

focus on Friends

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CONNECTING WITH THE FRIENDS OF THE BENEDICT CENTER

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

FRIENDS MADE A DIFFERENCE IN 2015

Thanks to the support and generosity of our members, the Friends of the Benedict Center was able to fulfill its \$10,000 commitment to the Benedict Center in 2015.

About one-third of the total was applied to the Sister's Program, which continues to expand and enhance the intervention services provided to

women engaged in street prostitution. The rest went to programming at the Benedict Center.

In addition to the money, Friends members brought a variety of hygiene products to our luncheon meetings. The Sisters Program includes the products in gift bags that are given to the women referred to the program.

Jeanne Geraci, Benedict Center Executive Director, noted that donations of winter outerwear, such as hats, scarves, mittens and jackets, have been outstanding. The Center has been able to meet the needs of its women clients for these items. One exception is plus-size jackets, for which the need continues.

FUND-A-MOVE CONTINUES TO HELP

Anyone who has ever moved knows that expenses stack up like packing crates.

Executive Director Jeanne Geraci estimates that the Center's recent move to new facilities at 1849 N. Martin Luther King Drive are closing in on \$20,000.

In addition to the cost of the move itself, the Benedict Center is undertaking a \$10,000 build-out of the kitchen area.

To help defray the costs of the move, the Friends set up a crowd funding site. To date, the Friends of the Benedict Center have donated over \$6,400.

Donations are still welcome. To contribute to the campaign, go online to: **www.crowdrise.com**. Click on **Find An Event** in the top menu and type Benedict Center in the Search box. **Select Fund-A-Move** and make your donation.

The Center's previous home, the Germania Building, was sold about a year ago. The owner's plans are to renovate the building into apartments.

Open House

Friends will have an opportunity to see the Benedict Center's new facilities at its Open House, Friday, April 8, from 11:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m.

Members interested in helping to host the event are welcome to contact:

Marianne King
414.771.9096

Marianne.kingwi@gmail.com



Though the new facility is somewhat smaller, staff members are pleased to be located in the community that benefits from its services.

HEROIN: THE NEW GAME CHANGER

Seventy-five percent of the prostitution arrests in Milwaukee are made in the second and third police districts. District 3, the near south side, edges out District 2 (the near north side) in total prostitution arrest numbers.

Even so, the social and economic issues that create an incubator for prostitution are not unique to a single district. A life marred by poverty, violence, sexual assault and substance abuse can happen anywhere.

Increasingly, research conducted by the National Institute of Justice has drawn a relationship between drug abuse and prostitution. According to Marilyn C. Moses, Social Science Analyst at NIJ, "This research reveals that many women enter prostitution as minors and use

the income to support a drug habit or to stave off homelessness."

Executive Director Jeanne Geraci notes that Benedict Center's Women's Harm Reduction Program is seeing an

increase in clients who are addicted to heroin, an increase that is also leading to growth in the number of clients who come from metro Milwaukee.

According to *JAMA Psychiatry*, there has been a dramatic shift in the demographics of heroin users. Today's users are more likely to be suburban men and women in their teens and twenties.

These young suburbanites start out sneaking their parents' prescription medications, about half of which are popular painkillers such as OxyContin, Percodan and Demerol.

Once a person is hooked, prescription meds can be both difficult to obtain and expensive to purchase.

(Continued on page 4)



ACTION REPORT FROM THE BENEDICT CENTER

BC RECEIVES GRANT

Benedict Center received a national grant from the Open Society Fund to conduct citywide policy work. This grant will support research and planning of a municipal diversion program that will help expand the Sisters Diversion Program, which provides a treatment alternative to incarceration for women arrested for prostitution.

RE-ENTRY PROGRAM EXPANDS

The Milwaukee County House of Correction has increased its contract for Benedict Center's re-entry services. As a result, the Center will be able to double the number of women served. CeCe Brown, the Center's re-entry coordinator, has gone from part-time to full-time to manage the higher volume. Katie Karnold-Lynch has become re-entry coordinator at the House of Correction.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

The Benedict Center is now an officially licensed outpatient mental health counseling center. The staff is pleased to be able to integrate mental health counseling with its existing AODA counseling for a more holistic approach to client treatment.

SHELTER FROM THE STORM

Many of the women served by the Sister's Program are homeless. Most of the homeless shelters in Milwaukee do not open until 7:00 p.m. or later. Sadly, women on the streets seek shelter where they can find it. Sometimes a crack house may seem like the only option.

During the coldest weather, the Sister's Program is extending its hours to weekends and will stay open until 8:00 p.m. weekdays

to offer these women a better place to keep warm until the community's homeless shelters open their doors for the night.

***What else is going on?
See for yourself!***

**BENEDICT CENTER
OPEN HOUSE**

**Friday, April 8, 2016
11 AM - 2PM**

1849 Martin Luther King Dr.

CHAPTER 2: FROM 11 X 15 TO ROC

In 2012, the WISDOM statewide, faith-based network of churches and community leaders began its *11x15 Campaign* with the audacious objective of cutting Wisconsin's prison population in half by 2015. The campaign has achieved success, but has a ways to go to reach the final goal line.

The grassroots momentum generated by the campaign and locally spearheaded by Milwaukee Inner-City Congregations Allied for Hope (MICAHA) has had a significant impact on the state's criminal justice system.

Today, more courts offer non-violent offenders treatment rather than imprisonment. Policy changes are reducing the circumstances in which solitary confinement is utilized as a punishment within the state's prisons.

The *11x15 Campaign* hasn't gone away. It has evolved. Renamed *Restore Our Communities Wisconsin*, aka *ROC Wisconsin*,



Wisconsin, it will continue its efforts to reduce our prison population, reduce racial disparities in the rates of incarceration, promote treatment over prison for non-violent offenders and build safer, healthier and more just communities.



SAFE SURRENDER GAINS TRACTION

According to the Milwaukee County DA's Office, there are more than 20,000 active arrest warrants in the county for non-violent offenders wanted for traffic violations, failure to pay child support, burglary and low-level drug offenses. Confrontations between these individuals and law enforcement have turned deadly at times, as evidenced by recent shootings.

Example: A white police officer in North Charleston, S.C., was charged with murder for shooting a man who tried to run following a simple traffic stop. The victim, Walter Scott, had outstanding warrants for back child support, and he feared arrest.

With support from the DA's Office, Milwaukee County Circuit Courts and the Milwaukee Police Department, MICAHA obtained a two-year, \$395,000 grant from the Medical College of Wisconsin to create the Safe Surrender Program.

The program, which has shown success in communities across the country, establishes churches as safe havens. Suspects will be able to surrender without fear of immediate arrest or being caught in a sting operation.



The program will help suspects figure out penalties and establish payment plans. Other potential services would help participants find housing, access health care, and pursue job training and employment opportunities.

MICAHA has targeted summer 2016 for a major event to encourage people with outstanding warrants to participate.



RISE ACT OFFERS HOPE

Rep. Dean Knudson (R-Hudson) and Sen. Alberta Darling (R-River Hills) are co-sponsors of the Reduce Incarceration, Secure Employment (RISE) Act, which would create certificates of qualification for employment (CQE) for individuals who have been incarcerated.

The program, which has shown success in Ohio, would allow the Wisconsin parole commission to drop occupational licensing restrictions that annually prevent thousands of previously incarcerated Wisconsin residents from obtaining employment.

During incarceration, many people learn skills and trades that require an occupational license. Ironically, their status as a convicted felon precludes their obtaining the license when released.

Passage of the RISE Act is expected to increase employment, reduce recidivism, and provide people who have served their sentence to make a fresh start.

(Continued from page 2)

Heroin, an opioid synthesized from morphine, is a cheaper and easier-to-obtain alternative to prescription painkillers.

Heroin is highly addictive. The National Institutes of Health estimates that almost a quarter of all Americans who try heroin become addicted. Tolerance to the drug increases with use.

Heroin addicts often face a future of financial problems, divorce, broken family relationships and job loss.

Without the money to maintain their drug habit, women sometimes turn to crime, including prostitution.

As we advocate for justice reform, we can support those healthcare and community programs that offer help to persons caught in the grip of addiction.



BRING IT ALONG!

Benedict Center is always in need of in-kind donations that contribute to the well-being of their clients. We will be collecting items at the Spring Luncheon and appreciate all donations, including:

- Towels
- Toothbrushes/toothpaste
- Feminine napkins and tampons
- Deodorant
- Toilet paper
- Wet wipes (individually wrapped)
- Reading glasses (various strengths)
- School supplies, including: note books, pocket folders and pens

For information about Benedict Center's wish list for donated items, please contact:

Camille Shaw
camilleshawski@gmail.com
414-475-5124



Your table's waiting...

Friends of the Benedict Center

SPRING LUNCHEON

Tuesday, June 7, 2016

Milwaukee Yacht Club

BECOME A FRIEND
and help women to a better future

Your support helps non-violent women offenders build academic, personal and economic skills for a safer, healthier and better life.

For more information go online to:

www.benedictcenter.org

Then click on *How You Can Help* to access the Friends page.

Join today!

Individual Member	\$30
Family Member	\$50
Lifetime Member	\$200

Friends
of the Benedict Center