

Connection

Published for friends of CWJC - Nashville

First CWJC - Nashville fundraiser a success

By Dawn Ferguson

"Tonight we've used our hands to applaud these courageous women. To salute these women who have been helped by this organization. Yet there are countless more hands needing to be lifted up in the Nashville area. Who will lend a hand to lift a woman in need?"

That was the question posed by emcee Harry Chapman to more than 500 people attending CWJC-Nashville's first fundraiser on Thursday, March 3 at Brentwood Baptist Church in Wilson Hall.

Chapman's question followed the powerful testimonies of two CWJC participants - Cassandra Keeble and Bonnie Payton - and mentor Lauren Moody.

Cassandra, a single mother of three, is working toward receiving her GED (see story Participant wants 'to give back' by mentoring, page 3.) "I needed someone I could trust more

than anything," said Cassandra about her coming to CWJC. "I was broken. I had a broken home, a broken heart and a broken relationship. I found that trust at CWJC as well as honesty and love and people who encouraged me no matter what came up. I am so thankful for the tutoring program and for my mentor, Lauren Moody."

CWJC participant Bonnie Payton spoke of her struggles and the downward spiral her life had been prior to becoming involved in CWJC. Bonnie dropped out of high school her senior year. The years that followed her dropping out presented Bonnie with a long list of challenges and struggles...struggles that finally brought her to

her knees. "On February 17, 2004 I asked God back into my life, and it was the beginning of a big turnaround," she said.

Bonnie also spoke of her special challenge in preparing for her GED because of her dyslexia. When she had entered the program last year, she was at a third grade reading level. Now, the 27-year-old proudly states, she's at "a newspaper level or eighth grade" and just

read her first book!

"When Becky (Sumrall) asked me to be a mentor, I told her I wasn't sure I had what it took," admitted Lauren Moody in her testimony. "I didn't think I had enough answers. But Becky explained to me that a mentor was just someone who was a little further down the road in this journey we call life."

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THE GRATEFUL BLUEGRASS Band will provide entertainment at the CWJC fundraiser to be held at Brentwood Baptist Church.



CWJC RECEIVED A \$2,500 grant from The Community Foundation of Middle Tennessee this fall. Shown left to right are Jerry Williams, CFMT board member; Betsy Walkup, CFMT board member; Becky Sumrall, CWJC executive director; and Patricia Davis, The Women's Fund of the CFMT, board member.



**CWJC —
A Hand Up, Not A
Hand Out**

Our purpose is to equip women for life and employment with basic life skills necessary for self-sufficiency, within her culture, which may include sustained employment; adequate income; housing; transportation; child care; and/or medical care.

Graduation scheduled for Saturday, May 7

By Dawn Ferguson

At least 10 women are scheduled to graduate from CWJC on Saturday, May 7 at 2 p.m. at First Baptist Church downtown.

"I am so proud of these women and their mentors and other CWJC volunteers who have touched their lives," said CWJC executive director Becky Sumrall. "They have all worked so hard to achieve their goals and to rise above their circumstances."

One of this spring's graduates, Rachel Grant, made it to college but had to drop out her first year in October 2001. Her mother was very sick and died the following January. Because her grade point average had been low during this stressful period, Rachel didn't think she qualified for financial assistance. So, she never pursued college again because she couldn't afford it.

Rachel was working two jobs at First Baptist Nashville — a childcare worker during the day and cleaning in the evenings — when she chatted one evening with

Sumrall. She told Becky she wanted to go to college and get her degree in early childhood education, but she didn't have the necessary financial resources. Becky suggested Rachel enlist the services of CWJC.

Rachel's life changed when she hooked up with mentor Kathy Kemmer in September 2003. She told Kathy her story and that her goal was to get her degree and explained her inability to qualify for financial aide. Kathy immediately said "you can appeal." So, Kathy started writing a letter of appeal and got Rachel to get together supporting documentation. "The whole time she was doing it, I kept saying this isn't going to work. I just know this isn't going to work," admits Rachel.

But to Rachel's surprise, it did work. She got the much needed financial assistance and was back in school the next January! Today, Rachel is preparing to graduate in May with her technical certification. She next plans to pursue an associate's degree.

Being partnered with Kathy gave Rachel

just what she needed. After she got back in school, Kathy continued supporting the single mother of two, and they did Bible studies together until Kathy's life changed. "She had always told me that she wanted to be a missionary," said Rachel. "In early January, she left to be a missionary in Nicaragua. I'm glad for her, but I regret she won't be able to be here for my graduation from CWJC or Nashville Tech."

"The theme of graduation this year is 'I believe'," said Sumrall. "That's how our program helps our participants — by enabling them to believe in themselves and their abilities, by pairing them with volunteers who care for them and about them and encourage them and believe in them, and by showing them God's love and His plan for their lives and strengthening their faith in Him. Everyone who believes in our mission and the abilities of our participants is welcome to show their support by attending graduation!"

For more information about graduation, call CWJC at 244-3669. □

Executive director seeks volunteers for 2005

By Becky Sumrall
executive director

Volunteers are invaluable to our ministry. They are the foundation upon which we build. In fact, one of the things that sets our program apart from others is the vital role our mentors play in the lives of our participants. To my knowledge, we are the only program of assistance in our community for adults that requires each of our participants to have a mentor.



SUMRALL

A mentor can point a woman in the right direction. She can give her a role model to look up to. She can give her resources to help her make her own decisions. She can guide her spiritually, mentally and physically. She can be the person who believes in you and encourages you when no one else does.

Unfortunately, once again this semester, we have turned women away from our program because we didn't have enough mentors.

Therefore, I'm writing this column as an urgent plea. Most of you reading this newsletter are volunteers — you're well aware of the rewards you receive through your giving to the women in our program. I am asking for your support and your help in recruiting more volunteers for 2005.

You can start by praying. I know that God is at work through our ministry. I have experienced Him working first hand in the lives of these women. Pray that Christian women who are seeking to experience God and want to make a difference in someone's life as a volunteer will find us. Pray that God will use you to make that happen. Your personal testimony to someone about our ministry and your involvement may be all that it takes to get someone involved.

You can also pray that God will put on the hearts of someone a desire to help us recruit volunteers. This person would be responsible for contacting churches and community agencies to tell them about the volunteer opportunities available at CWJC. We have a volunteer helping us now with communications and are working on materials to use to help state our needs. These

resources would be available to the volunteer recruiter to assist in telling our story.

You can also make a commitment to share your experience and our ministry with at least one friend or your Sunday School class, your bunko group, your work colleagues, your mission group, your family, or anyone else you come in contact with. If you're worried about what to say, share this newsletter with them. Or give them our website.

I'm excited about 2005! Our fundraiser is not only bringing us support from new resources, but we're getting opportunities to tell more people about our program. And as more women become aware of us and our ability to help them, we are going to need more volunteers as well as financial support.

As one of our participants said, "This is the best program out there for women who need someone in their life to talk to ... I do not know what I would do without CWJC in my life!" Please pray for our current volunteers and the addition of new volunteers. And, share your experience to enable us to continue raising women up and giving them "A hand up, not a hand out!" □

Participant wants 'to give back' by mentoring

By Dawn Ferguson

NASHVILLE — “It’s something my heart desires to do,” says Cassandra Keeble. “I want to start a mentoring program (at my church) to encourage young ladies.”

That’s what Cassandra told her minister, and the first meeting of just such a group took place last month at Christ Christian Center in Gallatin.

Cassandra is a CWJC participant – slated to graduate from the program this spring. “I told my pastor that I was part of a mentoring program, and I wanted to give back the same inspiration that God had brought to me,” she said.

Cassandra entered CWJC in the fall of 2002. She was trying to get her GED and a friend

who was a program participant encouraged her to seek the organization’s services. At the time, she was not a Christian. “I had always believed in God, but I had never dedicated my life to Christ,” she said. “I never took the steps to live in Christ.”

It was during a CWJC Bible study in 2003 that Cassandra started asking lots of questions about becoming a Christian. “Becky (Sumrall) took me aside and talked to me, and we started praying about it,” she said. “Later, I made a public decision to dedicate my life to Christ.”

Since then, Cassandra — a single mother of 3 — moved from Nashville to Gallatin and has been studying for her GED which she is scheduled to take soon. “I just need 10 more

points to get it,” she says. After she meets that goal, she will have reached the goals she established when she first began participating in CWJC.

“The greatest joy I have in working with these women is watching them transform,” said CWJC executive director Becky Sumrall. “That’s what we do – we transform lives. And the really exciting thing of it is, is that we don’t just enable one woman to change. Because she changes, people in her life change. Like Cassandra. She has re-established a broken relationship with her mother and she’s making a difference in the lives of the young people she’s working with at her church. What we do has a great snowball effect in our community.”

At one point in her life,

Cassandra was on Families First — Tennessee’s welfare reform plan — while she was studying for her GED. “I was getting \$234 a month – my only income – and trying to support myself and three kids,” she said. “I couldn’t do it, and I decided I was going to have to go back to work.”

So she left Families First and obtained a job. She’s been able to maintain her employment, participate in CWJC, take GED classes and become active in her church while raising three children — including one teenager!

Anyone who wants to personally congratulate Cassandra may do so at CWJC’s graduation ceremonies on Saturday, May 7 at 2 p.m. at First Baptist Church downtown. □

Endowment created

NASHVILLE — An endowment has been created for CWJC that allows the bequest of tax-deductible cash gifts of property, insurance, stocks, and bonds. The board would like to acknowledge and thank Glenda Palmer, board member, for making the first contribution to establish the endowment.

For more information, contact the CWJC – Nashville office at (615) 244-3669. □

Volunteer Training

Sunday, June 5
or
Saturday, Aug. 27

Call (615) 244-3669 for more information.

First CWJC - Nashville fundraiser ...

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Lauren, who is Cassandra’s mentor, explained that Cassandra was worn out when she met her. “She was just exhausted from the struggles of life,” said Lauren. “She had become a mom at 15 and her life had been a downward spiral for the next 13 years.”

She added that it had been an honor to watch Cassandra grow and to see her transform – beginning the day God gave her a new heart!

“I am so excited about the success of our fundraiser,” said Becky Sumrall, CWJC-Nashville executive director. “The community has learned more about our mission and purpose, and I think the personal stories that were told by our participants helped to show those who are unfamiliar with us just how we work to raise them up and to give them a hand up, not a hand out.”

“The most exciting thing to me about our work on this project has been the opportunity to

tell people about our ministry,” said Mary Frances Turner, past CWJC president and co-chair of the fundraising committee. “I’ve talked to lots of people who weren’t aware of what we’re doing and the response has been so supportive. To me, that’s exciting.”

“We were very fortunate to have Creely Wilson, the founder of CWJC-Nashville and Tennessee’s WMU/CWJC state coordinator, as the honorary chair,” said Carolyn Hunter, fundraiser chair. “And we were blessed to have the support and assistance of Brentwood Baptist and The Grateful Bluegrass Band led by Dr. James McGinley as our entertainment as well as popular television host Harry Chapman as our emcee.”

In a closing tribute to Creely Wilson, Brentwood Baptist pastor Mike Glenn, presented CWJC with a \$10,000 check in honor of Creely and her husband Bill and their work to “encourage this church and its mission giving.” □



CWJC PROGRAM participant Bonnie Payton, left, and her GED tutor Rachel Freeze are working hard together to prepare Bonnie to take her GED test. Bonnie shared how CWJC has “Raised her up” at the organization’s fundraiser.

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visit www.cwjcnashville.org
or contact us at
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