



Rosie's Place

winter newsletter



08



Women of Strength

For more than thirty-four years Rosie's Place has been helping women find dignity and respect within our walls. While our organization has grown and services have changed, our guests remain the strong foundation upon which Rosie's Place was built. Rosie's Place has helped women to find jobs, find homes, find futures and most importantly, find themselves in the process. The journeys that our guests have taken are often difficult; the women themselves are brave and amazing. We hope that the following guest stories will inspire you as much as they have us.

The state of the economy is affecting us all, but the poor and homeless are hit the hardest. Over the past several months, Rosie's Place has seen the effects of the economy on our guests in a variety of ways.

- Our advocates are seeing approximately 50 new women each week. Of those women, many are coming in for the first time due to recent job losses. A loss of job contributes to a woman's inability to pay her rent, leaving her homeless.
- Women have been evicted from their homes when their apartment buildings were foreclosed upon.
- The Groceries program has reported distributing groceries to a record 1,400 women in the month of October. This is a significant increase over the 950 women who received groceries in October 2007. This Thanksgiving 850 Stop & Shop gift cards were distributed to purchase turkeys in just TWO days – as opposed to the four days it took to distribute those cards last year.
- The Dining Room is serving more meals to a greater variety of guests. There is an increased number of elderly women, young adults and children coming in for meals regularly.

With recent cuts to the state budget, Rosie's Place is bracing for even more increases in the demand for services. As other organizations must cut programs and services, a new wave of women will come to Rosie's Place seeking assistance. We are hopeful that we will continue to be able to help women with their needs.

Florence's Story

Florence left Uganda for America when she was 28 years-old. After marrying and then being abandoned by her husband in a new country, she decided to pursue a career as a CNA. Her housing situation soon became dire after a roommate broke the lease and left Florence with the bill and the hard decision of moving to a more affordable place far from her job. The commute became an unworkable challenge that cost Florence her employment, and eventually her apartment. "Everything was uncertain," Florence remembers. After going to a local police station for help, Florence was directed to Rosie's Place.

Seven years later, Florence is working as a human services case-worker, counseling people in recovery from mental illness and addiction. She is paying rent for a room in Rosie's Place permanent housing and she's even taking courses towards her Bachelor's degree at local colleges.

Florence is grateful to Rosie's Place for helping her along the way. "[My advocate] was instrumental," Florence explains. "She helped me access resources and made it easy for me to communicate. I had trust issues and was betrayed in the past. Rosie's Place not only restored my trust; they gave me hope and a new light. It was a rebirth."

Florence took full advantage of the services at Rosie's Place, from temporary housing, to the Dining Room, to working at the Women's Craft Cooperative and attending trainings on Public Policy, for which she has a strong passion. "I want to influence policy to make things better and give people another chance...I want to be a role model for others." From what we can see, she already is.

Deidre's Story

Before she was even 18, Deidre was faced with many obstacles—a teenage pregnancy, a mentally ill mother who suffered from addiction, and a father who passed away suddenly. This didn't make attending high school an easy feat, and Deidre dropped out just before her senior year. She was then denied public housing twice. But with great perseverance, she tackled her challenges head-on and rose to the occasion.

Deidre first came to Rosie's Place looking for a fresh start and some solutions. By working with a housing advocate, Deidre went through the appeal process and was finally approved for housing. Even though she now lives in her own place with her two-year-old child, Deidre still says that Rosie's Place feels like home. And she treats it as such by lending a helping hand in the dining room.

Deidre is also committed to getting an education by attending GED classes and meeting with a private tutor weekly, always doing her homework, and having a can-do attitude. Additionally, Deidre takes advantage of both the clothing and food programs at Rosie's Place to make sure that she is looking and feeling her best. As one can see, Deidre is utilizing all available resources so that she can lead a healthy lifestyle for herself and her family.

Mary's Story

After a difficult history of mental illness and substance abuse, Mary was searching for stability and a healthy routine – and Rosie's Place became her safety net. Mary has been coming to Rosie's Place since 1986 to utilize a variety of services including advocacy, the wellness center and the dining room.

Two years ago, Mary found affordable housing and today is more independent than ever. She is proud to say that she can pay her bills by herself "on time every time" with no extra financial support. When she gets her check, she first pays rent for her housing, and then goes grocery shopping. Mary likes to prepare a variety of balanced meals in her own kitchen, with chicken and broccoli being among her favorites. She also continues to enjoy supplemental meals in the Rosie's Place dining room where she feels comfortable. She attributes these milestones to meeting with her advocate who understands her needs, keeps her trust and makes her feel comfortable. In response to her ability to budget her own money and practice a healthy lifestyle, Mary says simply, "It just feels good."



from the executive director

sue marsh

Dear Friends:

The world feels upside down these days – for many of us, what we read in the papers is scary and hard to understand. For some of us, we feel like the rug has been pulled out from under us. Others of us anticipate being up-ended, and worry. It's a time of uncertainty – and a time to re-think what's important, what's a priority.

“At Rosie's Place we strive to be present, every day, for every woman.”

Thanks to you, we can cheer on the woman who fills out a job application, and the woman who lands her first job in a decade. We rejoice in a guest's new keys to her own apartment, and a guest who agrees to stay inside in one of our Overnight beds. We look for, and sometimes look hard for, the one step forward, the victories, the gains that are for so many so hard won. Without a

doubt, successes within the walls of Rosie's Place are among the sweetest we can ever imagine.

In September, a great writer, David Foster Wallace died. One of his most heartbreaking works has a lot to do with how we think and act at Rosie's Place, which he wrote for a speech at Kenyon College's graduation.

Mr. Wallace wrote:

“... there are all different kinds of freedom, and the kind that is most precious you will not hear much talk about much in the great outside world of wanting and achieving. The really important kind of freedom involves attention and awareness and discipline, and being able truly to care about other people and to sacrifice for them over and over in myriad petty, unsexy ways every day.

...the capital-T Truth, ... is about the real value of a real education, which has almost nothing to do with knowledge, and everything to do with simple awareness; awareness of what is so real and essential, so hidden in plain sight all around us, all the time, that we have to keep reminding ourselves over and over.”

This is Rosie's Place. This is serving a woman lunch on a real plate instead of Styrofoam. This is giving a child a bookbag instead of a plastic bag to bring to school. This is giving a clean set of clothes to a woman on her way to Detox. This is helping a woman pay a back heating bill.

At Rosie's Place we strive to be present every day, for every woman. We are there for them in matters big and small, over and over. We aim to find Mr. Wallace's Capital T Truth in every guest that finds her way to Rosie's Place.

We're grateful for your support so that we can offer a chance at a new beginning to every woman who comes to our door. As you know, we offer that chance in our own particular way, independent of government funding and built upon Kip's values of justice, compassion and relentless efforts for our most fragile sisters. Your generosity provides hope, dignity, keys to survival and keys to growth and change. Without a doubt, you are a gift to the guests of Rosie's Place.

With faith,
Sue

ROSIE'S PLACE NEWS is a quarterly publication designed to inform our friends about the many activities happening in our community at Rosie's Place. Our mission is to provide a safe and nurturing environment for poor and homeless women to maintain their dignity, seek opportunity and find security in their lives.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR Sue Marsh **FOUNDER** Kip Tiernan

To help support Rosie's Place or to make address changes, please contact the Development Office at: (617) 442-9322.

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Volunteers from Rosie's Place, Women of Means and GesherCity, offered free rides to and assistance at the polls to guests on Election Day

Election Day at Rosie's Place

At Rosie's Place, we believe in empowering our guests to be engaged in the political process as educated voters. For each year's election, whether local or national, we host candidate forums, publish and distribute our own voter guides, and register voters. Every four years, our election activities intensify in preparation for the presidential election. In addition to creating an extensive non-partisan voter guide, which we published for the first time in Spanish, we hosted viewings of all four televised presidential debates and hosted a forum dedicated to educating our guests on the three Statewide Ballot Questions.

The energy on Election Day was palpable. Rosie's Place partnered with Women of Means, a healthcare organization providing free medical care to Boston area shelters, and GesherCity, a social justice organization for Jewish young adults, to provide our guests rides to the polls. From the South End, Roxbury, Dorchester, and as far away as Harbor Point and Quincy, our Get Out the Vote efforts mobilized 50 guests of Rosie's Place who otherwise would have not been able to vote.

Our efforts highlighted some of the barriers poor and homeless women face in casting their votes. The first challenge was to know where someone is registered to vote. Many of our guests were unsure of where they were last registered to vote because of their transience. Some ended up registered in locations farther from where they were and, had there been no rides to their registered polling locations, would have forgone voting entirely because of the distance. Others were last registered as far away as Florida and Minnesota and were unable to vote in the presidential election. Their experiences remind us of the great need to implement Election Day Voter Registration, which would have allowed them to take part in our society's self-governance.

Our volunteers were also available to assist guests at the polls if they needed it. For many guests, November 4th, 2008 was their first time ever voting. One guest was not prepared for the length and complexity of the ballot, and needed some help in understanding exactly what it was asking and what her options were. Another guest never learned to read and asked for someone to accompany her, wanting to make sure her ballot was cast. Leah Madsen, one of the 12 volunteer drivers, noted that Rosie's Place guests were excited about participating in the election. "You could see how proud the guests were after they voted. It was clear to me how much this opportunity meant to the women," Leah said.

Thanks again to all of our volunteers. We look forward to continuing election activities as we draw closer to the City of Boston elections next year.



Rosie's Place helped 850 women serve a traditional Thanksgiving meal to their families with gift cards to Stop & Shop. Women used the cards to purchase a turkey for their meal and the Rosie's Place Groceries Program provided them with the remainder of the food items for their feast. Special thanks to Stop & Shop for helping to make this Thanksgiving special for our guests!

Funny Women...Serious Business



Carol Leifer

Now in its eighth year, the annual fall luncheon *Funny Women...Serious Business* was once again an impressive example of warmth and generosity, raising \$420,000 for Rosie's Place. Nearly 1,400 supporters came together on October 16th to show their love and support for Rosie's Place and the poor and homeless women we serve.

Funny Boston media women joined Master of Ceremonies Susan Wornick to discuss the happiness and heartache that comes with being a woman. Comedienne Carol Leifer headlined the event, and kept the crowd laughing with her witty take on womanhood. Hailed by *The Washington Post* as "one of the best comedic minds of our time," Carol Leifer is an acclaimed stand-up comedian and Emmy-nominated writer. Her credits include *Saturday Night Live*, *The Larry Sanders Show*, and *Seinfeld*. Currently, Leifer is completing her first book, "When You Lie About Your Age, The Terrorists Win," which explores life, love and children all after forty.

Many thanks to our event chairs, sponsors, and table hosts for showing the guests of Rosie's Place how much serious business a group of funny women can accomplish. Special thanks to our headlining sponsors: Harvard Pilgrim Healthcare Foundation, Liberty Mutual and New Balance.



Michele May (l) and Board President Lynn Kaplan (r)



Executive Director Sue Marsh, Carol Leifer, Kip Tiernan and Susan Wornick



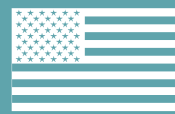
Bruce D. Aleo from Done Right Landscape & Construction Company, Inc.,

wanted to transform Rosie's Place's overgrown backyard into a beautiful space that the guests could relax in and enjoy. Bruce came in with his hard-working team and in just one day, shaped the trees and shrubs, removed extraneous trees and bushes and weeded the entire area. The backyard became an area that was both clean and inviting.

Then Bruce redesigned a round patio area with cobblestone-encircled trees, flower beds, and decorative borders with multi-colored mulch and stone. It was as if the backyard was his canvas and the different materials, flowers and stones were his paint.

"For all the guests, neighbors and staff, I thank you for that very special place, which allows each one of us to put our problems aside and think more positively about the future!" said Bruce.

We are thrilled with the transformation of our backyard into a beautiful sanctuary for our guests. Many thanks to Bruce for his exceptional effort, creative design, and generosity. Special thanks also to the Landscape Express and Tech-block for donating landscaping materials for this project.



The Struggle for Citizenship

The United States is currently experiencing the largest sustained wave of immigration in its history with 1.5 million legal and illegal immigrants settling in the country each year (Center for Immigration Studies). Rosie's Place has seen an increase in the number of women seeking our services who are not U.S. citizens.

The road to citizenship is a difficult path to navigate, especially for poor and homeless women. This can be attributed to the lack of resources available to help make sense of the confusing process. There are very few places in Massachusetts that offer a course to prepare naturalization applicants for the required United States history and government exam. Most of our guests cannot afford the filing fee, which has just been increased to \$675, nor can they afford to hire an attorney to prepare the forms and attend the interview with them.

Rosie's Place now provides a citizenship preparatory class free of charge which prepares women for the US history and government test. Before a student can enroll in the class, they must be referred by a Rosie's Place advocate or known by Rosie's Place staff. Anyone is welcome to meet with an advocate to obtain a referral. In addition, each student must meet with attorney and board member, Cathryn MacInnes and her husband, Gerry Pearlstein, also an attorney, to make sure that they are eligible for naturalization. Students will need to present documentation to verify financial eligibility (W2's) and legal status (a valid green card), and will need to demonstrate the ability to speak and understand English well enough to take the test.

If eligible, the women then enroll in a 4-week course, which provides them with an overview of US History and reviews all of the possible questions they will be asked on the exam. Upon completion of the 4-week course, Cathryn fills out the application and necessary paperwork, prepares the woman for her interview, and ultimately accompanies her to it.

Working with Rosie's Place guests to help them become citizens is something that gives Cathryn great pride. "Most of these women have had their green card for many years; some came here as children. They wanted to become citizens but they just didn't know how to do it. They are all so excited to finally have an opportunity to apply to be a citizen."

Currently there are two students with interviews scheduled, eight students awaiting documents, three students who have already completed the fingerprint step, and twelve who have already become citizens, like Miyoung Sohn Chung!

Upon becoming a citizen, Miyoung registered to vote and was excited to participate in the recent election. "I voted for the first time as a U.S.A. Citizen in the election," Miyoung recalls. "It was such a nice experience for me. I wish that many people can vote."

We are proud of Miyoung and our other students and look forward to helping others become citizens through our program. If you are interested in learning more about the Citizenship class at Rosie's Place, please contact Ellen Braverman at 617-442-9322 ext. 215.

18 Mt. Vernon Goes Green



Rosie's Place's Mt. Vernon Street residence recently received a makeover courtesy of NSTAR and WCVB-TV Channel 5. The collaboration on the Going Green Initiative was a part of WCVB's "Extreme Makeover: My Hometown" project.

NSTAR conducted an assessment of the Mt. Vernon Street home in Dorchester, where women with medical issues reside. They identified several key areas where their expertise would ensure the home's energy efficiency while maintaining its comfort.

"Rosie's Place has a long tradition of being a warm, welcoming place for women throughout the city of Boston," said Penni McLean-Conner, NSTAR's Vice President of Customer Care and Energy Efficiency. "We hope that by partnering with WCVB to implement these energy-saving measures, we'll help that tradition continue for years to come."

The NewsCenter 5 team of anchors and reporters joined forces with NSTAR employees in November to perform a complete home energy audit and installed new energy efficient lighting, weatherstripping and even a Christmas tree with energy efficient lights! They also spruced up the kitchen with new energy saving appliances and topped it off with a fresh coat of paint – green of course! Their work will be documented in a series of news reports, web stories, public service announcements and on WCVB's acclaimed nightly newsmagazine, Chronicle.

WCVB President and General Manager Bill Fine said, "It has been a wonderful experience working with our friends at NSTAR and Rosie's Place to truly make a difference in the lives of the residents of Mt. Vernon Street and share ways for Channel 5 viewers to make their homes more energy efficient."

The women who reside at Mt. Vernon Street were excited to see all of their favorite Channel 5 on-air personalities helping to make their home more comfortable. They were thrilled with the final results and look forward to keeping warm in their home this winter!

Rosie's Place thanks everyone at WCVB and NSTAR for their friendship and hard work on this project.



from the founder

kip tiernan

Dear Sisters & Brothers:

The balance of power shifting? A level playing field again? A change in the way the government of the people, by the people and for the people is conducted? Yeah. All that and more, and needless to say, the women of Rosie's Place feel great! The change has come, and we are that change! To have felt abused and neglected for so long by so many and then suddenly to see the possibilities is almost too much for one to hope for. And yet...

Like so many Americans on the heels of the most recent presidential election, I too, am proud and hopeful. And also like many Americans I, too, remember the Depression of the thirties. I, too, remember the bread lines and the folks selling apples on the corner. In 1933, I was seven and lived with my mother at my grandmother's house in New Haven, Connecticut, in a working class neighborhood. A few weeks ago, Fran Froehlich and I were at Curry College talking about rethinking change and challenging the status quo. And here it is today. He said "We can do it," and Obama is right. We CAN do it. As one New York Times writer said, "Obama has a political base." But he also has a huge social base of millions of people who have signed on. Millions. This has never happened before. This is what you call a movement. Finally getting a black president has never happened before either. Is this a great country or what?!

The working poor have been hit hard in this current economic downturn. The middle class is in trauma, never thinking they would be affected. The poor always know they are going to be more adversely affected by any downturn. But I tell ya – the possibility of "change" seems to be more of a possibility now. The idea of having a level playing field seems closer now. The balance of power is, I think, about to change dramatically, but not overnight. Not in the next few months for sure. But change IS coming, and it validates all of our lives, particularly those who believe that change must come. The long walks I took, whether it was for civil rights or the anti-war movement, or walks to the state house for welfare moms or kids without medical or mental health help, the desperation felt by so many young black and white youths... It is, I think, finally paying off. Robert Kuttner said, "Charity is not just about helping the poor, as the great social radicals have understood – it's about changing the system." Hopefully this current system is about to be changed for the better. I feel we have reached that mountaintop Dr. King spoke of. Change will take place, but not right away. Maybe not even in four years, but it will happen. The collective voice has spoken. The millions who voted for him, the hundreds of thousands of people who at last came forward into the sun, have spoken. And I do believe that things will never be the same again. This time the party has come forward to reclaim democracy. To reclaim the dream of Martin, and to walk strong and confident into a future that should be different.

I think back to the days when I, too, marched with Martin through the streets of Boston, and then when we marched to Boston Common when he had been assassinated. I think back to the days of the Reagan Empire when he slashed forty years of social services to the poor. I think back to my grandmother who fed hordes of hungry people in the Depression. I think of all the years and years of trying to help. I think of you who have stuck by us (and still do). It all validates what we have all been doing for the past twenty, thirty, forty years, hoping that things would change, hoping against hope. And I am grateful and I feel blessed. And now the work begins... How wonderful community organizing is! Look what it brought us this time! We have a president we can at last be proud of. Yes, my sisters and brothers, "that one!"

Thank you so very much you who have come to the aid of Rosie's Place over and over and over again. It looks like a brighter, clearer, more hopeful world for our crowd, and Thanksgiving and Christmas look pretty darn good from where we sit, too. What a blessed time! What a relief! What a wondrous day in all our lives!

Again, in struggle and hope,
Kip



SAVE THE DATE

WBUR Presents *A Christmas Carol*

Friday, December 19, 7:00 p.m.

Omni Parker House Hotel, 60 School Street, Boston

Embrace the holiday season and join your favorite WBUR/NPR radio personalities for a special reading of Charles Dickens' classic *A Christmas Carol*. Proceeds benefit Rosie's Place. Tickets are \$35 and are available online at www.rosiesplace.org. For more information call Ben at 617-442-9322 ext. 232.

Volunteer Orientations at Rosie's Place

Tuesday, December 11, 6:00 p.m., Wednesday, January 9, 6:00 p.m., Tuesday, January 29, 6:00 p.m., Thursday, February 28, 6:00 p.m., Tuesday, March 11, 6:00 p.m.

For more information, or to sign up for an upcoming volunteer orientation, please contact Marty Wengert, Director of Volunteer Services at 617-442-9322 ext. 218.

Wish List Spotlight

As the temperature changes from mild to cold, it is a sign that winter is coming. Many of our guests come to Rosie's Place with cold fingers and snow in their hair. Help us supply them with winter essentials by donating new or gently used hats, gloves, mittens and scarves, warm socks, thermal underwear (especially large sizes) and lip balm.

We are especially in need of warm winter coats, size 16 and up for our guests.

Once inside, guests appreciate a cup of coffee, tea or hot cocoa to warm up. Single servings of hot chocolate mix; tea bags; coffee beans (ground is best); and individual packets of instant coffee are appreciated. Our dining room also needs mugs to help serve these soothing warm drinks to our guests.

Donations can be dropped off at Rosie's Place anytime between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m. Monday through Friday. Directions to Rosie's Place can be found on our website under the 'contact us' section at www.rosiesplace.org, or by calling (617) 442-9322. Thank you for thinking of us!

Button Box

News from the Women's Craft Cooperative



This holiday season give a gift that gives back. When you purchase any product from the Women's Craft Cooperative, your money goes directly to programs for poor and homeless women at Rosie's Place.

Find something for everyone on your list! Choose from our new collection of beautiful necklaces, bracelets, earrings and more, all handcrafted by guests of Rosie's Place.

To make your holidays even easier, there are many ways to shop. Shop online at www.rosiesplace.org or visit us in person at the WCC Boutique, open Monday-Friday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m., at 47 Thorndike Street in Boston. Please call Barbara ahead of time at 617-318-0282 so we can schedule a personal shopping experience for you!



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