

The Red Shoes Circle

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The Red Shoes
A CENTER FOR PERSONAL & SPIRITUAL GROWTH

FALL 2010 NEWSLETTER

A Sign of The Times

Thanks to gifts from friends like you, we have a beautiful new sign on Government Street. We are proud to let everyone know about the wonderful activities we offer!



We are a non-profit center offering opportunities for spiritual enrichment and personal growth. Our warm, open community broadens understanding and encourages self-discovery.

Our unique offerings include:

- ≈ Inspiring speakers from around the world
- ≈ In-depth studies of spirituality and faith
- ≈ Thought provoking book and film studies
- ≈ Weekly meditation and daily yoga

Our programs open hearts and minds that transform the world.

Lifting Loans for Entrepreneurs Micro Loan Program Helps Women Fulfill the Dream of Business Success

Our door opens and in walks a woman holding a folder of papers. "I am ready to start a business of my own and I have my business plan. I need assistance with start-up costs."

The Red Shoes' **Lifting Loans Program** combines business education, mentorship and low interest micro-loans to support women in Baton Rouge who are starting or growing a small business.

The program began in 2007 with a generous gift from an individual. Since then we have counseled or interviewed over 200 women and given 12 loans. Micro-loans are a proven way to help women become self sufficient and your financial support will help Lifting Loans continue as a path to success.

This year we welcome eight volunteer mentors who offer guidance and support to loan recipients. This dynamic group is reaching out to share their knowledge and experience with aspiring entrepreneurs.



Mentors reviewing applications.

Already, the results are amazing. A variety of suggestions and solutions emerge from one on one mentoring and mentoring circles that encourage entrepreneurs to help each other. **If you would like to become a mentor, please give us a call, 338-1170.**

Women's Leadership Connection Preparing Baton Rouge's New Leaders

Welcoming women to Baton Rouge and helping them learn how they can take an active role in the community is a new way your contributions are helping women.

"One of our main goals is to create a supportive community for women."

Professional women new to Baton Rouge have an opportunity to learn about the customs and culture unique to Baton Rouge. In partnership with AARP and LANO, we are hosting a series of seven conversations about race, politics, religion, education, football and more.

"One of our main goals is to create a supportive community for women new to Baton Rouge," says Nancy McPherson, Senior State Director of AARP and Vice-President of The Red Shoes Board. *"Each month we socialize over dinner and then learn about a specific topic from locals, people who can give us an insider's insights into what makes Baton Rouge tick."*

A Safe Place for Healing Partnership with Junior League and Rape Crisis Center Supports Survivors

Feeling alone, exploited and unheard, survivors of sexual assault are often told to stop talking about "it" and move on with their lives.

Realizing that these women need a safe space to reflect and heal, the Rape Crisis Center received grants from the Junior League to partner with The Red Shoes to create one-day spiritual retreats. The retreats enhance the healing process by centering on rejuvenating the spirit. Meditation and relaxation techniques including yoga, therapeutic art activities, sound healing and the labyrinth help women find inner peace. Participants learn new ways to relieve anxiety and reconnect with their wisdom and strength.

Did you know?

- ≈ In 2010, we offered over 165 programs.
- ≈ Over 1600 people benefitted from our programs in 2010.
- ≈ Our low fees keep our programs inclusive but do not cover our operating expenses and facilitator fees.
- ≈ Your gifts help us provide uplifting and affordable programming.

We celebrate the energy of the Feminine Soul, which, at this particular time in history, has a central part to play in the work of global transformation and healing. We seek to do our part in discerning what is asked of us as women today.

*Roberta Guillory,
Founder, The Red Shoes*

Women's empowerment helps raise economic productivity and reduce infant mortality. It contributes to improved health and nutrition. It increases the chances of education for the next generation.

*United Nations
Development Program*

Dress for Success is a Perfect Fit Stepping in to Donate Space

Dress for Success, a non-profit new to Baton Rouge, needed space to use as a showroom and a fitting room for clothes being donated to help women seeking jobs.

The organization helps women dress appropriately as they pursue employment opportunities. We read about their need and had a vacant space in the building. Thanks to your financial support, we offered to donate space to Dress for Success for two months while they awaited funds they hoped would soon become available.

The 3 local founders of Dress for Success walked into The Red Shoes and could not contain their smiles:

"It is a perfect fit. The space feels so good. We love Mid-city and we're right on a bus line."

They have suited several clients for important interviews. *"I feel so peaceful and full of hope"* their first client said after her fitting. They have recently moved into a larger space at The Red Shoes and are able to pay a reduced rent.

Thanks to you, we are able to help in many new ways.



Thanks to your financial support, we were able to donate space to Dress for Success for two months.

No Photos Allowed Just Memories!

After a long, hopeless day at the shelter, a spirited party after dinner offers hope and a smile for women at **The Bishop Ott Sweet Dreams Women's and Children's Shelter.**

For children, a Summer Luau or Fall Fiesta is a welcome break in the evening routine of dinner, homework and bed. Each season, our volunteers bring treats for a fun and fabulous party.

While we enter as strangers, after playing games, chatting and snacking together, we become friends. When it is time to say good-bye, one woman says, *"Thanks for coming, it is the first time I have relaxed and had fun since I've been here."*

Volunteers have a new understanding of the words "homeless person." No photos are allowed, but the faces stay with us. If you have volunteered at a party, thank you for the gifts you brought. All who support The Red Shoes help make these evenings possible. **This is a gift of joy you can give by supporting our work.**



**Circle of Women Inspired by
Half the Sky book study**

Half the Sky Book Group is Call to Action

What enables one woman, among so many others, to escape dire circumstances and transform into a productive person?

This is an emerging question in a new book group that brings together **LSU's Women's and Gender Studies' Community Connection Book Study** and The Red Shoes. Learning about the plight of women around the world from the stories in *Half the Sky* by Kristof and WuDunn is leading the group to seek ways to make a difference in the lives of women in Baton Rouge. How can we sow the seeds of empowerment for women facing trauma? This collaboration will yield meaningful results. Can you think of a better goal to support?

Thank you for helping us take your gift into the community in this important way.

Circles by Hafiz

The moon is
most happy
When it is full.

And the sun
always looks
Like a perfectly
minted gold coin

That was just Polished
And placed in flight
By God's playful Kiss.

And so many
varieties of fruit
Hang plump
and round

From branches
that seem like a
Sculptor's hands.

I see the beautiful
curve of a
pregnant belly
Shaped by a
soul within,

And the Earth itself,
And the planets
and the Spheres –

I have gotten the hint:

There is something
about circles
The Beloved likes.

Hafiz,
Within the Circle of a
Perfect One

There is an Infinite
Community
Of Light.



The Power of Poetry Giving Voice to Women's Souls

"It is the first time I have ever shared my poetry, I'm a little nervous," said a young poet. Diversity of style, subject matter and age created a vibrant evening of personal expression. The power of words was evident as poets shared intimate moments in a manner that was healing for both reader and audience.



**Poets gathered for our First
Open Mic Poetry Night.**

Valuing the poet's journey and providing a space for sharing offers support and fosters creativity. As one of our poets stated,

"Writing poetry and not sharing it with others is like creating a beautiful painting and hanging it in a dark closet."

Our safe, warm atmosphere is the perfect venue for contemporary poets to share their passion and make their voices heard.

Your gift will make it possible for us to open our space to host *Open Mic Poetry Night* each season in 2011.



Our volunteers sort 4,000 pounds of food for the GBR Food Bank.

Three Faiths, One Family Daughters of Abraham Dialogue

Prejudices, both overt and covert, manifested as the discussion of a mosque near Ground Zero ignited the news. Fortunately, you have offered support to The Red Shoes as we work together with **The Interfaith Federation of Greater Baton Rouge** to build a community that encourages interfaith respect. In addition to programs that take us to different houses of worship to build understanding, we host a monthly, midday *Daughters of Abraham* discussion addressing topics studied from the perspectives of the three Abrahamic traditions: Christianity, Islam and Judaism. 2011 offers you the opportunity to become a member of a *Daughters of Abraham* monthly book group. Join Us!

Walk for Mother Earth Reuse, Recycle, Raise Awareness

On the grounds of the Old State Capitol, the shoes you donated became a labyrinth, a space for a walking meditation and a reminder of how re-use is a way to care for Mother Earth as well as each other.

With hundreds of pairs of donated shoes,



Maida Owens, a founder of the **Baton Rouge Labyrinth Project**, created the maze-like path. Walking the labyrinth allowed time to focus on the intention of **Earth Day**. Collecting the unwanted shoes that might have ended up in landfill, we REUSED them for this project and then RECYCLED them by donating all shoes to **St. Vincent de Paul**. Without you, we could not have created this wonderful model for the community.

The Red Shoes Circle Come into the Circle and Become the Change

Our oasis on Government Street draws a peaceful sigh from those who enter. Leave behind the traffic, the rush, the tension and walk into a sanctuary for the heart and mind. Women discover the space and wonder why it took them so long - it is difficult to articulate, but you know this is a place of healing, a place to come home to.

Our First Newsletter

Thank you for reading our first newsletter. Are you amazed by how much our organization can do with your help? The title of our newsletter, *The Red Shoes Circle*, evokes the image of interconnection: We are all One and our thoughts and actions reverberate and affect all. The circle embraces the “divine feminine,” the gentle nature of the divine that cultivates compassion, communication and collaboration. The circle represents the ways in which our mission, encouraging personal and spiritual growth, flows into the greater community providing support and resources for women with diverse needs. The newsletter reveals the ever-widening circle we weave embracing people of all faiths, cultural backgrounds and socio-economic groups. Each program, each speaker, each teaching we offer is creating positive change. We change inwardly and this change manifests in our world, a continuous circle of transformation.

There is more work to be done. Join our *Circle of Giving* and join us in this work that will transform individual lives, the community and the world.

Becky Simmons, Board President

Wendy Herschman, Executive Director

Alternatives for Cancer Healing Thriving - Not Just Surviving

With friends and family members living with cancer, our partnership with **Cancer Services** is important to all of us. “Fit and Fearless,” a unique exercise program designed for Cancer survivors, recently filmed a new workout video at The Red Shoes to make exercise instruction available to those not well enough to attend classes. *With the blessing of your support, we were able to offer our building space at no charge for this important project.*

*Your gift helps
The Red Shoes
grow as a
dynamic force
for good in our
community.*

We also sponsored an outstanding speaker, Dr. Christine Page, who spoke to a standing room only audience at Cancer Services. Dr. Page’s empowering lecture about healing offered new approaches for people living with cancer. Further supporting the healing journey, this partnership offers **FREE Yoga for Cancer Survivors each Monday at 10:30 am.**

The Red Shoes Circle of Giving Taking steps to assure a better tomorrow

Name _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email address _____ Phone _____

_____ \$25-\$50 Circle of Understanding

_____ \$51-\$100 Circle of Caring

_____ \$101-\$200 Circle of Compassion

_____ \$201-\$300 Circle of Change

_____ \$301 - \$500 Sustaining Circle

_____ () Open Hearted Circle

Gift () in Memory of, () in honor of _____

Also acknowledge to this name and address:

() Check enclosed () My Pledge: I have set up an automatic monthly transfer from my bank for \$_____.

() I prefer to put this on my credit card.

Make your donation right now at www.theredshoes.org - click “Support” on the left

Or, provide your credit card information and we will process the charge for you:

Amount _____ Is this a *one time* or *monthly* credit card auto charge? (circle one)

CC# _____ Expiration date _____ Security Code _____

Billing address if different than above: _____

Thank You! May we print your name as a member of our Circle? Yes No Thanks