



Volunteers spent several months working with staff to organize the Health Fair.

Special thanks to:

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DID YOU KNOW?

- Maria Shelter provides an average of 14,600 nights of shelter annually.
- 52% of the residents of Maria Shelter are children and 69% are under age 5.

HUNDREDS ENJOY IWT SUMMER HEALTH FAIR

GET UP AND MOVE was the theme of IWT's Health Fair held last summer. According to the Centers for Disease Control, more than 50% of all chronic diseases are linked to preventable problems such as smoking, obesity and physical inactivity. This year's Fair was aimed at educating and screening to prevent chronic disease. Thanks to the hard work of University of Chicago Medical School students and volunteers, several hundred people, including shelter residents and seniors, gathered in the street in front of our building for an afternoon of dancing, food and fun. In addition to the usual medical screenings for blood pressure, vision and diabetes, there were also CPR presentations, information/referrals to medical and psychological service providers, and educational exhibits on dangers of drinking and smoking. Free pedometers were also distributed. A special treat included a DJ who played an assortment of popular music and coordinated with an exercise teacher who taught the crowd, ranging in age from toddler to senior citizen, some of the latest moves.

75% of total health care costs in the US are due to chronic diseases such as asthma and diabetes.

--CDC

HONORING TWO SPECIAL EDUCATORS AND FRIENDS OF IWT

It was a cold and blustery night outside, but the feeling inside the Tasting Room was warm and cozy on November 4, 2010 when the Institute of Women Today held its fall event. Guests were welcomed by prominent Chicago Journalist, Laura Washington who engaged the audience with her personal connection to our cause and her lively encouragement for financial support. The highlight of the evening was the presentation of the Sister Margaret Traxler Award to Cheryl

Watkins, principal of John J. Pershing West Middle School and Golden Apple Award Winner, and a Lifetime Achievement Award to Sister Irenaeus Chekouras, RSM, President Emeritus of St. Xavier's University and former board member of the Institute of Women Today. We are grateful to these exemplary women who have made a difference in the lives of so many.

Chicago Journalist Laura Washington Welcomes Guests at Fundraiser



“All human wisdom is wrapped up in two things—wait and hope.”

Alexander Dumas Pere

Dear Friends,

As the holidays approach, we are again reminded of how much of our lives is spent waiting and hoping. We all remember the excitement of being a child in December, and impatiently awaiting the arrival of Santa Claus -- hoping that he would bring that special doll, car, or other toy we so desperately wanted. As we have gotten older, we still wait and hope, but we do a lot less of it than we used to. As adults, we have control of many things in our lives....That is unless we are homeless.

Imagine being a woman entering the doors of Maria Shelter. You do not know when, where or what you will eat. You know there will be specific bedtimes and wake times and rules that will enable 50 people to live together safely. And there will be lots of waiting...Waiting to hear that you have been accepted into a job training program or have a job offer... Waiting to hear if a daycare has room for your child... Waiting to receive child support or disability payments...And waiting to find affordable housing.....

The waiting period can be long and often painful. Some of you may have heard about the nearly 100,000 people who gathered last spring to apply for the 40,000 positions on the waiting list for subsidized government housing in Chicago. The waiting list had been closed for nearly a decade because there simply is not enough affordable housing to meet the enormous need.

But waiting at Maria Shelter is also a time of opportunity for learning and growing—a time to gain wisdom. Women can enroll in educational programs or job training. They can receive medical and psychological care to resolve acute and chronic issues, and manage conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure, asthma and depression that prevent so many from moving forward. Women at Maria can learn how to be better mothers, better money managers, and through our many therapeutic programs and support services, we hope they can each become a better and healthier person. We help women find affordable housing, even though they aren't on the subsidized waiting list. We encourage, we empower. We give back some of the control that each woman loses when she becomes homeless. But the single most important thing we do is provide hope for a better future.

Last week I attended a workshop for nonprofit organizations. As I looked across the room, a young lady caught my eye and whispered, “Hello, Miss Hicks.” I immediately recognized her as a former resident. She had come to Maria Shelter several years ago homeless, pregnant and all alone, and now she is on the staff of a successful nonprofit agency. She has gone from being an unemployed homeless woman to being a colleague! We have asked her to join us for our March 20, 2011 fundraising luncheon at the Ridge County Club, where all of you can hear her inspiring story.

For many faith traditions, this is also a season where we are reminded of the importance of waiting and hoping. It is a challenge to wait with hope, but we do it every day with every woman and every child. But we also look to you, our supporters and partners, for hope because without your assistance we could not operate Maria Shelter and the Vincennes Senior Center, or provide services and programs that we offer to those in need. As we give thanks for your past support, we ask that you continue to wait and hope with us.

In gratitude for all you have done and continue to do.

Angela Hicks, Executive Director

