

Powerful Alternatives

A Newsletter for Supporters of Alternatives For Girls

FALL 2021

SPECIAL FEATURE: SAFE CHOICES STREET OUTREACH

By Christie Jackson, Development & Marketing Fellow

The Alternatives For Girls (AFG) Safe Choices Street Outreach program continues to be a success despite the challenges raised by the pandemic. Our street outreach team drives 50 miles a night from Southwest Detroit to the 8 Mile and John R area serving homeless women and women engaged in sex work from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. on Wednesday and Thursday evenings. With a new and improved van purchased with the generous contributions of our donors, our dedicated team of volunteers continue to provide resources and information about AFG for more than a dozen women on both nights. Although the pandemic has required us to put a plastic barrier between our volunteers and the people they serve, they are still able to form meaningful connections with the women they meet.

During the summer, AFG volunteers James Maier and Marissa Graziano (pictured below) built a friendship with a woman they encountered on nearly every Wednesday route. She opened up to them about her struggles with drug addiction, and her desire to receive treatment. Getting treatment isn't easy. There are financial and physical barriers to getting help, such as paying for treatment programs and securing housing upon completion of in-patient treatment. There are also significant mental and emotional barriers that require good resources and a strong community to overcome. Despite these obstacles, the woman James and Marissa befriended checked into a rehabilitation center!

“Marissa and Jim were able to initiate a partnership with a facility that would allow us to cut through the red tape that we usually encounter,” said Audrey Watkins, AFG’s Crisis Resource Center Manager. “This provided us the opportunity to get the young woman off the street while it was in her mind and heart to do so. Most often, if they do not receive help immediately or if there are too many barriers, they will change their minds.”

AFG is so proud of the Safe Choices Street Outreach team and the incredible impact they continue to make in people’s lives!



To learn more about giving or to become an upcoming event sponsor, please email Dawn Barrack, Director of Fund Development, at dbarrack@alternativesforgirls.org.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT: SOCIAL ENTERPRISE AT WORK

By Christie Jackson, Development & Marketing Fellow

Alternatives For Girls (AFG) is expanding their workforce development initiatives to help young women explore and access the support, resources, and opportunities necessary for safety, independence, and sustainable healthy living. AFG will collaborate with area workforce development programs to connect our participants with soft skills, job training programs, and vocational opportunities, including industry certifications that align with their long-term goals. These efforts will open multiple pathways for gainful employment and livable wages while continuing case management and other supports.



The Workforce Development initiative has two significant components. One is to develop partnerships with local employers in all types of businesses who are willing to orient or re-train AFG participants for the workplace. The other is to address basic unmet needs and solve social or environmental problems through market-driven approaches. AFG embraces such Social Enterprise activity via Sew Great Detroit (SGD) and Eats All Good.

Sew Great Detroit (SGD) is an AFG-grown workforce development program that provides women employment training, personal growth, and empowerment in a respectful team environment. SGD supports women's behavioral shift towards healthier, productive living through individual coaching and counseling. SGD participants learn the technical skills of sewing and knitting and sell their hand-crafted clothing and accessories to local businesses and organizations, such as Hollywood Market, Brudders Pizza, and Détroit is the New Black. Sew Great Detroit is currently accepting contracts for interested buyers.



Eats All Good, a private business, creates and sells handmade vegan snacks in Detroit and the surrounding metropolitan area. Their goal is to empower women in Detroit by offering meaningful employment opportunities. Participants will learn job skills, from budgeting and sales to production and marketing, while earning an income from product sales.

Stay tuned for more details about our progress and participants' achievements in the coming months.

LETTER FROM THE CEO: AMANDA (AMY) L. GOOD



Autumn is the season of reflection at AFG as one fiscal year comes to an end and a new one begins. We marked our 34th anniversary this year, and are looking forward to celebrating our milestone 35th anniversary in 2022. We've served over 120,000 girls and women, and counting. What matters is that most have used the AFG "launching pad" well, and have gone on to thrive! Their success has impact well beyond themselves and their families; they strengthen the Detroit community, lifting all of us up! Just as YOU do by participating in AFG's mission.

Some highlights of our past fiscal year include:

We just completed a rigorous, five-year research project focusing on teen leadership and pregnancy prevention, at the high school level, with strong results; we are on the verge of being federally designated as an "evidence-based" successful program! We are thrilled to announce that we've received a second, five-year research grant to bring this proven model to Detroit middle schools.

Sixty-seven girls participated in our summer program, where our creative staff, community partners, and teen leaders created a magical experience for elementary-age girls. They dug up and identified bones, grew vegetables, created plays, studied nutrition, formed clay creations, and embarked on on-site "field trips." They reconnected with friends and brushed off rusty social skills in safe skill-building and relationship-building activities.

Our programs work: of 70 participants in our "aftercare" program—extended services to support the transition away from our shelter into independent living—87% maintained safe and stable homes after three months. Year after year, most of those we serve are enrolled in school, employed, or both.

Thank you, friends, for standing with AFG, and with those who need us, who deserve our support, and who will go far because we are here for them.

MISSION:

Alternatives For Girls' mission is to help homeless and high-risk girls and young women avoid violence, teen pregnancy and exploitation, and help them to explore and access the support, resources and opportunities necessary to be safe, to grow strong and to make positive choices in their lives.

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DEPARTMENTS:

Shelter and Transition to Independent Living: AFG's Shelter Program provides a stable home, counseling, and life skills training to homeless girls and young women ages 15-21 and their children. The goal is to empower them to lead productive and fulfilling lives.

Outreach and Education Services: AFG's Outreach Program helps teens and women engaged in high-risk activities, such as sex work, drug use, and gang involvement, to understand the risks of such activities and transition to safe choices and healthy lives.

Community Based Prevention: AFG's Prevention Program serves girls and young women ages 7-19 who are at risk of pregnancy, gang involvement, abusing drugs or alcohol and school truancy. We engage them through after-school programs, a teen leadership program, and a summer camp.

For all you do, thank you.

THE POWER OF MENTORSHIP

Mentoring with AFG is one of the many ways to get involved and make a one-on-one impact in someone's life. AFG's Asset Building Program is looking for mentors who are ready to make an impact and fully embrace the girls and young women we serve. The Asset Building Program is housed within the Prevention Program, and helps girls and young women find self-esteem, improve grade-point average, reject drugs and alcohol, prevent pregnancy, and discover untapped talents. Mentoring relationships are a shared opportunity for learning and growth. Below is one of the many poignant stories from our mentors.

“I want to thank you and the rest of the Alternatives For Girls team for providing me with the opportunity to Mentor. It's been an incredible five plus years serving as a mentor. Mentoring and serving has always been a passion of mine. It's so gratifying to empower girls and help them embrace their unique capabilities, not limited by society's stereotypes and standards. I've grown with my mentee, Gregoria during this journey. Just when I thought I would be the only ministering/teaching in the mentor/mentee partnership, Gregoria ministered and taught me so much about life, patience and faith.

The highlight of my mentoring was watching Gregoria walk across the stage to receive her diploma during her graduation ceremony. She's the first in her family to accomplish this achievement. She's such a bright, caring determined young lady and I know she has so many wonderful things coming in her future. She and I will continue to keep in touch outside of AFG. I'm a life long friend and will definitely be here to help guide her during her college years if she ever needs me. I will forever be grateful for this opportunity.”

To learn more about how to become a mentor, please visit bit.ly/AFGMentor or scan the QR code.



Alternatives For Girls

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GIVE HERE!



At AFG, we respect everyone who comes to us for help – as they work towards a brighter future. So, while their stories are true, names and images may have been changed to protect their privacy. Thank you for understanding.