



One Woman's NOSW Journey

'I ARRIVED SCARED TO DEATH...BUT LEFT KNOWING I AM ENOUGH'

By Tarri Bozard, Class of Spring 2020

When I was asked to reflect on my experience at the New Opportunity School for Woman residential program, I thought, oh, this will be simple. Boy was I wrong!

The contrast between the Tarri before the program and the Tarri now is like night and day.

In January 2020 I was presented with the idea of attending NOSW by the director of the battered women's shelter where I resided. I must say, I didn't really have high expectations. I had been a victim of abuse in one form or another for 49 years. Life had taught me that this was what I deserved and all I could ever expect. Through the encouragement of the shelter and my daughter, I reluctantly applied and, to my amazement, was accepted.

I arrived in Berea on Feb. 22, 2020, scared to death. Honestly, my only desire was to return home as quickly as possible. Two weeks seemed like a lifetime. Though my life was in shambles, sadly, it was my comfort zone.

When I was warmly greeted by NOSW staff, I thought, "Okay, maybe this won't be so bad."

The schedule was rigid and, at times, I thought it was ridiculous. But the knowledge I gained was absolutely priceless. I learned that the fact that negative opinions showered me all my life does not make them true. My past mistakes do not define who I am today—or what my future will be. Simply put, I am enough!

I learned I am capable of forming positive friendships, and I finally had a powerful support system. I learned coping skills for when the "ugly" shows up, and that it is really all about mindfulness and balance.

Through all the lessons and skills I learned, I suddenly realized that I now have self-esteem—something that was totally missing in my life until now. I am able to make better, healthier choices.

Now, two weeks doesn't seem like a long time. But during this two-week



Tarri Bozard, receiving her diploma at graduation from the Spring 2020 NOSW residential program, stands between NOSW staff Mary Lewis and Robbie Pentecost.

program the knowledge gained was a lifetime of learning.

I am so grateful to everyone that makes this program possible. My life today isn't perfect, but I have the skills to deal with the difficult challenges that occur. I no longer have to fly into a self-destructive tailspin. I also know how to stop the cycle of abuse for future generations. 

Family Voices

A DAUGHTER NOW SEES HER MOTHER AS A 'WOMAN WITH POWER AND VOICE'

By Jennifer Walden

It's not just the women whose lives change by participating in an NOSW program. Our staff recently spoke with family members of several NOSW graduates about how our programs impact their lives as well. This is the second in a series of Family Voices.

It took over a decade of trying for Amanda Gadd to finally attend the New Opportunity School for Women. But after finally participating and

graduating in the Spring of 2019, Amanda had such an appreciation for the transformative power of the program, she committed herself to bringing the experience to others.

After attending the graduate retreat that same year, Amanda soon became an irreplaceable member of the NOSW team. She served as house sister for the Fall 2019 and Spring 2020 residential sessions. Recent NOSW grads know Amanda as the

ultra-organized team member that kept their time schedules locked down and provided beautiful heart-healthy salads at every shared meal.

But her daughter, Sarah Fields, has a new, even more endearing image of the woman she calls "Mommy." "I have always known that she is courageous, strong, gifted and powerful, says Sarah. "But somehow NOSW taught her to own those

See A Daughter Now Sees on page 2.

NOSW NEWSLETTER

This newsletter is published three times a year: Winter/ Spring, Summer and Fall.

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Executive Director

Editor: Karen Hurley

Design/Production:
Tricia Sarvak

Board President:
Christie Green

Trustees: Mary Absher, Sam Cole, Leslie Combs, Karen Hurley, Anna Lake, Kelsie Madden, Bridget McCormack-Finley, Lauren Skiles, Leslie Smart, Betsy Whaley

CALENDAR

Please watch our Website for ongoing changes in relation to COVID-19 and our desire to save lives.

JUNE 22–24

Three-Day Session
Laurel County (London)

JULY 13–15

Three-Day Session
Berea/Rockcastle County
(Berea, KY)

JULY 27–29

Three-Day Session
Hopes Wings (Richmond)

AUGUST 10–12

Three-Day Session
Clark County (Winchester)

AUGUST 28–31

Graduate Leadership Retreat

SEPTEMBER 14–16

Three-Day Session
Clay County (Manchester)

OCTOBER 3

Graduate Reunion

OCTOBER 10–24

Two-Week Residential Session
(Berea)

From the Executive Director

TRANSFORMING AND BELIEVING...DURING THE PANDEMIC

Experiencing a major transformation is a primary goal for all our sessions. Now all of us are experiencing a total societal transformation thanks to COVID-19. Opportunities for transformation abound.

We are reminded again and again, by our governor and local leaders, that “We will get through this together.” When I hear this, I am reminded of the value of community—which is so essential to our work at the New Opportunity School for Women.

Daily, we are all encouraged to do two things: transform our normal routines and believe we can do this because we are doing it together.

The “doing it together” has taken on some new forms with the pandemic, but transformation proceeds nonetheless!

The hallways of our offices at the New Opportunity School for Women are now quiet as each staff member has transitioned to working from home (most of the time). But working we are—to ensure that transformation continues!

We are...

- reaching out to our graduates, donors and partners to keep connected.
- transforming our communication systems at the office to be more

mobile-friendly.

- envisioning new ways to offer our programming.
- staying in touch with our community-based sites to either reschedule or confirm. (Our April and May sessions scheduled for Berea and for Rockcastle County are now going to be combined and held in late July.)
- providing resources for those graduates who are working from home (e.g., computers).
- seeking new funding partnerships.
- learning new technology and formats to hold meetings and trainings. (Zoom has become our best friend.)
- Communicating important COVID-19 information to all graduates.

COVID-19 has totally turned our lives upside down. What I hope you will always remember is this: Each of you (whether a graduate, a donor or a partner who supports our mission) is part of the NOSW community that makes it possible for all of us to get through this together—transformed!



Stay safe!
With a grateful heart...

A DAUGHTER NOW SEES HER MOTHER ANEW!

Continued from page 1.

things for herself.”

The transformation that Sarah witnessed in her mother inspired Sarah to give back to the NOSW residential program as well by volunteering her expertise in beauty techniques. She has offered instructional courses in hair care and makeup application for the residential program participants.

Sarah’s classes not only offer fantastic information that participants so much appreciate. But her light-hearted, feel-good sessions also make for lasting memories as women come to bond while being showered with hair and makeup accessories and plenty

of positive affirmation. (Participants show off many of these acquired makeup and hair skills on graduation day.)



Sarah Fields (left) with her mom, **Amanda Gadd**, a 2019 NOSW graduate.

Sarah remembers fondly Amanda’s graduation day: “The confidence she showed on March 9, 2019, as she held her head up and gave a speech, is something I will never forget and always be thankful for.”

'I AM NOT A NOBODY': NEW BOOK BY NOSW FOUNDER

The latest book by NOSW founder Jane Stephenson, *I Am Not a Nobody: Stories of Courageous Appalachian Women and Their Journeys with the New Opportunity School for Women*, has become a popular selection for many book clubs around the region.

Over 925 Appalachian women have graduated from life-changing New Opportunity School for Women programs in Kentucky, North Carolina, and Virginia/West Virginia. In *I Am Not a Nobody*, Jane

introduces us to 11 of these women who courageously share their difficult and painful stories of abuse, addiction, poverty, limited education, drugs and early marriage.



They also share their life-changing journeys with NOSW where they became empowered to believe in themselves and their values and abilities and gained the courage to succeed for themselves and their families. Here is what some of these women say about their NOSW experience:

Elizabeth: “Just know you are alive for a reason.... You are not a nobody. You do matter, and you are important. I really don't think I would be where I am today, if not for the New Opportunity School.

Yvonne: “With the NOSW as my support team, they helped me on the road to college.”

Barbara: “The greatest thing about the New Opportunity School is that they build up your self-esteem. They make you feel good about yourself.”

Brandi: “When I came to the New Opportunity School, it really helped me to connect with people again and not feel alone....”

Born in the mountains of North Carolina, Jane Stephenson came to Kentucky in 1966 and moved to Berea when her late husband, John Stephenson, became president of Berea College in 1984. She founded the New Opportunity School for Women in 1987. Stephenson is also the author of *Changing Lives* and *Courageous Paths*.

To purchase a copy—or multiple copies for your book club—call NOSW at 859-985-7200 or email info@nosw.org. There is a discount for NOSW graduates.

MARGE KELLER: A LIFE OF SERVICE, A NOSW LEGACY

In mid-April NOSW received a large gift from the estate of Marjorie (Marge) Keller, a long-time donor to the New Opportunity School for Women. Marge Keller died in 2018 in Lexington at the age of 89.

This type of unexpected gift is always a blessing to a small non-profit like NOSW, says Executive Director Robbie Pentecost. But during this time of so much uncertainty due to COVID-19, “This gift will undergird our efforts to support low-income women across Kentucky,” Robbie emphasizes.

Marge Keller went from attending a one-room school in Connecticut to earning a doctorate in nursing science from Indiana University. She

taught nursing at several universities including the University of Kentucky from which she retired in 1991. Her work teaching nursing and public health took her to every state except Hawaii. She also taught and volunteered in 26 countries.

NOSW founder Jane Stephenson penned this memory upon finding out about Marge's generous estate gift:

I knew Marge first from our days at UK. Then, when we started NOSW, she would bring women from South America to visit with us because she hoped these women would be inspired to do something similar when they went back home. She spent her life focusing on relationships between the United

States and South America. Even after retiring from UK, she continued her work with women in South America.

“NOSW certainly celebrates the life of this amazing woman,” says Robbie, who never had the opportunity to meet Marge personally.



Marjorie Keller

Marge loved books and was a life-long learner. She also took creative writing classes and wrote her autobiography, detailed accounts of her travels as well as creative and fanciful stories.

Marge also bequeathed to NOSW a large collection of her writings. Robbie hopes to eventually share these writings with the women NOSW serves. She says, “They will serve as a source of encouragement for our graduates to write their own accounts of their life journeys.”

REMEMBER NOSW IN YOUR WILL

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

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

A Fond Farewell

By Jennifer Walden

COVID-19 has triggered many changes in families and organizations. The NOSW team is no exception. We are sad to announce the loss of one of our beloved team members, Program Manager Mary Lewis, during these turbulent times.

Mary has family members who are at a higher risk from the coronavirus. Because she wants to keep them all safe and healthy, out of an abundance of caution, she resigned her position in April to spend more time at home with her beautiful children, Chloe (12) and baby Liam (1).

Mary will be missed. Thanks for the indelible mark you leave and for being a part of the NOSW team!

FORMER NOSW GRADS TURN OUT TO SUPPORT NEW SPRING 2020 GRADS



See page 1 inside for new grad Tarri Bozard's personal reflection on "the contrast between the Tarri before the program and the Tarri now!"

NO Festival of Trees IN 2020!

NOSW is postponing this year's Festival of Trees until 2021 given the challenges faced as a result of COVID-19! Please stay tuned for plans for 2021.