent for married couples with children.”

(Buffalo Poverty Reduction Blueprint, 2009)

“What This Program Means to Me”

“Being with other women going through the same experience is priceless. Sharing our fears and hopes gives me strength to get through this journey [with cancer].” Sue

“This program was done with such respect. When I walked in to my own private room and saw the caring and thought all around I was awed. There was an envelope on the desk addressed to me. I opened it to find a note from a sister to welcome me and let me know she would keep me in her prayers throughout my stay. I was overcome with emotion. I met her [later] and felt like I had known her for a very long time... This weekend was for me a life changing experience.” Judy

“I am a single mom and work 2 jobs to support my 4 children. Coming to Stella Niagara for the Women's Respite Program in the winter is the only time I ever get to rest a little and have some quiet time to just THINK. I don't know what I would do without this program. It gives me something to look forward to when I'm feeling down.” Tisha

“I'm a 39 year old breast cancer survivor. The Center of Renewal is exactly that—a renewal of spirit that for some women is damaged by cancer and cancer treatments.... I have been uncomfortable talking about cancer with others...this changes you forever. This respite retreat has been relaxing and calming. To have a few days to myself to reflect and enjoy the company of these amazing and strong women has brought me so much joy. I truly am renewed and ready to go back into the world rested and with a positive attitude.” Anne

“The Women's Respite Program should be used as a model for similar programs across the country.” Diane E.

“All I can say to anyone who donated to this program is THANK YOU and PLEASE DON'T STOP DONATING!! Us mothers and grandmothers really need this place and this program. God bless all the people who help us.” L.D.

Visit our new web site!

www.womensrespites.wordpress.com

You will find information about
our history, goals, programs, applications, photos, comments
and you can even donate on line

You can still e mail us at
womensrespites@yahoo.com

Write us at: 1301 Ferry Ave.

Niagara Falls, NY 14301

Or call us at 716 893 0931

Stay in touch - especially if you move, and please tell your friends about us.

The Women's Respite Programs

*provide women in need with an opportunity for rest and renewal
in a safe, comfortable and healing environment.*

*We serve low income single mothers, grandmothers who are raising their grand-
children, and women with cancer diagnoses. They are referred by various agencies.*

The program is supported by grants and donations.

"Restoring Hopes, Refreshing Bodies, Renewing Spirits"

Thank you to all our generous donors.

Each dollar given goes directly to support our programs. Without your help this program could not exist. The women who participate, the staff, coordinating committee and the Sisters of St. Francis who sponsor this program remember you with grateful prayers.



Women's Respite Programs

1301 Ferry Ave.

Niagara Falls, NY 14301