



Ann Linnea has written this month's Circle Tale, which links to a newspaper article that shares the success stories of 2 women who participated in circles organized by Catherine Place in Tacoma, WA last fall.

Circle Tale, June 2009 Tacoma WE-CAN Women's Circles

Sometimes a good idea turns out even better than you expect. That is the sentiment of Judy Mladineo, associate director of Catherine Place, when she reflects on the success of the WE-CAN Women's Circles. Catherine Place, founded by the Tacoma Dominican Community in 2000, is located in the heart of Tacoma, Washington. Its goal is to provide an oasis for women from all walks of life. In the fall of 2008 with funding from the Tacoma, Washington Fund for Women & Girls (under the auspices of the Tacoma Community Foundation), Catherine Place organized the facilitation of WE-CAN circles for women living in "stress or poverty."

Women were selected for the project by social service providers as having enough stability in their lives to show up for seven consecutive weeks and a desire to move beyond their current circumstances. WE-CAN Circles were an experiment for both the Fund for Women and Girls, and Catherine Place. The Fund wanted to know: *How many women would enroll in schooling as a result of the investment of the grant?* Catherine Place wanted to know: *How would the circle experience provide peer support as a foundation for making a sustained shift from their current circumstances toward enough stability to encourage education?* The project was professionally evaluated and by the time the circles ended one-fourth to one-third of the women had taken steps towards more education - whether enrollment in college, high school GED program, English as a Second Language, food handler's license, or other.

At the project's beginning, PeerSpirit offered two days of circle host training for sixteen women leaders from agencies ranging from Goodwill and the YWCA to the Tacoma Urban League and several transitional housing programs. The newly trained hosts finished their training and carried their Women's Circle Starter Kits to the circles arranged by their respective agencies.



"Even with women who were slightly more stable financially, the biggest barrier to education is low self-esteem, the sense within a woman that she's not capable of learning, or that she doesn't have the right to better herself. The circle began to serve as an esteem builder with a dozen outside voices pouring confidence into one another," Mladineo reported.

The success of one of these circles was reported in the Tacoma News Tribune on May 31, 2009 in an article by Debbie Cafazzo. We have arranged with Debbie and the Tacoma News to keep this link live for two additional months. Click on the following link to enjoy the story.

<http://www.thenewstribune.com/soundlife/family/story/762004.html>

If you have a tale to tell, contact the PeerSpirit office and we'll help you share it.

*For more information on many applications of circle, visit our web site at www.peerspirit.com and subscribe to our monthly Circle Tale newsletter. Your e-mail address will **not** be shared or used by anyone other than PeerSpirit, and you can unsubscribe yourself at any time.*