

CONNECTING WITH THE FRIENDS OF THE BENEDICT CENTER

“Listen and attend with the ear of your heart.”  
— Saint Benedict, *The Rule of Saint Benedict*

## CONFRONTING ADDICTION

In 2016, 343 deaths from drug abuse were recorded in Milwaukee County; 148 were caused by heroin use. The problem has reached such a critical stage that all first responders now carry Narcan, a prescription medicine that blocks effects of opioids and reverses an overdose.

In April, Iran Jennings helped the Friends Board better understand the impact of addiction. Iran is an intern with the Center’s outpatient substance abuse services. Alcohol and other drug abuse cover a wide spectrum of substances, so Iran focused many of her remarks on the current opioid epidemic.

In addition to the profound physical effects experienced by women addicted to opiates, the drugs also impair their decision-making ability, cause unstable behavior, and make it difficult, if not impossible, for them to respond to stressful situations.

“The Benedict Center uses cognitive behavioral therapy and motivational therapy to help our clients with addiction problems,” said Iran.



This approach helps clients:

- Learn basic skills for refusing offers of drugs
- Develop a plan for finding enjoyment in drug-free activities
- Establish a social network that will support recovery
- Cope with high-risk situations
- Recover from a relapse, should one occur

Iran noted that psycho-education is the key to helping clients beat their addiction.

According to the National Institutes of Health - National Institute on

Drug Abuse, psycho-education “integrates psychotherapeutic and coping skills training techniques with abstinence-based addiction counseling.” <sup>1</sup>

Treatment is designed to promote the client’s motivation for change, establish and maintain abstinence from all psycho-active drugs, and build the client’s coping and problem-solving skills so she doesn’t turn to drugs to deal with life challenges. Therapy is individualized according to each client’s needs.

Iran noted that it is virtually impossible for clients to successfully recover from an addiction if their basic needs are not being met.

According to The National Coalition for the Homeless, “For many homeless people, survival is more important than personal growth and development, and finding food and shelter takes a higher priority than drug counseling.” <sup>2</sup>

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The National Institutes of Health cites, as an example, that most homeless people lack access to public, as well as private transportation. Providing transportation or public transportation vouchers to meetings and recovery centers is just one step that helps individuals struggling with addiction get the help they need to end their dependence on drugs so they can focus on other needs.

(Funding bus tickets for Benedict Center clients has long been one of Friends' fundraising priorities.)

The Women's Harm Reduction Program deals with this dynamic by trying to address the complex needs of the individual through cognitive behavioral therapy and groups to address trauma, as well as adult education, parenting and employment classes and support.

<sup>1</sup>Washton, Arnold, M., Ph.D., C.S.A.C. ( *A Psychotherapeutic and Skills-Training Approach*, <http://www.dualdiagnosis.org/resource/approaches-to-drug-abuse-counseling/psychotherapeutic-and-skills-training/>

<sup>2</sup>National Coalition for the Homeless (July 2009), *Substance Abuse and Homelessness*, <http://www.nationalhomeless.org/factsheets/addiction.pdf>



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## BRAVA DONNA!

There is not enough room in this newsletter to completely document all that Donna Hietpas accomplished during her 27 years at the Benedict Center.

On May 19, the Medical College of Wisconsin (MCW) awarded Donna an honorary doctorate degree in recognition of one facet of her service — her leadership in creating the Sisters Program. The program's establishment was funded by a grant from MCW's Advancing a Healthier Wisconsin Endowment.

The program, including street outreach, a drop-in center, case management and other services, help improve the lives of women who are involved in the sex trade.

In 2013, AHW awarded a \$200,000 grant to the Sisters Project "to prevent violence against women involved in Milwaukee's sex trade by developing an action plan that integrates local and national best practices in prostitution intervention strategies." Donna led that charge.

According to MCW, during her tenure at the Benedict Center, Donna "helped provide countless women a safe place to begin healing from past trauma. . . by providing community-based treatment including mental health and substance abuse services, cognitive behavioral therapy, trauma counseling, and parenting and employment classes. "



Donna Hietpas

In 2010, Donna worked with Police District 3 and the District Attorney's office to develop more effective responses to street prostitution. The Program offers women facing arrest the option of participating in the Sisters Program for six weeks.

Outreach workers also intervene with women on the streets, bringing them to the center for an introduction to the program. MCW research indicated that, of 88 women who had participated, fewer than 10 percent went on to incur new criminal charges.

MCW academic partner, Staci Young, PhD, is analyzing the program's data, trying to form a best-practice model that can be expanded and replicated. Officials in Cook County, Illinois, have expressed interest in building a similar program.

This winter, the Sisters Program expanded to Police District 2 (Milwaukee's south side).

Congratulations to Donna for building a successful program that is changing the way communities address the issue of prostitution. It is wonderful to see her receive the public recognition she so richly deserves.



## NEWS FROM ROC

Rep. Michael Schraa has introduced a plan to establish a pilot program that would divert many people convicted of Operating While Intoxicated (OWI) into an intensive treatment program, rather than a five-year mandatory prison sentence. The "WISGREAT" program would not only provide intensive treatment, but it would also provide transportation that would allow participants to keep their jobs during the 18 months they would be confined.

Ask your legislators to support Rep. Schraa and the WISGREAT program, as well as increased funding for the TAD (Treatment Alternatives and Diversions) program. Both programs save taxpayer money and help restore people to health and a place as productive, contributing

members of society. WISGREAT and TAD hold people accountable for their actions while providing a path for them to recover and make amends.



### PAROLE FACES CHALLENGE

About 3,000 people in Wisconsin prisons are eligible for parole. These individuals were sentenced prior to

"Truth in Sentencing". Many men and women who have served the time they were expected to serve by the judge who sentenced them, and who pose no threat at all to the community, are being held unnecessarily. For unexplained reasons, the Governor has proposed the elimination of the Parole Commission, which could potentially slow the process even more.

Ask your legislators to refuse to eliminate the Parole Commission. Ask them to demand a complete review of the 3,000 parole-eligible prisoners, and the release of those who have met the expectations of the judges who sentenced them in the last century.

Terry Sherman  
Treasurer, Friends Board

## AT A LOSS FOR WORDS?

If you're a Friend of the Benedict Center, inevitably someone will ask you to explain the Center's mission. As a Friend, your role as an ambassador for the Benedict Center is important to the public's perception of its programs and services.

Whether you're chatting with a neighbor or addressing a group, the more you know about the Benedict Center, the more comfortable you'll feel answering questions about the purpose and nature of its activities.

Monica Beitzel, Friends Board member, has compiled a packet of infor-

mation about the programs provided by the Benedict Center: Deferred Prosecution Agreement, House of Corrections, Women's Harm



Reduction, and Sisters, as well as Mental Health and Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse counseling.

The packet, distributed at the Spring Luncheon, offers you an up-to-date overview of ways the Benedict Center helps women in our community improve their lives.

Monica is working with the Benedict Center to identify ways Friends members can augment the Center's Speakers Bureau. In the near future, interested members can sign up to address local church groups and organizations about the work of the Benedict Center.

Look for more information about the Speakers Bureau in future issues of the Friends Newsletter.





*Save the Date!*

**Wednesday, September 27, 2017**

***Friends Fall Fundraiser***

**Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist  
in the Atrium**

## HOW YOU CAN HELP US

There are many ways to support Friends of the Benedict Center. Choose your own level of involvement.

### **JOIN THE FRIENDS, OR RENEW A LAPSED MEMBERSHIP**

Membership remains affordable: \$30 per individual; \$50 per family. Or enhance your membership by joining the Leadership Circle.

*For information contact Pat Santilli at [ptsan@wi.rr.com](mailto:ptsan@wi.rr.com).*

### **SERVE AT AN AWARDS LUNCHEON**

To encourage the women on their journey, the Benedict Center holds three awards luncheons annually.

Awards recognize client achievements, such as completion of classes and programs. When you help the Friends provide and serve the meal for these events you have a special opportunity to meet many of the women and share in their joy.

*For information contact Camille Shaw at [joencamille@gmail.com](mailto:joencamille@gmail.com).*

### **ATTEND OUR EVENTS**

Our luncheons and fundraiser are an importance source of Friends' financial support. More important, these events update Friends to the activities of the Benedict Center. Enjoy the fellowship of other Friends members at our annual fundraiser

on September 27.

*If you would like to lend your talents to planning and facilitating a Friends event, contact Marianne King at [marianne.kingwi@gmail.com](mailto:marianne.kingwi@gmail.com)*

### ***FOCUS ON FRIENDS***

Focus on Friends newsletter is published three times per year by the Friends of the Benedict Center.

Articles and ideas are welcome. Send articles, questions or comments to:

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