



WE CAN: Celebrating 10 Years of Empowering Cape Cod Women

by Stephanie Boosahda

Do you know of a woman experiencing a major life transition and looking to make a positive, lasting change in her life? A woman who could use some hope-filled guidance, training, or empowerment?

Then you need to know about WE CAN. For the past ten years, this small but highly effective non-profit has been empowering Cape Cod women to create positive lasting change for themselves and their families.

Celebrating its 10th anniversary, WE CAN - Women's Empowerment through Cape Area Networking – provided services to over 500 women and their families in 2010 – up from 15 in their first year.

This Harwich Port-based non-profit empowers Cape Cod women of all ages to successfully navigate challenging life transitions such as divorce, career change, job loss, relocation, illness, retirement, isolation, or personal loss. WE CAN serves the entire Cape. Its clients – and volunteers – come from the upper cape to Provincetown and everywhere in between.

The organization grew out of Cape Cod Community College's Women in Transition program and now serves Cape Cod women and their families through information and referrals, mentoring, free legal services, workshops, seminars, and training. With the help of a 15-member board, a growing team of community partners, over 100 dedicated volunteers, and a small staff of three part-time and one full-time person, WE CAN offers clients services not duplicated elsewhere on Cape. They also collaborate with other Cape non-profits that provide services that WE CAN doesn't offer.



Past and present Board of Directors with the WE CAN 10th anniversary Quilt

WE CAN founder, current board member and Chatham resident Dick Sullivan notes, "As a WE CAN founder, I am thrilled that we continue to meet the growing needs of women on the Cape who are ... experiencing difficult transitions and looking to make a positive, lasting change."

PEOPLE AND PROGRAMS

Janet Weatherbe, current Board of Directors president, says she became involved with the organization "because it helps women figure out solutions to the problems that many women face. I enjoy being a part of an organization that helps women build self esteem through mentoring, goal setting, and problem solving."

Andi Genser recently completed her first year as WE CAN's Executive Director, expanding programs, services, visibility, and outreach. Genser is often quoted as saying, "At WE CAN we believe that by helping women, WE CAN helps families, and by helping families, WE CAN helps whole communities."

Mary Jaynes is WE CAN's Program Director. Jaynes holds one-on-one options meetings with potential clients to understand their needs and ensure that each client receives or participates in the optimal mix of WE CAN services. She also organizes the WE CAN's signature PathMaker mentoring program.

The PathMaker program runs ten months, from September through June, with a focus on setting and achieving goals through partnered mentoring and monthly programs.



Mary Jaynes conferring with a WE CAN program participant

Through a "speed-dating" type of process, each PathMaker is paired with a mentor. The mentoring Partner and the PathMaker join together in mutual learning and support as the pair learn about and from each other.

Recruiting is now underway for WE CAN's 2011-2012 PathMakers Program. If interested, plan now to attend one of the information sessions or contact Mary at mary@wecancenter.org or 508-430-8111 for more details.

As WE CAN Program and Administrative Coordinator, Kara Duff is responsible for coordinating WE CAN's legal services. She arranges one-to-one legal consultations for low to moderate income women held several times each month, as well as workshops.

Topics range from Family Law to an intense, comprehensive Divorce Boot Camp. These programs are conducted by one of 28 pro bono attorneys. Workshops have suggested donations of \$5-\$30 but no one is ever turned away because they are unable to pay. For more information or to arrange an appointment or register for one of the workshops, email Kara@wecancenter.org.

One of WE CAN's newest offerings is called the Financial Empowerment Program. These are 45-minute one-on-one counseling sessions for women who have the need for financial planning and counseling but are unable to pay.

An experienced banker, financial planner or tax accountant helps each woman address a broad range of financial issues including basic finances and budgeting; eliminating debt and rebuilding credit; and issues related to foreclosure, bankruptcy, refinancing and taxes. Appointments for a free consultation can be made by calling the WE CAN office at 508-430-8111.



Dick Sullivan flanked by Directors of LCOC (Larry Marsland); Elizabeth Bridgewater (CDP) and Andi Genser at In the Spotlight collaborative Fundraiser, Fall 2010

EVENTS

Although the business of WE CAN is quite serious in nature, the organization is excitedly creative in getting the job done in a warm, fun, positive way.

Some of the recent events sponsored or supported by community partners include a Wine and Chocolate Tasting Quilt Signing (Orleans Wine and Spirits, Beach Way Sweet Shop, and Cape Cod Museum of Art); the Card Party at Epoch Senior Living of Brewster, Girls' Night Out (Puritan Cape Cod & Cape Cod Magazine), and The Sesuit Spring Spree (Sesuit Harbor House).





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For upcoming WE CAN Events please visit:
www.wecancenter.org/wecanevents.php

In celebration of WE CAN's 10th anniversary, past Board President and current Special Advisor, Ro Morrissey, initiated the Signature Quilt project. Like celebratory quilts throughout history, this has been a great endeavor, reuniting the human fabric of the WE CAN community and expanding its outreach.

"It's really exciting how this quilt is broadening our tent. I'm thrilled to meet many of you who were a part of the early WE CAN history and just as excited to meet those of you who are new to us," Andi Genser remarked, when recently addressing over 170 attendees at a quilt signing event.

SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

There is literally something for everyone ready to enrich their lives: clients, volunteers, and donors. Pam Kukla, WE CAN Special Advisor from West Dennis, explains, "Volunteering for WE CAN has a direct impact on the well-being of my family and our entire Cape community."

So, check out WE CAN and join in to make a difference in the fabric of our community. Become a client or volunteer your time, talents, or resources to help women or to be helped and inspired.

At the WE CAN website www.wecancenter.org you can find a wealth of information, subscribe to their newsletter, sign up to volunteer, make a donation, and find updates on classes, workshops, and events.

All photographs by Michael Karchmer



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Stephanie lives in South Yarmouth and her hobbies include kayaking & biking, photography, writing, skiing, digital scrapbooking, volunteering, reading, traveling, activities with her grandkids, and exploring new computer applications.

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