



Addiction knows no boundaries.



WHERE WE LIVE: A MOTHER'S TRIUMPH



Peggy gets winded climbing three flights of stairs to her third floor apartment at Sojourner House MOMS. Still, that climb is nothing compared to the struggle she faced to get herself and two of her three children to the place they now call home.

The 34-year-old Armstrong County woman came to Sojourner House last April for the second time. The first was in 2003, when she quit the program after just four months, thinking she could stay clean on her own. She did, for a while. "I took care of my grandmother for about

nine months," Peggy recalls. "After she died, I moved back to the projects and there it was—the alcohol, the crack. I stopped taking my medications. I was on a day-to-day suicide mission."

"I felt like I was living in a coffin," she remembers. "I never left the house. I spent every day high. My 10-year-old would come home from school and say, 'So and so called you a crack head.' My teenage daughter got pregnant. I was evicted from my apartment. They turned off the electricity. I remember sitting in a

ball on the kitchen floor sobbing. I had nothing else to lose. I was in the hospital for a week then returned to Sojourner House. If I hadn't come back to Sojourner House, I'd be dead."

As she worked through her healing and rehab at Sojourner House, her two youngest children, ages 5 and 10, came to join her during the summer. Peggy attended counseling and daily groups, and while the children attended school and counseling in the community, their day also involved taking part in Kids Club and other children's events right at Sojourner House.

With the steady progress made by the whole family, the Sojourner House staff determined the time was right last fall for Peggy and her children to make the transition to a more independent living arrangement at Sojourner House MOMS. "Moving was a little scary at first," Peggy noted. "But I learned I can stand up on my own. MOMS is a lot less structured, but you're still accountable."

"It's amazing how much I put my kids through, and they still want to be with me," Peggy says. "I have to be okay for my kids to be okay."

SAVE THE DATES!

Saturday, April 14, 2007, Mothers, daughters, sisters, friends are invited to the 3rd annual Victorian High Tea at Fox Chapel Presbyterian Church. Mrs. Ruth Anne Papa is Honorary Chair of the event. **Timyka Artist** from media sponsor WPXI TV is our Master of Ceremonies. RSVP today for this free event at www.sojournerhousepa.org

Saturday, May 19, 2007, SIGN UP NOW: Sojourner House is participating in the fifth annual Walk for a Healthy Community presented by Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield at Heinz Field on the North Shore of Pittsburgh. Form a team and visit the Sojourner House web site for registration information www.walkforahealthycommunity.org





SOJOURNER HOUSE

MOMS ADDS THREE NEW RESIDENCES

Sojourner House MOMS announced in November that it will open three additional residences, offering 10 families permanent supportive housing along with services to continue their recovery, reunite their family and move toward self-sufficiency.

The strong alliance of forward-thinking neighborhood organizations and county government agencies made the vision of expanding, known as Sojourner House MOMS Phase II, a reality, says Anne Crawford, Sojourner House MOMS board president. "The collaboration was rooted in the recognition that housing and follow-up options for mothers leaving treatment were few; the desire of Negley Place Neighborhood Alliance to revitalize their community through partnership with nonprofits; and East Liberty Development Inc.'s long standing commitment to restoring the East Liberty community to its vibrant past," notes Ms. Crawford.

In addition to efforts of community partners, the Allegheny County Department of Human Services and the Housing Authority, City of Pittsburgh were instrumental in developing a unique funding partnership that made MOMS possible.

While the goal of Sojourner House MOMS is to provide compassionate care and safe housing, "we understand that stability is more than a roof over your head," explains Ms. Crawford. "We hope that MOMS will make a difference in their lives and help families to attain their full potential," she says.

Construction will begin on MOMS Phase II in early 2007. A generous grant from the Staunton Farm Foundation will help to underwrite the supportive services at the core of this family-focused program.

OPENING NEW WORLDS FOR KIDS

Miss Pam (Conway) makes a world of difference in the lives of children she teaches in the Sojourner House childcare program. She keeps her young charges stimulated, learning and smiling during morning and afternoon sessions at the center located right in Sojourner House.

With energy and passion, Miss Pam wants "her kids" to reach for the stars. One look around the center tells you that much more than childcare happens here. While there's plenty of caring, the large tiled space is a classroom, a place to learn, a safe, happy haven for children who have been through so much in their short little lives. The children know this is their place, says Miss Pam.

Amid crates of toys and shelves of books are posters and murals that open a world of learning to children who range in age from six weeks to five years old. A picture of Shreik, the "Ogre-achiever" hangs on the door next to a mural of

children visiting the zoo. Colorful signs remind children to "believe in yourself" and that "our hands are gentle."

"This is not a job for sissies," admits Miss Pam, a spirited 20-year veteran of pre-school and special education. "We're flexible to the children's special needs but our goal is to provide a structured and stimulating routine that keeps them interested in learning."

If the children are learning from their experience at the childcare center, Miss Pam says she is learning as well. The mother of three daughters and grandmother of seven, Miss Pam explains she grew up with her own children, and continues to learn from them. "Children are important here," she adds. "You see it in the way all of the staff interact with them. We want them to feel special and proud of all they are learning."

ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Sojourner House is a licensed Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation Residence where admission is based on determination of need. To be eligible to participate, a woman must be 18 years or older, have a least one child age 12 years or younger or be actively seeking custody of a child, or be pregnant. Pregnant women who are IV drug users or substance abusers will receive priority admission. Sojourner House admits women from Allegheny County, the surrounding region and the state.



Norma R. Raiff, Ph.D.,
Executive Director

SOJOURNER HOUSE MOMS



SOJOURNER HOUSE MOMS: CHAMPION IN ACTION

Citizens Bank and WPXI-TV honored Sojourner House MOMS as its fourth quarter Champion in ActionSM under the category of housing/homelessness. The award brings a \$25,000 grant from the Citizens Bank Foundation and extensive volunteer and promotional support from Citizens Bank and WPXI-TV.

Through Champions in Action, Citizens and WPXI-TV recognize and support non-profit organizations for the contributions these groups make to Pittsburgh area communities. A new Champion in Action is selected each quarter among a range of social service areas.

Citizens and WPXI-TV cited Sojourner House MOMS success in:

- providing housing units and intensive support services to homeless, dual-diagnosed women with children to help families stay together while the mother receives the support she needs to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty and chemical abuse
- teaching mothers family and child management skills in a safe, stable home environment, as well as providing crisis intervention, case management and support services

- transforming community eyesores to community assets, turning what were once run-down, vacant and nuisance properties that were known for hosting dangerous activities into beautifully landscaped buildings that bring pride to the community

"We are honored to be recognized as a Champion in Action," said Norma Raiff, Ph.D., executive director of Sojourner House MOMS. "We commend Citizens Bank and WPXI-TV for the active support these companies provide non-profit organizations in the Pittsburgh region and throughout western Pennsylvania. It is particularly encouraging to have them acknowledge that a small organization can have a huge impact on our community. At Sojourner House MOMS, it's not enough for us to give homeless women and their children a place to live. We want to address the underlying issues that caused them to become homeless in the first place. That way, we can end the cycle of despair once and for all. With the support we will receive from this program, we will be all the more

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To learn more about Sojourner House, visit our web site at www.sojournerhousepa.org.

OUR NEEDS:

Crib Sheets, Crib Mattress Pads, Baby Blankets, Walmart and Giant Eagle gift cards

Call (412) 441-7783, X-10 for drop-off information.

VISIT US ONLINE AND JOIN OUR E-MAIL LIST:

You can read more about the people featured in this newsletter by visiting Sojourner House online. To learn more about the work of Sojourner House, please visit our Web site at www.sojournerhousepa.org. You can register there to receive our newsletter and view all the latest updates about our people and activities.



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FROM WHERE I SIT: MY LIFE AS A CHAIR

An important step in the healing process for many people recovering from addiction is to find beauty in their lives again. For several residents of Sojourner House, new life took shape in the beauty of refurbished chairs.

For six weeks Sojourner House residents used their creative talents in a unique community program "From Where I Sit/My Life as a Chair", sponsored by the Women Against Abusive Relationships (WAAR) program. Each woman decorated and painted a chair to symbolize her life journey in recovery. In August, the Sojourner House artists met with a team from WAAR to celebrate the completion of their unique and beautiful artwork.

For one woman, "My chair represents the fact that I am living every day in a sanctuary, and that I have to seize the

moment." Another artist, "Yvonne", says, "I started out (painting my chair) with deep purple, because everything in my life was dark. I took my family with me through those dark, scary roads. But I moved toward the light as I prayed and things started to come together, and it wasn't as winding and dark any more."

The chairs became more than an art project for the women; they represented new meaning in their lives. Art instructor Christine Bethea describes the project as a process that became "a metaphor for their lives. If you can clean, paint and repair a chair, you can make better choices. If you can embellish a chair, you can make your life more beautiful."

Chairs designed by the Sojourner House women were displayed at a show in October, explains WAAR director, Roxanne Epperson.

