



Addiction knows no boundaries.



WENDY'S STORY: COURAGE MAKES HER FAMILY WHOLE AGAIN



If you want to see persistence, look into the deep-set steely eyes of Wendy S. At 34, the young McKeesport woman has lived more than half her life in a murky fog of addiction, abuse and depression. Determined to end the cycle of poverty and homelessness that shadowed her, this pregnant mother of three called Sojourner House every day for two weeks last spring until she found an opening in the program.

"Sojourner House saved my life. It gave me back my kids. Gave me hope," recalls Wendy, now clean for nine months and planning for a future that includes job training, work, getting a driver's license, raising her four children, and singing in the church choir. She is thankful for

her family's support, her children's love, and for the staff and residents of Sojourner House who gave her a new life of hope. But she credits the voice inside her that kept telling her not to give up on a better life, even during her darkest days, for guiding her to Sojourner House in the first place.

Wendy never thought the crack she was introduced to in college would send her life into a tailspin. As the years passed, cocaine, alcohol, marijuana, and a dangerous assortment of pills brought more heartaches than highs. She lost her job, her home, and nearly lost her children. "I stayed in shelters, three weeks here, three weeks there," Wendy said of the final months before moving to

Sojourner House. "I left the shelters because I couldn't take my kids with me. I moved in with friends, and I'd wake up with drugs in my lap. One friend let me and my three kids share a room, all of us sleeping in a twin bed until one night someone fired shots into the house."

At her sister's urging, Wendy moved back home with her father, himself a recovering addict who had been abusive to his children. There, Wendy got clean and began to look for housing for herself, her three children, and the baby she was carrying and planned to give up for adoption. Persistence guided Wendy to Sojourner House last April. She found more than a roof over her head.

"I was scared at first," Wendy says. "I had my own apartment. I had to learn how to run a house, how to stay clean, and how to enjoy my children again. My older sons were really happy here." Just weeks after moving to Sojourner House, Wendy faced another difficult decision. Her baby son was born and she realized adoption was not an option. She would keep her baby, whatever the sacrifice.

Today, Wendy cringes when she thinks that she almost gave up calling Sojourner House as she searched for housing. "My older sons, especially, have gone through a lot because of me. Here, they feel safe, secure, and loved," Wendy smiles. "They have their own beds. It's just the simple things, like eating dinner together, that make us happy now. I won't go back. I'll do whatever I have to do to stay sober for them."

STAY INFORMED WITH *SOJOURNER HOUSE E-NEWS UPDATE*

It's easy to stay connected to the interesting people and important happenings of Sojourner House by subscribing to our new e-news update. It's a timesaving way to stay informed, while you help us put dollars toward supporting our families instead of sending mailings. For your free subscription to *Sojourner House e-News Update*, just visit <http://www.sojournerhousepa.org> and complete the handy form.

MEET SOJOURNER HOUSE NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, JOANN CYGANOVICH

In July, Joann Cyganovich became the fourth executive director in the history of Sojourner House, following the retirement of Norma Raiff, Ph.D. The new director of Sojourner House has been an advocate for Pittsburgh's homeless and underserved for more than two decades.

With extensive background in human services administration and program development, Ms. Cyganovich has designed programs for those with special needs such as homelessness, mental illness, the disease of addiction, and domestic violence. Previously she served as executive director for Sisters Place, providing housing and supportive services to single, homeless mothers and their children. Prior to that, she was executive director of Lydia's Place, where she developed programs to assist women incarcerated in the Allegheny County Jail.

Ms. Cyganovich talks about what led her to her new position and her goals for Sojourner House in the future.

What brought you to Sojourner House?

"I first heard of Sojourner House in 1995 while working as the director of homeless programs for Community Human Services. From that point, I relied on Sojourner House as the primary referral source to accommodate mothers and children who were homeless while struggling with the disease of addiction.



Then and now, I am impressed with Sojourner House's compassionate mission to provide treatment while keeping the family intact. Without this component, many mothers would not seek treatment for fear of losing their children.

I felt drawn to the position at Sojourner House because the philosophy and practice of the organization matched what I feel in my heart."

What are your first impressions of your new position?

"Busy. I felt like I had to run to catch a ride on a moving train. I was impressed with the vision that was being lived out through the addition of the MOMS program. By May 2, 2008, Sojourner House MOMS will add 10 additional permanent, supportive housing apartments for mothers and their children. The program is a natural 'next step' for families leaving the treatment facility.

I also am impressed by the level of commitment from both the staff and the Board of Directors. The staff is extremely talented and dedicated, and the Board is an amazing, hard-working, hands-on group of volunteers who continue to insure that the programs we deliver are top of the line."

SOJOURNER HOUSE

HOW ARE WOMEN SERVED BY SOJOURNER HOUSE?

Women seeking admission to Sojourner House must be at least 18 years old and have at 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 receive priority admission. Sojourner House admits women from Allegheny County, the surrounding region and the state.

Sojourner House responds to admissions inquiries from women and their loved ones, other drug and alcohol programs, case workers, social agencies, physicians, prison and probation officers, counselors, and Children, Youth and Family courts. We will consider patients who are dually diagnosed with both addiction and mental illness.

Our house has 14 apartments, with a waiting list during periods when the house is full. Priority of admission is determined by order on waiting list, clinical issues (whether or not a woman is following through with treatment recommendations or the severity of emotional problems), and environmental issues such as lack of housing or domestic violence. The program is designed for a six-month stay. Sojourner House is a faith-based program that accepts women of all faiths. We believe that growing in spirituality is a cornerstone to recovery.

ADMISSIONS INQUIRIES

Sojourner House is a licensed Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation Residence where admission is based on determination of need. Although the House is staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week, inquiries for admission should be made to the clinical supervisor from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm, Monday through Friday, by calling 412-441-7783.

SOJOURNER HOUSE MOMS



SHARON JONES: MENTOR OF THE YEAR

Sharon Jones, clinical supervisor, has both feet firmly planted in the present, tending to her responsibilities for monitoring residential and treatment programs for addicted women and their children at Sojourner House. But Ms. Jones makes time to keep an eye on the future because she knows that years from now, mothers in crisis will rely on the services of qualified, compassionate professionals like those at Sojourner House. That's why she is so passionate about her work with area college students, instilling in them a real-world understanding of the skill and commitment they need to care for women and their families struggling with addiction.

Ms. Jones' visionary leadership and guidance of students earned her recent recognition as Community Mentor of the Year awarded by the *Bridging the Gaps* Student Internship Program, through the University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work. The award honors those who display outstanding mentorship of student interns from the university.

"I believe strongly in giving students firsthand exposure to our program," says Ms. Jones, who has worked at Sojourner House for four years. "They need to put a face on addiction because they will be the providers of those services in the future. Our summer internship program has been such a positive experience. Students take professionally enriching experiences from our internship and in return they leave us with something that enhances Sojourner House."

Two recent interns recognized that Sojourner House did not have an exercise program in place for residents. So they

collected data to prove the benefits of providing regular fitness activities for residents. Research supported the need for fitness and exercise to decrease symptoms of depression, increase energy, and control weight gain that often accompanies recovery from addiction, and resulted in regular fitness classes for mothers and their children at Sojourner House.

Another group of interns turned a backyard fence into a place where women graduating from the program can leave their mark on Sojourner House. Along the length of a redwood fence that borders the backyard play area at Sojourner House, the interns created a graduates' wall inscribed with large letters that read: "Every Journey Begins with One Step." (See photo on page 4.) As women graduate and leave Sojourner House, they and their children are invited to leave their painted handprints on the fence, a motivating and inspiring symbol to future residents and visitors.

"Sharon has been instrumental in providing students in the community with the best possible experience in working with families impacted by the disease of addiction. She is extremely knowledgeable in the field of addiction and does a great job in providing a stimulating, interactive environment for the students," says Joann Cyganovich, Sojourner House Executive Director.

Born and raised in Williamsport, PA, daughter of the late Rev. Joseph L. and Dolores Harris, Ms. Jones graduated from Chatham University, with a masters degree in counseling psychology. Ms. Jones and her husband, George, have two children in college and live in Pittsburgh.

SOJOURNER HOUSE

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SAVE THE DATE!

Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield will present the sixth annual Walk for a Healthy Community on Saturday, May 3, 2008 at Heinz Field on the North Shore of Pittsburgh.

For more information or to register online, visit www.sojournerhousepa.org.





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PNC GRANT TO FUND: NEW CHILDREN'S CENTER

The James F. McCandless for Charities through the PNC Charitable Trust Grant Review Committee awarded Sojourner House a \$14,000 grant to fund the redesign of the Children's Center, where children ages 6 weeks to 12 years old learn and play in a safe and nurturing environment while their mothers receive treatment for addiction.

The grant will be used to redesign the center for optimum use by dividing the space into learning stations that represent literacy and community, creative play and imagination, music and listening, and exploration and discovery. Renovations will include new flooring, painting the walls in bright primary colors, and new age-appropriate furnishings that reflect the child-friendly atmosphere.

Programs of the Children's Center assist children in dealing with the trauma, behavioral health issues, and poor school readiness of their earlier lives. Improvements to the center will enable staff to help the children adjust and learn in an environment that is organized, stimulating, comfortable, and exciting. An average of 16 children attend the Center's morning and afternoon programs each day. Work began in late January.