



## FEEDING YOUR SOUL, CHERISHING YOUR LIFE



*Dr. Sharon West, PhD*

If you're reading this article, it means that today God blessed you with the gift of life – *another 86,400 seconds on this earth!* And whether the opening of today's present has led to a positive day, a Pandora-like outcome filled with problems, or something in between, most of us would agree that life is, *truly*, a gift.

But what happens when the Pandora's-Box-days occur back-to-back, when the box-of-life is so mucked up with darkness that it's hard to believe that the light even exists? What happens when the collective stressors of money, men and medical problems make us question the true value of the gift of life? How do we find our way out of the mire? Well the truth is, there is no magic formula, no foolproof recipe that will make it *all* better. But like every good recipe, every problem has a special gift inside that will help jump-start the good stuff.

So much has been said about *Soup for the Soul* that it has become as much of a cliché as a commercial bonanza, and I'm reluctant to use the phrase here. But a scientific study conducted by Dr. Stephen Rennard at the University of Nebraska Medical Center confirmed: chicken soup has documented healing properties. And CWAH uses it liberally – figuratively and literally.

Once every other week, a circle of women gather at CWAH for a session of *Soup for the Soul*, to enjoy a tummy-warming bowl of soup, and a soul-warming cup of shared discussion that helps each of them design their own formula, their own recipe for healing that which ails them. It's a "soul feast of mental and spiritual nourishment."

Facilitated by Dr. Sharon West, *Soup for the Soul at CWAH* is a peers-helping-peers support group that addresses the "tremendous toxic stress" caused by underemployment, abuse, relationship challenges, poor health and other issues, in a casual format determined by the concerns of the participants at each session. While the sessions are open to all races, Dr. West says that the amount of stress experienced by African Americans is atypical of that of the general population, a combination of racial issues, economics and – not surprisingly – *personal choices*.

A lack of trust in the psychiatric community stemming from a history of being locked up and poorly treated by police and/or staff in mental institutions has resulted in many African Americans hiding or masking depression or other mental health issues that could well be addressed before reaching a "breaking point."

"The group is excellent for those not at the breaking point," says Dr. West. "It's like peeling layers of an onion. The sessions are non-threatening; provide a safe environment where they can speak openly; and confirm that there is 'nothing wrong' with them. It also allows them to give back."

Giving back is a concept that's very familiar to Dr. West. She facilitated the program at CWAH for 3-4 years, left for a short while, and returned recently when Gloria Taylor reached out to her to work with the group once again. Dr. West received her Ph.D. from the University of Missouri-St. Louis, and has been a psychologist for 25 years. She is currently the Director of Mental Services at Grace Hill. The program at CWAH has allowed her to get back to doing what she loves most – working with women, a gift from which she receives as much as she gives.

*By: Gwen Swan*

## A Special Thank You

Santa would like to thank each of you who helped make his job a lot easier in 2014.

Your generous donations to our People Against Poverty Campaign brought many smiles to the little faces at our annual event.

Throughout the year we provided direct services to approximately 400 individuals, children and adults.

These services included basic need services ( *Food Pantry, Household goods, Clothing Boutique*), Parent Opportunity Programs, Job

Readiness Classes, Career Assessment and Counseling, Health and Fitness Workshops, Zumba, Science for Kids, Mass Media Classes, Financial Literacy, Soup For The Soup Computer Classes, Fine Arts, Jazz Study, Gardening, Summer Enrichment Programs, Trip to Alabama, Tai Chi, and much more.

We could not have done it without the support of you and the community. So thank you for caring and sharing, in our mission.

***Providing Hope For Those In Need***



## Discover the Health Benefits of Tai Chi

**Sifu Herb Parran** brings the ancient art of Tai Chi to Community Women Against Hardship's Parent Opportunities Program.

This class, held on Mondays from 6:00pm – 7:00pm, uses gentle flowing movements to help individuals reduce the stresses of today's busy lifestyles and aids in improving their health.

Some health conditions may include:

- Reducing anxiety and depression
- Improving balance, flexibility and muscle strength
- Reducing falls in older adults
- Improving sleep quality
- Lowering blood pressure
- Improving cardiovascular fitness in older adults



*Pictured above: Sifu Herb Parran and Dr. Dale Anderson, psychiatrist along with students.*

## Save The Date

Plan to join us Saturday, May 16, 2015 at Tower Grove Park – Son of Rest Shelter for our 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Walk Athon and Health Fair.

This is always a fun filled event for children and adults of all ages. Prepare to bring your entire family and share in the many invaluable resources we have on hand, provided by the wonderful vendors that will be on site.

If you would like more information on sponsorship opportunities, forming a team or becoming a vendor, give us a call today.

(314) 289-7523

**11<sup>th</sup> Annual Walk -A-thon and  
Health Fair  
Tower Grove Park  
May 16, 2015**



## Mass Media & Journalism

The main focus of Community Women Against Hardship Youth Enrichment Programs is to bring focus to areas of learning that many of our families do not garner in school. We attempt to create a hands on environment where they might be encouraged to broaden their critical thinking skills.

Our instructors are the finest in their fields, who have committed themselves to providing expertise

and resources to our programs and services. Lois Ingrum, President and CEO of L.D. Ingrum Gallery & Studio Inc. a photography and art studio, took time out of her busy schedule to teach an eight week session about Mass Media & Journalism.

The students were engaged in news reporting, research script writing, reading texts, and recording as a news reporter.

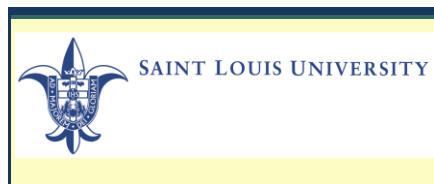


## SLU Community Service Day

Students give it their all, as they come together to help the community.

We always look forward to a great group of young people from Saint Louis University, who come our way to help with the grounds, spruce up the Transitional House,

clean and reorganize wherever needed, and so willing to give back to the community.

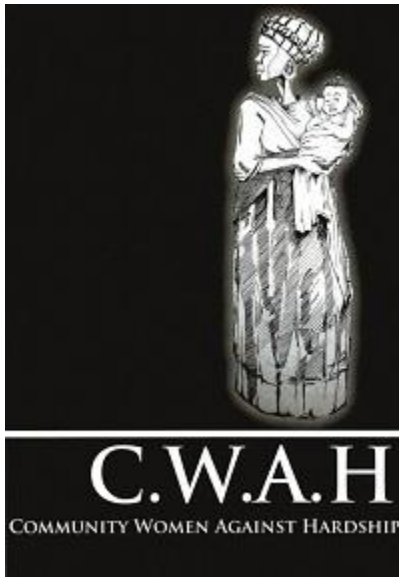


## The “Scrooge”

There’s nothing more heartening than being able to share your gifts with another generation of young musicians. Jerome “Scrooge” Harris is far from being parsimonious when it comes to sharing his gifts with the next generation of young drummers. It takes a lot of patience to work

with young children, and who better than the man with the patience of Job, when it comes to teaching beginner drum lessons. While they are busily trying to outdo one another, his gentle approach keeps them focused and encourages them to do their individual best.





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*Providing Hope For Those In Need*

We're on the Web!

[www.cwah.org](http://www.cwah.org)

## Community Women Against Hardship Celebrates Black History Month

Community Women Against Hardship, Inc. (CWAH) is delighted to welcome the return of premier Jazz vocalist Mary Stallings to headline their annual Jazz Celebration in Black History at *Jazz at the Bistro*, on Sunday, February 15, 2015 at 6:00p.m. (Doors open at 5:00p.m.) There will be a special performance by our students from the Institute of Jazz Study and Performance at 5:15pm. This charitable benefit concert is sponsored by **Centene Corporation**.

Ms. Stallings will be joined by outstanding pianist David W. Udolf and virtuoso musicians

Jerome "Scrooge" Harris – drums, Eric Slaughter – guitar and Jeffrey Anderson – bass. Their resumes total approximately a century of performance experience, throughout the U.S. and beyond.

Ms. Stallings was called "The Best Jazz Singer Alive Today" by the New York Times." Her extensive career includes an early stint with Count Basie and later work with Ben Webster, Cal Tjader, Earl Hines and Dizzy Gillespie. Her suave, alluring vocals have won her both rave notices and a lasting following among lovers of Jazz vocal stylings.

***All Proceeds benefit CWAH's Programs and Services.***

*All tickets available via the Jazz St. Louis Box Office 3536 Washington, St. Louis, MO 63103 – (314) 571-6001  
Mon. – Fri., 10am – 5pm and Saturdays, 2pm – 10pm  
Or online by visiting: [www.jazzstl.org](http://www.jazzstl.org)  
\$1.50 fee added to purchases by phone or online  
Checks can also be written to Jazz St. Louis*

