

Service Commission

Because the MDCCW has no Service Commission chair at this time, we are reprinting the following from The Connect, the newsletter of the National Council of Catholic Women (NCCW).

BY DIANE TUGANDER, SERVICE COMMISSION CHAIR, NCCW

April, 2018

This month's installment of "Sharing our Special Stories of Service" centers around an amazing group of women who are following the Gospel message. They have established a home and family for those who would otherwise have nowhere to go. Thank you to committee member Beverly South for bringing this program to light.

Journey to New Life, Inc. was established in Kansas City, Missouri, in 2013, with the purpose of providing re-entry programs for those newly out of prison. In 2015 they purchased a 22-bedroom home in the Beacon Hill neighborhood of Kansas City to serve as temporary housing for women returning from prison. Former offenders not only receive basic human care but also care that is based on the concept of restorative justice which focuses on healing, hope, and an opportunity to begin again — it offers former offenders the opportunity and power to change. Their vision and mission statements can be found on their website and are as follows:

Vision — Every individual, no matter their circumstances, will have quality participation in society.

Mission — Journey to New Life maximizes quality of life for men and women returning to the community from prison or other involvement with the justice system.

Since opening, more than 200 women have lived at Journey House for Women and less than "five percent have returned to prison, a remarkable feat, considering the national recidivism rate is 68 percent."

So what accounts for the success of Journey House for Women? The women live at Journey House for about three months, and a group of local nuns live right alongside them. Sister Gabrielle, Sister Martha, and Sister Rose offer consistent support, encouragement, and accountability "while the women try to repair relationships, complete vocational training and education programs, find work, secure housing, and many times, begin healing from past abuse or mental health concerns."

Journey House for Women is so successful that many of the women consider the nuns and other residents to be family and the house as their home. The women find trust, security, and compassion—some for the first time in their life. Many return to visit. "Those who come to us find guidance and compassion, not judgement," say Sister Gabrielle, Sister Martha, and Sister Rose.

Sources: <https://www.journeytonewlife.org/>

Roberts, B. (2017). Serving the dear family: Sisters walk with women rebuilding their lives after prison at Journey House. Connections, Fall, 2017. Retrieved from <https://www.journeytonewlife.org/>