

Women Transcending Boundaries Monthly Program Meeting
October 23, 2022 3:00 - 5:00 PM
Creating a Caring Community
Held at the CNY RISE Center 275 W. Seneca Turnpike, Syracuse

Attendance: Approximately 25- 30 women were in attendance. The speaker portion of the meeting also was being sent via Zoom to persons not in attendance.

Speakers for the afternoon:

Rhonda M. Butler, Center for New Americans (CNA), of InterFaith Works (IFW)
Bettie Graham, The Determination Center of Central New York

A table with snacks and water had been set up. Five of six round tables were filled with supplies which women in attendance had brought as donations for 3 non-profit organizations: Determination Center, Center of New Americans, and Vera House.

At 3:10 pm WTB President Melek Yavuz opened the meeting. She thanked everyone for coming and bringing generous donations.

Melek also announced the Annual CNY RISE Friendship Dinner to be held on November 10th. All are welcome. Ben Walsh, Mayor of Syracuse, will be the featured speaker for the evening discussing the *I-81: Highway to Social Justice*. Dinner will feature a Traditional Turkish Meal. RSVP by November 7.

Melek read both the *WTB Mission Statement* and the *WTB Safe Place Declaration*.

Barbara Bova, co-chair of the Program Committee, made the announcement of a change in the program. The planned speaker from Vera House was unable to attend. Rhonda Butler of InterFaith Works' Center for New Americans will join us today to talk about the ways in which her agency supports newly arrived refugees. Barbara thanked Rhonda and Bettie Graham for coming to speak about their programs this afternoon and introduced the speakers.

I.) Rhonda M. Butler, Community Engagement Manager for the Center for New Americans, began by briefly reviewing the kinds of programs supported under the large umbrella of Interfaith Works. Some of those mentioned with a brief description were: Center for Dialogue and Action, Senior Services including the Senior Companion Program (which is a federally supported program through AmeriCorp), computer classes for seniors at the Northside Learning Center, a One-on-One program for the elderly living at home or in residential facilities, as well as gardening projects. This afternoon she gave a brief update of services of the *Center for New Americans*.

In Syracuse there are two primary local agencies through which refugees coming into the community are sponsored and supported. One is the Center for New Americans of Interfaith Works and the other is the program at Catholic Charities of Onondaga County. There are nine United States Resettlement Agencies. The Center for New Americans is allies with the services of the Episcopal Migration Ministries (EMM). Catholic Charities Refugee Services are sponsored through national Church World Service.

As stated, The Center for New Americans receives and supports refugees coming into the community. When the Center for New Americans get the identity/names of persons expected for resettlement from the Episcopal Migration Ministries, an attempt is made to match a caseworker

with language skills which correspond with the person coming for resettlement. Volunteers set up an apartment and use donated furnishings to make the new home feel cozy. Persons/families are met at the airport when they arrive, are usually taken right to their new furnished home or apartment, and welcomed with a hot meal. New Americans are assisted over the next three months with necessary connections to essential social, educational, and health services in the community. There is a great deal of paperwork and accompaniment that needs to be completed to enroll persons into these essential services. A period of the most intensive services occurs in the first 90 days after arrival into the community for most immigrants. The Center also has intensive case managers for families and persons with special needs that go beyond the 90-day period. Rhonda said, "Everything for a new American is different from where they came including essential services and education."

In response to a question, Rhonda said the status of Afghans coming into the country now has changed because the government has terminated that initiative. They have been considered Humanitarian Parolees like the Ukrainians and Venezuelans. They are allowed to remain here for two years and can then either return to their country or apply for refugee status. Many of the Ukrainians coming into our community during the war in Ukraine are being supported by their families here. She said sometimes the Center for New Americans is contacted by those welcoming families because they need support for assistance for their new family member.

Rhonda thanked WTB for the donations which had been brought today. Financial donations can be made to The Center for New Americans through the InterFaith Works website. Donations of good quality, used furniture can always be made to the new warehouse they have that is located at 14 Corporate Circle, East Syracuse.

II.) Bettie Graham, the Founder and Director of The Determination Center of Central New York, Inc then spoke to the group. The Determination Center is a program that was started in 2006 with leadership from Bettie. Bettie Graham shared a bit about her own personal history that led her to begin the development of this program. She related that her father and mother died when she was 8 and 9 years of age. Bettie said the siblings were very supportive of each other. Her family has helped each other, and Bettie felt the need to assist children who needed more support from the community. The Determination Center began as a service to at-risk youth in Syracuse as an after-school program for support, enrichment, and direction for youth.

The Determination Center currently has two major programs. One began as an after-school program for 6 to 12-year-olds, which currently is at 344. E. Brighton Ave, Syracuse. It also provides an early morning program for the children before schools open. The program at this time involves about 50 children. Children are qualified for the program through D.S.S. A pre-school program for 3 to 5-year-olds has also developed which is at 2200 Valley Drive, Syracuse. Primary hours for this are 9 AM- 4:30 PM. Bettie's daughter gives leadership to that program. Both programs involve assisting with nutritional needs and educational support, as well as arranged transportation to and from home as needed for the children. While the program was established in 2006 for youth from Syracuse, currently there are children in the programs from outside the City of Syracuse.

Bettie emphasized that the goals of the program were established to give students a sense of respect for self and others. She said there is no tolerance for disrespect, and participants in the program agree to principles of politeness and courtesy to staff and volunteers. The brochure which was shared said that the Determination Center provides a safe place "determined to give youth a glimmer of HOPE." The brochure noted that, in addition to assistance with academic needs, the possible programs include Art Classes, Computer Lab, Eating Smart, Teen Matters,

Financial Literacy, and Creativity with wood, can be integrated into the program for a child, too. Volunteers provide assistance with these.

Good quality food is provided for children in each program as many children have nutrition desires and needs. Children sometimes come to the program hungry. Bettie, herself, said she frequently provides food for the children and some of it involves her home-cooked contributions.

The Determination Center counts on volunteers and donations for services. Volunteers work in the program in various ways. Bettie said there are always needs for volunteers for assistance with activities, food for snacks, and she specifically noted a need for grant-writing.

Bettie thanked the group and took with her many donations of supplies brought to the program by women of WTB.

If interested in learning more or volunteering, the brochure lists the phone number as: 315-396-0148 — and ask for Bettie.

Web-site is: www.determinationcenter.com.

Women enjoyed refreshments and helped pack up donations for the Determination Center, Center for New Americans and Vera House.

Respectfully submitted,
Cara Steiner,
WTB Sunday Secretary