

# Hand in Hand

...HELPING ONE ANOTHER

A NEWSLETTER OF THE WILLIS CENTER • SUMMER 2004

## Finding a place to call Home

### Struggles, successes, fears of homelessness

#### Bill's Story

Three years ago, Bill was addicted to heroin. With nothing but burned bridges to his name, he soon found himself homeless and hopeless. Willis Center Outreach team referred Bill to needed substance abuse recovery services. A year later, Bill has a job, his own apartment, and an "attitude of gratitude" for the Willis Center's Outreach services.

#### Maria's Story

When Maria became ill and lost her job, she and her three children were living with

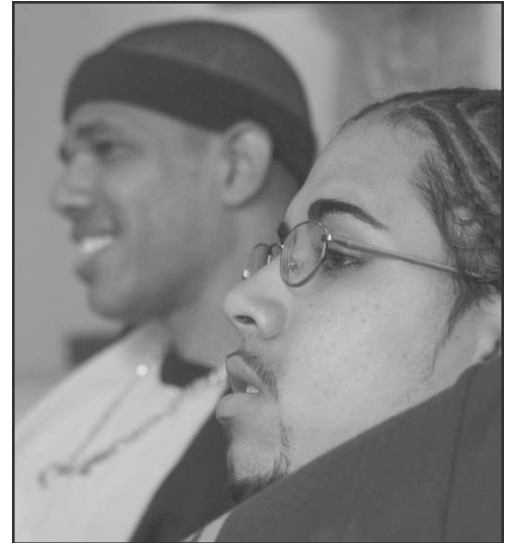
relatives in a small, cramped apartment. Suddenly, she had no resources for getting an apartment and no hope for making a home for her family. Willis Center Neighborhood Services assisted Maria in finding an affordable apartment and provided a grant for her first month's rent. Maria is grateful for the help which made it possible for her to get the apartment, but even working two jobs she is still just a paycheck away from being homeless again.

#### Donna's Story

Donna and her son arrived at Shepherd's Place feeling that she had lost control of her life. During the next few months, staff worked with her on parenting and life skills and watched her blossom, both as a woman and as a mother. Donna moved on to a long term shelter where she continues to work on her skills, her recovery and her education. She maintains the ties with Shepherd's Place staff that helped her begin her journey to a healthy life.

#### Willis' Story

Since 1991, Willis Center has fought against homelessness, working tirelessly and compassionately addressing the complex needs of people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. There are no "quick fixes" for Worcester's homeless and housing problems; despite dwindling state and federal funding, Willis Center stays committed to supporting those in need to



In Massachusetts there are more than 1,600 families sleeping in emergency shelters nightly. Willis Center works to support those families in need.

Below: A mother and her son pose for a picture and spend time together while at Shepherd's Place.



improve their quality of life. It is extraordinary and motivating to all of us each time a life is changed for the better.



A child looks into the doorway of Shepherd's Place as she and her mother find shelter.

HENRY LEE WILLIS COMMUNITY CENTER, INC.

WILLIS CENTER



Hand in Hand. Helping One Another!

A SOMBWA certified  
multicultural organization

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**FROM THE DIRECTOR**



We have all heard the news reports that our economy is improving. We have been told that our fiscal crisis is slowly turning around, and that better days are just

around the corner. However, our state and federal budgets are still cutting programs for the disadvantaged and our most vulnerable citizens see their services disappearing bit by bit.

The rosy economic forecasts are no comfort to a family that has no place to live and "better days ahead" means little to a person who cannot access recovery services, cannot feed her children or find a job.

Willis Center remains committed to helping these families. We believe that our efforts are not wasted, but contribute to a stronger, healthier community. We know that the well-being of an individual impacts the entire community; and so we persist in our efforts to make Worcester a strong and fair city that cares for all of its citizens.

We are always looking for partners to work with us as we assist our community members to improve the quality of their lives. I invite you to read the stories of individuals who join with us to help themselves; meet others who lend a hand, contributing to making our community a better place to be; then find out how you can join our team in this work to make our community a better place for all.

Join us - Hand in hand, helping one another.

Carlton Watson, Executive Director

# Willis Center Cultural Institute

## Traveling Art Exhibit

Willis Center Cultural Institute recently installed a three piece art exhibit in the conference room of the Greater Worcester Community Foundation that will extend into the fall. The exhibit features two pieces from the "Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing" Interpretation Project and the original art work for the 2002 festival commemorative poster.



## African American Festival 2005

The Institute is in the planning and fundraising stage for festival 2005. Also in the works is the exhibit tentatively entitled: "Enslaved in the Americas" at the Worcester Public Library featuring documents, photographs, & paraphernalia, on enslavement in the Americas and the premiere of an expanded dance performance of "Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing".

## Save the Date

Mark your calendars for February 4, 5, & 6, 2005 for the African American Festival 2005. As a reminder the festival will take place down town at Worcester's Mechanics Hall.

Please make a donation today to support the festival.

## African American Festival 2004 Poster

Copies of the commemorative poster are available for \$12. via email at ghall@williscenter.org or call Gloria Hall at (508) 799-2934, ext. 30. The poster can be framed at

CC Lowell and \$10 of the cost will be donated to the Willis Center.

*The Cultural Institute works together with partners, Worcester State College and Assumption College.*

# Sober Softball provides outlet for people in recovery

Willis Center's Channing House program has participated in the Sober Softball League for the last four years.

This year, for the first time, Willis Center is proud to be sponsoring a coed team of women from Linda Fay Griffin and men from Channing House, Willis' two substance recovery residential homes. The Willis team, along with nine other teams makes up the league.

"Sports helps people in recovery focus on good health and clean living and it provides a positive, safe networking environment for people to reach out and meet the community," according to Channing House Program Manager Jeff Storms.

Life lessons are learned on the softball field. Players learn to be part of a team. They learn that winning is more than keeping score; it is getting in the game and giving it their all.

Softball provides an opportunity for players to experience challenges, build character and practice discipline.

"We are having a good time and are encouraged by one another in our sobriety," said Terry, Willis Team Captain and Channing House alumnus.



*"We are having a good time and are encouraged by one another in our sobriety."*

**-Terry**  
Willis Team Captain



Check out our website at [www.williscenter.org](http://www.williscenter.org)

# The Gift of Child's Play:



Children enjoy a new "playspace" at Shepherd's Place II while Horizons for Homeless Children volunteers look on following a ribbon cutting ceremony.

## Willis Center's women's and children's shelters receive new playspaces

Horizons for Homeless Children donated and installed "Playspaces" at Shepherd's Place I & II.

The donation will give the children of the shelters a safe, child-friendly space of their own. Shepherd's Place I & II are among the first shelters in Central Massachusetts to have the Horizons Playspaces installed.

In addition to the spaces, Horizons recruits and trains volunteers to spend two hours per week playing with the children in these Playspaces.

"Each year we serve more than 65 children in our shelters. These children will receive tremendous bene-

fit from the beautifully decorated play area, complete with books, toys, trains, art and craft supplies," stated Cindy Cepero, shelter services director.

Shepherd's Place staff have worked with Horizons for many months to establish the playspaces, "we are thrilled to have such a positive partnership with Horizons, and to finally have the Playspace opening," said Cindy.

The Playspaces were officially opened with a ribbon-cutting celebration on June 10 at Shepherd's Place II. The Playspace at Shepherd's Place I is scheduled to open this month.

Shepherd's Place I & II are family transitional shelters serving up to 13 homeless women with children at a time from Central Massachusetts.

## Hall receives Katherine F. Erksine Award for arts, culture



Gloria Hall, Director  
Cultural Institute

Gloria Hall, Director of Willis Cultural Institute, received the Katherine F. Erskine Award in the category of Arts and Culture for her personal and professional achievements within the community at a "Tribute to Women" luncheon presented by YWCA in May.

The annual award celebrates the personal and professional achievements of five women from the Greater Worcester area, who embody the qualities the YWCA seeks to instill in all women.



## Save the Date:



September 16, 2004

September 28, 2004

Third Annual Willis Center Recovery Walk  
"Voices of Recovery"  
11:00 am, Starting at  
Corner of Wllington &  
Main Street in Worcester.  
Ending with a rally  
at City Hall.

11th Annual Day of Caring  
In collaboration with  
United Way of Central  
Massachusetts  
Help others within our  
community through team  
projects such as painting,  
yard work, street cleanup,  
etc.

Please call 508-799-0702 for more information on these events.

## Invest in People...



When you make a donation to the Willis Center, you are making an investment to help build better lives.

Yes, I would like to become a supporter of the Willis Center.

Please accept my donation of:

- \$500
- \$100
- \$50
- \$25
- Other

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Day/Evening \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Please make check payable to  
"Willis Center" 119 Forest  
Street, Worcester MA 01609  
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Or, visit our web site at  
[www.williscenter.org](http://www.williscenter.org)  
and make a donation through  
PayPal today.

*"Friends are Angels that help you fly."*

— Julia VeRost

## BECOME A FRIEND OF THE WILLIS CENTER

Our service recipients and programs have many needs.  
Can you, your family, church group or club help?

### ONGOING NEEDS:

Bath Soaps  
Toothbrushes  
Toothpaste  
Paper products (toilet paper,  
paper towels)  
Individually wrapped snacks,  
water & juices  
Twin size sheets  
Non-perishable foods  
Office Paper Products  
Indoor/Outdoor Recreational  
Equipment

### IMMEDIATE NEEDS:

Kitchen Table & Chairs  
2 New Computers  
2 Refrigerators  
Vacuum Cleaner  
AA Big Books and 12 Step Books

**Your financial contributions and  
volunteer efforts are greatly  
appreciated. For information on  
how you can get involved, please  
contact Nicole Brathwaite-Hunt  
(ext. 135) or Brenda Abrahams  
(ext. 132) at (508)799-0702.**

## Thank You, Enterprise!



Anthony MacDonald, Account Mgr. for Enterprise Fleet Services, (center left) presents an unsolicited donation of \$1,000 to Carlton Watson, Executive Director (center right). Also shown, far left; Kim Dawkins, Assistant Director of Adolescent Residential Services and far right; Brenda Abrahams, Director of Development.

## Willis Center Programs & Services



Casa La Vida • Channing House • DMR Services Worcester •

DMR Services Gardner • Community Services • Driver

Alcohol Education Program • Footsteps Program • Fresh

Start Program • HIV/AIDS Prevention & Education Outreach



• Linda Fay Griffin House • Next Step Program • Outpatient Services • Price Memorial House •



Shepherd's Place I & II • Starting Point Program • Tides Program • Willis

House • Vision House • Willis Cultural Institute • Willis Family Care

Program: Worcester/Lowell

*The vision of the Willis Center is to  
create in Central Massachusetts a com-  
munity in which people of color and  
the disadvantaged can gain equal  
access to quality human and social  
services that will improve the quality of  
their lives.*

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