



Spring 2010

## Betty K. Marler Youth Services Center

# Bulletin

### Celebrating Success

#### GRADUATION DAY!

On March 3rd, 2010, Betty K. Marler Youth Services Center celebrated its 9th Graduation Ceremony.

Twice a year students, staff, parents, and members from the community, come together to celebrate and honor students who have achieved academic milestones and personal program success. This particular ceremony recognized two students who earned a High School Diploma, two students who completed their GED, ten students who successfully became program graduates, three who earned Vocational awards in the areas of Culinary Arts, Horticulture, and Career Technology, one in Athletics, and one student honored for Greatest Overall Program Achievement.

The keynote speaker for the evening was Ms. Milagros Ramos, formerly of the University of Colorado in Boulder. She followed the theme of the graduation, "Happiness", by eloquently speaking to her own experiences and creating her own happiness even when situations were not ideal. She delivered a great message of self-reliance and she connected with students about finding happiness even in difficult times. She mentioned many personal examples about her time in the Air Force, being a single mother and her professional career. In retrospect, she said she feels happy with how her life has turned out, even when situations did not go her way. One graduate found inspiration when Ms. Ramos quoted John Barrymore by saying "Happiness often sneaks in through a door you didn't know you left open." The quote captured the heart of the message and offered hope for her situation.

Ms. Ramos' message was very appropriate for the evening as it encompassed the experiences of several of the students who were honored during the graduation. Many of the young women arrive at Betty K Marler resistant to

the program simply because of the events in their own life and because of what education and treatment represents. However, due to the supportive staff and the students' own will-power, many are able to embrace their situation and flourish, both programmatically and educationally.

While the graduation ceremonies recognize



*A Reason to Rejoice  
In March, 2010, Betty K. Marler Center graduated 14 students. Family, staff, and alumna shared the students' pride and sense of achievement.*

their achievements, the real success comes from their actual journey. The Betty K. Marler Youth Services Center looks forward to many more young women following in the footsteps of those honored in the March 2010 graduation.

#### FOCUS ON THE FUTURE

Two students arrived at the Betty K Marler Center over a year ago expecting to do some time and leave. Little did they know that their lives were about to be transformed.

After a review of all credits, Olga, now 19, learned that graduation could be a reality. She requested to stay in the program until she earned her high school diploma. She is the first in her family to graduate from high school.

Ashley, now 18, arrived at the Betty K. Marler

Center with a GED. Within two weeks of arrival, she was enrolled in two courses at Adams State College in Alamosa, Colorado. Ashley is the first person in her family to attend college.

While at the Betty K. Marler Center both young women worked hard in school and hard in treatment. In September 2009, both women participated in a tour of Adams State College. On the long trip home, both women realized they wanted more for themselves and decided that college was for them. Finally they could see themselves doing something different - something good.

In January 2010, after nearly 14 months in the program, both young women transitioned from the Betty K Marler Center to Adams State College and were enrolled as full time first generation students.

Today these young women remain at ASC and, despite being very busy, both report being very happy. We at the Marler Center are very proud of these two young women and surely the late Betty K. Marler is as well.



*Former Betty K. Marler students focused on change and altered the course of their lives*

## Bloom Where You Are Planted

### Betty K. Marler Youth Service Center's Horticulture Program

I wanted to let all of you know about our new Horticulture Program and what we have been



doing for the past 9 months. In the field of horticulture there are many areas to explore; landscape installation and maintenance, floriculture, which includes greenhouse production and management, and floral design, nursery production and management, which includes growing and caring for trees, shrubs and perennials.

To simplify what Horticulture really means: it's just the growing and working with plants and flowers inside and outside. Here at Betty K. Marler Center we have been doing just that. Last spring we built and designed a vegetable garden where the students grew tomatoes, zucchini, basil, cilantro and a few other garden vegetables. We also designed and planted eight whiskey barrels and cared for them all summer. This allowed the students to learn how to grow plants, learn many plant names and needs, as well as experience the joy of seeing a plant grow from a seed to harvest and ultimately eating what was grown.

The Marler Center's Horticulture program

recently designed floral arrangements for Rite of Passage's 25th Anniversary/Graduation Celebration at Ridge View Academy. Additionally, the students have created designs for other venues including community functions and holiday centerpieces.

Our goal at the Betty K. Marler's Horticulture Program is to teach students entrepreneurial skills and job skills that will help them become employed in the "Green Industry" where they can work with plants and build up their skills to start a great career in Horticulture. Whether ,outside working with trees and bedding plants, or working inside with foliage plants and/or floral design, students will be employable and ready to start work!

Written by: Susan L. Simons 3/1/103

### *Laura Shipman-Hamblin, Program Director for the Betty K. Marler Center, presented at the 13th Annual Adult, Juvenile Female Offender (AJFO) Conference held in Jackson, Mississippi*

The AJFO Conference was developed in 1985 to provide a vehicle for correctional professionals who work with female offenders to participate in relevant training and provide a place for networking. In 1993, juvenile females were included and asked to the existing workshops. The conference now attracts approximately 500 participants nationally and from Canada.

Ms. Shipman-Hamblin has been attending for over ten years and each time she attends this conference, the largest of its kind for women and girls involved in the criminal justice system, she continues to strongly advocate for systematic changes to help stop shortchanging young women in the juvenile justice system. Ms. Shipman-Hamblin showcases many of the program services that have been implemented by Rite of Passage to benefit the academic progress, physical health, spiritual and emotional well-being of each young woman who resides at the Betty K. Marler Center.

Partnering with a Division of Youth Corrections Case Manager, Ms. Shipman-Hamblin spoke on the complex relationship between trauma and substance abuse for female offenders. It is well documented that these co-occurring disorders are prevalent among young women in the criminal justice system and are difficult to treat. Typically, they are addressed separately in most programs. Many of these young women entering facilities or community programs may appear to be combative, which results in the use of physical restraints, staff imposed isolation and termination of services, all of which are typically believed to be deterrents to her "bizarre" behaviors. Unfortunately, these events are often traumatizing in and of themselves. Likewise, when young women enter treatment with the primary presenting problem of substance abuse, the co-occurring problems are often left untreated or treated separately. This serves to increase the chance of early relapse and a possible return to people or lifestyles that support the substance abuse which, in turn, increases the likelihood for further trauma.

With these obstacles in mind, an integrated treatment approach was presented by Ms Shipman-Hamblin in the hopes that other professionals working with young women may begin to readily identify traumatic stress symptom and understand the dynamic relationship between complex trauma and substance abuse. Emphasis was placed on utilizing effective cognitive behavioral treatments strategies to teach personal safety, self-soothing behaviors, problem solving skills, cognitive restructuring, relapse prevention and interpersonal skills, and skills for building healthy recovery networks. Several participants stated that the information presented would be helpful and useful to their work with young female offenders.