



BUMMER OF A SUMMER LAUNCHES PROGRAMMING TURN-AROUND

By Jennifer Walden

Given COVID-19, NOSW's programming got off to a rocky start this summer. We had difficulties recruiting for our community-based courses. Then came the cancellation of our November 2020 residential program. Staff members were concerned that our service work would cease for the remainder of the year. A devastating prospect!

We didn't stew too long over this negative possibility, though. Very quickly our hearts and minds turned to wondering how all our graduates were coping with the societal changes brought about by the global pandemic—and how we could

offer support to them. This focus led to the creation of two new graduate-centered programs.

Our **Graduate Support Group** now meets weekly via Zoom on Wednesdays to talk about individual struggles and share celebrations with one another. It is facilitated by staff counselor and graduate engagement coordinator, Jimmie Lewis. (See article below.) She has a keen insight into the anxieties that many women are experiencing in these uncertain times.

To keep these meetings engaging, we began a book club with participants to form the agenda on alternating weeks. Our first selection was best-selling author Adriana Trigiani's *Big Stone Gap*, in homage to her support of NOSW's mission and fundraising efforts. An online conversation is planned with the author in October.

Our second graduate-focused program, **Healthy Habits**, meets twice a week via Zoom and emphasizes healthy lifestyle choices. Programming staff all

take part offering supports, tips and strategies for smoking cessation and prioritizing nutrition in one's diet.

Offering a meeting space for graduates seeking to build healthy habits was an easy and organic progression. It is based on feedback from residential session participants that our program focus on healthy lifestyles was very valuable. Our Healthy Habits program offers a way of going deeper and pushing conversations further about the holistic approach to wellness that NOSW's regular programming model promotes.

Technology platforms like the graduate Facebook group page and the video conferencing site, Zoom, have provided new platforms for outreach in an era of physical and social distancing. Tools like these are keeping our services relevant as we all adapt to a changed pandemic environment. 



Zoom: New Look at NOSW. This screen shot of a Zoom session is typical of how staff and graduates interact in new graduate program offerings.

If you are a NOSW graduate who would like to participate in one of these Zoom programs, contact:

Jennifer Walden
jwalden@nosw.org
859-985-7200.

JIMMIE LEWIS—THE NEW RAGE

By Jacinda Townsend

Jimmie Lewis is now onboard at NOSW as the new RAGE Coordinator. RAGE stands for Recruitment, Assessment and Graduate Engagement. She is no stranger to NOSW.

Jimmie first learned about NOSW when working with the Christian Appalachian Project in the early 1990s. "I saw the impact of their commitment to

women and families in Appalachia," she says. "I did my first session as NOSW's clinical counselor in June of 2014."

Jimmie, in private practice since 2012, became attracted to the mental health field because "it's about understanding and helping facilitate new understandings," she says. "When I was younger, I thought people

simply made good or bad decisions. After my first paraprofessional assignment I began to understand it's not that simple—children and adults go through major trauma."

What attracted her to working with NOSW is its commitment to women and families in Appalachia. Jimmie grew up in Berea, and her mother grew

See Jimmie Lewis on page 2.

NOSW NEWSLETTER

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CALENDAR

While regular programming is on hold due to the pandemic, Zoom programming proceeds! Contact Jennifer Walden at jwalden@nosw.org or 859-985-7200.

MORE NEW STAFF

Jacinda Townsend first encountered NOSW while serving as the Appalachian Writer in Residence at Berea College. In that capacity she coordinated a service-learning day with NOSW alumni.

"I learned then just what miraculous work the school does," she says, "and I'm incredibly proud to now be supporting its mission in a more direct way."

Jacinda, NOSW's new development/communications coordinator, brings a wealth of experience as a professor, attorney and journalist. She has worked with underserved communities of women, both domestically and internationally, including a year of teaching at the Indiana Women's Prison and on-site work with anti-slavery activists in Mauritania.

"NOSW fills a critical niche in helping Appalachian women reinvent themselves and become forces in their communities," she says. "I'm excited to tell NOSW's story far and wide." 

From the Executive Director IT'S ALL SERENDIPITY!

As a staff we joke about the word *serendipity*. I confess to using it a lot over these past several months—and even prior to COVID-19. But now it is really appropriate!

In the midst of what will go down as one of the most challenging years in our nation's history, the New Opportunity School for Women has been blessed beyond measure and will come through to the other side stronger, more adaptive and with greater capacity to serve. Serendipity!

Because of the long friendship of two very compassionate, engaged women who shared a philanthropic interest in NOSW, we received two huge legacy gifts early this year. We featured a thank you to Marge Keller last issue. This issue we thank her friend, Miriam Stambaugh.

Because of the generosity of these women and their commitment to our mission, we were able this spring to hire a much-needed Development and Communications Coordinator, Jacinda Townsend. This hire was part of our long-range plan, but these legacy gifts enabled us to hire more quickly than we anticipated.

We were also able to fill a programming staff vacancy with Jimmie Lewis, a clinical counselor who had served for a number of years on our residential program team.

Jacinda Townsend and Jimmie Lewis bring a wealth of talent and new energy. Such a development in

the midst of pandemic is certainly serendipity.

During the past several months, through the generosity of so many foundations, individuals and organizations, NOSW has been able to:

- purchase a new vehicle to transport staff and participants across our multi-county service area.
- research and identify a new client-tracking system (something NOSW did not have prior to this year).
- implement a new donor software system and integrated financial system that will help us grow.
- update organizational policies and procedures.
- develop and implement on-going graduate virtual training sessions, a new initiative of the New Opportunity School for Women.
- lend computers to graduates and program participants for educational and professional purposes.
- network graduates in a more formal way through ongoing virtual support sessions.
- build technical capacity so we can hold virtual sessions in communities in the future.



It is all serendipity!

With a grateful heart,

JIMMIE LEWIS—THE NEW RAGE

Continued from page 1.

up in Southeastern Kentucky. "My maternal history is a reflection of the struggles that women and families have long faced throughout the region."

In her new role at NOSW, Jimmie looks forward to networking and identifying regional community partners to support NOSW's work in two ways:

- First, to build a recruitment base in participants' home counties.
- Second, to identify people willing

to partner with the women when they return home after an NOSW program.

A delight to everyone in our office, Jimmie often bikes to work—and she has an uncanny talent for making the call of a pileated woodpecker.

Whether in her work with our program participants or graduates, Jimmie Lewis is a point at which passion meets skill. NOSW is fortunate indeed to have her expertise. 

OVERFLOWING GRATITUDE

By Jennifer Walden

The new van pictured at right is just one of the many reasons NOSW is overflowing with gratitude.

Robbie mentions other reasons in her column where she lists all the things that have been accomplished in past months because of the generosity of foundations, organizations and individuals. Here are some of the donors who made that list possible:

- **Jim Collison** (through a donation in memory of this wife, Valerie).
- the **Catholic Diocese of Lexington** for securing a grant for NOSW computers.
- **One Hundred Women** for accelerating their gift due to Covid.
- **St. Joseph Hospital** for donating brand new much-needed office furniture.
- **Moving Forward Together** for funding for a new donor database (in addition to help with the new minivan).
- **PNC Bank**, a generous new supporter.

Special thanks also go to NOSW graduate **Amanda Gadd**, who

worked wonders to make NOSW offices look bright and cozy by painting walls and helping to reorganize work spaces. She is a regular session staff member who helps with meals and transportation.

ANOTHER LEGACY GIFT

The summer newsletter reported a major gift from the estate of Majorie Keller. On the heels of that gift, NOSW received another major legacy gift from the estate of her long-time friend, **Miriam Stambaugh**. Miriam, a registered nurse like Marge, passed away earlier this year. She first became known to NOSW when she made a gift to NOSW in memory of her friend



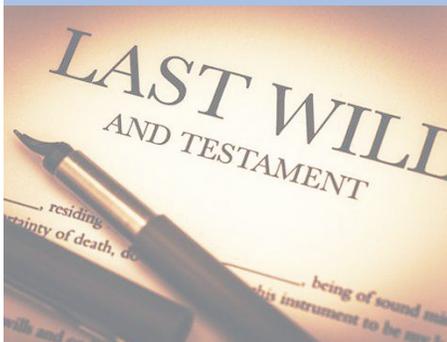
New Wheels for NOSW. Beaming staff members (Jennifer Walden, Robbie Pentecost and Jacinda Thompson) are thinking of all the ways this new Toyota minivan will enhance NOSW's mission. Its purchase was made possible because of generous support from **The Honorable Order of Kentucky Colonels, The Thompson Charitable Foundation and Moving Forward Together.**

when she passed away two years before.

As Robbie reported in her column, these two gifts from friends enabled NOSW to implement one of the key strategies of its long-range plan, to build capacity through adding a staff member focus on development and communications. 

REMEMBER NOSW IN YOUR WILL

For information on how you can leave a legacy to continue the mission of the New Opportunity School for Women, contact Executive Director Robbie Pentecost, at rpentecost@nosw.org or 859-985-7200.



NOSW RISES TO COVID CHALLENGE

Continued from back page.

“We’d been having discussions for years about seeking funding and development for a train-the-trainer program,” says Robbie, referring to NOSW’s vision of offering fee-based training to staff in other agencies who want to incorporate NOSW’s three-day community-based programming model to support their own mission. “Now we have the time and technology to plan creative ways to implement such an endeavor.”

long needed to do,” says Jimmie Lewis, RAGE coordinator. For example, the graduate surveys have been revamped and the employee handbook is being revised.

“The temporary break in programming has granted us the time and opportunity to come back post-pandemic from a position of strength,” says Jimmie.

While everyone at NOSW misses the laughter, the camaraderie and the

“The break in programming has granted us the time and opportunity to come back post-pandemic from a position of strength.” –Jimmie Lewis

Another benefit of the pandemic lockdown has been relative quiet in the NOSW offices, which has provided mental space to revise and create policies and procedures as well as programming goals. “This was a wonderful opportunity to do all the internal housekeeping that we’ve

love of in-person sessions, staff is still finding ways to be in community with one another, whether through Zoom meetings or socially-distanced office visits. “We look forward to hugging soon,” says Robbie. “In the meantime, we are discovering new ways to bridge the physical distance.” 

We work to improve the financial, educational and personal circumstances of low-income women in the Appalachian region.

NOSW RISES TO COVID CHALLENGE

By Jacinda Townsend

NOSW's mission was challenged to its core when the coronavirus hit Kentucky this past March and Governor Beshear put the state into lockdown.

"So much of what we do is about intimacy," says Executive Director Robbie Pentecost. "Introducing new experiences and defining personal space is best done in community. Now, we have to nurture that kind of commitment from afar."

"We kept being hopeful that we'd have programming in person because we know the value of that," says Program Director Jennifer Walden. "And yet we couldn't do that and be safe. The biggest challenge was letting go of expectations."

But NOSW has risen to that challenge with new expectations and innovative ways to overcome

the barrier to face-to-face programming. (See *Programming "Turn-Around"* on page 1.)

One solution quickly implemented was to use Zoom to reach out and provide support to graduates. The new Graduate Support Group now meets on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

NOSW has also loaned laptops and remote hotspots to graduates who are working on college degrees or seeking employment during this challenging time.

"It's really exciting to me that



Former NOSW graduates in photos lining the hallway were all that Executive Director Robbie Pentecost had to keep her company most days with staff working from home due to the pandemic.

instead of just looking to recruit new participants, we're able to mine our graduates and invite them to join our journey forward. We're maintaining those intimate connections with online programming, going further and deeper with goal-setting and motivational planning," says Jennifer.

See *NOSW Rises* on page 3.