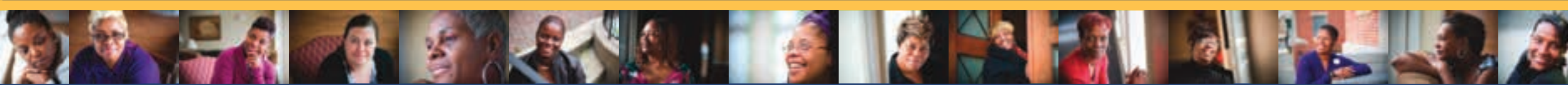


30 Women, 30 Stories



Journeys of Recovery and Transformation



30 Women, 30 Stories

30 Women, 30 Stories

Journeys of Recovery and Transformation

A project of Marian House

Women moving from dependence to independence

Portrait Photographs by Marshall Clarke



Copyright © 2013 Marian House

Contents

Foreword 4

Introduction 6

Addiction 8

Gail Chapman-Robinson 10

Rita Chapman 12

Denise Matthews 14

Chrystal Wesby 16

Elizabeth Smith 18

Audrey Fisher 20

Donna Jackson 22

Linette Parrine-Waters 24

Incarceration 26

Lesly Bailey-Johnson 28

Monica Scott 30

Trina Selden 32

Paris Turner 34

Karen Floyd 36

Chanta Whiting 38

Homelessness 40

Willette Fair 42

Deneen Houze 44

Helena Weathers 46

Cynthia Kopec 48

Kendra Gatling 50

Rowena Gore-Simmons 52

Mental Illness 54

Terri Randolph-Spence 56

Sharon Cannon 58

Mary Bonds 60

Nalisha Gibbs 62

Terona Hopkins 64

Trauma 66

Carol Smith 68

Tammi Shuron Jones 70

Cynthia Hall 72

Evania Chapman 74

Doreen Cooke 76

About Marian House 78

Acknowledgements 80



Marian House residents Gwen, Linda, Nakeiya, and Robin created this quilt in honor of the organization's 30th anniversary. It is inspired in part by Marian House's Value Statement, which reads: "Marian House values the innate dignity of each human being. Within a culture of respect and understanding of the human condition, the values of patience, trust, honesty, and integrity direct all our interactions and endeavors." Thank you to artist Faustine Davis for leading the quilt-making project.

Foreword

"The women Marian House serves are some of the strongest women I have ever had the privilege to meet. This book gives them a platform upon which to display that strength to the world."

Katie Allston

Thank you for taking the time to read our book, "30 Women, 30 Stories." The personal accounts contained throughout these pages portray transformations that most people would find impossible to accomplish. It is surprising that these women survived the lives they lived before coming to Marian House. I certainly know that what did not kill them, most likely would have killed me. I am thankful to these 30 women who, because of their strength and perseverance, are now able and willing to share their stories of triumph. My hope is that everyone who takes the time to read through these pages becomes a more compassionate individual with a stronger belief in the capacity for change by those who consciously strive to accomplish it.

When hired as the Executive Director of Marian House in 2007, I feared that the position would not be the right fit for me, as it would not involve direct client service to the same extent as my previous professional roles. What I had not considered was that I would be working in the same building where our women lived. We would share the halls, the phone lines, the coffee pot, holiday celebrations—and I would have the opportunity to hear their stories and interact with them daily.

5 years later, I can say unequivocally that my time at Marian House has been a true blessing. There is nothing more fulfilling than helping someone to become aware of the beauty they possess and the light that is contained inside of them. The light is just waiting to shine out . . . and once a person becomes aware of its existence, the light within them becomes a beacon of hope pouring out onto those around them. This light shines bright at Marian House, causing people to stop and be in awe of the many successes our women experience.

Fearful, excited, and hopeful, women come to Marian House with many anxieties, as I did when

I first arrived. Once through the doors, for most these anxieties naturally melt away. As you will read throughout this book, Marian House is, first and foremost, a home. A place of safety, caring, and kindness, where the simplest things like a friendly greeting and the use of a person's name resonate deeper than most people can imagine. These simple courtesies, the ones so many of us take for granted each day, transcend the fear the women feel and begin to heal their pain. To our women, such an interaction says, "someone truly cares about me, and not because they want something in return." For many of the women we nurture, no one has ever cared for them the way they are cared for in this special house.

After a decade working in human services, I thought I had heard every sad story. I did not think anything I could ever hear again would shock me. Then, I started to learn about the women Marian House serves. As the Marian House logo depicts, our women are breaking free of their confines. Their restraints may be poverty, addiction, homelessness, mental illness, the stigma of incarceration, or memories of trauma and neglect, or, as in most cases, they may suffer from a combination of these pains and labels. They are breaking free from whatever is holding them in their past. Undoubtedly, you will find the accounts of the women's lives in this book gripping, and their struggles will pull on your heart-strings. If you find yourself more aware and sensitive to the obstacles they and many others face and become a believer in the ability to overcome adversities, then our mission in producing this book will be accomplished.

To be a part of any portion of the Marian House story is a privilege and an honor. But the Marian House story is not mine to tell. It is Carol's, Sharon's, Evania's... I hope you find that this book and the stories it contains capture the beauty, depth, and

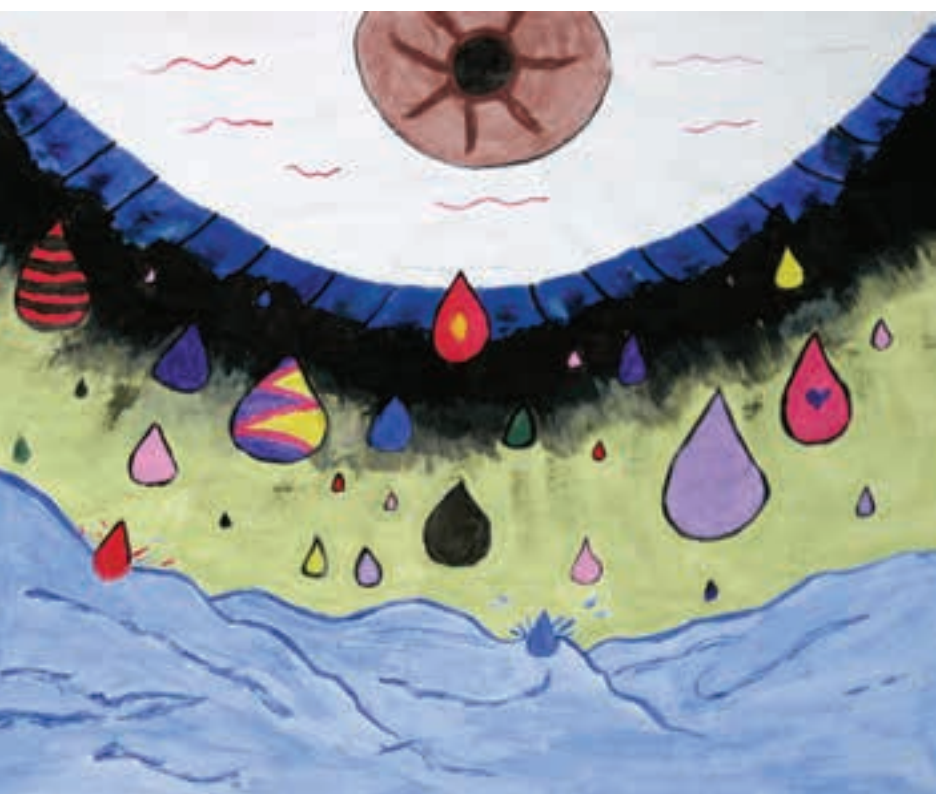
warmth of these women. To think that once they did not know they possessed these qualities... but lived a life of pain, shame, and regret... will never cease to amaze me... and I hope now, you.

Katie Allston, LCSW-C
Executive Director, Marian House



Marshall Clarke

Katie Allston in Marian House's courtyard.



Painting by Rhonda, a current resident at Marian House, inspired by *30 Women, 30 Stories*.

Introduction

“The experiences shared in this book are as inspiring as they are informative.”

Peter Bruun

30 Women, 30 Stories, created on the occasion of Marian House’s 30th anniversary, not only celebrates the incredible journeys of women served by the organization over the past three decades, but also functions as a primer on the correlated issues of addiction, mental illness, trauma, homelessness, and incarceration.

Too often, these concerns are regarded in isolation from one another, without due sensitivity to their interrelated qualities. As the women’s stories make clear, one ailment is rarely separate from another: a childhood trauma sets off a depression, this leads to substance abuse and addiction, which in turn leads to homelessness and incarceration—a composite of challenges that can seem overwhelming.

But these stories prove hope is possible, and transformation and recovery real. It is never easy, and as observed by Marian House’s Executive Director Katie Allston in her Foreword, is often awe-inspiring. Contrary to commonly held views on those suffering from the disease of addiction and other difficulties, the women in this book should not be seen as profligates but rather as heroes.

Their courage is evident in their stories, and also in their willingness to share their agonizing experiences with the public.

The project began in early 2011, when Marian House alumnae were invited to participate. The 30 women who responded were asked to submit themselves to recorded interviews, take part in photography sessions, and grant permission for Marian House to use their interviews and images for publication in various formats. They all agreed.

30 Women, 30 Stories is a book, but also a project that includes a traveling exhibition of Marshall Clarke’s beautiful portrait photographs, and a DVD addressing the five target issues of this project (the disease of addiction, mental illness, trauma,

homelessness, and incarceration). Each project component is intended to be informative, serving as a jumping-off point for dialogue and sharing of perspectives. Our goal is to get people to understand the issues, and talk about them.

Through this book and the related audio stories, exhibition, and DVD, we seek to reach several audiences, including policymakers who have it in their power to create laws to help women such as those who come to Marian House. We also want experts, advocates, and practitioners to use *30 Women, 30 Stories* to carry out their own public education and advocacy campaigns. As for women and men whose lives echo those of the women in this book, they too can take courage and find hope from others who have been in their situation. Finally, we trust anyone who reads this book, listens to the audio stories, or attends an exhibition will be inspired to believe positive change in people is genuinely possible.

Though organized by issue, the book's categorizations are necessarily loose; as noted above, the various ailments are intertwined. This complex interplay becomes abundantly clear when reading each narrative, thus making our groupings somewhat arbitrary. However, our goal is to allow each subject a moment to rise to the surface as the primary object of consideration. In this way, each focus area is not unlike a musician in a tight jazz group, taking its turn as soloist while the others continue to play.

While the analogy to upbeat music may not be quite fitting to describe afflictions as devastating as addiction or trauma, it is apt when considering treatment. As one woman's trajectory of recovery after another makes clear, it is never just one thing that makes a difference: not sobriety alone, nor having a safe home, nor psychological counseling or appropriate medication. The Marian House approach is that of a team, in which a *community* of support and

range of protocols are brought in to play. In its way, it is music-making, and the song it sings is the magic it works on women's lives.

As more than one woman noted in her interview, we need more Marian Houses.

Peter Bruun

Project Director, *30 Women, 30 Stories*



Concurrently with the release of this book, the Marian House website features audio stories—edited excerpts from the women's interviews. When scanned on your mobile device, the barcode here will take you directly to the audio stories. We encourage you to look and listen all at the same time.



Addiction

“Addiction, like other chronic diseases, is a primary disease which can be progressive and relapsing. It is characterized by a loss of control, with compulsive and continued use despite negative consequences. Treatment programs need to stop having patients ‘successfully complete treatment.’ We do not state that patients with hypertension or asthma ‘successfully completed treatment.’”

Thomas Cargiulo, Director of the Maryland Alcohol and Drug Abuse Administration

Honesty by Gwen; detail of quilt created by Marian House residents.

Despite a preponderance of evidence, years of research, and formal declarations by medical authorities that addiction is a chronic disease, those suffering from addiction are still widely considered to be somehow unfit, deserving whatever ill comes their way. The narratives contained in this section suggest otherwise.

As with cancer and depression before it, addiction remains something of a taboo affliction. Those affected by it are often treated as pariahs. As stated in a 2011 article that appeared in *Counselor* magazine, “Addiction as a disease classification has suffered almost as much as our patients with the disease have over the years.”¹ One need look no further than the ill-conceived “Just Say No” public health campaign of the 1980s and early 1990s for evidence of faulty understanding of the nature of addiction. The phrase itself implies that drug use is simply and exclusively a matter of choice; by inference, those who do *not* “just say no” are weak or morally deficient.

When the founders of Marian House wrote grant requests seeking support to establish the organization in the late 1970s, no mention was made of their intention to address problems of substance abuse or addiction. Those to be helped are called “ex-offenders” or “homeless women,” and services to be offered are described as “safe housing after release,” “social services,” or “job counseling, training and sustained encouragement.” This omission may not be significant (addiction was perhaps less prevalent or recognized a condition for those first served by Marian House), but one may infer the possibility of guardedness, given society’s attitude toward this widely misunderstood chronic disease.

Paradoxically, drug use today is both at the heart of *and* peripheral to what ails women whose journeys are shared throughout this book. In story after story, using drugs or addiction is described as the problem: “It was daily drug use, and it was a

life of despair” (Audrey Fisher); “I was a drug addict” (Chrystal Wesby); “Drug addiction is such a powerful thing” (Denise Matthews); “My addiction life was hell” (Gail Chapman-Robinson); “In active addiction, my life was just a mess” (Rita Chapman). And while the impact of substance abuse and addiction is real, it also tends to mask underlying problems—the very problems the founders of Marian House set out to confront.

Though perhaps savvy of the founders to downplay substance abuse as an issue to be addressed, it was not a false position to take. Indeed, substance abuse and the problems of active addiction are almost always a *symptom* of other issues demanding attention: the negative effects of trauma; the increased risk of drug use resulting from mental illness; the life complications resulting from incarceration or homelessness. The founders did not skirt around a primary issue; rather, they went straight to the complex core.

In this first section of *30 Women, 30 Stories*, we share the experiences of eight women who suffer from the disease of addiction. Their narratives defy misconceptions about addiction—the notion that only deficient people succumb to the disease; overcoming addiction is simply a matter of abstinence; addicted people cannot be helped and should never be trusted. When Rita Chapman claims “you can equate” her and her sister Gail to “the Kennedys because all of them are in public service too,” she is being sincere. Their stories point out the prospect not only of recovery and redemption for anyone who suffers from addiction, but also of those in recovery becoming inspirations and role models for the rest of us.

1. “Addiction: The New Definition”; by Stuart Gitlow, *Counselor Magazine*; October 5, 2011

Greg Warren is President and CEO of Baltimore Substance Abuse Systems (bSAS), an organization seeking to ensure that Baltimore residents receive comprehensive, high-quality services proven to prevent and reduce substance abuse. Mr. Warren shares the following thoughts:

On what people should know about addiction: “Our public health system has largely been blind to the pain and suffering felt by individuals with addiction. As with other chronic diseases like diabetes and high blood pressure, addiction recovery needs a lifetime of commitment and support. Addiction can’t be solved by attending a 28-day program or outpatient services alone.”

On Baltimore City and the recovery community: “Baltimore City should be known for the thousands of individuals who have become resilient and healthy. Thinking that our city can be characterized by shows like ‘Homicide’ and ‘The Wire’ does a disservice to recovery individuals. It is my belief that there are many more individuals in recovery than those in active addiction.”

On what we can do: “We are a country and a city that prides itself on the hope of opportunity and second chances. We love to hear stories when the underdog has surpassed all odds and succeeded. We need to reach out to those suffering in active addiction and let them know that treatment works, recovery is possible, and a hopeful future is possible.”

“Being able to walk into the person that I know I can be, that’s an accomplishment. Because being in active addiction is like a prison.”



Gail Chapman-Robinson

First time at Marian House: February 3, 1988–April 12, 1988

Second time at Marian House: September 26, 1995–May 18, 1996

“I think I started using because of peer pressure. My mother didn’t drink or anything; it wasn’t in our home. Everyone else around me was doing it, and it looked like fun. You start using at an early age, and your development stops.

“I was an IV drug user—I used heroin and cocaine . . . My addiction life was hell. I didn’t have a stable place to live, my son was with my family, and I was just using drugs.

“As my addiction progressed, I stopped working altogether . . . I just used drugs. My family tried to intervene. The first time I came to Marian House it was, ‘You need to do something with yourself, you can do better than this, your son needs you.’ This was my family talking to me. When I left Marian House the first time I continued to use drugs.

“One day I put the drugs in me, I didn’t feel them, and that day was the first day in many years that I really looked at myself. I asked God to help me. So I went to get some help . . . The first time I went to Marian House it was for

everybody else, and the second time was my decision.

“So I ended up going to Mercy Hospital’s detox. I stayed there for 28 days. I called Marian House, and they knew me there, and that’s how I came back to Marian House for the second time.

“I would go to Narcotics Anonymous meetings every day—I got a sponsor, I got a home group. I began to volunteer at a housing program where I would do intakes for people that were HIV positive that were looking for housing.

“After eight months, I left Marian House. My son came back to live with me, and I went to school. Everyone had helped me so much, and I just wanted to help other people . . .

“I got my Masters in addiction counseling in 2003 . . . I became lead counselor at my job. Right now I manage an outpatient adult and adolescent substance abuse program where I’ve got a staff of 10 people. I’m living better than I have before in my whole life. Drug addition is an ugly thing, and I’m just so grateful that I don’t live that way anymore.

“I celebrated 16 years of recovery yesterday.”



Nicole Jarrett Photography, LLC

Gail plays with her 3-year old dog, Narnay, in her home. Of her sobriety, she says, “Now I am free to be me.”



Gail has survived much, including the loss of one son with whom she reconciled shortly before he died, and a dramatic awakening to the need of becoming clean and sober for herself. Visit www.marianhouse.org/stories to hear more.

“Marian House was a stable house . . . It’s just a real good place for people that need help and that’s what they do here.”



Rita Chapman

Start Date Marian House: December 8, 1997

End Date Marian House: November 24, 2000

“I came into Marian House because of my sister [Gail Chapman-Robinson]. I went into the same 28-day program.

“The first time I smoked cocaine, I was like, ‘Gosh, this is good’... What I did had nothing to do with my sister, it was just something that people around you did. By the time it became a problem it was too late.

“In active addiction, my life was just a mess... I just lived day to day. It wasn’t a good life before Marian House, before treatment.

“When my sister was in active addiction, her son was with her boyfriend’s sister; that’s how I came to get him. He came to live with me, and I used with him. As a family, we made a decision that we weren’t going to leave him with Gail... but then he was in it over at my house too.

“And I went into treatment. There are some things about who I am and why I did what I did that are still to this day kind of fuzzy.

“I was going to be put out of my home and

that was the only reason I went into treatment. I was like, ‘I can’t get the rent,’ so the last night we got high and everything because I was going to be put out the next day. And that’s why I surrendered. In the rooms of Narcotics Anonymous, they say it doesn’t matter why you come here as long as you come.

“I look at myself as a person who tries to do the right thing, and I don’t always succeed. But I like to say, ‘Let’s do it the way they say to do it; let’s stay on the path.’

“At Marian House, I had an opportunity to get into a housing program. I lived in a house for 2 years, and after I had the opportunity to purchase the house. That was a huge step for me. That was always a dream for me—to have a house.

“Then I followed my sister Gail... I became a counselor in 2006. In 2008, I got my Masters.

“Our mother died in 2009: all of her children are public servants. We all work for the State—so you can equate us to the Kennedys because all of them are public servants too.”



Nicole Jarrett Photography, LLC

Rita works for the Maryland State Department of Education Division of Rehabilitation Services as a Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Specialist. She has won many awards and displays them proudly in her office.



Rita and Gail Chapman-Robinson are sisters. Visit www.marianhouse.org/stories to hear them talk about their relationship and the importance of looking out for each other as family.

*“I knew that God didn’t
create me to be living in
the street doing all kinds of
crazy, degrading things.”*



Denise Matthews

Start Date Marian House: July 15, 2002

End Date Marian House: April 17, 2003

“I started using at a very young age. For most of my teenage years, I lived with my father. He was a good provider and he was a wonderful person, but a lot of things I would have learned from my mother, she just wasn’t there to teach me. So I kind of went towards the streets.

“Drug addiction is such a powerful thing. I wouldn’t wish it on anybody. I had never lived in my adult life without using drugs. What drugs do for you is help you to not deal with reality. I never wanted to feel any feelings... I didn’t want to feel anything but happy. If I didn’t feel happy, I always wanted to change the way I felt. So that’s why I used.

“Marian House was exactly what I needed. It was a big decision for me to leave home and leave the kids, but that’s what I needed to do to get myself together to be able to take care of them.

“I knew I needed structure in my life. Everything was structured at Marian House. We had a chore that we had to do twice a week, and

laundry was once a week, and we had to cook and eat dinner at 6 pm every day—cooking for all those women in the house, cooking for my four children would be no problem. Almost everything that I’ve learned about living, I have learned from the Marian House.

“As soon as I started to get all of the drugs out of my system, my head started to clear up and I wanted to go to school; I got my GED. In 2008, I was back in school for my prerequisites so I can do nursing. I say I’ll be in school another 3 years.

“I went to court to get the kids. I presented all the stuff from Marian House and the drug treatment program I was in and that I had a house for them to move into. The judge gave them back to me. Once we all were together, we were well on our way. They say that recovery is for the whole family. I am just so glad that they were so young when I decided to get it together.”



Nicole Jarrett Photography, LLC

Marian House residents enjoying a light moment while working in the kitchen; chores, work assignments, and structured days are all part of the recovery process at Marian House—something Denise puts in practice today as an employee of an elder care company.



Visit www.marianhouse.org/stories to hear Denise talk about deciding to apply to Marian House, and her feelings once she had become a resident in the program.



Nicole Jarrett Photography, LLC

The Walter E. Washington Convention Center, where Chrystal now works as the Manager of the Meeting Services Department. “I am responsible for all the room setups, ballroom setups, and exhibit halls setups.”

Chrystal Wesby

Start Date Marian House: May 9, 1994

End Date Marian House: June 1, 1997

“Before I got to the Marian House I can’t ever remember not using drugs. At the age of 33 I started using them intravenously. By the time I was 35, I was pregnant with my second child and my oldest child was then 17. My son was born addicted to heroin, and he went through withdrawals and even then I didn’t stop. I was homeless, hopeless, and helpless . . . living in people’s basements with rats in them. I would leave my son by himself while I would go out copping, and come back and he would be on the floor screaming where he had fallen out of the bed.

“I don’t want anybody to think that I woke up one day and I was in recovery. This was a process. A process is slow—it does not come overnight. It takes time, and it takes a lot of work, and that’s what I did. I worked.

“I cried for the first 6 months after being clean. I cried and cried and cried, and I was at a meeting and this guy asked me, ‘Do you find yourself crying all the time?’ He said, ‘Because you have done drugs for so long—it was your

best friend, now you can’t do them anymore, and you miss it because that’s all you know and now it is gone.’ I’ll never forget, he went out the next day and used and overdosed.

“The program at Marian House I would recommend to anyone because if you want it, you can definitely get it there. I was sitting downstairs looking at TV one day and Father Sam came in and said, ‘Hey what’s going on?’ I said, ‘Nothing,’ and he said, ‘Well it should be because recovery is hard work.’ I got right up and went to meeting. And for my first 5 years that’s all I did—I went to meetings.

“You could not have told me in a million years that I would be the person that I am today. I love who I am . . . I am so good to me, but more importantly I am good to others. I have not forgotten the pain of active addiction; it is still just as fresh as it was yesterday.”



Chrystal feared she had acquired AIDS during her addiction. Hear her share her experience with getting tested and other stories from her life at www.marianhouse.org/stories.



“I don’t want to minimize the fact that I was a drug addict: I was a drug addict. I was so low that I would look up and the curb looked like a skyscraper—that’s how low I was.”

“Today, I can make clean choices, because I’m in my right state of mind... When you’re doing right, God’s just everywhere letting you shine.”



Elizabeth Smith

Start Date Marian House: October 8, 2007

End Date Marian House: October 2, 2008

“When I first got arrested, I knew I was sick and tired. Have you ever heard of God putting you in exile? That’s what he done to me. And I had my chance to tell God how I felt and what I wanted out of life, and he started shifting and shaping me . . . I’ve been hurt and abused, and I said, ‘Never again.’ I was incarcerated, and I said, ‘Never again’ . . .

“I had a parole hearing. I told the commissioner, ‘I’m not a bad person, I just have a problem and that’s my only problem. Other than that I’m not a bad person.’ I spoke to him, and I told him how I felt and what I needed. I explained, ‘I’ve never been in any type of program, and I would like some programs to help me get past all this.’ And he said, ‘I’m gonna put some things in motion for you.’

“Before I came to the Marian House, I never had a program in my life. When I came in the program, I was missing some stuff—missing me. Even though I used drugs and stuff like that for a long time, I had good in me that I had lost.

“Marian House helped me put it back in place.

They didn’t judge me, they just helped me. I really think it’s a wonderful program because they really helped me set some goals that really weren’t in place. Now it’s back in place. I got a chance to get back with some positive people to show me some stuff to stay positive, instead of being ashamed.

“Ain’t it something when someone can see more in you than you see in yourself? Marian House taught me how to love myself—and I learned how to love myself . . . I had to learn how to love myself, and it worked.”



Nicole Jarrett Photography, LLC

Elizabeth works as a Weekend and Overnight Supervisor at Marian House and also is in pursuit of her GED. She is shown here in the study room at Marian House.



Elizabeth both resisted and appreciated the structure offered by Marian House when she was a resident. Visit www.marianhouse.org/stories to hear her talk about her interactions with the staff, as well as her achieving an education.



Nicole Jarrett Photography, LLC

Audrey Fisher

There is a spot in Audrey's stairwell that she calls "Sister Mel Lane"—Sister Mel, a staff member at Marian House, gave her the artwork that hangs on the wall. Audrey says, "Sister Mel always saw more in me than I saw in myself. She really made an impact on my life."

Start Date Marian House: July 21, 2005
End Date Marian House: January 15, 2007

"At age 21 my life had just become so overwhelming to me. I just wanted to escape. I couldn't take it anymore. I can remember when I first tried heroin, it was like I had instantly fallen in love. It gave me this feeling of euphoria—that pretty much nothing even mattered because I had found a new best friend. From that point on it was downhill.

"My life was a wreck—just a total wreck. It was just daily drug use, and it was a life of despair. I felt like I lived in a black hole. My whole life was consumed with drugs. It was almost as though nothing else existed.

"It took a long time for me to actually go to jail. I think that was the turning point for me because, even though I was on drugs, jail was just utterly disgusting to me. That was my rock bottom. It took probably a few months after I had gotten out until I actually decided that I was going to go into treatment. The thing with me was I went into treatment a lot of different times, and then would go back home and do

the same thing all over again. This time I knew that I had to do something different. I went to a 28-day treatment center. While there, I went into my counselor's office and told her I didn't want to go home—I wanted to go to the Marian House.

"I was not the ideal client. I broke, I think, just about every rule that Marian House had ever created. I was always testing the waters, always trying to see what I could get away with. I was given an angel as a counselor . . . I can remember when I first met her I said to myself, 'She is going to be a pushover.' She was anything but a pushover. I truly believe if it wasn't for her, I would not have made it to this point. She saw through all the masks that I wore every day, and she would gradually tear the mask off for me.

"When I first got to Marian house, I was not a very nice person. I can say that I actually like me now. And I can also say that it's all due to the Marian House because they taught me how to live in a normal way."



Visit www.marianhouse.org/stories to hear Audrey talk about regaining a relationship with her daughter and grandchildren, learning to live a structured life, and her struggle with and ultimate appreciation for Marian House staff.



“Marian House provided me with everything that I needed to start a new life. All of the staff members were instrumental—It was almost like a chess game where everybody had their position.”

Donna Jackson



Nicole Jarrett Photography, LLC

Donna is a proud homeowner. She worked hard to earn her house through the Habitat for Humanity program. She comments, “This house was a shell when I moved in; you wouldn’t believe it from the way it is now.”



Donna recognized she needed to entirely re-make herself in the process of recovery. Visit www.marianhouse.org/stories to hear her talk about her journey from alcoholism to sober homeowner, professional, and family member, and the gratitude she feels for Marian House.

Start Date Marian House: August 5, 2002

End Date Marian House: May 29, 2004

“In high school, we used to drink. It was just something we did. I was still top in my class in high school. It started off recreationally. It went from that to going to college to the grain alcohol parties . . . It escalated when I got older. I got pregnant, and it was no fairy tale no more.

“Before I got to Marian House I was at a 28-day treatment program. I was there for alcohol abuse. I needed to be detoxed, and I needed to find a new way of life. I knew that after I left I still needed further treatment.

“You learn in treatment you have to change people, places, and things. I had been in treatment before but because I didn’t know about where else to go I wound up going back home. And soon after being home I was back to drinking again because of the environment I was in.

“You might do the 7-day detox, or 28 days, and then the supports are gone . . . You could go to a transitional house, but that requires you pay money—who has money coming straight out of treatment? Who has money when you

don’t have a GED? The problem is not having enough programs like Marian House.

“When I got to Marian House it was just like I thought it would be and better. I got to move into a small room, and after so many months you get the big room. And then after you do that, then you’re on your way to the next level to Marian House II.

“I liked that when I was at Marian House they worked on things. Things like dental work, eyeglasses they helped with, clothing . . . They helped you out with a bus pass. I had to be accountable for where I was going and what I was doing. We had responsibilities. We had to do the kitchen, clean the bathroom, you know . . . keeping Marian House looking nice.

“When I moved to Marian House II, I really started sprouting out. I went back to school. I was working. This was another stepping stone to moving to my own home. I am thankful that the Marian House was here.”



*“My biggest accomplishment
is forgiving myself and
giving myself a chance.”*

“Lawmakers, they waste a lot of our money on programs that are not working. So treat the person—treat the addict. I guarantee you that our city and our state will prosper.”



Linette Parrine-Waters

Start Date Marian House: March 2, 1998

End Date Marian House: April 1, 1999

“I started using drugs when I was 14. I didn’t like myself. I didn’t like who I was. That’s why I used...to cover the feelings that I had of myself. I knew if I got high, I didn’t have to feel.

“I was addicted to heroine and crack cocaine. I was homeless. My family had given up on me, and I just didn’t have the will to live anymore. I was prostituting, I was using drugs, I was stealing, I was doing whatever I had to do to get high. I was completely suicidal. When I got to that point, I realized I needed help. I didn’t want to live the way I was living anymore.

“I went into treatment. My treatment counselor told me about the Marian House. They hugged me, they loved me, they helped me build my life.

“Now I’m back in the workforce. I am still with the State of Maryland. I’ve been with the State of Maryland for 11 years, so I’ve been working consistently since I left Marian House.

“When I was out there smoking crack, you didn’t know I was a high school graduate with some college courses . . . that I was a dancer, a

singer. All you saw was the addict. When you see the addict, the first thing you want to do is lock them up. Then you put them in jail. They do their time, you throw them back out, they’re back on the drugs, they’re back sleeping under the bridges. That’s money wasted.

“I go to work, and those people don’t know that I smoked crack, they don’t know I’m 14 years clean. They don’t know that about me. So the same thing you see in me is in other people. If you treat them well, people will start feeling good about themselves.

“You can’t lock me up for 30 days and leave me to go find a job—What am I going to wear? I’m looking in the mirror, and all I’m seeing is that ugly, dirty, crackhead monster that you called me—So how am I going to sit in front of you for a job interview? I don’t have nothing to work with. The Marian House saw through all that. That’s what the lawmakers need to do.”



Nicole Jarrett Photography, LLC

Linette works for the Department of Juvenile Services. She believes she can have a positive impact with some of the teens she comes in contact with—helping them recognize their worth and that change is possible.



Linette worked hard on developing self-esteem and learning how to stand up for herself and live without drugs. Hear her talk about her achievements by visiting www.marianhouse.org/stories.



Incarceration

“Black and white people use illicit drugs at about the same rate, but blacks are more likely to be incarcerated for drug offenses. Treatment, not incarceration, is needed for those who are addicted to and convicted of possession of illicit drugs.”

Monique L. Dixon

Freedom by Nakeiya; detail of quilt created by Marian House residents.

Involvement with the criminal justice system affects many of the women whose stories are featured in this book; included in this section are six women's tales where incarceration looms large as part of their journey with addiction.

Their experiences conform to problems within today's criminal justice system: exploding recidivism and imprisonment rates; the need for more effective pathways to treatment; the obstacle a prison record presents to successful employment; and more.

Economic analysis has shown imprisonment does not make sense as a cost-effective means of addressing illicit drug dependence. According to a 2011 report, “every \$1 spent on treatment brings \$7 in benefits to society” and “prison only generates \$0.37 for each dollar spent.” The report concludes, “At a time when public expenditures are being given close scrutiny, there is a strong economic argument to be made for investing in substance abuse treatment rather than incarceration.”¹

Despite incarceration becoming a turning point for some of the women—a judge insisting Trina Selden enter a long-term residential program; Paris Turner coming into contact with RESTART (Re-entry Enforcement Services Targeting Addiction, Rehabilitation, and Treatment)—the criminal justice system is not currently effective in supporting successful re-entry to society: “67% of recently incarcerated women were not directed to re-entry services upon release” in Baltimore City in 2003, according to one report²; a separate report notes, “Substance abuse, vocational training, and educational programs are available to a small fraction of those being released.”³

Paris Turner's history of repeat offenses (“I boosted, I got caught, I did 30 days; I came home, boosted again, got caught . . . It just kept repeating itself . . .”) offers but one example of someone who may have benefitted from support services not only upon

release from jail, but also as part of her involvement within the criminal justice system. Observes one report: “Those who participated in substance abuse treatment programs while in prison were less likely to use drugs after release than those who did not participate.”⁴

In the stories to follow, the women sketch tales full of painful memories of incarceration: “I was terrified” (Chanta Whiting), “It’s hell” (Karen Floyd); frustration: “I kept applying for jobs, and nobody would hire me and it was because of my background . . . I started not wanting to put that answer on there that says, ‘Have you been convicted of a crime?’” (Paris Turner); and appreciation for the remarkable contrast Marian House offered: “When I first got here to Marian House, I felt an overwhelming sense of relief” (Karen Floyd). The women are angry: “How do you expect one to be productive if you are putting up all of these barriers? Stop building prisons and build rehabs or places for the youth to go!” (Trina Selden). They also are motivated to work for change, as we see with Trina Selden founding an organization that serves ex-offenders and advocates for policy reform.

That these and the other Marian House women were able to first overcome burdens presented by current policies and then translate their own negative experiences into positive contributions speaks volumes about their strengths. Living testimonies of success, their feelings and thoughts deserve to be heard. As stated in one recent report, “It is our hope that listening to the experiences of those prisoners . . . will point the way to policy innovations that are empirically grounded, pragmatic, and reflective of the realities of re-entry.”⁵

1. *Still Serving Time: Struggling with Homelessness, Incarceration & Re-Entry in Baltimore*, October 2011 report issued by Health Care for the Homeless, Inc., p.21

2. *Still Serving Time: Struggling with Homelessness, Incarceration & Re-Entry in Baltimore*, October 2011 report issued by Health Care for the Homeless, Inc., p.7

3. *Baltimore Prisoners Experiences Returning Home*, March 2004 report issued by Urban Institute, p.7

4. *Baltimore Prisoners Experiences Returning Home*, March 2004 report issued by Urban Institute, p.2

5. *Baltimore Prisoners Experiences Returning Home*, March 2004 report issued by Urban Institute, p.1

Monique L. Dixon, J.D., is the Deputy Director of Programs and the Director of the Criminal and Juvenile Justice Program of Open Society Institute-Baltimore. Ms. Dixon offers the following thoughts:

On addiction as a public health rather than criminal concern: “Society relies too heavily upon the criminal justice system to address drug addiction. As a result, people who are addicted to illicit drugs find themselves in prison cells instead of treatment programs. This country must change its approach to addressing illicit drug use. A public health approach views drug addiction as a chronic disease that requires treatment. Relapse is part of a chronic disease. But, the justice system often punishes people who relapse by returning them to prison.”

On what people should know about re-entry: “Individuals who are incarcerated for a drug offense often re-enter communities with two burdens, a criminal record and an untreated drug addiction, which block access to housing and employment opportunities. Many employers do not hire people with criminal records, even if the records are old and unrelated to relevant job responsibilities. Everyone deserves a second chance. There are re-entry organizations in Baltimore that provide treatment, job training and other services to people returning from prison. But, more programs are needed to serve the approximately 9,000 people who return to Baltimore from prison each year.”

*“When you do drugs, you
do things that’s not even in
your character.”*



Lesly Bailey-Johnson

Start Date Marian House: February 17, 2004

End Date Marian House: September 19, 2005

"I had been locked up for buying drugs. I stayed in jail for 2 weeks. It taught me a lesson, being locked up for 2 weeks.

"My mother told me I had a choice: I could either get myself together or I won't see my son again. So I came to Marian House. I was a hard pill to swallow . . . a hard egg to crack. But the staff stuck with me.

"Marian House showed me how to be who I am again—without drugs. Drugs hide that person you are; it makes you somebody else. The teaching, and the learning, and the transitioning at Marian House showed me patience. It taught me how to love myself so that I could love my son. The guidance at the Marian House brought me closer to my mom—My mom is a recovering addict also.

"My mom and my son still are a big part of my life.

"Once I got my own apartment, I was actually scared to move into it because I was so used to this comfort zone with the Marian House. I

overcame my fears by joining my church. I was really afraid of going back out. I was scared to death because I no longer had Marian House supervision over my head.

"The biggest challenge is not using again and basically just getting back into independent living, because you're so dependent on that substance to help you live. It's still a struggle. It really is. My biggest accomplishment is staying clean. I'm still standing . . .

"My life basically is centered around my church and what's going on with my church. I'm on five different ministries. I am an usher. I sing in the choir. I'm on the Courtesy Guild. I'm on New Members Committee, and I'm the Vice President of the Usher Board, and my son sings in the choir.

"Follow the rules, and you just can't imagine how far you could go. There's no better way of living than being sober and clean."



Nicole Jarrett Photography, LLC

Garden of Prayer Baptist Church, the church to which Lesly belongs. "I really didn't care for the Narcotics Anonymous meetings, so I joined the church."



Lesly tried to get into Marian House twice, lying the first time and not entering the program then. Visit www.marianhouse.org/stories to hear her talk about her life, including how finally telling the truth helped her the second time she went to Marian House.

Monica Scott



Nicole Jarrett Photography, LLC

Monica, enrolled in 2012 as a candidate for a Bachelors Degree from the University of Maryland, is pictured at a library studying. After leaving Marian House, she earned an Associates Degree in Human Services, Addiction Counseling.

Start Date Marian House: July 14, 1998

End Date Marian House: January 15, 1999

"I started using drugs when I was 14. I started with marijuana and alcohol. I used pills and then the hard stuff, heroin and cocaine. I used for about 20 to 24 years.

"I was incarcerated for 4 years, 6 months, and 20 days. Got clean by going cold turkey in prison . . . sweating it out and that kind of thing. If it is not a life or death situation, you don't get much medical treatment. You have to kick your habit cold turkey.

"Before coming out of prison, I was introduced to the opportunity to come to the Marian House. So I took that opportunity.

"It was just a blessing to be at Marian House. They showed me to my room, and I was amazed because it was only one person to a room. It was good to have your own room and have a little bit of privacy. It was really nice.

"A lot of the programs around the city basically just treat the disease and not the individual. Baltimore City substance abuse services focus too much on the bed space or the bed

slot, so to speak, trying to get people in and out. Services need to give them not just treatment, but recovery. It's one thing to be in treatment for 28 days, but it's another to be in recovery for a year. Nothing in your life can happen in 28 days. That's just scratching the surface. Only if you learn good emotional management over time can you survive your emotions and recover consistently.

"The person I was when I was using was nasty. I was a very unlikable person. When people saw me coming, they would go the opposite direction because I was just nasty and evil and mean; just mean-spirited. Today I am not that same person.

"Today I work in the Department of Social Services doing assessments for mothers and children who are addicted to drugs and their family members. Getting them adequate treatment. Making sure they too enjoy the process of recovery like I have.

"We are people first; and because we are people first, we need to be treated as people."



Visit www.marianhouse.org/stories to hear Monica talk about how recovery has helped her develop healthy relationships with family and friends, and hear her views on what works and what needs to be done at a societal level with treatment and recovery.



“I can get treatment, you can give me housing, but if I’m not trained or educated to do something, then I am going to revert back to doing what I used to do.”

*“How do you expect one to be
productive if you are putting
up all of these barriers?
Stop building prisons and
build rehabs or places for the
youth to go.”*



Trina Selden

Start Date Marian House: August 26, 2002

End Date Marian House: October 9, 2004

“I came to the Marian House because I didn’t have a choice—I had gotten two 12-year sentences. The judge stipulated I had to get into a long-term residential program before I could go for modification. Then I wrote Marian House.

“I bucked the whole time, like I didn’t need the Marian House. But I learned a lot about myself. If I would have kept doing things my way without the structure, I would have landed back in prison, possibly doing 24 years right now. Marian House cared about me more than I cared for myself. They held my hand until I was able to do things on my own.

“Now I am the Executive Director of a program called Out for Justice. It is led by a group of ex-offenders who are trying to change unjust laws and policies that hinder successful re-entry. I am working for people who don’t have a voice of their own.

“I remember how I felt because I had to kick my addiction on a floor in Central Booking. As cold and depressing as that was, I think back

about that... I was kind of relieved when the police locked me up.

“I remember my mom used to get high. She was using, and I think my oldest brother was using, and they were always together. My using was probably because I was looking for the relationship she had with my brother that I didn’t have with her. Using was probably a way to get that.

“After prison, I wanted to work with kids. I couldn’t because of my felonies. It was all drug charges, and they told me that I couldn’t. That was one of the reasons I wanted to be involved with Out for Justice. On job interviews, they say it won’t matter if you check that box saying you were incarcerated, but it does. So that’s where the advocacy part came in with Out for Justice.

“There are no bad people—People just make bad choices. Everyone deserves a second chance. A lot of the people that sit around the table in Annapolis probably did the same things but just didn’t get caught. Marian House knows we are good people, but it is convincing those other folks.”



Nicole Jarrett Photography, LLC

Trina, a proud mother and grandmother, works hard to help her family and others. She is pictured here (from left to right) with Khaniyah (age 5), Kay Shawn (age 4), Jordyn (age 2), and Khimanni (age 16).



Visit www.marianhouse.org/stories to hear Trina talk about difficulty finding work with a criminal record, her relationship with her family, working for Out for Justice, and more.

“I think that the people in the government . . . should take from stories like mine that people like me don’t want to be where we are in the streets using drugs.”



Paris Turner

Start Date Marian House: September 20, 2007

End Date Marian House: July 28, 2008

“My mom passed away when I was 19. She passed away of cancer. I was going through this emotional trauma, and that’s when I started using. I needed something to take me away.

“Before I came to Marian House I was coming from incarceration. Prison was a vicious roller coaster... I boosted, I got caught, I did 30 days; I came home, boosted again, got caught... It just kept repeating itself.

“I had a lot of aspirations. I wanted to reunite with my children, I wanted to get a job, I wanted a house. I had these great dreams and goals... I never not thought about them, even when I was using.

“The last time I got incarcerated, I found the program called the RESTART program, and I did all the things that they asked me to do. I had to do so many things before I could get released; but they did give me a release date, and so that’s when I wrote to the Marian House program. I took myself straight through the door, and it was the best transition that I ever made in my life.

“I actually got to be structured without being in an incarcerated setting. I learned how to cook, I learned how to speak out, I learned how to take criticism, I learned how to be on time, and I learned responsibility with my finances. I learned so many things on how to live life.

“I kept applying for jobs, and nobody would hire me and it was because of my background. I started not wanting to put that answer on there that says, ‘Have you been convicted of a crime?’ I knew that I was qualified for these jobs that I was applying for.

“I finally got a job. We would clean the dorms while the kids were going on summer vacation. It was the worst job I’ve ever had in my entire life. My fingers were bleeding from scrubbing and scraping, my nails were breaking, and I cried every day.

“I put forth my best effort. So now I have the house, I have a car, I have a job, I have my family, and I am a complete person. For 24 years, I used and was incarcerated and didn’t know how to live. Being clean and sober to me is everything.”



Nicole Jarrett Photography, LLC

Paris with her friend Audrey Fisher, who was also a resident at Marian House—Women supporting women is a powerful component of the Marian House experience. “We all keep in contact from the Marian House,” Paris says.



Paris has reunited with her family since living at Marian House. Visit www.marianhouse.org/stories to hear her talk about her struggle to locate her lost children, and her decision to take responsibility for her choices in life, both positive and negative.

Karen Floyd



Nicole Jarrett Photography, LLC

At the time this photograph was taken, Karen was working on a degree in Business Administration, expecting to receive her diploma in May of 2012. Accomplishments since graduating from Marian House include serving as a member of the organization's Board of Directors.



Visit www.marianhouse.org/stories to hear Karen talk about her experience of the criminal justice system, her feelings about its flaws, and how Marian House gave her the knowledge to cope with people and places that otherwise might threaten her recovery.

Start Date Marian House: May 1, 2003

End Date Marian House: October 4, 2004

“When I first got here to Marian House, I felt an overwhelming sense of relief. I could not believe how beautiful Marian House was, how clean it was, and how warm and receptive the people were. After being incarcerated for 8 months, you are not used to privacy; so having my own room, I remember crying every day for almost a week.

“When you go to jail, at first it’s hell because when you go in you’re dealing with withdrawal and there is no medication; you just have to rough it. After about a week or two, you know you’re not going home; you resign yourself that you’re going to be here, and you make the best out of the situation . . . Not a place I would like to go back to or see family or friends in.

“Alcoholism runs in my family, so I probably knew about drinking from a wee baby on up. I experimented with marijuana and it just progressed. I started trying cocaine and then ultimately heroin and crack.

“I have been in 13 recovery programs; some, multiple times, over and over again. It’s hard

to believe in yourself when you have failed that many times, but when you come through the door at Marian House, the staff are not concerned about that—they truly believe that everyone who enters the door can make it. The main ingredient at Marian House is love.

“My relationships with family and friends have changed since I’ve been in recovery. My family is proud of me, friends acknowledge my accomplishments—even my church family. They’ve seen me up and down and in and out, and they just rejoice when they see me.

“We don’t have nearly enough programs like Marian House. Programs that work need to be supported—they need to get funding, so they can expand and meet the needs of the people.

“The criminal justice system is a system that is broken. The rate of recidivism is high because people have nowhere else to go. A lot of people keep coming back because there is no place to go except back to that environment where you used or where you sold. There are so many people out there that are in need, and the recovery places that are available just cannot accommodate all.”



“Nine years of sobriety is quite an accomplishment for someone who was in addiction for over 20 to 30 years.”

“I didn’t have to accept that I am never going to be anything—Knowing that I had the power to change my life and that there was a better way made me feel good.”



Chanta Whiting

Start Date Marian House: October 4, 1999

End Date Marian House: May 24, 2000

“I came from a family where drugs and alcohol were always around. I used with my mother for 14 years. My grandmother used to always tell me, ‘You’re just like your mother.’

“My experience with being in the penal system was I got arrested for narcotics. I was 18 years old, and that was my first experience. The second time, I went to Jessup. I was terrified because you’re always told stories about the women . . . being locked in a cell and not being able to get up and leave when you want to, not being able to bathe when you want to. Comes a point when you’re there that you start talking to yourself—or, well, I did. Just trying to keep my sanity because I was seeing people hang themselves, and I just didn’t want to be that weak.

“I got released on October 1, 1999, and I moved into the Marian House on October 4, 1999. From that day, my life has taken on something that I would never have believed could have happened.

“At first, I kind of rebelled against the pro-

gram, coming straight from jail. It took me a while to get used to the constructive criticism and all that type of stuff—the curfews, preparing meals, and being around a whole bunch of women outside of prison: that took a lot of getting used to.

“With the one-on-one counseling I got to get a lot of things out. I had a lot of pain, a lot of anger inside of me, and my counselor helped me; not to get over it, but to be able to deal with it just a little bit better each day.

“No one at Marian House gave up on me, and I was rebelling a lot. I was very grateful for the opportunities that they afforded me. I was able to go back to school and work on my GED; I got computer skills. They brought a lot of structure into my life.

“I learned that I have very big heart, that I care. I learned that I wasn’t a bad person like my grandmother always told me I was.”



Nicole Jarrett Photography, LLC

Chanta in her home: “It feels wonderful to be a homeowner because I don’t have to abide by anybody’s rules but mine.”



Chanta began living on the streets at age 13. Visit www.marianhouse.org/stories to hear her talk about when she came to Marian House; how she learned to set and accomplish goals; and the events leading to her incarceration and subsequent decision to recreate herself and her life.



Homelessness

“Research and experience over the past 20 years has shown that there is a cost-effective solution to chronic homelessness known as permanent supportive housing.”

National Alliance to End Homelessness

Hope by Robin; detail of quilt created by Marian House residents.

The problem of homelessness is widespread. “An estimated 1.6 million people access homeless shelter services” each year nationally, and “there are approximately 124,000 chronically homeless individuals in the United States,” according to a March 2010 brief released by the National Alliance to End Homelessness.¹ In Baltimore alone, “more than 4,000 people experience homelessness on any given night.”²

Though many experience homelessness for only a brief time, “chronically homeless people have disabilities such as serious mental illness, chronic substance use disorders, or chronic medical issues and are homeless repeatedly or for long periods of time.”³ Solutions must couple “housing with supportive services that target the specific needs of an individual or family.”⁴

As the six tales in this section illustrate, Marian House effectively provides such services. The women’s experiences shed light on the spiritual, physical, and psychological costs associated with homelessness, and the impact Marian House’s supportive transitional and permanent housing has had in helping the women turn their lives around.

At the most basic level, homelessness is dehumanizing: “I had to display this hard person that didn’t want to care” (Kendra Gatling); “I had no zest for life at all; I didn’t care if I lived or died” (Helena Weathers); “I just felt like nobody cared about me” (Deneen Houze). Additionally, homelessness compounds other problems, including the risk of incarceration. According to one report, “The connection between homelessness and incarceration is bidirectional: incarceration can lead to homelessness, and homelessness often results in incarceration.”⁵

Homelessness is a corollary to a life in chaos: “I was a junkie living on the streets; I had nowhere to go” (Cynthia Kopec); “I was addicted to drugs and alcohol, homeless, mentally unstable, and just

going through a lot of mental difficulties” (Helena Weathers); “I was incarcerated and I was homeless” (Rowena Gore-Simmons). As such, housing needs to be addressed as fully as every other condition facing the women who come to Marian House.

Studies show programs offering supportive housing that “include health care, substance abuse treatment, mental health treatment, employment counseling, connections with mainstream benefits like Medicaid”⁶ and other such services have a significant positive impact not just on the afflicted individuals but on society as a whole: “A study of homeless people in New York City with serious mental illness found that providing permanent supportive housing to the individuals directly resulted in a 60% decrease in emergency shelter use for clients . . . Research on the overall costs to the taxpayer of permanent supportive housing has consistently found the costs to the taxpayers to be about the same or lower than having a chronically homeless individual sleep in an emergency shelter.”⁷

For individuals who receive services such as those offered by Marian House, the results are transformative: “Me coming to Marian House was an intervention from God” (Rowena Gore-Simmons); “Marian House broke into that hard shell and got to the core of what was wrong” (Kendra Gatling). For Cynthia Kopec, being at Marian House after living on the streets had a profound psychological impact: “The day I got to Marian House and saw the facility and met everybody, I saw my own room . . . I knew I was safe, I knew I could get the help that I needed.”

It is little wonder the women who benefitted from the opportunity to restore their lives through Marian House express exasperation at the state of current inadequate resources. “You hear the politicians say they want the drug addicts and the homeless to get help, but the help is so hard to find”

Kate Briddell is Director of the Homeless Services Program at the Mayor’s Office of Human Services in Baltimore City. Ms. Briddell offers the following thoughts:

On the relationship between housing and addiction recovery: “It’s hard to get and stay clean when you don’t have a home. When the Housing First pilot program was launched in Baltimore City, a man who’d lived on the streets for over a decade, and who had been a heroin addict, detoxed himself almost immediately after moving into his apartment. He said he didn’t need to self-medicate anymore. This is a remarkable example of the hope that having housing can bring to someone.”

On what people should know about those with addiction and housing: “Relapse happens. Programs that don’t allow for the possibility of a ‘slip’ do their clients a disservice. People in recovery often have a hard time distinguishing between ‘making a mistake’ and ‘being a mistake.’ Losing your housing because you made a mistake feeds into the ‘being a mistake’ concept.”

On what can be done to alleviate chronic homelessness: “Treatment-on-demand is imperative—whenever anyone is ready to access drug treatment, they should have the ability to do so. More in-patient beds are necessary, especially for those who are homeless . . . And if we want people to live in safe, decent, and sanitary conditions, we have to work to create housing units that are affordable. Currently, the Housing Wage [how much one has to earn in order for housing to be 30% of one’s expenses] for a studio apartment in the Baltimore area is \$17.44/hour.”

(Cynthia Kopec); “As many vacant houses as they have in Baltimore City, if they could just rebuild some of those houses and open up some more homeless shelters for people like us” (Willette Fair).

Willette Fair observes of her own journey, “I came from living in somebody’s basement on a sofa up to having my own apartment unit; sleeping in my own bed, having my own kitchen and bathroom.” Solutions exist, leaving one wondering why they are not more aggressively pursued.

1. *Chronic Homelessness: Policy Solutions*, March 2012 report issued by National Alliance to End Homelessness, p.1

2. *Still Serving Time: Struggling with Homelessness, Incarceration & Re-Entry in Baltimore*, October 2011 report issued by Health Care for the Homeless, Inc., p.3

3. *Chronic Homelessness: Policy Solutions*, March 2012 report issued by National Alliance to End Homelessness, p.1

4. *Chronic Homelessness: Policy Solutions*, March 2012 report issued by National Alliance to End Homelessness, p.2

5. *Still Serving Time: Struggling with Homelessness, Incarceration & Re-Entry in Baltimore*, October 2011 report issued by Health Care for the Homeless, Inc., p.3

6. *Chronic Homelessness: Policy Solutions*, March 2012 report issued by National Alliance to End Homelessness, p.2

7. *Chronic Homelessness: Policy Solutions*, March 2012 report issued by National Alliance to End Homelessness, p.2

“I see a homeless person on the street I’m like: ‘I don’t get it! I don’t get it! There’s somewhere you can go.’”



Willette Fair

Start Date Marian House: July 20, 2006

End Date Marian House: May 15, 2007

"I was in active addiction, and through my addiction I was in prison. I was in prison for 3 years. It was not good. Prison is not a happy place to be.

"I was paroled here to the Marian House. I heard about the program from different friends who had gotten clean in the past—they kept saying 'Once you go to the Marian House they can help you live a better life.' Had it not been for prison and for Marian House accepting me into the program I wouldn't be able to live the life that I am living today.

"I began to open up. I came in a little closed-minded, which is something that prison does to you. My lost dreams were awakened... I was able to achieve some of my goals. Through the counseling sessions, I learned about who I was and what the disease had done to me.

"I suffered from a lot of abandonment issues, low self-esteem, trying to fit in with other people. I think that's where I started. That led me into 20 years of active addiction. It took over 20 years of my life away from me.

"Marian House helped me get my values and my morals back. That was blown out the window once I started using drugs. When I came here, they awakened that stuff in me again, and I stand firmly on those values today.

"I left Marian House with a job dealing with recovering addicts. I was to monitor people who were in recovery or just were trying to get clean and change their lives. And that's pretty much what I do today.

"I came from living in somebody's basement on a sofa up to having my own apartment unit; sleeping in my own bed, having my own kitchen and bathroom.

"As many vacant houses as they have in Baltimore City, if they could just rebuild some of those houses and open up some more homeless shelters for people like us... some of us who have no hope. If they would just extend themselves for people who sleep on the streets."



Nicole Jarrett Photography, LLC

Willette with her grandchildren at Druid Hill Park in Baltimore: "I wasn't able to be there as a mother for my son... that's what grandchildren are—they're your second chance."



Visit www.marianhouse.org/stories to hear Willette talk about her transformation and how much she loves her life today, despite struggles finding a job with a criminal record.

*“I kept saying to myself,
‘There’s something wrong with
these people; they keep telling
me I look pretty, they keep
hugging me . . . they must not
know what’s going on. They
must not know that I am a
drug abuser—a crack head.’”*



Deneen Houze

Start Date Marian House: December 3, 2001

End Date Marian House: May 28, 2004

“I never had a relationship with my mother because she was a dope fiend. I was somewhat ashamed of her but at the time I took care of her when she was dying of cancer, I grew to know her as a person—as my mother—and I grew to love her as she died.

“I became angry with God; I felt like He took my mother away at a time when I just got to know her, and that’s what started me doing drugs. Before that, I was living a good life—I was raised in the Church. I knew the good life prior to me doing drugs. I just decided that I didn’t want to live like that anymore.

“The moment that I think my addiction really hit me was when I became homeless. I was in the streets all the time. I was prostituting; in and out of cars with strangers, people I didn’t know. That was the bottom. And I knew that just wasn’t me and that I really wanted to change my life.

“When I came to Marian House, I was so broken. I just felt like nobody cared about me.

Nobody loved me—I didn’t love myself. When I arrived, I just felt so much love from all the staff and the women. They loved me so much—they loved me until I could love myself.

“With people loving me, I learned I love me, and then I could also love someone else . . . I didn’t know how to do that prior to Marian House.

“I became a staff member at Marian House for a while. It was so good because I was able to see the women coming in . . . I was able to tell them my story.

“There is a young lady at Marian House now who was using with me. We used drugs a lot of years together, and she’s here now. I told her I am so happy that she’s here, and she just hugged me and she got a little teary-eyed. I said, ‘Girl, I am here for you—I am here to help you.’ I let her know I was proud of her because that’s what people did for me.”



Marshall Clarke

Deneen photographed in Marian House’s front courtyard. As with many alumnae, she feels at home whenever she returns. Deneen currently works as a hair stylist and lives in her own home she acquired through Habitat for Humanity.



Deneen knows she has hurt her family over the years, and is doing the best she can to heal wounds. Visit www.marianhouse.org/stories to hear her talk about her relationship with her family, and more about her transformation from homeless drug addict to successful community member.

Helena Weathers



Nicole Jarrett Photography, LLC

Helena is pictured here with some of her children and her husband during a regular get together at her home. “I have five wonderful children,” she says. “We have a great relationship.”

Start Date Marian House: May 24, 2000

End Date Marian House: May 3, 2004

“I was addicted to drugs and alcohol, homeless, mentally unstable, and just going through a lot of mental difficulties.

“I went to a shelter and from there they referred me to the Marian House. I was tired; I was tired of living the way that I was living.

“When I came to Marian House, I was an awful, awful person. I had no rules, I had no respect for authority at all. I just had no zest for life at all; I didn’t care whether I lived or died. I fought because I was torn between living the life that I had been comfortable with and getting straight. I fought real hard. I just wanted to do things my way. It was like I had never had a positive role model in my life, someone to tell me this is not acceptable, that is not acceptable. I’d never felt love from anyone, so I didn’t know how to accept the love that they were offering me.

“I was successful in the program. I think it’s everything that they did right. They were patient, kind, loving, very supportive. I saw that they were not going to give up on me, and

I began to respect what they were doing, what they stood for, and what they believed in.

“When I left Marian House to move into my own place, it was a challenge. These people had become my family and my support system. I did not think I would make it out there without them, but they had faith in me and said ‘You can do this’; so I got my own place with my children, and I just focused on my sobriety.

“When I became sober, I realized that I wanted to help people like me. I worked with the homeless and mentally ill. I do a lot of advocacy work for the homeless. It’s a lot to do. We’re making strides, but every day we get more homeless people. It feels so good every day doing the things that I am doing to help get people back into society.”



Coming from a difficult family situation, Helena had trouble accepting love and support from Marian House staff, and difficulty giving herself a chance. Visit www.marianhouse.org/stories to hear more.



“Happiness eluded me all my life until I got to the Marian House. I just want to give back to those who have helped me along the way.”

“It felt really good the first time I realized that I was looking someone in the eye—that I wasn’t staring down at the ground.”



Cynthia Kopec

Start Date Marian House: November 8, 2006

End Date Marian House: October 16, 2007

"I was homeless, jobless, penniless, and hopeless. I had been using drugs for about 28 years. At the end, I was a junkie living on the streets; I had nowhere to go. I wanted to get my life together, and I wanted my family back in my life. I wasn't raised to be a junkie. I came from a very good family.

"The day I got to Marian House and saw the facility and met everybody, I saw my own room. When I came here, it was like a tremendous weight was lifted off my shoulder. I knew I was safe, I knew I could get the help that I needed.

"I came with nothing, I came with maybe 3 days worth of clothes, and they gave me clothes and they gave me all the personal items that I needed. I got back a sense of self.

"I had to get used to not being out running the streets every day... to a routine again—getting up in the morning and eating breakfast and getting dressed and going to classes and following rules.

"The staff and the women just made it so easy. The respect that I felt from everyone here.

The safe atmosphere and the camaraderie. The closeness with the staff. I went to classes, I went to counseling... I really focused on the counseling a lot, to deal with the feelings that I have been trying to numb for so many years.

"I just started to feel more confident in my recovery, more confident in myself. I got back my family, my self-respect, my dignity, my pride. Just recently, I moved into my own apartment (without roommates) for the first time in 11 years. It's so exciting. The whole process of saving the money, of looking for places. I have my routine: I get up in the morning; I shower, eat, and dress; then I go to work. I come home and I'll make dinner, I'll make some phone calls. And it's normal.

"You hear the politicians say they want the drug addicts and the homeless to get help, but the help is so hard to find. I don't know many junkies that have health insurance. I say, put more emphasis on education and rehabilitation instead of trying to fight a war you can't win. As long as there are drugs, there will be drug addicts."



Dean Ray

One of the first sights Cynthia and each woman who comes to Marian House see upon arriving are the caryatid statues standing in the front courtyard. Notes Cynthia, "Coming to the Marian House was one of the happiest days of my life."



Cynthia has many cherished memories of Marian House: the warmth of the people; the celebration of holidays. Visit www.maranhouse.org/stories to hear her talk about her Marian House days, and how the program helped her learn from her failed recovery attempts from her past.

*“Penniless, jobless, hopeless,
and homeless. God, please
rescue me.”*



Kendra Gatling

Start Date Marian House: April 24, 2000

End Date Marian House: January 2, 2001

“When I got to the Marian House I was a mess. I had no direction. I had no structure. I had no idea of who I was. I didn’t know how to have relationships with people. I was just a wreck.

“I had been neglected at a young age. My mother was caught up in the grips of addiction. I didn’t want to admit that I needed some guidance and some structure in my life. Instead, I needed the drugs. But eventually I realized I did need some guidance.

“My core was really a child crying out. I just wanted to be loved, and nurtured, and cared about, but from my outer shell I had to display this hard person that didn’t want to care.

“Marian House pretty much took my hand. I learned how to cook . . . I began to be responsible. They taught me how to take care of myself. We had house meetings we were required to attend, and it was mandatory that we went to school if we did not have our GED. They made sure I went to Narcotics Anonymous meetings.

“We had classes to learn how to dress for interviews, how to communicate during an interview, and how to write a resume. I thought that

once you were caught up in the structure you would not have time for life, but building that structure was just a beautiful thing. It became my life; it became my world.

“I had violent tendencies; I had a really bad attitude problem. I found that the females that I was being argumentative with were the same ones that were there for me when I needed them. They pretty much carried me with no resentments, and it taught me how to not have resentments. It taught me how to appreciate and build relationships.

“I remember a couple occasions where I just cried out because I finally realized that I was powerless, not just over my addiction but over people, places, and things; and because I wanted to control everything and everybody. I remember when I realized that I was powerless—I just dropped down and started crying. It was a beautiful feeling to let all of that off my shoulders and off my chest.”



Nicole Jarrett Photography, LLC

Kendra spent time in this abandoned house with no air conditioning or heat before entering Marian House. She now has two children, a husband, and owns her own home and two cars. “I’ve come a long way since the days of living in this place.”



Kendra’s story of transformation is dramatic. Visit www.marianhouse.org/stories to hear her tell her story of relationships with the staff and women of Marian House, her growing into a caring person, and more.

Rowena Gore-Simmons



Marshall Clarke

"I am much calmer now than when I walked into Marian House . . . I don't try to put too much on my plate."

Start Date Marian House: March 3, 2003

End Date Marian House: April 23, 2004

"I was incarcerated and I was homeless; and I had four kids. Two of my kids were in foster care, and the other two were in kinship care.

"The worst experience of my life was being incarcerated and losing my kids. It was just a bad experience. It made me feel worthless, useless; and it made me feel like I had messed up everything, messed up my whole life due to my drug addiction.

"After I was incarcerated, I came back to Baltimore and went into the shelter, and I got to Marian House through the shelter. Me coming to the Marian House was an intervention from God.

"It was very structured, which was very good for me. It was bumpy being there, but I did my best to try to follow the rules and to participate. My goal was to get my GED while I was there—which I did—and to be able to get my kids, have a job, and start my life with my kids and my husband.

"Marian House is a great time for you to be able to step back and take a look at your whole

life from the beginning to see what happened that put you in this position where you are. If you just take the time to focus on yourself, and heal, you can mend some wounds. Being at Marian House is a time for healing.

"Marian House guided me to where I am today. I have my family; I opened up a nonprofit organization for women that helps with transitioning women from homelessness to self-sufficiency. It's not Marian House: no way; but it's what I would call a derivative from Marian House.

"There are a lot of homeless people and there are so many boarded-up houses. Policymakers really need to start looking at some of the models of housing that have been successful and start housing these people; stop sopping up resources and monies just so the homeless can be in and out the door. If you can't stop someone from using drugs but yet they are housed and taking care of themselves, then what's the harm? The harm is not giving them housing."



One of the challenges Rowena lives with is being HIV positive. Visit www.marianhouse.org/stories to hear her talk about coming to grips with this reality, how she creates and lives by her own definitions of success, and more.



*“There should be small
Marian Houses all over the
world.”*



Mental Illness

“One in five people experience mental illness. There is significant work to be done to maximize the availability of mental health resources and services to meet the need in our communities.”

Jane Plapinger

Truth by Nakeiya; detail of quilt created by Marian House residents.

“Mental illnesses can lead to drug abuse.” This straightforward assertion from *Comorbidity: Addiction and Other Mental Illnesses*, a report issued by the National Institutes of Health’s National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)¹, underplays the complexity of recognizing and effectively treating mental health disorders and diseases, including addiction.

In just about every instance, the Marian House alumnae whose stories follow in this section spent years suffering from mental illness that was either undiagnosed or untreated: Mary Bonds suffering “from major depression” following a childhood trauma; Terona Hopkins being “really, really depressed” and it leading her “down the wrong path of life”; Terri Randolph-Spence, who was “diagnosed bipolar” at an early age but who came from a family “that pushed everything under the carpet”—the examples go on and on.

The consequences of failing to attend to mental illness are consistently devastating: “I didn’t know I could get help with, like, depression, so I was turning to different things to fill the void... I knew it was a matter of time before I was headed to the morgue...” (Sharon Cannon); “I was just plain lost... I would use coke to numb my feelings...” (Nalisha Gibbs). In these and other instances, the women’s turning to drugs only added to their problems, as addiction itself became a primary disease with which they needed to cope, and which in turn exacerbated or activated other mental health disorders.

The savage relationship between drug abuse and other mental health complications is well documented. According to the NIDA report, “Many people who regularly abuse drugs are also diagnosed with mental disorders and vice versa.”² The report goes on to note, “Certain mental disorders are established risk factors for subsequent drug abuse—and vice versa.”³ It is little wonder the Marian House alumnae experi-

ence their falls as downward spirals, with one bad situation engendering another: “I just thought, ‘I’m gonna get drunk and feel good for a short time.’ But later on you feel just as bad as you did before you drank” (Mary Bonds).

Effective treatment begins with recognizing that the disease of addiction is itself a form of mental illness, and one that co-occurs with other mental health conditions. Physiologically, drug-induced changes in brain structure and function “occur in some of the same brain areas that are disrupted in other mental disorders, such as depression, anxiety, or schizophrenia.”⁴ Little wonder it can be “difficult to disentangle the overlapping symptoms of drug addiction and other mental illnesses.”⁵

NIDA’s assertion that “correct diagnosis is critical to ensuring appropriate and effective treatment”⁶ is well supported by the experiences the women had with Marian House: “I’m so glad I came here to the Marian House . . . They give you the psychological help that you need . . . I do have bipolar disorder, I do have PTSD . . . that counseling here and that extra boost that I needed, it really helped . . .” (Nalisha Gibbs); “They hooked me up with a therapist and a psychiatrist so I could get my medications and receive my therapy treatment . . .” (Terri Randolph-Spence); “They knew I was depressed, and they tried to help me every way possible . . .” (Mary Bonds). Each woman’s complex collection of issues was recognized for what it was, and as a consequence they each found understanding, effective support, and ultimately control over their own lives.

Remaining alert to the likelihood of comorbidity (the concurrent presence of more than one mental disease or disorder) is critical to successful treatment. “Failure to treat a comorbid disorder can jeopardize a patient’s chance of recovery,”⁷ notes the NIDA report, and anecdotes in this section—from

Jane Plapinger is President & CEO of Baltimore Mental Health Systems, a non-profit agency established by Baltimore City to perform the governmental function of managing the City’s Public Mental Health System. Ms. Plapinger offers the following thoughts:

On the potential of those with mental illness and substance abuse problems: “People with mental illness want to be participating members of their communities as family members, employees, neighbors and friends. Many people experiencing mental illness have experienced positive transformation and there are many others who are eager to realize their own vision for recovery.”

On the importance of effective services being widely available: “The community mental health system has made great advances in treatment technology and best practices that have been demonstrated to be effective in supporting individuals with mental illness in their recovery. While a variety of these effective interventions are available, they are not yet available in sufficient quantity to ensure that all members of our communities in need of these approaches have access to them.”

On what the general public needs to understand: “People often misperceive that a given label or mental health condition defines someone’s entire life or their potential. The truth is there is hope that individuals who experience mental illness or substance use issues have the potential to realize their personal vision for their lives.”

Nalisha Gibbs’ plea to “those running the city to be more sympathetic with people who have substance abuse problems” to Mary Bonds’ insistence on listening “to people that are supportive . . . somebody that has your back like the staff at Marian House . . .”—underscore just how important it is to comprehend the nuances of mental illness, and not vilify those who suffer from it.

1. *Comorbidity: Addiction and Other Mental Illnesses*, a September 2010 report issued by the National Institutes of Health’s National Institute on Drug Abuse, p.3
2. *Comorbidity: Addiction and Other Mental Illnesses*, a September 2010 report issued by the National Institutes of Health’s National Institute on Drug Abuse, p.2
3. *Comorbidity: Addiction and Other Mental Illnesses*, a September 2010 report issued by the National Institutes of Health’s National Institute on Drug Abuse, p.1

4. *Comorbidity: Addiction and Other Mental Illnesses*, a September 2010 report issued by the National Institutes of Health’s National Institute on Drug Abuse, p.1
5. *Comorbidity: Addiction and Other Mental Illnesses*, a September 2010 report issued by the National Institutes of Health’s National Institute on Drug Abuse, p.1
6. *Comorbidity: Addiction and Other Mental Illnesses*, a September 2010 report issued by the National Institutes of Health’s National Institute on Drug Abuse, p.1
7. *Comorbidity: Addiction and Other Mental Illnesses*, a September 2010 report issued by the National Institutes of Health’s National Institute on Drug Abuse, p.1

Terri Randolph-Spence



Bill Bailey

Terri and her husband on their wedding day. She is now studying to be a chemical dependency counselor. She comments, "Stress is always gonna be here, and I do everything I can to avoid it."

Start Date Marian House: January 30, 2008
End Date Marian House: September 19, 2009

"My life was a complete train wreck. I started using around the age of 16, just with marijuana and drinking, and eventually progressed around the age of 21 to where I was using cocaine. Later down the road I started using heroin and crack cocaine.

"When I was younger I was diagnosed bipolar. I had tried to commit suicide several times. I came from a family that pushed everything under the carpet. Nobody really wanted to say that they had a child that had problems with addiction and problems with mental illness. When I got older, I knew I had these problems, and I did my best to address them.

"Unfortunately, it really got worse after my mom died. I lost my job and started getting into trouble, going in and out of prison. It gave me the opportunity to think about what I wanted to do, and that's when I signed up for Marian House.

"I was so scared because I didn't know what to expect. But once I got there everyone was welcoming to me. It really made me feel good.

I never had relationships with women. That was something that was hard for me to handle because of my past. I was able to talk about situations that happened in my childhood like the sexual abuse and the mental abuse.

"Marian House helped me work through that. They also helped me with looking for a job. They sent me to a place to redo my administrative skills. They also hooked me up with a therapist and a psychiatrist so I could get my medications and receive my therapy treatment.

"I'm now married and I have a year clean. My husband's family is very supportive of me. My husband is absolutely wonderful. I still use some of the tools Marian House gave me. I do things to nurture myself. Right now I have a really great life. I'm getting ready to go to school for my Associates Degree in Applied Science. I bake and I sell cakes... I go and I walk a mile or two every morning... I'm just really happy.

"I used to be uncomfortable with being with myself. I'm comfortable in my own skin, and that used to be an unpleasant place for me."



Terri experienced and recovered from a relapse after graduating from Marian House; visit www.marianhouse.org/stories to hear her talk about her experience finding her way back to being clean, as well as her relationship with her family, including grieving her mother's death, and more.



“If you have a mental illness, you need to take those medications and stay on them, and go see your doctor and your therapist. Otherwise, you’re going to seek out other things to make you feel better.”

*“It was dark, it was scary,
and it was just exhausting. It
was so devastating when you
lose that self-control. It’s
like you want control, but
you can’t get control of your
life.”*



Sharon Cannon

Start Date Marian House: October 1, 2003

End Date Marian House: December 29, 2006

“My life was a life of struggles, addictions, losses, grief and abuse, abandonment. I lost my mother at the early age of 15. I went into a deep depression from losing my mom, and it caused me to not want to have my life.

“I had my daughter and my son at the age of 17. I thought a baby would fill up the void of love, but it didn’t. That’s when I felt my life started to go downhill. I felt like a failure, and I felt like I wasn’t worthy of nothing, but that was the way my mind was because I didn’t have the psychological help.

“It’s just a hopeless state of mind . . . I was caring of others but not for myself. I felt like everything around me was just falling apart. I couldn’t find the actual face of who I was.

“When I began to use drugs it was recreational. But it became a monster, a beast. It took everything I had. I didn’t know I could get help with, like, depression, so I was turning to different things to fill that void. I knew it was a matter of time before I was headed to the morgue.

“One day, I walked to my church . . . It’s like

something was carrying me. I fell on my knees and started crying out to God and crying uncontrollable tears. And I now know that was repentance.

“I was in treatment for, like, 32 days. And then I was ready to move on to Marian House. I got educated. I learned about the disease of addiction. I learned about the meetings. And then the counselor got me to write a letter to my mother, and there was a lot of healing.

“I worked. I went to school. I did everything I needed to do. I couldn’t believe that I was actually moving from dependency to being independent.

“I knew I was getting better, but I didn’t realize all the impact that Marian House played in my life until I actually left out the door. They brought back my values that had been there as a young child when my mother was here. They rebuilt them and helped me regain them. They lifted me from the gutter to the reality of the full map of what life is really about.”



Nicole Jarrett Photography, LLC

Sharon is pictured at her home with her husband, Mark, after church on a Sunday. They are very active in their church community.



Visit www.marianhouse.org/stories to hear Sharon recall when she realized she “was ready” and gave herself over to inpatient drug treatment, prior to coming to Marian House.

*“I’d say, listen to people that
are supportive . . . somebody
that has your back like
the staff at Marian
House . . . There are people
out there that will help...”*



Mary Bonds

Start Date Marian House: November 1, 1987

End Date Marian House: May 2, 1988

“I was molested when I was young and I suffer from major depression. That was caught like when I was in high school. I ran away from home a lot of times because I wanted to get away.

“I have an addiction problem too: alcoholism—and that didn’t help with the depression. I would get clean and sober for a while, and then I would go off again and get even more depressed than usual. And it just got to be a problem.

“Alcoholism was a struggle. I just thought, ‘I’m gonna get drunk and feel good for a short time.’ But later on you feel just as bad as you did before you drank. But I guess the main thing would be the depression.

“I heard about Marian House from a social worker in a hospital. Once I was there, it was a safe place. Even if you screwed up, which I did a thousand times, they were always there for you. They knew I was depressed, and they tried to help me every way possible.

“I really started majorly getting myself off alcohol completely. I made it a year, and then I

made it a whole other year, and it was like, ‘Wow, this is getting good.’ And now it’s gotten to be 10 years and 7 months. Now when I think of having a drink I just think, ‘No, do something else, don’t screw it up, even if you’re depressed.’

“I pay my bills on time and I’m more responsible than I ever was. I’ve learned things about banking. I do my own grocery shopping. I do my own clothes shopping. I got my place, a roof over my head... I have a closet, chair, television, kitchen, and everything.

“I was a stubborn person, a hard head. Now I try to listen to people. If you listen to people, you can get an idea of how their advice will work with you.”



Nicole Jarrett Photography, LLC

Mary with her cat at home surrounded by her own furniture and cherished possessions: “Even though it’s a small area I have it decorated the way I like it.”



Mary had a difficult period prior to her time at Marian House, going in and out of hospitals, receiving electric shock therapy, and living through multiple failed recovery attempts. Hear her talk about these experiences and her evolving relationship with her family at www.marianhouse.org/stories.



Nalisha is studying at the Baltimore Studio of Hair Design. She credits having received her GED while at Marian House as a personal turning point: “I know if I can achieve that, I am down to achieve anything in life.”

Nalisha Gibbs

Start Date Marian House: September 29, 2008

End Date Marian House: May 14, 2009

“I came from a broken home. I was raised in a physically and mentally abusive way. There’s a stigma attached to being depressed or having bipolar disorder, people used to make fun of me, so I didn’t want to take the medication. I was embarrassed about the stigma of it.

“Basically, my life before Marian House was riddled with drug abuse, prostitution . . . I was just plain lost. I would use the coke to numb my feelings.

“I had my surrender in 2008. I was walking the street. I got out of this man’s car, and I had money, I had my drugs, I had food, I had cigarettes: I had everything—but I wasn’t happy. I sat on a church step and bawled my eyes out. I told God, ‘I can’t do this anymore,’ and I told him that I can’t do it by myself . . . I was alone; I was afraid, scared . . . That next day I turned myself in.

“I’m so glad I came here to the Marian House. They give you the psychological help that you need. I do have bipolar disorder, I do have PTSD

(post-traumatic stress disorder). And getting that counseling here and that extra boost that I needed, it really helped.

“I used to wake up in the middle of the night when I first got to Marian House and pace the floor all night long. That was my trauma and my anxiety. It was hard for me to adjust at first, but once I got on my proper medications, and once I followed up with the therapy, I really got much better with it, because I would stop waking up in the middle of the night and I would stop pacing the floor . . .

“Things are now instilled in me—I know the proper way of getting help now. I’m not ashamed to go fill a prescription of psychotropic medicine because I know that’s what I need.

“My calling is to help somebody else since somebody else helped me. I volunteer in the same community I helped tear down. That was another big point in my life: to actually go back to the community and help somebody else in the community that I helped tear down.”



Visit www.marianhouse.org/stories to hear Nalisha talk about her experiences with educational success once in recovery, parenting, and more.



“I would urge those running the city to be more sympathetic with people who have mental health problems and not be so quick to judge them as throwaways—I don’t think I’m a throwaway.”

“One thing that I can say is that God knew what he was doing when he put these walls together. That’s a definite. There’s nothing like Marian House.”



Terona Hopkins

Start Date Marian House: November 18, 2002

End Date Marian House: July 8, 2003

“I’ve been really, really depressed, and it led me down the wrong path of life.

“Before I got to Marian House, I was broke down, homeless . . . two kids. I started running the streets and got caught up in the drug game; my life was in turmoil until I got 2 years in prison. It was then that I started hearing about the Marian House from word-of-mouth. That’s when I started to contact the Marian House.

“Once you are inside Marian House, you have plenty of women to talk to about your problems. All I knew before I got to Marian House was how to stay alive and get one, that’s it. I never knew they could offer this much love and stability. It’s been a long road for me, it has . . .

“When I got out of prison in 2002, Marian House didn’t have any beds, so I had to live with my sister, on North Avenue. I didn’t want to, but I didn’t have anywhere to lay my head. The atmosphere of being in drug-infested North Avenue, I just couldn’t do it; I kept calling the Marian House every hour on the hour just trying to get into the building.

“I walked up to Marian House in the pouring down rain. I kept calling on the phone until they told me how to get here, and it was pouring down rain. When I arrived, I was soaking wet. I said, ‘I just really need y’all to help me; I ain’t going to survive.’ And it wasn’t an act and it wasn’t a show—it was the truth.

“The one-on-one counseling and affection that you get at the Marian House from the staff is so wonderful. I learned independence, I learned how to take care of myself, and I learned to be on time. Since the Marian House, I’ve been working since 2003, and, mind you, I had never worked in my life before.

“I’m never ever picking up again. I’m gonna stay clean thanks to God and the Marian House. With me staying connected to the Marian House there is growth for me, and I love them.”



Marshall Clarke

Terona earned her GED and celebrated her graduation at Marian House. “It was time for me to leave the Marian House, but I didn’t have my GED yet, so I scheduled classes to come back till I got my high school diploma.”



Visit www.marianhouse.org/stories to hear Terona talk about her struggles, discoveries, and determination, including the time she went to Baltimore’s City Hall and did not leave until the Mayor’s Office found her a place to live.



Trauma

“The ways in which helping professionals address and respond to a client’s history of trauma play a critical role in the adult survivor’s recovery.”

Carolyn Knight

Patience by Linda; detail of quilt by Marian House residents.

“I grew up in a home where there was a lot of abuse from both my mother and her boyfriend, and I grew up with low self-esteem.” Thus begins Tammi Shuron Jones’ tale of decline into addiction, homelessness, and incarceration. Tammi’s life was derailed by trauma, as were the lives of the other women featured in this section of the book.

Be it from sexual abuse, such as with Doreen Cooke and Carol Smith; or another devastating event, such as Cynthia Hall suffering catastrophic burns as a 3-year-old child; or an un-named emotionally dislodging recollection, such as with Evania Chapman who needed to “get in touch with some of the pain and some of the things from my childhood,” trauma is often linked to addiction. Substance use becomes, for these women and others, a form of self-medication. As Carol Smith notes in her story, “I pretty much used anything that would take me out of myself.”

Experiencing trauma leads not only to addiction, but also to a host of other psychological problems: Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), complex PTSD, dissociation, depression, and more.¹ We see these and similar conditions in the women’s stories: “I would have terrible flashbacks” (Carol Smith); “I didn’t remember the pain” (Cynthia Hall). When trauma is present, clinicians’ understanding of the impact it has on clients is a critical aspect of recovery.

The success of the approach taken at Marian House to address the complexities of trauma is clear from the women’s testimonies. For example, perhaps the most fundamentally destructive impact from trauma is a loss of sense

of identity—a feeling of alienation both from self and community. The lives of the women in this section were rife with such disaffection prior to entering Marian House, and time and time again they credit Marian House for returning themselves to themselves: “Marian House was the foundation” (Tammi Shuron Jones); “Marian House helped me grow up” (Evania Chapman); “Marian House gave me back to me” (Doreen Cooke).

What is Marian House doing right?

First, the Marian House staff brings sensitivity to the effects of trauma. For example, one common coping mechanism used by survivors of sexual abuse or other childhood trauma is dissociation, whereby feelings and sometimes even memories of what happened are cut off from conscious awareness.² Survivors might make light of, simply mention in passing, or have no memory at all of the traumatic events they experienced. We see this downplaying in Doreen Cooke’s story, where she mentions only incidentally the fact of her rape, and in Evania Chapman, who vaguely refers to “some of the pain and some of the things from my childhood.” Competent clinicians know to be on the lookout for indicators of trauma even when survivors do not directly disclose such a history.

Second, appropriate protocols are essential. Supportive relationships at both the individual and communal level are key; establishing rapport and trust through genuine caring and listening creates a baseline for successful treatment. The women’s comments are rife with appreciation for these qualities within

Dr. Carolyn Knight is Professor of Social Work, School of Social Work, UMBC, and author of the book *Introduction to Working with Adult Survivors of Childhood Trauma*, written to serve as a primer for providers who often find themselves on the front lines of treating trauma survivors. Dr. Knight offers the following thoughts:

On the relationship between trauma and addiction: “Those with addiction and trauma in their histories have used—often unintentionally—their addiction to ‘escape’ the traumatic experience and its associated feelings. Trauma typically leaves its victims with overwhelming feelings of powerlessness. Being clean and sober is empowering and therefore very therapeutic.”

On what professionals should know about trauma: “Normalizing and validating survivors’ feelings and experiences can go a long way towards minimizing the effects of the trauma.”

On what needs to be done differently: “‘If you see something, say something.’ This same slogan that we see in train stations and airports can be applied to trauma . . . If you see something ‘off’ with a child, or a family, say something, report your concerns to the proper authorities. Exploitation of children almost never occurs in a vacuum. Prevention is the key.”

Marian House: “They really cared about where I came from” (Evania Chapman); “I felt warmed and welcomed” (Doreen Cooke). Once safety is established, processing the trauma can begin.

The stories in this section come alive with the promise of overcoming trauma and its associated conditions of addiction, low self-esteem, depression, and more. The ability of the staff at Marian House to help women reframe trauma as Carol Smith does (“I now think of myself as a survivor and not a victim”) makes all the difference. With successful recovery, the women are empowered to give back, perhaps in ways others cannot, as exemplified by Doreen Cooke’s extraordinary experience with a young victim of

sexual abuse, reaching her in precisely the right therapeutic way *because* of her own story.

The women whose narratives are shared in this section are not the only ones in this book with histories of childhood trauma, but they epitomize the essential need for comprehensive approaches to treatment.

1. Carolyn Knight, *Introduction to Working with Adult Survivors of Childhood Trauma: Techniques and Strategies* (Thomson Brooks/Cole, 2009), p.9

2. Carolyn Knight, *Introduction to Working with Adult Survivors of Childhood Trauma: Techniques and Strategies* (Thomson Brooks/Cole, 2009), p.13

“I really had some deep-seated psychological trauma that I needed to work through . . . I’m thankful that I have tools and that I have people.”



Carol Smith

Start Date Marian House: August 27, 2007

End Date Marian House: May 30, 2008

“As a child I was sexually abused. This abuse went on for years before my mom put a stop to it, but this was in the sixties, so they didn’t tell you when someone touches you inappropriately to tell someone. I still lived in fear for years.

“I rebelled against my abuser and everything he believed in. Whatever he didn’t like . . . He hated the city: I moved to the city. All these things I intentionally did to hurt him, not realizing all the while that I was killing myself.

“He was an alcoholic. So I decided I’m not going to drink, I’m going to take drugs. He hated drugs.

“Heroin and cocaine were my primary drugs of choice, but I pretty much used anything that would take me out of myself. The only way I was able to have what I would call a normal heterosexual relationship was if I was drunk on alcohol or high on drugs; otherwise I would have terrible flashbacks of the sexual abuse that I endured.

“I was incarcerated. I’d get out and do good for a couple years, and then I would start using again. I also had some minor attempts at treat-

ment through methadone programs, which never lasted and never worked. I would always return to using . . . I really didn’t have any education on the disease of addiction.

“I walked through the doors of Marian House . . . I really didn’t know what I was walking into. The amount of love I would be shown and the changes that I would go through. I felt like I belonged for the first time in my life.

“I did the mandatory addictions program. I also attended intensive outpatient therapy. I had a counselor there who was excellent. And it was suggested that I see a therapist for the sexual abuse. I also attended a group there that they had for sexual abuse survivors, and I now think of myself as a survivor and not a victim.

“The tools that Marian House gives are so powerful, I learned so much about the disease of addiction. Marian House was my first real recovery program other than going into the emergency room and getting 3- to 4-day detox. I might not even be alive today if it weren’t for people like them.”



Nicole Jarrett Photography, LLC

Carol has an apprenticeship with Enterprise Electric. She is a proud member of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Union.



Carol’s experiences of trauma growing up stand in sharp contrast to her current success as a professional. Visit www.marianhouse.org/stories to hear her talk about her trauma, years of addiction, and present day accomplishments.

*“Years ago I would get high,
I wanted to use drugs over
anything... Now I am a
much stronger person—just
learning about me.”*



Tammi Shuron-Jones

*First time at Marian House: June 27, 2000–
July 9, 2001*

*Second time at Marian House: March 11, 2003–
March 17, 2005*

“Before I got to the Marian House, I came from jail. Before I went to jail, I was addicted to drugs. I grew up in a home where there was a lot of abuse from both my mother and her boyfriend, and I grew up with low self-esteem.

“I wound up being in the same predicament my mother was in—an abusive relationship. And that went on for years. And as the years went on, I got addicted to drugs, going back and forth to jail. I got incarcerated, and that is when I found out about the Marian House. And I wrote the Marian House and asked them, ‘Can I be accepted?’

“When I came to the Marian House the first time, I used to cry a lot. I was so broken I was crying a lot. The staff would ask me why I was crying, and I didn’t even know why I was crying... I guess my spirit was so broken from all the bruising I took from my kids’ father and my low self-esteem.

“I stayed at Marian House the first time and got employed, went to counseling, and got back with my children’s father. I left the Marian House, and the cycle started all over again. I started using drugs again, got evicted, went back to jail. I wrote the Marian House, and they said sure I can come back, because I left on good terms.

“They said I needed to do something different. They focused more on the abuse. They gave me suggestions to go for counseling and take self-esteem classes, and that’s what I did. I had to take anger management, address my low self-esteem.

“It took some work, mending and building back up. I’m more confident today. Low self-esteem has its days, but it don’t stay there. I don’t allow it to settle and let myself wallow in it. I recognize it, and I move on and do what I can to better the situation or to better myself.

“Marian House was the foundation... just dealing with life on life’s terms without using a drug, learning about me and getting information about how to survive my emotions.”



Tammi plays with her grandson Daizon Jones, 3 months old, as her husband Bernard looks on. Of her life now as a family member, she says, “I know I am a good mother, and I say thank God I did the work in that area.”



Tammi has both witnessed and been subject to abusive relationships. Hear her talk about her transformation (including the significance of the 12 steps of Narcotics Anonymous) and her current success with a healthy life for her and her family at www.marianhouse.org/stories.

Cynthia Hall



Nicole Jarrett Photography, LLC

Cynthia now works on weekends at Marian House. “For anyone who thinks that this program cannot work: it can work. It’s a whole lot of us that’s doing it, and we’re doing pretty well.”

Start Date Marian House: February 17, 2004
End Date Marian House: September 19, 2005

“When I was 3, I got burned playing with matches. I had set the house on fire. I was in the hospital for like a year and a half. I was on such hard medicines from me getting burned. I didn’t remember the pain. I still don’t remember the pain. I remember being in this hospital for a long time. They said that they had to give me medicine to forget the pain. That was basically the beginning for me.

“As an adult, my mom had me going to therapy. I think I was about 34. I was going to therapy and seeing a psychiatrist—because my mother was not having it. And somehow when my mom died in ’98, that’s when the addiction actually took off.

“It was really bad at that time for me. I fell right into the trap. I started stealing. My first time getting locked up in my whole life was in 2001. I was just lost. But the drugs, theft, they all go together. It was devastation for my whole family. My children were devastated. I was out there getting high . . . I was incarcerated. My survival skills were to go back after jail and start stealing again and I would get locked up again.

“When you come home from jail, it’s like you’re already screwed up in the brain. Depression is already on. You’re trying to figure out how you can get on track. You go back to your old ways—we know how to do bad, we know how to screw up, but to be able to do good?

“When I first came to Marian House, I just thought that it was just gonna be magic. It didn’t happen that way. It took a process. I kept striving and kept striving. I had a wonderful counselor. Everybody here was just willing to help me. It makes you want to do right. You can’t come here and not want to do right. I have mad love for this program . . . mad love and respect for the staff because they gave me a chance.

“I am not proud to say that I would go into stores and steal stuff. But I’m not a thief today. I am so thankful that I am able to be a productive person in society, give back to the one program that gave me a chance.”



Visit www.marianhouse.org/stories to hear Cynthia share her feelings about the criminal justice system, her efforts to mend relationships with her family, and more.



“I think if you sit down and talk to a person and hear somebody’s story—hear about where they’ve been and what they are trying to do today—you’d want to give a person a chance.”

“You know, when you start using that’s when your maturity level stops. And I started using when I was 15.”



Evania Chapman

Start Date Marian House: October 11, 2006
End Date Marian House: September 26, 2008

“I had been using drugs and alcohol for 37 years. I had been in countless treatment centers—in and out of detoxes, in all types of programs. It’s just been a whole history of revolving doors.

“I went to a treatment facility with the idea that I was going in for 7 days . . . 7 days turned into 14 days, and 14 days turned into 24 days. After being there, they asked me to escort one of the girls to the Marian House. They let me tour the facility. When I got upstairs, I actually fell in love. It was just something about the spirit of the place.

“When I got to Marian House, I still didn’t believe in myself. But once I met the staff, they made you feel welcome. They really cared about where I came from. We had sessions with a counselor, and I was able really to get in touch with some of the pain and some of the things from my childhood. I had a lot of good therapy.

“Even though I was the age that I was, I didn’t know anything about responsibility. I thought I paid bills, but I didn’t—I never really paid bills. I always relied on family members or somebody

else to do that for me. It was not so much just being dependent on the alcohol but being dependent on society as a whole to be responsible for me.

“Marian House helped me grow up. I needed somebody that was nurturing, but also had the ability to not allow me to manipulate them. They show you a lot of tough love here, but most of all they have your best interests. You get people to help you with your job. You got mental health. You got social work. And then they teach you . . .

“I reunited with my girls after being in Marian House for 11 months. The staff helped me with parenting issues—about boundaries and effective ways of discussing certain issues. We had sessions where they allowed my children to talk about some of their hurt. We got some really good therapy.

“I am trying to do what Marian House has done for me with my children. I’m really grateful for where I am. All I got to do is look back at where I came from and I’m real grateful.”



Nicole Jarrett Photography, LLC

Evania has an eye for decorating. One day she plans to have her own home but has made her rented space cozy and welcoming.



Visit www.marianhouse.org/stories to hear Evania share her journey, including a story about a particularly meaningful mask-making exercise she experienced while at Marian House.



Doreen has a little piece of Marian House in her home in the form of a plant that was given to her by Father Terry. It stood about 4 feet tall when she received it and is now about 8 feet tall. She likes to sit near her plants to reflect on life.

Doreen Cooke

Start Date Marian House: January 6, 1998

End Date Marian House: August 5, 1998

"I kind of knew I had to change my life. I just didn't know how to because I had been out there for maybe 30 years of my life. I had been arrested out there, prostituting, just living wrong... I knew it was wrong. I just couldn't find my way out of wrong.

"I came here through the front door not knowing what to expect, but when I came through the door of Marian House I just felt like I was in a place where people cared. I felt warmed and welcomed. This was my family. They nurtured me, and they helped me, and they cried with me, and they laughed with me, and they just showed me a new way of life with structure.

"Marian House taught me how to laugh again—there was nothing funny in my life. It taught me how to cry when things were good and when they were bad. It just opened up all my senses again. It gave me life. It gave me back to me.

"When I left here, I worked with children and addiction. I was able to share my story with

those children, which was a blessing that made those children open up to me. I talk about my rape and every time I shared my deep, dark secrets with people that are like me, it's a blessing for me and it's a blessing to them.

"I've sat in a padded room with a little girl who had been molested. And she wouldn't talk to anybody. I sat on the floor with her and I asked her the question, 'Did somebody touch you?' She never said anything, but her eyes were talking to me, and I said, 'You know, I got raped when I was little too and I was afraid to tell somebody.' And that little girl ended up telling me what had happened to her.

"People need help. They need help mentally, physically, and spiritually; not to be locked in a box or cell because the mind is where our disease is. There need to be programs... a place for people to go and share how they're feeling.

"If I can give someone a shot of hope or a smile so they can believe it could get better, then my work is done."



Visit www.marianhouse.org/stories to hear Doreen talk about her relationship with her mother and daughter, and how she draws upon her past experiences as not only a source of strength today, but also as a resource to help other people cope with hardship.



*“We need more people who
are concerned and want to
give a helping hand.”*



The former St. Bernard's convent on Gorsuch Avenue has been expanded and renovated since Marian House opened there in 1982, but remains the headquarters of the agency to this day. Upon entering the front doors all visitors are greeted by a sign stating, "Peace to all who enter here."

About Marian House

"There's not a word to describe what the Marian House can do. It's like a supernatural word. It's not a word you could just put together, or you could just make up."

Sharon Cannon, Marian House Alumna

Marian House, a non-profit organization located in the Better Waverly neighborhood of Baltimore City, has the following mission:

"Marian House is a holistic, healing community for women and their children who are in need of housing and support services. We provide a safe, loving environment that challenges women to respect and love themselves, confront emotional and socio-economic issues, and transition to stable and independent lives."

As the stories in this book demonstrate, the organization has been succeeding at what it sets out to do, helping over 1,000 women since 1982 move from dependence to independence.

As early as 1978, working under the auspices of the Sisters of Mercy, Province of Baltimore, Sister Margaret Beatty (then serving as chaplain at the Women's Detention Center) began to seek funding to address, as stated in numerous grant letters, "the need for a residence for homeless women." She and a colleague, Jane Harrison, who in 1978 was a "volunteer who has worked with me this past year," met with "great frustration because there is so little available in terms of support services specifically geared for poor women."

Her letter to funders continues: "In addition to safe housing after their release, these women need job counseling, training and sustained encouragement."

And so the vision for Marian House was born.

Originally under the aegis of Sisters of Mercy, by 1980 the School Sisters of Notre Dame had joined in, with Sister Josanna Abromaitis working alongside Sister Margaret "to establish and implement the Marian House residence and program." The contours of the new organization had by this time become more clearly defined as a residence that would "offer 15-20 women a four-month education-training-employment program with additional support ser-

vices which include individual and group counseling, social services and intensive follow-up.”

The initial focus of the founders was procuring a building. Correspondences from the time identify community resistance as a barrier needing to be overcome; wherever the location, the founders had to address the obstacle of neighborhood discomfort. City Council Member Mary Pat Clarke, then and now a supporter of Marian House, was instrumental in pursuing options. By early 1981, with Mary Pat Clarke’s support and the agreement of St. Bernard’s Parish Council, it was determined “St. Bernard’s Convent at 949 Gorsuch Avenue” would become home to Marian House.

With the location resolved, the remaining months prior to Marian House’s beginning operations were put toward preparing the building for occupancy. Fund-raising for renovations and programming became a central concern. In the second half of 1981, the first Executive Director, Sister Mary Graf, was hired, and she and the board of directors, established in December 1980, worked together to complete fund-raising for capital and operating needs.

On April 12, 1982, Marian House officially opened.

Four Executive Directors and 30 years later, Marian House has proven its value, growing in scope steadily over that time: In 1985, Marian House—having “provided a second chance to over 100 women”—received Loyola College’s Milch Award for Excellence of Accomplishment; in 1992, under its second Executive Director, Sister Augusta Reilly, RSM, Marian House purchased three row houses in the vicinity of the program center and launched Marian House II, an extension of the transitional housing program for women to continue receiving support beyond their initial stay at 949 Gorsuch Avenue. In 1994 Marian House II expanded to an additional location in the Pen Lucy neighborhood;

in 1996, Marian House, through the contribution of two donors, was able to purchase rather than lease the Program Center location at 949 Gorsuch Avenue. In 2001, the Program Center expanded with the addition of 2,500 square feet, allowing for a Great Room, Education Center, Family Tower with four apartments, and 14 additional bedrooms.

Under Sister Loretta Rosendale, SSND, the third Executive Director, Marian House began providing permanent housing with support services with its first Shelter Plus Care grant in 2003. In 2005, Marian House was awarded the Seal of Excellence from Maryland Association of Nonprofit Organizations. This same year, Marian House began the process of acquiring and renovating an empty school building across the street from the Program Center on Gorsuch Avenue, a tax credit project aimed at providing affordable housing for special needs populations. In 2007, under the fourth Executive Director, Katie Allston, Marian House opened the 19-unit apartment building known as Serenity Place—the project won awards in 2008 from the Affordable Housing Tax Credit Coalition and the Housing Association of Nonprofit Developers. In 2010, Marian House opened an additional row house to serve women in Marian House II, thereby expanding bed capacity by 33%, and was chosen by Bank of America as the 2011 Baltimore Neighborhood Builder in their national Neighborhood Excellence Initiative. In 2012, Marian House was awarded annual Shelter Plus Care funding of more than \$500,000 to expand its permanent supportive housing services to homeless women who have children in their care.

Marian House’s history of expansion illuminates the value the organization has in the community—it exists today as a beacon of hope for women in need, and as a model to be replicated in Baltimore City and other urban centers. That it all began with just a

few visionary, bold, and determined women speaks volumes on what is possible when individuals set their mind to something: in this way, the founders’ journeys and those of the women whose stories are related in this book share something in common. More than anything else, those who have lived and worked within Marian House’s walls since its founding have made it the distinctive place it is.



Founded by the Sisters of Mercy and School Sisters of Notre Dame, Marian House continues as a sponsored work of the two sister communities. The two communities make up the organization’s corporate board with reserved powers, and play an ongoing role with Marian House through representation on the Board of Directors, financial support, and service as staff and volunteers. This sponsorship guarantees that the charisms of both communities endure as guiding forces to Marian House’s mission and activities.

Acknowledgments

30 Women, 30 Stories is the result of many individuals' contributions of time and expertise. Marian House wishes to acknowledge those who helped make the book and project possible.

Ursula Hill, first as a social work intern and then as an independent contractor, spent countless hours recording interviews with those whose stories are told in this book; she was assisted by Katie Allston, Nicole Jarrett, and Sr. Pat Smith, RSM, who also conducted interviews. Serafina Krag, Paige Miller, Erica Ray, and Jackie Wang transcribed the interviews, thus making it possible to create the stories in this book as written narratives.

Marshall Clarke spent many a Saturday at Marian House, devoting over an hour to photographing each woman; Nicole Jarrett photographed many of the women at their homes, places of work, or other sites of their choosing. We are also thankful to the Marian House residents whose art graces this book.

Glen Burris designed the book, remaining patient throughout the many last-minute changes requested of him; Elisif Bruun, giving many editing hours to each woman's recorded interview, created the audio stories on Marian House's website as accompaniment to this book; Jane Harrison, who reviewed Marian House historical information for accuracy; Peter Bruun of Bruun Studios, who served as Project

Director and helped to bring an idea to reality: coordinating all the moving parts, editing the women's stories, and writing the section introductions.

A special word to those who contributed their expertise: Kate Briddell, whose open-minded understanding brought important nuance to this book's section on homelessness; Monique L. Dixon, whose intelligence fuels a passion for supporting those unjustly treated by the criminal justice system; Carolyn Knight, whose fervent and clear-sighted knowledge was indispensable to the trauma section of this book; Jane Plapinger, who lent her insights and considerable experience to the section on mental illness; and Thomas Carguilo and Greg Warren, who contributed generously to the addiction section of this book, and who themselves have long sought just recognition of addiction as a disease.

The Marian House staff offered support throughout, most especially: Mary Spurrier, Executive Assistant, coordinating outreach to the 30 women, tracking audio files and transcriptions, and generally being available to help out with any number of tasks; Meghan Montone, Director of Advancement, offering insights, input, and coordination as the project progressed.

And last but certainly not least, the 30 women who made the entire project not only possible but also worthwhile: Lesly Bailey-Johnson, Mary Bonds, Sharon Cannon, Rita Chapman, Evania Chapman,

Gail Chapman-Robinson, Doreen Cooke, Willette Fair, Audrey Fisher, Karen Floyd, Nalisha Gibbs, Cynthia Hall, Terona Hopkins, Deneen Houze, Donna Jackson, Kendra Gatling, Cynthia Kopec, Denise Matthews, Terri Randolph-Spence, Monica Scott, Trina Selden, Tammi Shuron-Jones, Rowena Gore-Simmons, Elizabeth Smith, Carol Smith, Paris Turner, Linette Parrine-Waters, Helena Weathers, Chrystal Wesby, and Chanta Whiting.

30 Women, 30 Stories is a project of Marian House, made possible by grants from the Open Society Institute-Baltimore, the TKF Foundation, and the David and Barbara B. Hirschhorn Foundation.





Sisters of Mercy of the Americas
South Central Community

30 Women, 30 Stories is a project of Marian House, a 501(c)3 organization that was founded in 1982 by the School Sisters of Notre Dame and the Sisters of Mercy.