



Lift Up Your Heart

A newsletter of the

WOMEN'S RESPITE PROGRAM

Volume 27, Issue 2

Fall 2023

Sponsored by the
Sisters of St. Francis
at Stella Niagara, NY

The Women's Respite Program provides women in need with opportunities for rest and renewal in a safe, comfortable and healing environment.

We have programs for mothers with low income, women with cancer, grandmothers raising their grandchildren, and mothers with children on the autism spectrum.

Great women, great programs in 2023

Since the last newsletter in the spring, the Women's Respite Program gathered groups in May, June and September—women with cancer and our awesome moms raising children on the autism spectrum (see photos below) and a new group attending Respite for the first time (see photo next page).

Thanks to the Fundraising Committee at Francis Center, our parent organization, there was a meat raffle in October that brought the Respite Program needed financial support. The proceeds were split between the Women's Respite Program and Francis Center afterschool enrichment program in Niagara Falls.

We continued to offer overnight stays at the Center of Renewal so our alums could refresh themselves with a brief bit of peace and quiet. See back page for more info on that.

And now it's fall with winter coming, bringing with it a new round of programs. See the 2024 schedule on the back page. Just to know, we love introducing new women to the Respite Program. There are so many tired and anxiety-laden women out there, but we need your help to find them. If you'd like S. Diane or Teresa to come speak to your group or employer about referring women, please give us a call. We can come in person or on Zoom. Call Teresa @716/877-6896. Thank you.



Refreshing Bodies ● Restoring Hopes ● Renewing Spirits



On the left is our summer group of moms who came to the Respite Program for the first time. We hope to see them again in the future.



There are a few quotes in this issue from Dr. Amber Baker who is an advocate of befriending one's self. You can listen to her podcast or read her blog at Gofriendlyyourselfdoc.com



On the right is a group of fierce and funny cancer warriors who met at the Respite Program and became fast friends. (A group member is missing from this photo.) They give each other support and the gift of laughter. Sometimes the women include their partners in their gatherings. Keep spreading the joy!



Wish you didn't have to go

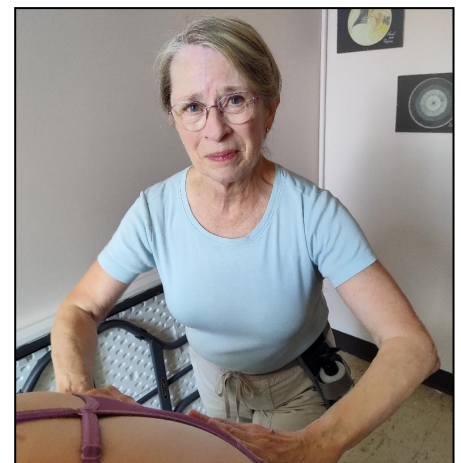
Retiring? Oh no. That was the first response to Mary Ellen Nelson's announcement of retirement. The second, more thoughtful reply was, 'We'll miss you, but wish you only the best.' On the last day of September, the Women's Respite Program had to bid adieu to Mary Ellen as her retirement would begin October 1.

Being a licensed massage therapist was Mary Ellen's second career. Her first career was as a sixth grade teacher for the Lewiston Porter School District. She taught all subjects, but for the last eighteen of her thirty four years, she taught math.

After retiring from teaching, Mary Ellen received training and licensure for her second career as massage therapist extraordinaire. Neither Mary Ellen nor we can remember exactly when she came to the Women's Respite Program, but are we glad she did! It must have been at least ten years ago.

Mary Ellen helped to relax hundreds of tense necks and backs over the years along with parsing out good practical advice for self-care and healing. Plus, she often shared her favorite muscle ointment made from the arnica plant and having anti-inflammatory properties.

Now, after seventeen years as massage therapist, it's time to put away her massage oil bottle. Mary Ellen enjoys reading, knitting, and spending time with the family,



including her grandchildren. She will do some traveling, too.

On a parting note, Mary Ellen told us that, "I was getting as much benefit as the ladies I saw."

On all those Saturdays, our women certainly did benefit from her strong hands and gentle presence.

Thank you, Mary Ellen!



Remember: you hear your own voice more than anyone else's. Listen to what that voice says to you. That's step one. How does it make you feel? Supported, uplifted, and loved? Or belittled, shamed, and trapped? You deserve the compassion and kindness that you show to others.



Love those blue ponchos from the annual excursion to the Maid of the Mist. Also love crafting and relaxing and taking a hike to see the river.



Dr. Amber Baker



The October Meat Raffle brought out a number of alums and S. Maureen! Thanks to the Fundraising Committee of Francis Center for organizing it all. And thanks to everyone who supported the event.



A Final Goodbye to a Friend and Patron

In May, Gini Patwardhan passed away. For more than a decade, Gini came to our summer program for women attending the first time and introduced them to the therapeutic art of journaling. Gini would bring stacks of her own journals, demonstrating that she practiced what she preached. She would explain to the women how she used journaling to heal from the painful experiences of her youth and continued the practice for further insights and benefits.

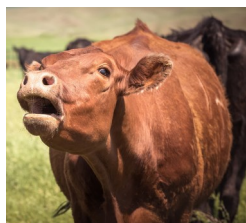
Carrying on her attachment to the Respite Program to the end, Gini requested that memorial gifts be made to us. Thank you, Gini.

Almost every client I worked with didn't just need [self care] skills, they need permission to use those skills.

Dr. Amber Baker

So dear reader, this is your permission.

Moooving?



Call us

Please stay in touch. Send us your new contact info.

Women's Respite Program

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Schedule for 2024

- Feb 16 - 18 — Alums who started in a summer program
- March 15 - 17 — Grandmothers raising their grandchildren
- April 12 - 14 — Women with cancer
- June 7 - 9 — Mothers with low income, at least 25 yrs old
- Nov 1 - 3 — Women raising a child on the autism spectrum

If you know an eligible woman, please encourage her to apply. We give priority to women with low income, but it is not an absolute requirement.



No amount of regret changes the past.
No amount of anxiety changes the future.
Any amount of gratitude changes the present.

Ann Voskamp, author



Stay-for-One-Night Offer

If you'd like some quiet time to yourself for a day and a night, the Respite Program continues to offer our alums access to the Center of Renewal (COR) for an overnight stay. We will cover the cost of a room for one night and up to four (4) meals. If you'd like to extend your stay, you can pay for any additional costs.

Two or three alums can come together. If you come with someone who has not attended a Respite Program, she will have to pay for her own expenses. The Program may be able to help with transportation. Even if you took up this offer previously, you can return this fall or winter. This is NOT a Respite Program; you will have to entertain yourself. There is wifi and of course the beautiful grounds for walking. We recommend making a reservation at least two weeks in advance. You can stay during the week or on the weekend as long as COR has a room. Call Teresa at 716/877-6896 to make a reservation.