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Resident Spotlight: Betty Jo

Like many YW Housing residents, Betty's story began when she was far, far too young.

"I started using when I was 19" She recalled. Her parents were both drug users and it was what she knew, what she was used to.

Betty struggled with her addiction for years before moving to California to be with family and get clean. But in California she fell in love and she and her partner relapses. "We were on and off together, still using, still using. It was pretty scary, you know," she noted, "We never had a place to live. We were homeless and couch surfing." Then she found out she was pregnant.

"When I was 3 months pregnant I went into detox." Betty explained. But the voluntary detox wasn't enough to keep her clean, so she turned herself in for outstanding warrants. "I spent 5 months in jail and Alli was born clean."

Then tragedy struck. At six months old, Alli rolled out of bed and passed away; the cause of death unknown. "When that happened I could not handle it so I went head first into drugs. I was slowly killing myself."

Six months later she was pregnant again. "I got scared when I was pregnant because I didn't want the same thing to happen." She decided to change her life, to leave her bad influences behind and move back to Washington where she could stay clean for her soon-to-be baby girl.

"Living at YW Housing meant that I didn't have to use anymore."

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Betty Jo sharing a moment with her daughter

The following is an excerpt from a letter written by Betty to YW Housing during her stay in jail:

“Every day that I am here my baby is getting a little bit older, and I am missing everything. She’s going to be walking soon. She needs me to come home as much as I need to come home. I feel that it is time to begin moving forward with my life, and that starts when I come home.”

Spotlight

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Betty stayed clean and sober throughout the pregnancy and on August 14, 2007, Kyliegh Faith was born. She baby was a happy, healthy, beautiful girl, but due to Betty’s past history, CPS came to take Kyliegh away.

“It was awful. It was horrible. I felt like I stayed clean for nothing,” Betty remembered painfully. “It was all based on my past history.” She knew she had to get help if she was to get her baby back. That’s when she found YW Housing.

“Living at YW Housing meant that I didn’t have to use anymore. I wasn’t around drugs and I was so grateful for that.”

Betty’s case manager offered no slack to the young mother. “I was told to do 90 meetings in 90 days, so I stayed and worked really, really hard. I completed treatment and parenting classes.”

Getting clean and sober helped Betty face her second problem; she had warrants in California, and CPS insisted that Betty handle her warrants before Kyliegh could be returned. Betty spent

almost four months in California while YW Housing kept her room open so that she had a home to come home to.

“I love the structure of YW Housing – the fact that I come home and know what to expect. There’s not going to be anyone drunk here, nobody is going to be high. It’s the same thing every day. I have keys to my room and the front door, and nobody will change the locks. If you start slipping up, somebody is going to say something. Plus,” she glowed, “it’s safe for Kyliegh.”

On Tuesday, August 19, Kyliegh Faith returned home to her mother.

Director’s Note

It’s hard to believe that summer has come to a close and another year is fast approaching. I have just passed the two year mark as the Executive Director of YW Housing and how time has flown! I am still consistently amazed and humbled by the hard work and successes of our clients and staff.

As I reflect on the year so far, I am struck by several major accomplishments but none outshine our Re-Entry Housing

Pilot Program. This new program and the outstanding work of Sarah Bowens (the program manager and case manager) have been a real example of what teamwork, innovation, and mission can do with a little funding.

A recent study by the Pew Charitable Trust found that at the beginning of 2008:

- 2,319,258 adults were incarcerated.

- One out of every 100 adults living in the United States is in jail.
- One out of every 750 women in this country is behind bars.
- The average yearly cost to incarcerate one individual in Washington is over \$24,000!

Too often, people released from prison or jail have nowhere to go, no support system and the cycle of poverty and

Re-entry Housing Pilot Program Update

YW Housing's Re-entry Housing Pilot Program (RHPP) has been up and running for eight months now, and what a success it has been! RHPP provides housing and case management to women coming out of incarceration.

Accomplishments: We currently have nine program participants with six more vacancies to fill.

Of the nine women in the program:

- 6 women are employed and all the women participate in employment service programs through Clearview Employment or Partners in Careers (PIC).
- 6 women have reunified with their children
- 3 women are attending school at Clark College
- 3 women attend out-patient treatment through Civigenics and Cowlitz Tribe Treatment Center
- 3 women have graduated from out-patient treatment.
- 2 women have completed the Displaced Homemakers program at Clark college



Case Manager Sarah Bowens (middle) with her clients.

- 4 women are volunteering with Hands Across the Bridge and Oxfest
- 8 women have completed Dress for Success

Most importantly, all the women are clean and sober, and no one has re-offended!

How you can help: RHPP is always in need of new or gently used home items including: beds, comforters, rugs, toiletries, computers, and paper prod-

ucts. The women also need clothing, shoes, and accessories that are suitable for job interviews. The focus of RHPP is employment and most women are released from prison wearing a grey sweat suit and nothing more; professional clothing is greatly appreciated. Don't forget, in-kind and cash donations are always tax deductible.

For more information about RHPP, contact Sarah Bowens at 360-571-4380 or email sbowens@ywcaclarkcounty.org

crime can begin again. Yet through the coordinated efforts of the Department of Corrections, local law enforcement and case management, we are helping to reduce recidivism. The women participating in our program are offered the resources and tools to accomplish what they really want: to live happy, healthy, lawful lives outside of the prison system.

At the writing of this note, we have nine formerly incarcerated women in stable

housing and they are doing stunningly well. Many of them have found employment, completed education programs, and reunited with their children. Real women's lives are being impacted in concrete ways, and it is easy to see that the ripples of this positive change touch many lives.

I believe that it is programs like our Re-Entry Housing Pilot Program that will be the ticket to insuring that public safety concerns are addressed. Further,

it is the more human, basic worth of this program that strikes me; to honor the humanity of people who have made past mistakes and to foster the idea that they too can become self-sufficient. Our program is the cheapest, most compassionate, and most forward-thinking idea I can imagine to welcome these women back into our community.

—Megan Newell

Plant, Harvest, Eat

Recalling last night's dinner, how many of us can say we planted and harvested the food on our plate? For many people, last night's meal included an item wrapped in greasy paper from a local drive-through; it might not even be considered food!

Fast food may be cheap and abundant but it certainly isn't healthy and in the long run, it doesn't make sense to fill our bodies with food-flavored trash. That is the lesson that YW Housing women received from WSU Clark County Extension's Food \$ense Nutri-

tion Education Program.

Food \$ense has empowered YW Housing women to reclaiming their authority over food. It all began in the spring when Jodee Nickel, Food \$ense Program Coordinator, began educating the women about gardening. Each month Jodee and YW Housing women gathered at different transitional houses to discuss nutrition and food self-sufficiency. Jodee started each meeting with an educational piece about plants including vitamin and nutrient information. Jodee even brought examples of unusual, edible

plants like dandelion tea (a great use for those pesky flowers).

After the education piece the women rolled up their sleeves to get dirty! Jodee provided planting material for the outdoor garden boxes and instructed the group on planting procedures. The women spent over an hour working together in the yard.

"It has been a great opportunity for the women to build relationships with each other and it allows them to see some of the other properties," noted Housing Services Coordinator, Teri Owen. "The setting is relaxed and casual, and for a moment YW Housing staff members are seen as other women, not authority figures."

In conjunction with gardening, the Food \$ense Program included a cooking element. Nikki Smith and Brenda Chadwick from the WSU Extension delivered a cooking class each month and provided the ingredients, cooking supplies, and class materials. Topics ranged from healthy snack choices for kids, preparing meals on a budget, and "cook once, eat twice" meals. The classes always included an educational component, an activity, and a hands-on cooking piece. Of course after the cooking came the best part: Tasting!

Food \$ense has been a highly successful program at YW Housing, and we hope to continue again next summer.



Denise McMullen pulling weeds in the planter box

“All and all we had a good time working outside together and I hope that the women see the benefits of having a garden both for their health and their wallets.”

—Jodee Nickel

Mentoring with Martha

She can prune a tree, build a garden box, and mentor women on their way to self-sufficiency; she is a Jill-of-all-trades in many ways. Martha Brett is YW Housing's Landscape Maintenance and Mentoring Program Coordinator. Martha began doing landscape in 2006 and has been the Mentor Coordinator for over a year now.

The 15 mentors and 18 mentees meet as a group once each month to do an activity and build relationships. Last month, for example, the group went to the Marshall Center to create artistic stepping stones. The activity was a blast and lent itself to deep conversation about "stepping stones" on the path to recovery and self-sufficiency.

Women Helping Women mentoring program is crucial to the success of many YW Housing residents. "If the women are committed to changing their lives, we are there to help the process," Martha said. "We are there to uncover their potential, their talents, their dreams."

Q & A :

What have you enjoyed most about the mentoring program?

I've enjoyed getting to know such wonderful women in the community. I meet women that just knock my socks off!

What impresses you most?

The strength of the group; it is a very strong, positive movement in our community.

Who makes a great volunteer?

A non-judgmental woman with a passion for helping other women succeed.

What does the program need for better success?

Funding! That's a no-brainer. Having more money to do the activities and increase staff time would be wonderful.

What would you like people to know about you?

Before coming to YW Housing, I owned and operated Martha's Mocha in Sandy, OR. It was the highlight of my life and taught me about community. I love being outdoors. I run in the mountains with my dogs and I drag race, snowboard, golf, ski, and do tile work with my husband and boys. I also jam out on my electric bass guitar!



Martha with her dogs Blaze, Brewtus, and Oscar

Women Helping Women

Mentoring is often the critical, missing component in programs for disadvantaged women. Mentoring fosters empowerment, and empowerment is precisely what women in YW Housing need.

Women Helping Women is our solution to the lack of mentoring in women's lives. This volunteer program matches women from our community with women in transitional housing. The mentors provide supportive role-modeling and help YW Housing women identify and develop their skills, talents, and potential. While mentoring doesn't ensure success, it does provide hope and tools to make it happen.

Mentors are everyday heroes who understand that women are stronger together than apart. You can be a part of this rewarding movement; you can be a mentor.

For more information about mentoring contact Martha Brett at (360) 798-5415 or mbrett@ywcaclarkcounty.org

For donation information, contact Megan Dixon at 360-906-9151 or mdixon@ywcaclarkcounty.org

Message from the President

Fall is a time of change; leaves turn colors, children return to school, and we all get ready to hunker down and face the rain and chill of another Northwest winter. Most of us can anticipate, plan for, and deal with these basic changes; however, the clients of YW Housing are facing challenges that are beyond the comprehension of the average person. Many of our clients are homeless, victims of domestic violence, recovering from drug addiction, or have recently been released from prison. Many of our women and children struggle just to maintain their family unit.

As we move into the holiday season, let's be cognizant of the members of our community who, like our residents, struggle daily to make ends meet. This year's National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week is November 16-22, and we ask everyone to take that time to become more aware of homelessness in our community. You can promote education and awareness by asking a YW Housing representative to speak to your faith community, civic organization, or place of employment about homelessness and poverty here in Clark County.

—Cheri Meyerhofer

Board of Directors Update

It is with great pleasure that YW Housing's Board of Directors adds Heather Hewahewa to the list. Heather works as an accountant for Southwest Washington Medical Center. She is originally from Hawaii and moved to Clark County four years ago. Heather is passionate about YW Housing's mission and objectives, and she is very interested in being on the finance committee and helping with fund development efforts. What a great addition to the Board.

Welcome, Heather!

Board Members

Cheri Meyerhofer, President
Jim Massey, Vice President
Ginger Schmidt, Treasurer
Sue Kusch, Secretary

Ken Bello
Barbara Caggiano
Heather Hewahewa
Avaly Mobbs
Cozette Tyler
Marién Vera

Staff Update

Megan (Maschmann) Dixon

Three Megans in the office? Don't be ridiculous. Last month, Development Director Megan Maschmann tied the knot and changed her name to Megan Dixon. Her email has changed to mdixon@ywcaclarkcounty.org and all other contact information remains the same.

Staff Members

Sarah Bowens, Case Manager
Martha Brett,
Landscape Maintenance and
Mentoring Program Coordinator
Victoria Clevenger, Ready to Rent/
Story Street Coordinator
Megan Dixon,
Development Director
Debby Dover, Asset Manager
Lisa Erickson, Unit Preparation
David Gilmore,
Housing Services Assistant
Megan Newell, Executive Director
Valerie Norris,
Case Manager Coordinator
Teri Owen,
Housing Services Coordinator

YW Housing Mission Statement

As a community based non-profit we exist to foster self-sufficiency for at-risk women and families through affordable housing linked with community services.

Cash Flow Matters

As fall approaches, we can't help but wonder: How significantly will our electric and gas bills increase? How do we effectively manage our properties to maintain positive cash flow while keeping housing affordable?

Our first course of action is to go to our local and state partners who understand our problems and are eager to offer collaboration, guidance, and

financial support. This September, we will take part in the Washington Low-Income Housing Alliance to help set the 2009 Legislative Agenda. We gladly welcome your thoughts and comments on this endeavor, and we encourage you to contact Debby Dover, YW Housing Asset Manager at ddover@ywcaclarkcounty.org.

Look for our update after the New Year.

The following donors generously supported YW Housing from February 2008 through August 2008.

GOVERNMENT AND FOUNDATION SUPPORT

US Department of Housing and Urban Development
State of Washington
Clark County
City of Vancouver
Insurance Professionals of Southwest Washington
Master Gardener Foundation of Clark County
Meyer Memorial Trust Foundation
U.S. Bancorp Foundation

CORPORATE SUPPORT

All Weather Wood
Atlas Spinal Care
Biokleen
Clark County Fair
DSP Architecture
Design Showroom
Mattress Factory Outlet
MVP Video Production
Petals
Walsh Construction Co.
Washington Mutual

CLUB/ORGANIZATION SUPPORT

Alki Middle School's Alpha Club

INDIVIDUAL DONORS

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Warren and Betty Weldon
Robyn Weston
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In-Kind Donations

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Kathy Ryan
Cindy Rimer
Carrie Slayter
Erin Smiley
Pam Wadzita
Arlen and Linda Waters
Scott and Kim Wessa



A special thanks to the 2008 Clark County Fair for donating entry tickets. The women and children had a blast!

We strive to keep this list current and accurate. Please contact Megan Dixon with any necessary changes at mdixon@ywcaclarkcounty.org

Thank you, Donors!



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In-Kind Needs

Women in transitional housing work hard to provide for their families, but they often need help with the “little things” in life. Below is a list of little essentials that make a BIG difference:

- **Gift cards to Wal-Mart, Target, Safeway, or Winco**
- **Gas cards**
- **Toiletries:**
Deodorant, lotion, toilet paper, toothpaste , etc.
- **Cleaning products:**
Dish soap, bathroom cleaner, laundry detergent, paper towels, garbage bags, ect.
- **Cleaning tools:**
Mops, vacuums, etc.

To donate items or for more information, please contact Megan Dixon at (360) 906-9151