



## VOLUNTEER PUTS HER ORGANIZING SKILLS TO WORK AT NOSW

*By Karen Hurley & Jennifer Walden*

Kathy Barr has been a weekly volunteer with the New Opportunity School for Women for three years. Before retiring from her position as external affairs coordinator for the College of Business and Technology at Eastern Kentucky University, Kathy explored volunteer options, looking for a place that would value her expertise. NOSW is where she landed!

Kathy first heard of NOSW years ago when a friend's niece attended the NOSW residential program, and she had kept NOSW in mind ever since.

When her friend, Sister Robbie Pentecost, became executive director of NOSW in 2017, Kathy told her she'd be happy to devote some time to the organization once she was free from her work responsibilities. Robbie and Kathy had worked together

years before at AMERC (the Appalachian Ministries Educational Resource Center).

Robbie remembered that offer! So, shortly after Kathy's retirement, Robbie rolled her right into a volunteer position at NOSW.

After a career in which she had lots of responsibility and a high level of stress, she was eager to use her organizational skills in a less stressful environment to support others in a mission she believed in.

Kathy's volunteer duties focus on administrative assistance of all types,



**Kathy Barr volunteers weekly at NOSW.**

from organizing files to formatting organizational policies and procedures. "She is a jack of all trades," says Robbie, "and master of many!"

Program Coordinator Jennifer Walden is especially grateful for her help in keeping staff organized and better able to serve those seeking NOSW support. "Our team is made better by her presence and all her experience," says Jennifer.

Kathy says her work at NOSW is very rewarding. She sees her weekly trips to Berea from her home in Richmond as opportunities to engage with others who support women in realizing they are okay just the way they are—something it took her a while to discover in her own life. She enjoys "watching women blossom and become articulate architects of their newly found lives." ☑

## FAMILY OF 2000 GRADUATE EMBODIES NOSW RIPPLE EFFECT

*By Jennifer Walden*

Family support for NOSW graduates has a cyclical pattern: by supporting loved ones participating in the program, outcomes are improved, and the program is strengthened in turn by those successes.

Some of the women who participate in the New Opportunity School for Women's residential program arrive having been involved in mentally, physically or emotionally abusive intimate partnerships or marriages. Often, through the empowerment process the program entails, these graduates find the inner strength necessary to establish healthy boundaries or exit these toxic

relationships altogether. This is a natural process for some graduates of the program because empowerment brings about clarity, purpose and intention, making leaving bad relationships much easier.

Yet some women come to our campus with great encouragement from supportive families and partners rooting for them to succeed. NOSW's residential program is challenging for those who choose to participate, and it can also be uncomfortable and challenging for the loved ones they leave behind to attend this life-changing program. But the benefits of the program are so far-reaching and profound for graduates that, ultimately,



**Doug and Lillian Pratt connect to NOSW.**

their loved ones reap the life-improving rewards of women's empowerment as well.

Doug and Lillian Pratt are the embodiment of this aspect of the  
*See Family Affair with NOSW on page 2.*

## CALENDAR

### MAY

- 14 – Online graduate support group
- 24 to 26 – Three-day non-residential program
- 27 – Women's Empowerment Workshop with Alys Smith (online)

### JUNE

- TBD – Special topic online workshop
- 18 – Online graduate support group
- 28 to 30 – Three-day non-residential program

### JULY

- TBD – Special topic online workshop
- 16 – Online graduate support group
- 26 to 28 – Three-day non-residential program

### AUGUST

- 20 – Online graduate support group
- 30 to 9/1 – Three-day non-residential program

### SEPTEMBER

- 17 – Graduate retreat

### OCTOBER

- 9 to 23 – Residential session (Berea)

### NOVEMBER

- 12 to 14 – Festival of Trees (FOT)
- TBD – Graduate reunion

## WEBSITE

We have a new website! Read stories of our women, get programming updates and learn how you can support the Sisterhood.

[nosw.org](http://nosw.org)

### THANK YOU, ANNA AND LAUREN!

The NOSW Board would like to thank Anna Lake and Lauren Skiles for their service as treasurer and secretary. We appreciate your dedication to our mission and your hard work on the Board. We look forward to future collaboration!

## From the Executive Director SIGNS OF NEW LIFE AT NOSW

New Opportunity School for Women is bursting with new life!

I am excited to announce the arrival of Amy Hogg, NOSW development and communications coordinator. You will read more about Amy on the back page of this issue.

Our program offerings have begun, and new ones are in the wings. Participants are energetic and open to learning about themselves and others. Check our website to learn more.

Our new website launched in March and is gaining rave reviews by new visitors and those who know NOSW well. Continue to watch as new highlights are added on a regular basis at [nosw.org](http://nosw.org).

We also launched an e-newsletter. Make sure you get on the list by sending your email address to Amy at [ahogg@nosw.org](mailto:ahogg@nosw.org).

Our door is opening once again

to graduates who pass through Berea and grace us with their presence.

Staff have been decluttering, and our rooms have a warm yellow glow thanks to graduate Amanda Gadd, who painted for us! We are all in the office more often (i.e., we are all fully vaccinated, but continue to promote a safe environment), and working in person energizes us all.

Plans are being made for an in-person residential session and Graduate Leadership Retreat in the fall – if CDC guidelines allow for this.

As I look back on this past year, I stand in awe of what we have accomplished together. Resilience, courage, and opportunity are words that for me describe our journey. We are truly



grateful!

With a grateful heart,

## FAMILY AFFAIR WITH NOSW CONTINUES

*Continued from page 1.*

NOSW program. Lillian attended NOSW in 2000 after suffering from depression that resulted from the tragic loss of her son and her sister's terminal cancer. The isolation she felt was so devastating that her husband and daughter worried about her well-being and encouraged her to come to see what NOSW could offer her.

And the changes in Lillian after graduation did not disappoint them: "When Lillian went to the New Opportunity School, I saw a change in her," says Doug. "She had more confidence. She could make decisions. When she finished the program, I could see how much it had changed her."

Any benefits the Pratt family experienced from the program were returned to NOSW tenfold. Following Lillian's graduation in 2000, both she and Doug began volunteering with the organization. Lillian organized the clothing closet, and Doug became

somewhat of a resident handyman for NOSW. As someone who genuinely enjoys helping people, he made himself available to fix anything broken, carry luggage on move-in days, and even chauffeur our women on field trips. He even volunteered his woodworking skills by making keychains with the NOSW logo for staff and graduates to cherish!

These days, Lillian and Doug have settled into their retirement years, though Lillian keeps Doug occupied with his "honey-do" list. Through the pandemic, they have had regular video chats with their daughter and two-year-old grandson, Quentin, in Charlotte, N.C. Having spent all their married years in Berea, they're contemplating a move to Charlotte to be able to watch Quentin grow and be a support to their daughter. And as we know, support systems can make a tremendous difference in one's success in life!

# WOMEN GATHER FOR FIRST IN-PERSON PROGRAM SINCE PANDEMIC

By Amy Hogg

With many folks fully vaccinated, NOSW is thrilled to once again be offering in-person programming.

In April we offered our first three-day in-person program since the pandemic for a small group of women at Safe Harbor, an emergency shelter and advocacy center in Ashland.

“It was just great getting out there and delivering program content in person again,” says Jennifer Walden, NOSW program coordinator and co-facilitator. “The ladies at Safe Harbor were so enthusiastic—it was wonderful to just be in the room with them and engage with them directly in real time.

“Sheila Boyle and the administrative team at Safe Harbor are so great to work with, and we want to be a support to their service and their mission, because, like us, they are working toward a brighter future for women in Appalachia.”

The first day focused on personal stories, balancing our needs with the



**Reba, a participant in the Safe Harbor program (left), with Jimmie Lewis.**

needs of others and self-esteem.

Day two focused on healthcare and mindfulness. The group discussed the concept of the cairn, an ancient structure composed of rocks stacked by balance. With the cairn as a metaphor for our lives, the stones represent work/life purpose, relationships, spirituality, creativity and other aspects. If any stone is removed or out of balance, wellbeing is compromised.

Day three focused on SMART goals: specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timebound.

“It’s wonderful to be with others in an authentic way,” says Jimmie

Lewis, NOSW recruitment, assessment and graduate engagement coordinator and co-facilitator. “Our focus on self-esteem and holistic health creates a shared space for self-reflection, disclosure and growth.

“The women at Safe Harbor were able to connect with us as women whose task it is to value ourselves by identifying both our strengths and vulnerabilities. One of the participants, Lisa, shared with us at lunch on day two that she felt like we were ‘on their level’—one of the best compliments you can get as a facilitator.”

We’ll also continue online programming because it enables us to reach more women and provide continuing enrichment for our graduates.

In March we offered our first fully online three-day program. Even on Zoom, the six women were able to achieve the connection that makes our transformative work possible.

Other Zoom workshops in April focused on creative expressions and mindfulness. 🌿

## THANKS TO OUR SUPPORTERS!

**Jean Harding.** When Jean entered NOSW in 1999, she was the oldest participant ever admitted. That was when she first began sharing her writing with a group. After the program, she continued writing and went on to be published and win several awards. Now, at age 88, she’s working on a memoir. She’s still grateful to NOSW for giving her that first nudge. “They helped me to step out on faith and share my writings.” Jean recently made her first donation to NOSW. Thanks to Jean and the many other donors who support our mission!

**Elle Keys.** A Berea College graduate and MSW student at Barry University, Elle worked closely with staff to recreate our programming for a virtual format and kept our plans moving forward and expanding. We’re grateful to have had her as an intern for two semesters. Elle remains a member of our Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Task Force and Program Committee.

**Madeline Kujabi.** Madeline has interned with us for over a year, working virtually for most of it. She is from the Gambia and has provided our participants opportunities to engage internationally and expand their tastebuds with her African cuisine. She has been instrumental in providing research that informs our work. Thank you, Madeline!

### SAVE THE DATE

Join us for the  
**Festival of Trees**  
November 12-14  
at Churchill’s in Berea

Bid on beautiful trees, shop with local vendors, enjoy live entertainment and make a difference in women’s lives.



### NOSW NEWSLETTER

This newsletter is published three times a year: winter/spring, summer and autumn.

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**Alys Smith**  
**Betsy Whaley**

We work to improve the financial, educational and personal circumstances of economically disadvantaged women in Appalachia.

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## IT TOOK 20 YEARS, BUT SHE FINALLY GETS TO WORK AT NOSW

*By Karen Hurley*

Amy Hogg joined NOSW as the new development and communications coordinator April 5.

Amy's experience makes her "a perfect fit" for NOSW, says Executive Director Robbie Pentecost. For the past 13 years Amy worked in communications and development for Kentuckians For The Commonwealth, finally serving as communications and development director. She previously worked in development and communications at Berea College. Plus, she was born and raised in Letcher County in Eastern Kentucky.

A B.A. in journalism and an M.A. in English from Eastern Kentucky University led her to work early on for newspapers in Danville and Winchester and a magazine in Lexington. But it was a move to Berea

in 2000 that first brought NOSW to her attention.

During the years she stayed home to raise her two daughters, she taught college classes in Eastern Kentucky and encountered Appalachian women from difficult circumstances who were trying to put their lives on track. In Berea she learned about NOSW and realized this was just the kind of support that would have benefitted women like her students.

Amy even applied for a job at NOSW in the early 2000s, but withdrew to continue being home with her daughters. Then, some 20 years



**Amy Hogg joined the staff in April.**

later, the chance to work with NOSW finally came around again.

Amy finds lots to like about her new position. She says she loves "being able to use my skills and experience to work for such a wonderful mission." And as she begins to meet NOSW graduates, she is inspired by "these strong, resilient women."

But maybe the job's greatest perk is the joy she is finding in being a part of what she describes as the "community that NOSW women have together—starting with the staff and extending to all the women NOSW serves."

Amy replaces Jacinda Townsend, who filled this role part-time online and with occasional commutes from her home in Bloomington, Ind. Despite Jacinda's love for NOSW, family demands made it impossible for her to continue in this role. 