

Womenews

Women's Center of Montgomery County



Christine Wiita: Volunteer Coordinator in Bryn Mawr and Special in So Many Ways

If you are fortunate, you get the opportunity to meet someone during your lifetime who you truly aspire to be like in so many ways. You are amazed at the many positive attributes this person elicits including intelligence, authenticity, friendliness, honesty, kindness, and professionalism. This person is totally unselfish, always caring about others before themselves. When this unique individual serves as your mentor, they seek to empower you and give you every possible opportunity for growth. Christine Wiita, The Volunteer Coordinator at Bryn Mawr for over six years, has been that role model for me and for everyone who has had the fortune to work with her. Sadly for us but positively for her, she has decided to retire from this position as of the beginning of July. Fortunately for the Women's Center, she will continue in her role as an active volunteer.



What you may not know about Christine is that her first career was as a structural engineer, which lasted 30 years. In her professional career as an engineer, she became aware of the financial and career growth related inequities for women. As a second career, Christine sought new challenges and opportunities to have a direct impact on women and children. Christine also devotes countless hours as a youth advocate volunteer for CASA (Court appointed Special Advocate). She was recognized for her dedication in this regard at the 2015 Gala for CASA where she received an award for her service and for handling the toughest cases. Not surprising. Besides being the Volunteer Coordinator in the Bryn Mawr office, Christine is involved in new volunteer training, is a member of the Strategic Planning Committee for the Center, and is a court advocate.

While Christine empowers and fully embraces each volunteer that comes into her office, her real strength and passion is evident in her work with those who reach out for help, living under the shadows of domestic abuse and violence. Whenever we are stumped in the office about ideas for helping someone, we know we can move forward with solutions by our discussions with Christine. Her first priority is always to serve and empower those that come to us for help in the best possible way, looking at every possible option for that individual to ensure their safety and growth. She is the perfect example with her empathy, strength, listening skills and non-judgmental approach to counseling.

On a personal note, I came to the Women's Center in 2012 to be a volunteer and because of where I live; Bryn Mawr was the office where I volunteered. Christine set no limits on my potential volunteer opportunities. She encouraged me to try court accompaniment, speaking at various events, assisting in community education, facilitating the support group, Police roll calls, working with interns, joining a Board committee and ultimately becoming a member of the Board. I now am privileged to serve as co-president of the Board. I still am most

passionate to be an active volunteer at Bryn Mawr. Christine has been the root of my growth at the Center and has become a true friend.

Thank you Christine for all you have done and will continue to do, for the person you are, for your values, and your passion. We all wish you the best in this next phase of your life and are so pleased and relieved that you are continuing to be involved in the Women's Center. You have always given your absolute most to the volunteers, the center and those who seek our help.

Rosie Santulli
Co-President, Board of Directors

FINDING MEANING AND VALUE IN TEEN DATE VIOLENCE PREVENTION WORK: A SURVIVOR'S STORY

"I WILL SMASH YOUR PHONE WITH THIS HAMMER RIGHT NOW!" Guns, knives, tasers, and name calling were also amongst the violent threats I received. It came to a point, where I was scared of my own so called "boyfriend." In my 17 years of life, I've already experienced what it's like to be in a harmful relationship. I didn't necessarily even know that it was dating violence and that's one of the main issues.

I don't feel as though teens fully understand what dating violence is and how it may impact them. So first off, I think teens need to be educated on what a good relationship looks like versus what a not so good relationship looks like. I witnessed healthy relationships growing up in my happy household, but when it came to a negative romantic relationship, I was naive.

I think it's important for teens to understand dating violence because one could be in an unhealthy relationship and not even know - that's scary. They may think their partner's behavior is normal and they aren't ready to accept and/or process the fact that the one they are intimately involve with would be harmful.

Teens need to know that they do not have to be unsafe. There is help. I am devoting my summer to helping at the Women's Center of Montgomery County so that I can share my experience and support others in crisis. It is my mission to spread to word so that dating violence is not an accepted or tolerated part of any teen's world.

Daija – Age 17



**Attention Friends and Supporters
of the Women's Center of Montgomery County:**

Seeking Board Engagement?

As someone already committed to our mission of empowering women and eliminating domestic violence in our community you may want to consider taking the next step by becoming a member of our Board of Directors.

As members of a working board, Directors are expected to attend board meetings which are currently held every month from September through June. These meetings are typically one and half to two hours and are held the third Thursday evening of the month. Additional responsibilities include participation on two Board committees or, in the alternative, chairing one committee.

Directors must be active members of the Women's Center of Montgomery County, which includes payment of the annual \$35.00 membership dues and volunteering at least 52 hours of service each year (including Board meeting, committee service hours and attendance at Board fundraising events).

If you have a high level of passion and commitment to our mission of ending domestic violence, this is your opportunity to become a leader in our organization and to make a real difference by volunteering your time, energy, experience and vision to our Board of Directors. Our Board of Directors is a diverse, dedicated and talented group of individuals who recognize that we can affect positive change through volunteer engagement and a shared vision for the future. By becoming a member of our Board of Directors, your involvement can directly benefit the victims of domestic violence we serve!

We meet with prospective candidates throughout the year to ensure that they receive a full orientation to the Center and our Board expectations prior to making the commitment to join. If you are interested, please contact Beth Rubin, Nominating Chair, by email at bethfrubin@msn.com.

For more information about the Women's Center of Montgomery County, please visit our website at www.wcmontco.org. Thank you!

**The Women's Center of Montgomery County
Proudly Dedicates Our
13th Annual 5K Run/3K Walk
to
Celebrating the Life of Ellen Gregory Robb**

As domestic violence counselors and advocates the darkest days we face are when we learn of a life lost to domestic violence. It is beyond painful to imagine a life that ends with such cruelty and suffering, inflicted by someone who was supposed to love and protect, and equally unbearable to reflect on what was lost – the treasures of life, its rich and happy moments, its potential and possibilities. For most of us our lives are not defined by a single event but rather the complex tapestry of events, memories, relationships and accomplishments. But for the victim of a domestic violence homicide even that gift is stolen from them by their abuser, as they so often become remembered in the context of their death, tragically linked forever to the actions of their abuser, rather than as a unique and special individual to be celebrated.

On December 22, 2006 Ellen Gregory Robb, a 49 year old wife and mother of a ten-year old daughter, Olivia, was brutally murdered by her husband Rafael in her home in Upper Merion as she wrapped Christmas gifts for her family. She was beaten so badly that police initially believed she had been shot. Her murderer, Rafael Robb was released from jail on January 9, 2017, serving ten years for this savage killing.

That is the Ellen that many of us know from news reports over the past ten years. Those are the words we read in every article, every story about Ellen. But there was so much more to her – a devoted mother, a loving sister and daughter, a good friend, and a wonderful human being.

In thinking about Ellen – the woman, not “Rafael’s victim” – it became important to me that we learn about her, that we celebrate the rich tapestry of her life, and that we remember the lovely, talented, caring individual who graced the world and brought happiness to many.

So, on Sunday August 6th, as part of our annual 5K Run/Walk for domestic violence awareness, we hope you will join us to celebrate Ellen Gregory Robb and the positive memories of her life. Members of her family, including her brother Gary, will be attending and speaking at the event, helping us to experience their joyful memories of a special woman. Included in this year’s event will also be special tributes along the trail – Memories of Ellen – with photographic displays of happy times in Ellen’s life.

Please come out and help us in celebration and remembrance!



Under the Sea * Over the Boardwalk Be A Domestic Violence Lifesaver!**

13th Annual 5k Run/3k Walk to End Domestic Violence

When:

Sunday, August 6, 2017
Run/Walk starts at 9:00 a.m.
in-person registration starts at 8:00 a.m.

Where:

Germantown Academy - Carey Stadium
340 Morris Road, Fort Washington, PA 19034

What:

5k Run/3k Walk on campus
Featuring Artisan Collections/Craft Sales

Registration:

\$25 per Runner or Walker
Children under 12 Free



Women's Center of
Montgomery County

EIN 23-2000206

Start a team/register at: www.wcmontco.org

Judy's Law Passes Unanimously, Heads For Ohio Governor's Signature

They followed that by voting 33-0 to pass “Judy’s Law,” a bill that would add up to six years to sentences in cases where victims are left incapacitated or disfigured.

Judy was doused with gasoline and set on fire by her ex-boyfriend, Michael Slager, in 2015 and spent nearly 700 days in a hospital bed. Burns covered most of her body and skin grafting contributed to more than 50 surgeries. Judy’s face and hands remained disfigured until her passing Tuesday. Franklin County Prosecutor Ron O’Brien said Tuesday that he will now seek a murder charge against Slager.

Judy died Tuesday morning after a nearly two-year fight. Her mom, Bonnie Bowes, was by her side when she passed; just like she had been for nearly 700 days. Bonnie said her daughter wouldn’t take pain medication when testifying before lawmakers. She said her daughter was seeing angels just before she died holding her hand. “I held her hand for 700 days,” Bonnie said. “I said, ‘If you want to go be with Jesus... I’ll hold your hand until he takes the other hand.’” “She was really my rock,” she said. “I wasn’t hers, she was mine.”

“It feels good that we got some justice for Judy,” said Representative Jim Hughes who introduced the bill. “I think the system wronged her.”

Bowes said Judy fought to stay alive for this very day.

“I’m just amazed because Judy just said I just want to help one or two people mom and this suffering will be worth it. I’ll suffer as long as it takes if it will just help one person,” said Bowes.

With Governor Kasich’s signature, Judy’s Law will become law in Ohio in 90 days.

The Franklin County Prosecutor says his office is now taking necessary steps to pursue aggravated murder charges against Judy’s attacker.

The Women's Center of Montgomery County
Please make us your highest priority

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Women's Center Prevention Education Program at work

We believe it's never too early to teach our young ones how to be good friends and good citizens.

The Women's Center visited with over 25 preschool-aged children and their caretakers for a fun and interactive storytime using the book ONE by Kathryn Otoski.

It's Membership Renewal Time

Commitment—What does it really mean to be committed to making a better life for our families and ourselves? What does it mean to be committed to our beliefs and values? What does it mean to be committed to the betterment of the neighborhoods we live in? What does it mean to be committed to social change?

Since the Center was established in 1976, by becoming a member of the Women's Center of Montgomery County, we demonstrate commitment in thought and in action to eliminating domestic violence and empowering women. Domestic violence is not a pleasant topic to think about, but there are millions of women each year who live with this reality and need our assistance. Through our volunteer and membership support the Women's Center provides services to more than 5,000 victims of domestic violence annually, making a difference in their lives..

In recent weeks, you should have received your annual membership renewal form for the period July 1, 2017 through June 30, 2018. We hope that you will take the time to recommit to our mission by renewing your membership now! If you have already renewed, please let me again thank you for your generous support!

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215-885-0651

Monday - Friday
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Saturday
10:00 am to 4:00pm

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