

Rising Strong

Community Women Against Hardship

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2016 Winter Edition



Kenya Webster seems like the kind of person I'd like to have by my side in a street brawl . . . one who, when finding herself face down on the sidewalk, will reassess, shake it off, and come up swinging, fully aware that more punches might follow. Author Brene' Brown in her book by the same name, calls it "*Rising Strong*".

Quite simply, it's living with the understanding that each of us will at times in our lives find ourselves face down on the mat. The measure of our character -- and our success -- is based on our willingness to "rumble" with our failures and the stories we tell ourselves, and come back fighting.

Over the years I've written numerous articles for CWAH about the courageous women who've sought assistance through the program. While each woman's story is unique and special to her, the framework of their success is formulaic -- a combination of time, tenacity, education and faith. For Kenya, one of her greatest challenges surfaced when she was laid off from her job with the Bank of America.

For two years she was unable to find work. With unpaid bills piling up, the pressure of feeding and maintaining an acceptable living for herself and her three sons grew daily. Her dream of one day owning a home took a back seat to survival. "I think I was in a state of depression," says Kenya. "This wasn't my destiny . . . scrounging for food at food pantries; trying to find free school supplies for my boys."

She began implementing the educational piece of the formula by returning to school. Her success in that arena -- the Dean's list and a job with the National Archives of Records gave her the necessary confidence to keep going. But it didn't last long. The job was contingent upon her being in school. The success of graduation was diminished by the loss of a job . . . another fall to the mat.

Face down once again, Kenya reflected on the thing she wanted most in her life: to give her kids a home. "I realized I couldn't move the way I wanted to in the space that I occupied." Habitat for Humanity was a program she had previously considered, but her credit rating was too low and her debt ratio too high. "I had applied in 1994 and been turned down. I tried again in 1998 with the same results." It was time for more education.

"When I'm down, education has been the key to getting myself together . . . it's how I get back up," says Kenya. CWAH was instrumental in providing that education. The Financial Literacy Program gave her the framework she needed to get "credit-ready" for home ownership; Fitness and Health classes gave her the physical stamina to keep going; and Soup for the Soul provided the support of sisterhood and the ability to look truthfully at herself and share her challenges with women who were in similar situations. She's currently working on her Bachelor's Degree in Social Work at UMSL.

Not only did the classes at

CWAH benefit her but her sons as well. They participated in Job Readiness, Career Assessment, Jewelry Making, Youth Enrichment classes; Engineering and Youth Entrepreneurship classes and had an opportunity to travel to Alabama and study the Civil Rights Movement during the summer program.

She submitted her third application to Habitat for Humanity and moved into her new 4-bedroom/ 2 bath home in November of last year. "It was wonderful to see that my struggles hadn't been in vain and to see my kids succeed," says Kenya. She and her sons participated in the actual building of their new home.

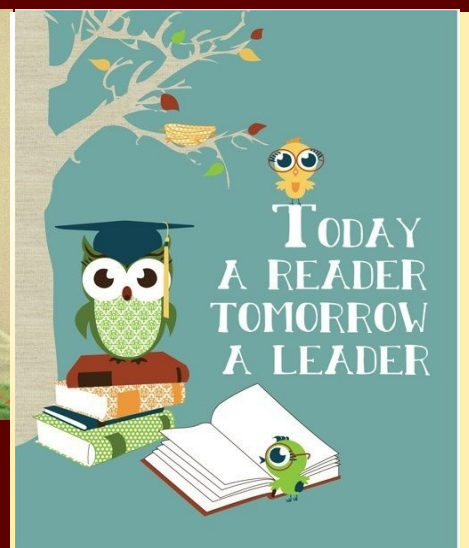
Her advice to others: Try to have faith. Believe in your ability to do better. Set goals, educate yourself on how to achieve them; and don't give up. Sounds like the perfect formula for Rising Strong. Are you ready to rumble?

By: Gwen Swan

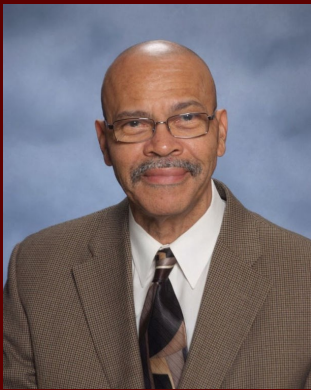


Now Enrolling

- Soup for The Soul
- Tai Chi
- Fine Arts
- Institute for Jazz Study and Performance
- Career Assessment & Counseling
- Health & Wellness for Youth



Estate of Leon Henderson donates to CWAH Library



grams that are designed to build better parent and youth relationships, improve health and nutritional outlooks, and to enhance academic achievement and / employability falls in line with the same values Leon worked for.

We shall cherish his memory by continuing to encourage our families to learn of our history, value it and contribute to it, by living life to their full potential.

Leon Henderson former Board Member, and long time supporter of Community Women Against Hardship passed away after a long battle with ALS, January 3, 2016. He was the epitome of a true servant in the community. His dedication and commitment to helping young people reach their full potential in life has left an unforgettable mark in the hearts and minds of many.

Like Marcus Garvey, Leon believed "History is the land mark by which we are directed into the true course of life", and it was with that same passion he instilled it into the minds of his students in his Leadership classes daily.

CWAH's commitment to providing educational and developmental pro-



Byron Rodgers, pictured above with students from the Creative Minds class. Students worked on printmaking with still life images.



"It's Our Region Fund"



SMALL CHANGE, BIG IMPACT is an initiative of the RBC's It's Our Region Fund to reach non-profits and community agencies in the St. Louis region that have difficulty funding small but important capital improvement projects. Pictured above Antonio Veal and son of Michelangelo Painting company completes the work on outside and inside of building. Great Job!



Upcoming Events

Charitable Benefit Concert

Featuring

Bethany Pickens

Daughter of Legendary Jazz Pianist Willie Pickens

Sponsored by Centene Charitable Foundation

Sunday, February 21, 2016

6:00 p.m.

Doors open at 5:00 p.m.

Tickets \$45

Joining Ms. Pickens on stage;
Mr. Jeffrey Anderson on Bass, Jerome "Scrooge" Harris, on Drums, and
the Songstress herself, Ms. Anita Jackson.

For More Information

Jazz St. Louis Box Office
3536 Washington, St. Louis MO 63103
314-571-6000

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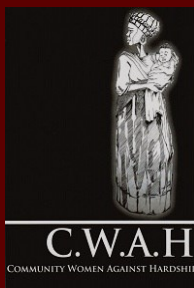
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PROVIDING HOPE FOR THOSE IN NEED