



Lift Up Your Heart

A newsletter of the

WOMEN'S RESPITE PROGRAM

Volume 29, Issue 2

Fall 2025

Sponsored by the Sisters of St. Francis at Stella Niagara, NY

The Women's Respite Program provides women in need with opportunities for rest and renewal in a safe, comfortable and healing environment.

We have programs for mothers with low income, women with cancer, grandmothers raising their grandchildren, and women raising children on the autism spectrum.

The Women's Respite Program has the honor of hosting scores of women each year. In the process, there are scores of people who help us to fulfill our mission—donors, including foundations, volunteers on the scene and behind the scenes, the people who run the Center of Renewal, and the Sisters of St. Francis who allow us to use their facilities. All these relationships are important and proof that we are all connected in a web of kindness and compassion.

We give thanks for you reading this and for all these relationships. They nourish us, and we hope they nourish you, too. Have a peaceful Thanksgiving.

Giving Thanks



Can we throw a party, or what?



The Respite Program hosted a retirement party for Sister Diane (far right) and lots of you came! We enjoyed good food (thank you, Jill and team at Personal Touch Catering!) and good jazz (thank you, Equinox!), as well as honoring Sister Diane. Thanks to all who helped and all who came!

Refreshing Bodies ● Restoring Hopes ● Renewing Spirits

Weekend programs, June and September

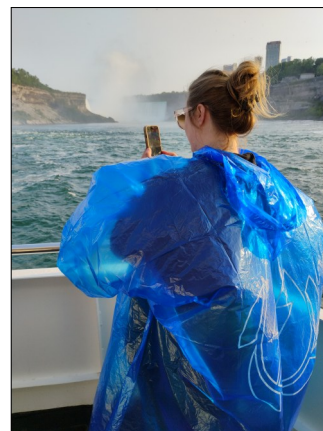
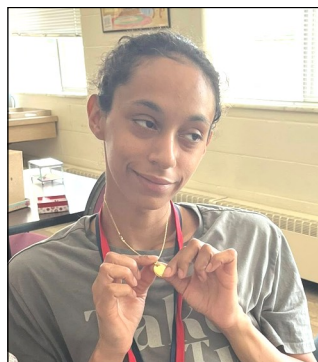
Typically, the women do arts & crafts (watercolors below), enjoy Playback Theatre (bottom left), and in summer, take a trip on the Maid of the Mist.



"This is an amazing event where moms are struggling so hard to cope with their own feelings as well as helping their kids. Here, we can connect, share, relax, and have fun."



"Amazing solid sleep with no interruptions! All the laughing has made me feel so light!"

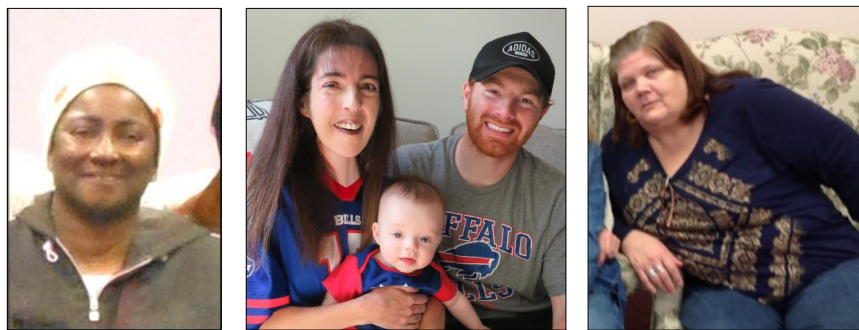


Final comments:

"Just 'thank you.' You can't know how much this means to us. You are appreciated."



Grant them peace



Grief and gratitude are kindred souls, each pointing to the beauty of what is transient and given to us by grace.

Patricia Campbell Carlson

Over the past months, we have lost loved ones. In the far right corner is Sue Seagrave who liked to call herself the “bag lady” as, over the years, she sowed hundreds of tote bags as gifts for the women we host. As you read this, you may remember receiving such a bag. Maybe you still use it. Sue would love that.

Crystal McLearn (middle) is seen here with her son Josh and her grandson Levi who was the light of her too-short life. Crystal had a form of cancer for many years which led to really difficult-to-manage complications, but manage them she did. She had tremendous determination to live her life as fully as possible.

Angela Hill, far left, came to the program over many years until her health failed her a few years ago. Typically, she wore glasses so she looks a little different here. She was a quiet woman with a big heart.

These women loved the Respite Program, and we loved them in return. Rest in peace beautiful ladies.

Grant us peace

Peace of mind, that is. The peace of mind that comes from knowing our finances are secure, and we can continue to focus on our mission.

We are pleased to share that the Women’s Respite Program has been awarded a generous \$10,000 grant from the New Era Foundation. This funding will directly support our mission of providing rest, renewal, and supportive services to women.

This year and every year, the Providence Fund grants us a large sum that has been the backbone to our work.

We also received grants from the Curatolo Foundation and from the Amico Memorial Trust.

We are so grateful to these foundations for recognizing the importance of our work and for partnering with us to empower women on their journeys of healing and resilience.

We should certainly count our blessings, but we should also make our blessings count.

Neal A. Maxwell

Respite Program alum Gerldine Wilson read the poem she wrote for the occasion of S. Diane’s retirement at her party. We give you excerpts here. The poem is too long to print in its entirety with our limited space.

In 36 years you’ve planted
So, so many seeds
Changed a lot of lives
met a lot of needs.

... the need to be acknowledged
and know that someone cares.
The seeds which you have sown
are growing everywhere.

Now observe the seeds,
so many years you have sown
Look around this room.
See.
how your seeds have grown.

Do you see your garden?
those seeds planted with such care?
Are now beautiful flowers
growing everywhere.

Stay in touch! Send us your new contact info.

Women’s Respite Program

197 Argonne Drive ■ Kenmore, NY 14217

716-246-2065

womensrespite@yahoo.com ■ womensrespite.org

facebook.com/stellawomensrespite



Schedule for 2026

- Feb 20 – 22 — Women with cancer
- March 20 – 22 — Alums from summer programs
- April 10 – 12 — Grandmothers raising their grandchildren
- June 12 – 14 — Mothers with low income, at least 25 yrs old
- Sept 25 – 27 — Women raising a child on the autism spectrum

If you know an eligible woman, please encourage her to apply. We give priority to women with low income, but it is not an absolute requirement, except when stated explicitly.



Stay-for-One-Night Offer

If you'd like some quiet time to yourself for a day and a night, the Respite Program continues to offer our alums access to the Center of Renewal (COR) for an overnight stay. We will cover the cost of a room for one night and up to four (4) meals. If you'd like to extend your stay, you can pay for any additional costs.

Two or three alums can come together. If you come with someone who has not attended a Respite Program, she will have to pay for her own expenses. The Program may be able to help with transportation.

This is NOT a Respite Program; you will have to entertain yourself. There is wifi and of course the beautiful grounds for walking. We recommend making a reservation at least two weeks in advance. You can stay during the week or on the weekend as long as COR has a room. To make a reservation, call Teresa at 716/877-6896.