



MARIN SERVICES FOR WOMEN

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MARIN SERVICES FOR WOMEN A HEALING COMMUNITY FOR WOMEN RECOVERING FROM CHEMICAL DEPENDENCY AND TRAUMA

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Holiday Open House

EXPERIENCE MSW AND ALL WE HAVE TO OFFER!

Join us for tours of
our beautiful new facility,
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joy of the season.

Thursday, December 13, 2005
4:00 - 6:00 p.m.

SHINING STAR AWARDS

will be presented to
several of our outstanding supporters.

TOGETHER WE BUILD A HEALING COMMUNITY



Weaving the Vision

MARIN SERVICES FOR WOMEN A HEALING COMMUNITY FOR WOMEN RECOVERING FROM CHEMICAL DEPENDENCY AND TRAUMA

Let me tell you

I am a recovering alcoholic and a methamphetamine addict. My drug use started at the very young age of 14 with marijuana. At 20, I was drinking and using cocaine heavily. In 1981,

I married an alcoholic and drug addict. In 1982, I became pregnant with our first child. Shortly after giving birth, I was introduced to methamphetamines.

I thought methamphetamines were great. It was cheaper than cocaine. I could tend to my baby and take care of the household and bills, all with ease and never get tired.

I became pregnant with my second child in 1986 and remained sober throughout the pregnancy. However, during the nine months of pregnancy I became co-dependent on my husband's drug needs and put myself in dangerous places in order to score dope for him. Our marriage started to fall apart about a year later, mostly because of drugs.

I reached out to my family for help, which resulted in my children being taken away from both myself and my husband. Needless to say I was devastated; I fell deeper into my addiction. Every year it seemed to get worse. It got to the point where I was dealing drugs with welfare money that was meant for my children. I used to live and lived to use.

In 1996, I moved to Petaluma, where my mother lived, in order to make a fresh start with extra support from family. Unfortunately, seven months after I arrived, the consequences of my actions started catching up to me and I was arrested for being under the influence of methamphetamines. I have been arrested and in jail so many times I have lost count; all for drug-related offenses.

Eventually I became homeless due to my drug use and lived in my van or car in the parking lot of my employer for several years. I turned my back on my dying mother, my 16-year-old daughter ran away from home and I abandoned my 11-year-old with people I didn't even know.

I was arrested for the last time in 2004. While sitting in my jail cell I could actually visualize myself living my entire life in prison. I was spiritually bankrupt and I wanted to die.

I truly believe that a power greater than myself got me to Helen Vine Detox Center and then to Marin Services for Women (MSW). A Marin

county judge gave me two options: prison or treatment. I chose treatment. Until that point, I had no interest in truly changing my life. Then a miracle happened; MSW became my home. I decided then to make the best of my time and take full advantage of the education and support MSW was offering me.



Renee

When I arrived at MSW, I was sick and tired of being sick and tired. MSW has taught me, and continues to teach me, that I don't have to live a life based on drugs. MSW is still a big part of my life and I continue to need it because I was living a life of drugs and irresponsibility for so long that I am now like a 14-month-old baby learning how to live all over again.

I have been clean and sober for 14 months, which is the longest I have been clean in 23 years. I could never have done it without MSW; they gave me my freedom back and taught me how to live a clean and sober life. Having a sponsor, working my steps and participating in the trauma recovery group all continue to support me in my recovery.

The trauma group is teaching me how to be assertive, deal with my emotions, build my self-esteem and balance my life with serenity. I'm learning how to deal with my feelings and the wreckage of my past without self-medicating. I'm there for my children and grandchild, mentally and emotionally.

All the staff members at MSW hold a special place in my heart. MSW has given me my freedom and a safe, secure place to live in their transitional housing. I am especially grateful to Renee Zito, Sadie Carlson and Julie Mullin for believing in me and for their continued love and support.

Recovery is hard work but nothing worthwhile in life is ever easy.

Thanks MSW,

Renee L.

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Board President

I am writing this a week after our Annual Benefit Dinner. What a night! Every year I am amazed at what happens in that room at the Embassy Suites. The MSW staff make it look effortless, but they work all year to pull off such a wonderful event. It truly is a one-of-a-kind event for Marin County, women and the field of chemical dependency. Looking back on MSW Founder's Award Recipients—Ann Richards, Judy Collins and now Carrie Fisher—I realize each woman is unique, but all have such a common thread, the thread of honesty in telling their own version of their journey through recovery. All three of these women were absolutely breathtaking in their own unique ways, truly bringing the journey of recovery to life.

Seated at my table were some of my closest friends, some of my work associates and friends of MSW. While they all enjoyed Carrie Fisher immensely, they also remarked about how moved they were by the stories of the individual women who began their recovery with MSW. They began to understand the magic that really happens through these women's heartfelt and everyday testimonials about how MSW changed their lives.

I continue to marvel over how unique it is to talk about chemical dependency openly and freely at MSW events. In every day life, there is still a sense of exposure, of telling secrets out of school. As a society, we treat chemical dependency as if it is somewhat of an embarrassment, a failure of character. It is our job as MSW supporters to dispel these myths, to be forever

vigilant to remind our friends, neighbors and communities that it is not any different than diabetes or heart disease—a progressive, chronic, yet treatable illness.

By bringing chemical dependency out of the shadows, and into our everyday conversations, we will create safe zones for more and more women to deal with their disease. The MSW Board is grateful to all who help us shine the light, the light for those who need to see in the darkness, and the light for all to live by one day at a time.

Nancy Rubin, Board President



Ann Harrison, Carol Patterson, Margaret Van Camp, Carrie Fisher, Nancy Rubin

W E A V I N G T H E V I S I O N

Executive Director's Greeting



Ann Harrison

Recently someone asked me to explain "empowerment." I was a little surprised by the question, since the questioner herself embodies the qualities I associate with empowerment. The question prompted further consideration of this concept underlying the philosophical approach at MSW that makes our recovery services successful.

The dictionary defines empowerment as "to give official authority or legal power to" or "to promote the self-actualization of." What does this really mean in the life of a woman, her child, her family? What does it mean in terms of MSW's approach to providing addiction recovery services to women?

One way to understand empowerment in terms of recovery is to recognize what it isn't. I know of many programs where the focus on following rules diminishes the humanity and dignity of folks who are there to get help. These programs "enforce" their rules and structure with ridicule, sarcasm and punitive consequences for clients' noncompliance with the rules structure. Many programs still use aggressive, shaming tactics to "force" clients to address their issues. These programs believe that external structure creates recovery.

This approach, commonly known as "break them down and build them back up," can appear to work. Clients

[Executive Director's Greeting continued on page 4]

MSW TAKES RECOVERY TO DEEPER LEVEL

At Marin Services for Women (MSW), we believe that helping women get clean and sober isn't enough. We need to help women gain the tools they need to stay that way. A 27-year history of treating women with substance abuse issues has shown us that many women have histories of personal trauma and active Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). This link between addiction, trauma and/or PTSD has been recognized in academic studies across the nation, but very few recovery programs address the issue directly. MSW counselors recognize that it is critical to address trauma issues as part of the recovery process. Through much research and experiential learning, MSW has created an innovative Trauma Services Program to help women in recovery come to terms with their trauma and PTSD issues.

"It's hard to put into words what a difference this shift has made for the women who come to us for care," says Cathy Thielen, MSW's trauma services coordinator. "I often hear from the women at MSW that this is the first time in their lives that what they are experiencing makes any kind of sense. I have had women approach me with tears in their eyes to thank me after group processes."

PTSD, trauma and substance abuse are all serious issues for the women who enter treatment at MSW. Current statistics report that 90-99 percent of chemically dependent women struggle with a history of trauma.

Here at MSW, our treatment is trauma specific and designed to meet the individual needs of each woman who enters our program. During treatment, women attend psycho-educational process

groups that address both recovery from substance abuse and PTSD and/or anxiety and depression. Women in the groups are asked to look at these issues in terms of their safety and stabilization. They receive information and learn coping skills that help them deal with their experiences with healthy behavior.

Women continue the healing process by joining Continuing Care Groups that deal specifically with these issues; while allowing them to stay connected to their treatment for as long as they need.

MSW graduates who had previously been caught in patterns of repeat chemical dependency are now sober, finishing their schooling, receiving scholarships, entering back into the work force after years of not being able to leave the house. They are gaining their independence by obtaining permanent

housing. Mothers can now parent their children in ways they never could before.

"Every woman who suffers with being an addict/alcoholic and also struggles with trauma, PTSD, anxiety or any other mental health issues and then walks through the doors of MSW is a woman of strength

and courage," states Cathy. "It is an honor to be a part of their healing process."

"I often hear from the women at MSW that this is the first time in their lives that what they are experiencing makes any kind of sense."

INSPIRED PHILANTHROPY: BARBARA MEISLIN

Barbara Meislin, also known as the Purple Lady, learned the importance of giving back as a child while being raised with her brother by a single mom. "I was taught that no matter how little we had, there were others with less, so it was important that we find a way to give something," says Barbara. "We had a little tzedakah box where we put our pennies and nickels for this."

Barbara is known as the Purple Lady because of her passion for the color purple, which she says, "has long been recognized as the color of joy, it energizes me to live my life to the fullest." She has brought her energy and enthusiasm for life to MSW since becoming involved with the agency when we moved to our new facility in Greenbrae.

Being involved with MSW has reinforced Barbara's compassionate perspective on life and philanthropy. "MSW does extraordinary work in helping women reclaim their lives and children reclaim their mothers," Barbara says. She also says, "I try to see how all these different things interface. For example, you can't take care of the children without taking care of the older ones and seeing how they can be of service to each other."

When recently touring the facility, Barbara remarked on how impressed



Barbara Meislin

she was by the feeling of community among the women at MSW. She believes strongly in the importance of joining together the different threads of community into a tapestry of strength, compassion and love.

"Love is a great healer," Barbara says. "In healing we find enormous usefulness and commitment. The work done at MSW embodies this principle, one that I try to live by. Each woman has a rainbow inside her heart and just needs a little help dusting it off."

MSW honors Barbara Meislin for the generous and dedicated way she brings congruency into her life.

To learn more about Barbara's inspiring work or for information about her new book "No One Can Ever Steal Your Rainbow" contact Purple Lady Productions, P.O. Box 1277, Tiburon, CA 94920, or e-mail: purpleladybythebay@earthlink.net.



Executive Director's Greeting cont.

learn compliance with the rules and successfully adhere to program structure. And they can stay sober...for a while, until over-reliance on the program's external structure fails them because they've left the program and its structure. MSW sees this as oppositional to empowerment, possibly enabling temporary changes in behavior, but not transformation and healing.

At MSW, our understanding of empowerment is congruent with the dictionary's second

definition: "to promote the self-actualization of." We recognize that we cannot give empowerment to our clients, in fact such an assumption would be patronizing. For us an empowerment based approach means maintaining an environment that supports women in the process of developing an internal experience of empowerment. Certainly programs must have guideline and structure. However, we know from research and our clinical experience that women (and most likely men) will not be empowered in an environment where they are confronted in shaming and punitive ways, where they have no control over their treatment experience.

At MSW we are committed to providing a physical environment and interpersonal experiences that support a sense of safety and express respect for each client. We encourage clients to partner with counselors in designing and implementing treatment plans and interventions. At every opportunity we reframe a woman's understanding of her history in terms of the strengths she's demonstrated in dealing with devastating experiences.

We seek in innumerable ways to express to each woman that she is valuable and worthy of a life of health and well being.

We treat her with respect and honor her dignity. We support her in finding

her own answers. And slowly women create the internal structure they need to maintain long term recovery and create meaningful lives.

Empowerment is about assisting chemically dependent women from all walks of life, to find and develop their internal power to heal from trauma and addiction. This is MSW's definition of empowerment. This is what we do. And this is why MSW has a higher than average 70 percent program completion rate.

This year we've contracted with a number of payor organizations and can now bill most insurances, making our services more accessible to chemically dependent women from all walks of life.

The exciting news is that we can now provide MSW's unique, empowerment-based services to even more women in the Bay Area. This year we've contracted with a number of payor organizations and can now bill most insurances, making our services more accessible to chemically dependent women from all walks of life.

No longer does a woman have to lose everything—her job, family, and home—to be eligible for our services. The doors at Marin Services for Women are open to everyone—regardless of lifestyle or financial status. By moving into the new facility, MSW has empowered itself in this way. You can help spread the word throughout the community—MSW is a unique, empowerment-based chemical dependency treatment facility for all women.

Warmly, Ann

INNOVATION AT ITS BEST



Renee Zito, VAnne Singleton,
Dan Quigley

Marin Services for Women's 2005 Corporate Leadership Award was presented at the 2005 Annual Benefit Dinner to Pacific Gas & Electric Company. VAnne Singleton, MA, MFT, peer volunteer coordinator and employee assistance program counselor, and Dan Quigley, director of charitable contributions, attended the Annual Benefit Dinner to accept the award.

MSW established this award as part of our educational mission, to acknowledge and raise awareness about innovative and effective corporate policies that demonstrate compassion and understanding of chemical dependency and its effects. "We were so impressed when we learned of the PG&E Volunteer Peer Program that we knew we had to honor them with this award," says Renee Zito, MSW director of programs.

Pacific Gas & Electric Company demonstrates a strong commitment to chemical dependency recovery in the workforce by assisting individual employees to recover from addiction, while protecting their jobs through the establishment and support of their innovative Peer Volunteer Program. This unique program facilitates entry into treatment and provides ongoing support.

"Receiving this award from such an amazing organization means a great deal," exclaimed VAnne. "The heart and soul of this program is the peers. They are an amazing group of people who do this just because they want to help other people. I'm honored to work for a company that cares enough about their employees to have this kind of a program."

MSW recognizes the PG&E Peer Volunteer Program as an exemplary workplace innovation and encourages all employers to consider implementing similar programs.

AN INSPIRATIONAL WOMAN



Laura Emard,
Randi Rogen

her generosity and support for other recovering women.

The Marin Services for Women's 2005 Alumnae Association Award was proudly presented to Laura Emard at the Annual Benefit Dinner. Laura was selected as the recipient because of her leadership as an inspirational model of a recovering woman; the honesty, courage, strength and humility she brings to her journey of recovery; her dedication to MSW and its clients, alumnae and family members; and

Laura joined MSW's outpatient program over ten years ago. Since then, she has exemplified how a MSW graduate walks through life in recovery. Laura models courage and generosity. She maintains a faithful commitment to the MSW family, leading a weekly Step Study Group where she contributes her insight and spirituality. "Leading these groups at MSW is a precious part of my sobriety and I appreciate being able to experience strength and hope with other women in recovery," says Laura. We honor Laura for her devotion, perseverance and wonderful spirit.



CARRIE FISHER AND MSW — WEAVING THE VISION TOGETHER

Marin Services for Women kicked off the fundraising year with our signature Annual Benefit Dinner on September 29, 2005. Themed "Weaving the Vision: Together We Build a Healing Community," the event attracted a record number of sponsors and friends, packing the Embassy Suites ballroom with over 350 guests. New friends joined with long-time MSW supporters to dine together to celebrate recovery with MSW's own stars—graduates and clients—and internationally renowned movie star and author Carrie Fisher.

Candid and forthright, Ms. Fisher shared her personal story of addiction and recovery with her well-known wit and flare. She shared many poignant, and often hilarious, memories of her life growing up as the child of movie stars Debbie Reynolds and Eddie Fisher. All the while weaving in her own struggles with alcohol and drug addiction—the denial and the misdirection she gave as excuses to her mother and later her spouse.

"I had my first drink when I was 13 years old in Monte Carlo," said Ms. Fisher. "Like most of you, I was in my mother's night club act," she added wryly, eliciting a burst of laughter from the audience. "I overdosed at 28 and had absolutely no idea how that happened. I was just trying to relax!" she exclaimed dryly. Later at the hospital, Ms. Fisher was totally taken aback when she was asked if she was trying to kill herself. "They said that my behavior was suicidal," explained Ms. Fisher. "I was offended! I told her that the behavior might be, but I'm not." Ms. Fisher explained that she really thought that somehow it was different. "It did scare me to death."

But she didn't stay sober. After going through rehab, Ms. Fisher thought she was fine, so stopped attending Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) meetings. On a trip to South America, she relapsed. "It wasn't because I thought that I wasn't an alcoholic. I knew it. I knew that I was the worst. I was as bad as you can be and not be dead."

Ms. Fisher then moved to Los Angeles, where she got married, had her daughter, then later divorced. During that time, she was in and out of a

mental hospital for her bi-polar disorder and struggling with a growing addiction to prescription drugs. But L.A. is where she met her sponsor. "I said 'I'm too smart for AA—and I don't mean that in a good way. Will you be my sponsor?'" She's had the same sponsor for eight years now.

"I learned that AA is a program of action. That you change your actions and your thinking will follow. You can't just change your thinking."

Ms. Fisher went on to relate what she learned in AA with Marin Services for Women's mission and goals. "It's not just about getting off drugs and alcohol—if it was just about that, you'd go to rehab and move on with your life. It's about creating a meaningful life in sobriety."

Interspersing her story of addiction with often whimsical tales of growing up in a Hollywood setting, Ms. Fisher had the audience enthralled. "What's really interesting," said Ms. Fisher, "is that my brother and I had the exact same childhood. I am not an alcoholic and drug addict because my mother was or wasn't there for me. I'm an addict because it's a disease."

"Ms. Fisher's openness and generosity in sharing her personal life with the audience was truly moving," exclaimed MSW Board President Nancy Rubin. "She made me laugh and touched my soul at that same—Carrie Fisher is an amazingly talented and compassionate woman."

Marin Services for Women is grateful that Ms. Fisher was able to take the time out of her busy life as an actor and author to spend an evening with us. Her talk underscored the incredible potential every woman has and what they can achieve in recovery.



Carrie Fisher

EVERY DONOR MAKES A DIFFERENCE - THANK YOU!

WEAVING THE VISION

We have made every effort to ensure the accuracy of this list. If you find an error, please accept our apology and alert us by contacting the Development Department at 415-924-5995 ext. 30 or emailing tjohn@mswinc.org

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Gordon & Elizabeth Smith

Linda Vandeloop

ALUMNAE ASSOCIATION: STAYING CONNECTED

Recovery is not an event but a life-time journey. Treatment is not a quick fix. Addiction is a disease and recovery is a life-long process that involves continuous commitment. One of the reasons my recovery has been successful is because I have maintained a strong connection to MSW, the place I came to for residential and outpatient treatment.

My experiences at MSW changed my life in more ways than I could have ever imagined. The support network I built at MSW has been a great part of my recovery. The MSW Alumnae Association is a fabulous way to stay in touch with other MSW graduates in a fun and supportive atmosphere.

I find that being involved as the president of the MSW Alumnae Association is a wonderful way to give back to the organization. I am continually rewarded by sharing my experience with those just starting out on the road of recovery. I also enjoy participating in all of the activities and fundraisers MSW hosts. I continue to give back as much as I can.

I encourage all MSW alumnae to join me and other graduates at the Alumnae Sharing Meetings held every Sunday at 7:30 p.m. in the MSW Outpatient Lounge. All alumnae are also welcome and encouraged to attend the Alumnae Association's monthly Business Meeting held on the

last Sunday of every month at 6:30 p.m. at MSW.



Randi Rogen, President,
MSW Alumnae Association with
MSW volunteer Annie Bachelder

The MSW Alumnae Association is now more accessible than ever! If you are curious about the alumnae association, our activities or meetings, check out our new page on the MSW Website at www.marinservicesforwomen.org.

We even have our own email address now—alumnae@mswinc.org! If you are an alumna and are interested in speaking at one of our sharing meetings, please send an email or leave a message at 415-924-5995, ext. 60. I look forward to seeing more MSW alumnae at our meetings, making it a place of support for everyone.

Randi Rogen, President
MSW Alumnae Association

Support
the Alumnae Association
by purchasing Serenity Bracelets
for \$3.00 each. Call 415-924-5995
email alumnae@mswinc.org to
get yours today!

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: A FRIEND DEDICATED TO MSW



Renee Stephenson

Renee Stephenson, a 29-year-old real estate agent and Marin native, first became acquainted with Marin Services for Women (MSW) when she helped two MSW employees buy and sell their homes. Renee was so impressed by these women and their glowing comments about working at MSW that she decided to find out more about the agency. She was soon "blown away" to

find that a recovery program geared towards and created by women existed right here in her home town, but that many "Marinites" were not aware of it.

Renee understands how drug and alcohol abuse can destroy lives; her biological father struggled with addiction and was eventually driven to commit suicide when she was a young girl. Her father had been in and out of rehab many times, but never found a program that fit him. "I was definitely a daddy's girl," explains Renee, "so I was devastated by his death." Renee credits her wonderful family and a caring therapist for supporting her through that heartbreak. Coincidentally, Renee recently learned that her therapist had trained MSW volunteers for years!

Renee knows first hand how important it is to reach out to others who are "not in a position to help themselves." She does her part by volunteering every week at MSW, insisting that she keeps coming back for selfish reasons. "Coming here and helping people feels so good!"

Renee's favorite aspect of volunteering at MSW is the personal interaction

with the women MSW serves. Whether she is lending an extra hand in the administrative department or greeting outpatient clients, she learns the names and sees the faces of women MSW has helped, and more often than not, they share their stories of recovery with her.

Renee's advice to those considering volunteering is, "absolutely do it!" She says that it can be difficult to take the first step, but points out that each person has something unique to give that could help change lives for the better.

If you are interested in becoming an MSW volunteer, please contact Bethany Gower at 415-924-5995 ext. 28.

A special thank you to all of our dedicated volunteers who go out of their way to support MSW and the women we serve.

Marco Alicea	Krystal Lohmann	Renee Stephenson
Annie Bachelder	Dru Manzer	Miriam Silver
John Leimer	Randi Rogen	Anita Tanenberg

If you would like to volunteer to cook and serve Thanksgiving Dinner on November 12, 2005, please contact Dolores Hollingsworth at 415-924-5995 ext. 41.

