

CONNECTING WITH THE FRIENDS OF THE BENEDICT CENTER

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

OH, WHAT A YEAR IT WAS!

During 2017, Friends continued to support the Benedict Center in myriad ways. Your generous financial-kind and volunteer contributions allowed us to help sustain programs and services, meet emergency needs, and enhance the experience of women in the Harm Reduction and Sisters programs.

Friends respond in amazing ways when asked for help. You’ve brought countless hygiene products to the luncheons. But this past January, you exceeded all expectations when we requested sheets for the

winter months that offers women a safe place for the night. Friends brought approximately three dozen sheets to the Winter Luncheon for the beds at the warming center.

Members also accomplished tasks that would otherwise have diverted staff from their primary job responsibilities. In May, Pat Santilli designed the centerpieces for the Benedict Center’s spring fundraiser.



Volunteers Camille Shaw and Cathy Fink get ready to serve the BC Thanksgiving luncheon.

new Sisters Program Southside. Women in prostitution are often homeless, so the new location opened a warming center during the

Also in May, Joan Houlehen and four friends provided and served the Spring Awards Luncheon at the Benedict Center. If you’ve never experienced an awards luncheon, we encourage you to volunteer for one in 2018. The event honors the Benedict Center’s clients for completing classes, passing GED tests, and modeling positive behaviors — cheering on their peers, overcoming challenges, and



Volunteers Lois Kujawa, Joan Houlehen and Rosemary Cavaluzzi at the Benedict Center Christmas Party

exhibiting the traits that will help them achieve better lives for themselves and their children.

Friends also provided the décor, food and staffing for the Benedict Center’s Thanksgiving Luncheon on November 16 and Christmas Party on December 6. Our members provided around 40 wrapped gifts used by Angie Kopf in her gift-passing game, which is fast becoming a tradition at the Benedict Center.

Friends are also serving as ambassadors for the Benedict Center, educating the public to its mission, programs, role in the community, and impact on the lives of women served there. Friends Board Member Monica Beitzel is working closely

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with Jeanne Geraci and staff to develop the Speakers Bureau and train Board members to make presentations to groups and organizations. A recent “trial run” at the Whitefish Bay Kiwanis Club was a great success!

Of course, Friends can be relied upon to provide the Benedict Center with funds. In 2017, your generosity made it possible for us to fulfill a \$10,000 pledge to the Center. We’re thrilled to announce that we were able to make a second \$10,000 donation this past fall, earmarking the money for use in 2018.

On a smaller but no less important scale the Friends came to the rescue with \$400 when the dishwasher broke down.

You’ve made quite a difference this past year. Thank you for being a Friend. Your support is greatly appreciated by the Benedict Center

and the women whose lives are transformed by their experience there.



Board member Angie Kopf leads the women in a laugh-filled Christmas gift-passing game.

CREATING CONTINUITY

In December, Joan Houlehen stepped down from the Benedict Center’s Board of Directors after nine years of dedicated service. She offers a few reflections on her experience with the Board.

I joined the Friends of the Benedict Center in January of 2004, first as its Membership Chairman, and then its President.

I was honored to be appointed to the Benedict Center Board of Directors as Liaison for the Friends on January 1, 2009, with my term ending on December 31, 2017.

During that time period I have watched as the Benedict Center went from begging to blessed. We

have grown, been recognized for our accomplishments, made contacts nationwide, developed new programs, joined with other



Joan Houlehen

agencies, and maintained our basic mission to help women in need to strive for a better life.

Kudos to Board President Stephen Steiner, to Executive Director Jeanne Geraci, and all the Board members who so judiciously steered this organization on to solid footing.

It is now time for new eyes, new ideas, and new people to continue to move this non-profit on an upward trend.

It has been my pleasure to serve you.

By Joan Houlehen
Member at Large
Friends Board

MONICA BEITZEL JOINS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Friends of the Benedict Center is pleased to announce that Monica Beitzel, member-at-large on the Friends Board, has been approved for membership on the Benedict Center Board of Directors.

Monica will serve as Friends Liaison to the Benedict Center Board.

Monica holds a master's degree in social work and is retired from a

career as a school social worker with Milwaukee Public Schools. She brings a wealth of knowledge and commitment to social justice to the Board.

This past year, Monica has worked closely with Jeanne Geraci to develop the Benedict Center Speakers Bureau and train members of the Friends as presenters.



Monica Beitzel



To listen to Jeanne's interview, go online to:
<https://radiomilwaukee.org/story/community-stories/russian-transport-human-trafficking>

JEANNE ON THE AIR

WYMS, 88.9 Radio, recently interviewed Jeanne Geraci, executive director of the Benedict Center, about the issue of human trafficking in Milwaukee.

The interview was part of the station's coverage the Benedict Center's Community Partnership with Renaissance Theaterworks' production of *Russian Transport*.



FOCUS ON FRIENDS

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

Ideas and suggestions are welcome. Send articles, questions or comments to:

MARIANNE KING
Marianne.kingwi@gmail.com

Or call Marianne at:
414.771.9096

www.benedictcenter.org

RUSSIAN TRANSPORT



The Benedict Center is pleased to be a Community Partner with the city's Renaissance Theaterworks for its production of *Russian Transport*, continuing through February 11 at the Broadway Theatre Center.

Renaissance Theaterworks is the only local theater both founded and operated by women.

Set in the Russian enclave of Sheepshead Bay, Brooklyn, *Russian Transport* tells the story of an immigrant couple, their two teenagers, and the turmoil that results when sinister Uncle Boris moves in. As the story unfolds, they realize that Boris is involved in human trafficking.

BENEDICT CENTER REACHES OUT

Jeanne Geraci will be part of the Scholar Afternoon Talkback following the 2:00 p.m. performance on Sunday, February 4.

GET A DISCOUNT

As Friends, you are eligible for a discount on tickets to the play. **Use the code Benedict25 to get 25% off tickets** (\$30 plus tax and facility fee). This code is accessible for online, in-person or phone orders.

TO ORDER TICKETS

Online: <https://www.r-t-w.com/>
Box Office: 414.291.7800

CONSIDER GIVING THE BOARD A TRY

JOIN THE FRIENDS OR RENEW A LAPSED MEMBERSHIP

It's membership renewal time at Friends of the Benedict Center! We operate with a very low overhead, and the money we receive from membership dues helps us to fulfill our financial pledge to the Benedict Center. In 2017 that pledge was \$10,000.

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

For membership information contact Pat Santilli at ptsan@wi.rr.com

A LITTLE TIME MAKES A BIG DIFFERENCE

The Friends Board meets once a month for two hours to consider how we can assist the Benedict Center in its mission, plan the Winter and Spring luncheons, and identify volunteer opportunities.

Think about joining the Board as an at-large member. Enjoy the fellowship of board members, and feel a great sense of accomplishment as you enhance the experience of the women we serve.

For more information, talk to any Board member or email Camille Shaw at camilleshawski@gmail.com

HELP WANTED: COMMUNICATOR

Friends of the Benedict Center is looking for a volunteer to assist with its communications needs.

In particular, we seek someone who can establish a Friends Facebook page, post news and information and monitor all activity on the page.

We would also like to explore other social media options that might be a good fit for Friends.

If you're interested in this exciting volunteer opportunity, or want to know more about it, please contact Darla Hium at dhium@hotmail.com