



The Front Porch

*Step by Step of Rochester, Inc.
Strengthening the Community One Woman at a Time
Where We Meet to Share Stories, Updates and Our Mission*

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Is your yard Safe?

Dear Step by Step Supporter,

Below, Kim writes about our recent work with unsentenced women. We started out with great trepidation because these women are 'fresh off the streets' and can have powerful attitudes and great resentment. We also expected a constant flow of participants because of the nature of the place.

Having graduated two groups, we've seen that our fears were unfounded. Both groups of women were eager to participate, formed solid bonds with each other, worked hard, and stayed for the entire workshop unless released.

It is so rewarding to watch women blossom and grow, even in such a short time. Just like our gardens at home, every day shows a new blossom, a new green leaf, a new sign of life. We are so blessed in our work!

Fundraiser update: More checks have come in, so **A Sentimental Journey** raised over \$8,000 after expenses. Thank you to all the people who contributed to this overwhelming success!

An added blessing was to see so many old friends that night: Rich Mathner, Connie Hatch-Feir, Kelly Wingo, Trish Healey, Nan Wall Watts, and so many others. It's so good to see people from our past because it makes us reflect for a moment on how far we've come. So stay in touch!

Sincerely,

Pat Merle

Want to Do More? Love Pink Flamingos?

Wish you could help fund our programs, but just don't have the financial resources? Here's a way for you to help that is fun and can be a substantial source of funds for Step by Step: gather 5-10 of your friends and have a mini-fundraiser.

Go to <http://www.fundraiserhelp.com/easy-fundraisers.htm> for a list of hundreds of fundraisers and resources. There are plenty of great ideas for church groups, kids, the neighborhood, or pink flamingo lovers (See the one entitled "Pink Flamingo," and check out "Golf ball drop raffle" too, for some far-out ideas.)

What would the money from your event do? It would support one of the 25+ workshops we offer in a year in jail/prison. Why is this important? Here's what often happens in a session:

- The women share their homework on what they have survived. One woman bursts into tears saying 'I never knew others have been through what I've been through. I'm not alone.'
- A woman, asked to share one thing no one knows about her, says that her tough exterior, that keeps people at a distance, hides a scared child inside. The others, who have kept their distance in the workshop, now support her and welcome her in her vulnerability.
- During graduation, when the women review the work they have done, receive their certificates and a book, many women say, 'This is the first thing in my life I have finished. I was tempted many times to drop out or not get out of bed, but I came and I have completed this.'

These stories happen in each workshop and each session. A woman makes a breakthrough and realizes she is not alone, she doesn't have to hide behind a terrifying exterior, and she is capable of much, much more than she thought. Your 'fun'raiser would help make stories like these possible.

Behind the Scenes

Every Thursday at our weekly staff meeting, we share a good story that reminds us why we do what we do.

Last week, our AmeriCorps worker, Kim, told us about a woman in her workshop, "Choices." When Kim asked her how she felt that morning, the woman answered "self-aware." She said that over the last few weeks, since she had been participating in "Choices," she had begun to see how her attitude and self-image affected the choices she's made. Every day, she said, she felt more prepared to use her strengths to persevere, get clean, and make the choices that would keep her out of prison.

New Programs at Step by Step

In March, we here at Step by Step took our trusty workshop manuals and strength-based approach to new territory: unsentenced women at Monroe Correctional Facility. There, the women await court, which could sentence them to another correctional facility, send them to a treatment program on the outside, or release them. Naturally, this is a very difficult time for them, and some wait for several months before seeing a judge. Since they receive no programming, we decided to use a small contract we received to work with them twice a week.

We decided that our workshop "Choices", which focuses on recognizing that all our decisions have consequences, and we ourselves have the power to make those choices, would be a perfect beginning for this work. The women take time to reflect on the choices they've made that put them where they are, and to identify the choice they are now faced with: how will I spend my time in jail?

So far, two groups of women have graduated, having completed all 8 sessions. We have been very blessed to be able to work with this population and the women, as expected, have made immeasurable progress toward claiming their own strengths.

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