

"Victorious Women"

Women healing from trauma continue vibrant, meaningful lives and contribute to the common good.



For Thanksgiving, our staff ordered pizza as a treat for the women. As we were unable to host a traditional meal due to COVID-19, this was a great alternative for a Thanksgiving meal!

Thank You for Your Support

Thank You for Sharing with a Friend!

Thank you for passing along Sarah's eNews to a friend and having them reach out to subscribe or sign up for the monthly conversation/virtual tour or "Day in the Life of an Asylee" workshop event at SarahsOasis.org.

Greatest Wish List Need

Sarah's residents who are not working need to purchase essential items like toothpaste, sanitary pads, and deodorant and many more are not working than pre-COVID. The best way to help with this is to purchase or designate your donation for \$10 or \$20 Target gift cards. Send to the address below or make a donation online and designate by contacting Director@SarahsOasis.org. Individual donations are also essential to the mission of Sarah's. If you are able to make a monthly commitment of even \$5 a month, please do click "Donate Now" or the link below. You will help the women of Sarah's a lot with even a small donation. Every dollar is stretched and used to provide for basic needs of our residents. <https://www.sarahsoasis.org/donate-2>

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Volunteers and Wish List Donations

Thank you to every volunteer who has made masks, picked up prescriptions, brought household items from the store, safely driven residents to appointments, talked on the phone, sent cards, or social distanced in the yard with residents, and more. And thank you to all who purchased items from Sarah's wishlist. We continue to accept newly purchased items for the safety of our residents. Please see our wishlist for our greatest needs. You may purchase items from any source and have them delivered to Sarah's. Please contact Director@SarahsOasis.org for the delivery address. <https://www.sarahsoasis.org/immediate-needs>

November "A Day in the Life of an Asylee" Workshop was a Success!

On November 18, we hosted our "A Day in the Life of an Asylee" workshop on Zoom. Together, we explored the process of seeking asylum in the United States and the struggles that asylees may face. We discussed the stories of asylum seekers, including a first-person account from our special guest speaker, Patricia Mokoena Bjerke. Patricia is an inspirational speaker, coach, and author. Recounting her heartbreaking story of survival and how she found healing, she shared a message of hope, courage, and resilience. Patricia inspired her audience to find purpose and meaning despite the life challenges they face. Our audience members were empowered to view their difficulties as points of reference, sources of inspiration, and catalysts for change. Her book, *Embracing the Scars: How to Find Your Purpose*, has been among bestsellers on Amazon.com. Patricia has dedicated her life to entrepreneurship and humanitarian work, juggling business ownership with motherhood. You may have even seen her speak at the Center for Victims of Torture's "Restoring Hope Breakfast". We want to thank Patricia for sharing her stories and helping us understand what it is truly like to come to the United States as an asylee.



If you're interested in attending our next "A Day in the Life of an Asylee" webinar, we are planning to host the next one in February 2021. Be sure to save the date in the future!

Goodness Knows, continued

This is the third story of a series of articles from Sarah's residents about their diverse life experiences. This is the last in the first series of mini stories based on the her-story of one woman, Goodness. This month we highlight her survival in the US and coming to Sarah's... an Oasis for Women. Recall that Goodness told me her story as a part of needing to write a personal affidavit which will be a part of the proof for her immigration case so that she apply to stay in the US and not have to return to her home country in Africa. Since Goodness is not able to read or write, I helped her to write the affidavit talking to her a few times to ensure that I got all the details right.

Recall that Goodness is in her sixties now after a life of poverty in Africa, her parents dying from that poverty, and Goodness fleeing to avoid being killed and having her organs sold by other people trying to survive in her home country. She is sure she would be dead if she'd stayed or went back to get her children. One day, she is hoping her young adult children, with her financial support of them, will be able to come to the US. First, she needs to complete her own process of approval to stay in the US and so that was why she was writing down this story. Children cannot come, spouses cannot come, parents cannot come until if and when the first member of a family has completed their approval and even then there are no assurances.

Goodness Knows, continued

Her own process is tied to the fact that when Goodness first arrived in the US, like so many, she was lured into a bad situation because she had no resources or support, or people to help her or a place to stay. People took advantage of her because she was very vulnerable to the promises of help and prosperity made. One attacked and trapped in their confines both physical and psychological, Goodness spent many months thinking that she escaped death in poverty in Africa, or from someone taking her vital organs, only to die in the hands of these people in the US. She again was hungry. She again was afraid.

A local agency in St Paul helped her to escape and build a case supporting her need to continue to stay in the US in the safety of the programs provided through the local agency particularly when they placed her to live at Sarah's.

Sarah's not only provides for all basic needs of food and shelter, but it's a place where "I am safe. I was saved here." Also like so many, those who face physical or psychological abuses are often in a position to be re-victimized. Being in safety at Sarah's means being in a place where she can sleep without worry of safety, eat without worry of starvation, work without worry of safety to get to work, send money to her children to help them to live so that she can breathe for a moment. Goodness says "I would die with no one to care for me and no money. I have nothing."

Someday, Goodness will have the ability to save enough once her family comes to the US and she can stop sending money home for her kids to survive. She is pursuing her own physical and psychological health and financial wellness while at Sarah's. She has limited options of employment since she cannot read or write. Goodness is such a hardworking, caring woman that she works full-time in a cleaning job despite her physical and psychological illness which she continues to suffer from because of the treatment she endured on the streets and being terribly stressed, often sleepless, about her children being still stuck in that terrible poverty and unsafe life that is still in Africa. She sends a large proportion of her earnings home to support her children and she still contributes \$300 per month to the Sisters of St Joseph to support all the things provided by Sarah's to her and to other women.

Once Goodness concludes her legal process with immigration for herself to stay in the US and once her children are approved to come (she is preparing with her attorney even though they cannot complete the process yet until they finish hers), she will find housing for her and her family with the help of the agency that placed her at Sarah's. As this process is a long process, and holds up all hope for her living independently because she needs more than her own income to live somewhere sustainably beyond Sarah's, we expect that her stay at Sarah's will be longer than the average length of stay of two years. Every other month her goal plan is reevaluated, determining what other resources she needs to be referred to, what support from staff she needs, and what she needs to work on next. And every six months we agree to any needed extension of the original written agreement of one and a half years to stay at Sarah's. The average length of stay is a statistic we have used at Sarah's over the years though many, from the beginning years of Sarah's, have stayed for three or four years like Goodness will have. With recent economic and political changes in our country and in the world, and more of a focus on unmet need of asylum seekers, Sarah's has seen the average increase from 1 ½ years to 2 years but the longest length of stay seldom is talked about and hearing a woman has stayed for 5 years can be shocking. How can the average still be around 2 years? A large number of women still stay for 1 year or less. Some even as short as a few months.

The residents and staff at Sarah's are hoping through this series of stories which is just beginning with Goodness' story we can share more about the women living at Sarah's, their very different stories, why they come to live there, and what life at Sarah's is really like. Stay tuned for more articles like this one.

Upcoming Events

About Sarah's... an Oasis for Women

Sarah's Director hosts a ministry conversation and virtual tour on the third Wednesday of the month at 10 AM via Zoom. If you have questions about Sarah's, are totally new to Sarah's, or haven't visited with us in a while, please register at sarahsoasis.org. Upcoming dates: December 16, 2020 and January 20, 2021.

"A Day in the Life of an Asylee" Webinar

Will be hosted again in February. Please register at sarahsoasis.org to learn more about the challenges and process faced by asylum seekers.

Sarah's Residents and Former Residents Invitation to come to FREE Yoga!

Virtual yoga! This is happening every Thursday from 6:00-7:00 PM (CST). Mary Pat will demonstrate poses over Zoom and talk through instructions, so it's very easy to follow along at home. It's also a great way to spend time with each other after so many months apart in quarantine! If you have some aches and pains, this is the perfect event for you. It's a gentle, easy way to move and stretch to help with back and joint pain. Both current and former residents are welcome to come! We hope to see you there! Email sjw@sarahsoasis.org if you want more information or want the Zoom link!

Other Ways to Connect

Monthly eNews from the Sisters of St Joseph: <https://www.csjstpaul.org/stay-connected/>

Weekly inspirational newsletter from the Sisters of St Joseph: <https://csjministriesfoundation.org/>

Watch videos on Sarah's YouTube Channel: <https://www.youtube.com/c/SarahsoasisOrg/featured>