



CENTER FOR WOMEN IN TRANSITION

REACH FOR THE STARS *gala*

THE DETAILS

cwitmi.org/events



LOCATION: The Pinnacle Center

3330 Highland Drive
Hudsonville, MI 49426

Doors open at 5:45pm

TICKETS:

\$100 each by March 31
\$125 each after March 31

Purchase online at
cwitmi.org/events



★ **APRIL 20**
2017

You read that right! This year we celebrate the 25th annual Reach for the Stars event.

In 1992, a determined group of staff and volunteers recognized gaps in the agency's funding plan and began laying the groundwork for the first Reach for the Stars. Their vision and leadership allowed our agency to survive lean times. We hope you'll join us to celebrate their commitment, and the commitment of many in our community, to ending violence.

We are honored to welcome keynote speaker Brooke Axtell, survivor of human trafficking and domestic violence. Brooke's experience with abuse began as a 7-year old child, when she was trafficked by her babysitter. Shamed and scared into silence, Brooke kept her abuse a secret. As an adult, she ended up in a relationship with a man who abused and threatened to kill her. She reached out for help, a decision which she says, "saved my life."

Brooke now serves as a dedicated advocate for girls and women, encouraging them to reclaim their worth and express their power to create a more compassionate world. She appeared on the 2015 Grammy Awards alongside former President Obama, performing a spoken-word piece about violence against women. A talented musician, poet, and writer, she contributes to publications like *Rolling Stone*, *Forbes*, and *The New York Times*.

25th

ANNUAL
CELEBRATION



DIRECTOR'S LETTER

This year, we proudly acknowledge the 40th anniversary of our founding. Since 1977, when a courageous group of women in the Tri-Cities recognized a need and organized to meet it, we've been assisting victims of abuse in Ottawa and Allegan counties.

We also celebrate the 25th annual Reach for the Stars event. Again, a brave group of volunteers and staff recognized a need and collaborated to create what is now our agency's signature event.

Yet as we reflect on the past, we also look to the future. We're pushing forward in our violence prevention efforts and preparing to launch our Engaging Men initiative. Domestic and sexual violence are not women's issues, they are community issues. If we're going to end abuse, we need the input, advocacy, and collaboration of women and men.

Personally, I'm also in the midst of a transition. In March 2017, I'll begin a new tenure as CEO of the YWCA of West Central Michigan. Their commitment to victims of domestic violence, along with a focus on ending racism and empowering girls, allows me to continue my work in this field while also providing new challenges and a workspace closer to home.

The Center remains in the capable hands of its dedicated Board and staff. Mindful of the agency's proud history and bright future, the Board is diligently working through its process to select a new Executive Director. The Center is an agency that truly recognizes the value of its legacy while never losing sight of current and future needs. With each challenge and every success, our community partners are by our side. It's bittersweet to say farewell, but I look forward to watching the Center grow, and I thank you for your continuing partnership.

Charisse Mitchell, Executive Director



CENTER FOR
WOMEN IN
TRANSITION

The Center's mission is to respond to, reduce, and prevent domestic and sexual violence. This mission will be achieved through education, collaboration, and advocacy, with crisis and supportive services to victims and survivors.

Email: mail@cwitmi.org
Website: www.cwitmi.org

Executive Director:
Charisse Mitchell

Board of Directors
President: Diane Ybarra
Vice President: Vicki Rosenberg
Treasurer: Greg McCoy
Secretary: Linda Rynbrandt, PhD
Michael Brown
Sue Fleming
Jean Martin, Ph.D., RN
Mat Nguyen
Paul Pruitt
Carol Sarosik
Sandra Trammell
Christine Wright

The Center for Women in Transition is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization.



www.facebook.com/cwit.mi



Welcome

We welcome three new staff members to the Center this month!

Kendra DeLoof, to the role of Domestic Violence Therapist. Kendra most recently worked in Muskegon as a Substance Use Therapist for the county jail. Kendra is returning to CWIT as she was a previous intern of our trauma therapy program. A life-long Midwesterner, Kendra enjoys running, drinking too much coffee, and spending time with her dog.

Emily Gardner, our new Shelter Assistant. Emily recently graduated from GVSU, where she was active in on-campus organization United Students Against Sweatshops. She's passionate about the Center's mission and eager to get engaged with clients and the community. Outside of work, she enjoys spending time with friends and family.

Allyson Stapleton, to the role of Shelter Advocate. Allyson graduated from Hope College in 2014 and has a background in child welfare. She most recently worked in foster care as a Licensing Specialist at Catholic Charities West Michigan. Currently residing in Kentwood, Allyson enjoys watching movies and spending time with her family.

VIOLENCE PREVENTION UPDATES



The scope of the Center’s prevention work is growing! Our prevention program now includes engaging men and boys, along with our violence prevention school programming, Girls on the Run (GOTR), and child and family services. Together, these programs work comprehensively to promote a culture of respect and healthy living, and prevent victimization. Over the next three years, we are working to develop an engaging men and boys program with support from the Office on Violence Against Women at the U.S. Department of Justice.

We piloted our first Coaching Boys into Men program with West Ottawa High School this fall and are working to expand this program to other high schools and athletics programs in Ottawa County. Coaching Boys into Men is a leadership program that helps coaches promote respect on and off the field, reinforcing concepts of consent and holding peers accountable.

We provide coaches with training and support as they implement the Coaching Boys into Men 12-card series each week during the athletic season. For more information about Coaching Boys into Men, please visit coachescorner.org.

Additionally, it is our hope to create a men’s Call to Action Team in Ottawa County, which will engage men as leaders and positive role models for young men and as allies in preventing domestic and sexual violence. Currently, we are scheduling educational sessions for school faculty and parents on “Dating Abuse: Tools for Talking to Teens” to increase knowledge for communicating with teens about healthy and unhealthy relationships.

 Contact Lesley Coghill at 616-494-1741 to schedule a presentation.

A NEW PARTNERSHIP FOR



Girls on the Run is excited to announce a partnership with Coopersville Public Schools. Following feedback from girls and their parents, we made the decision to host two celebratory 5k events on the campus of Coopersville Public.

The first celebration will take place on Friday, June 2nd and will be an evening event for our Northern Ottawa Country teams. The second event will be held Saturday, June 3rd and will be a morning event for our Southern Ottawa and Allegan teams.

We are looking forward to providing our girls with a smaller, community-based event and watching them achieve their goals together! The community is invited to participate in our events by volunteering or coming out to support the girls. For more information on how to become involved, visit our website at <http://gotroac.org>.

LOOKING BACK

CWIT TURNS 40



The first CWIT shelter, opened in 1985 in Grand Haven



Walker House in Grand Haven served as transitional housing and office space



Current Holland offices



Ginny's Place, our emergency shelter



Children's therapy room, re-designed in 2014

Martha's Story

Martha* came to CWIT after years of abuse. Married for 15 years, her husband began beating her during their first pregnancy and continued for the rest of their relationship. He abused her in many ways – financially, verbally, emotionally and physically. As a victim of childhood sexual abuse, Martha had no concept of a healthy relationship and a fractured relationship with her family.

At age 30, her husband beat her so badly she nearly died. She tells us, “I looked like a creature. My hair was ripped out, teeth were missing, I was bleeding everywhere. My eyes were so swollen I could barely see where I was going.” She crawled out of her bathroom window naked, running to a neighbor’s home in order to seek help.

What followed this assault was years of uncertainty. Martha had no money to her name, her ex-husband ruined her credit, and she had broken leases as her ex-husband’s stalking forced the family to move. Obtaining a stable home for herself and her children

was impossible. “Landlords laughed at my application. Why would they take a chance on me?” Martha and her children bounced between different homeless shelters, moving often due to her ex-husband’s determination to find the family. At one point, he called each shelter within a 100 mile radius, threatening to bomb the facility unless they sent Martha and her children back to him.

Martha was eventually referred to the Center for Women in Transition, where she was admitted immediately to our emergency shelter. There, she began a four month stay and connected with a highly-trained advocate. On the advocate’s advice, she applied for and was accepted to the Center’s Transitional Housing program. She tells us, “CWIT made it possible for me and my children to find stability—we had a place that was ours for the next two years. I worked daily with my advocate on budgeting, fixing my credit score, goal-setting, and even parenting.”

After two years, Martha

exited transitional housing and successfully applied for an apartment on her own. The best part? “My children can make friends now. All those years moving from place to place, they could never make any friends.” Martha is now in therapy to deal with the trauma of her childhood sexual abuse, and looks forward to finishing raising her kids with the goal that they attend college. “Transitional housing changed my life and gave me a chance for a better future. The guidance I received helped me become a positive part of my community.”

Last year our emergency shelter provided immediate safety for 56 adults and 77 children.

Our transitional housing program helped 38 adults and 72 children find a safe place to begin re-building their lives.

*Name changed for confidentiality

NEW SERVICE: DOMESTIC VIOLENCE THERAPY

With grant support from the Victims of Crime Act, Center for Women in Transition is delighted to announce that we are now able to offer individual and group domestic violence therapy- additional services that will provide vital assistance to survivors who are experiencing or have experienced intimate partner violence. This service will be offered in addition to our current sexual assault therapy program.

Nearly half of all women and men in the United States have experienced psychological aggression by an intimate partner. Additionally, more than 35.6% of women and more than 28.5% of men in the United States have experienced physical violence, stalking and/or rape by an intimate partner in their lifetime.*

There are a myriad of difficulties survivors might face after experiencing power and control tactics from an abuser; which can manifest physically, mentally and emotionally. Therapists specifically trained in trauma can provide a holistic approach to address the impact of interpersonal violence on all aspects of a survivor's life. Common topics of discussion in therapy include parenting, finances, perception of self, flashbacks, feeling unsafe, and hopelessness. Working through these issues is imperative in helping individuals achieve their goals toward a life free of intimidation and violence.

Working with a trauma therapist can help survivors with an array of challenges including; learning healthy coping strategies, processing through traumatic memories and experiences, learning to recognize power and control dynamics, breaking the cycle of violence, managing difficult symptoms and thought processes. Every survivor's experience with domestic violence is unique and therapists work closely with each client to explore their personal goals and provide the necessary support to achieve that success.

Research on the most effective outcomes working with survivors of intimate partner violence suggests that both individual and group therapeutic support are useful means for treatment.

In addition to the benefits of working individually with a therapist, where one can explore in more detail their personal experience, therapy groups are a useful adjunct. Survivors can learn from others' experiences, have a safe environment to re-establish connection with people who understand the pain associated with domestic violence and thereby reduce the sense of isolation that is often associated with domestic violence relationships.

*Center for Disease Control,
Violence Prevention Report

Center for Women in Transition welcomes Kendra DeLoof, LLMSW, as our newest member of the trauma therapy program. For additional information on how to engage in domestic violence therapy, please contact our helpline at 616-392-1970 or 800-848-5991.

“GASLIGHTING” & DOMESTIC ABUSE

*“I felt like
I was
going crazy!”*

WHAT IS “GASLIGHTING”?

The term “gaslighting” has recently gained some popularity in mainstream media. The term comes from a 1938 British play, *Gaslight*, about a woman whose husband slowly and methodically manipulates her into believing that she is going insane. The play was adapted into an American film featuring Ingrid Bergman in 1944.

Gaslighting is an insidious form of psychological abuse. The abuse will attempt to erode the victim’s self-esteem and self-confidence. Gaslighters will often withhold information, replace facts with false information, and use deception, manipulation, and accusations to weave an intricate web of control over the victim.

SHORT- AND LONG-TERM EFFECTS OF GASLIGHTING VICTIMIZATION

As a result, the victim can become increasingly insecure and anxious. Over time, they begin to question their memory, perception, and judgment of reality. It is common for there to be long-term physical and mental health issues. Moreover, many victims may not realize this is happening until long after the relationship has ended and they find themselves struggling to reclaim their sense of self.



WE CAN HELP

Therapeutic interventions can be extremely helpful to address triggers and lingering self-esteem issues. Center for Women in Transition offers confidential trauma therapy at no cost.

If you, or someone you know, would like to talk with someone about gas lighting, please call our 24-hour help line at 616-392-1970 or 800-848-5991. We also offer individual and group therapy, children’s therapy, and emergency shelter.



ADOPT-A-FAMILY

Our 2016 Adopt-a-Family was a huge success! Thanks to the generosity of our community, 95 women and families received gifts from their wish lists, allowing them to share in the spirit of the season. We extend a special thank you to the volunteers who coordinate and lead this program. Thank you for your support!

THANK YOU

The following individuals and organizations have recently supported our agency by hosting an event or making a large contribution to our agency. We thank them for investing in our mission!

- Art Van
- Big Lake Brewing
- Counterpart
- Dr. Leatha Wood, DDS
- Edmar
- Finish Line Youth Foundation, designated for Girls on the Run
- First Presbyterian Church of Holland
- Gentex Community Share program
- Investing in Communities, Jeannette Brownson
- Jenison Psychological Services
- Kaylee Lockwood, Lu La Roe consultant
- Magna Mirrors
- Mandy Compagner, Pilates in Holland
- ODL
- Panera Bread
- Perrigo Foundation, designated for Sexual Assault Nurse Examination program
- PORTERcorp
- Quality Car Wash
- South Holland Fit Body Boot Camp
- Springview Foundation, designated for emergency shelter
- The Lugers Family Foundation, designated for emergency shelter
- The Mignon Sherwood DeLano Foundation, designated for transitional housing
- TJX Foundation (TJ Maxx and HomeGoods)
- YanFeng Care & Share program

IN THE COMMUNITY

March 4

Join us! Once again, we are partnering with Haworth Inn & Conference Center for Girlfriends Weekend. Attend their high tea on Saturday, March 4, 2017. Proceeds from this event benefit our agency.

May 20

Mark your calendar! Saturday, May 20, 2017 is the day of the Postal Food Drive for the Holland area. How do you participate? It's easy—just fill your pre-delivered bag with non-perishable food items and hang it on your mailbox. Our agency, along with others in the area, is a direct recipient of these donations. In fact, our emergency shelter saves thousands of dollars thanks to the Postal Food Drive!

*We also have volunteer opportunities available during Postal Food Drive. Contact Sherry at 616-494-1747 for more information.



411 Butternut Drive
Holland, MI 49424

CENTER FOR
WOMEN IN
TRANSITION

NON-PROFIT
ORGANIZATION
US POSTAGE
PAID
HOLLAND, MI 49424
PERMIT #169

REACH FOR THE
STARS
gala
★ APRIL 20
2017



WHAT'S INSIDE

CWIT Turns 40

Violence Prevention Updates

**New Service: Domestic
Violence Therapy**