



# THE VOL 2 # 1 Jan 2016 JUSTICE PROJECT NEWSLETTER

(Left) Kris Wade-Director of The Justice Project (Right) Sister Donna Ryan

[www.justiceprojectkc.org](http://www.justiceprojectkc.org)

## Nuns On The Bus

Kris Wade, Director of The Justice Project, and Sister Donna Ryan welcomed the “Nuns on the Bus” caravan on September 11th as it stopped in Kansas City. Nuns on the Bus was initiated by Sister Simone Campbell, Director of Network in Washington, DC, to make local sites aware of the implications of national budget cuts for local social service organizations. Inviting nuns to join along the way, the bus visited 14 sites across the country that could be harmed or closed due to the lack of financial support. The Justice Project participates with many partner organizations dependent on that revenue.

## The Success of Ms. X – Why We Should Never Give Up

During an evening street outreach on the corner of 23rd and Prospect, The Justice Project staff met Ms. X, a chronically homeless woman in need. She had spent the last two decades living in abandoned buildings, drug houses or the streets. We knew she desperately needed our help.

As a crack cocaine addict, she had been prostituting for several years to feed her addiction. She was estranged from her family for over 10 years, losing contact with her two children and her other family members. The only services she'd received over the years was an occasional emergency room visit, but was otherwise considered a lost cause by most providers who had dealt with her in the past.

She was very dismissive and wary of us at first, but through repeated street contact for more than a year, she began to trust us and looked forward to our informal street meetings. She eventually called one night from the street after being sexually assaulted, robbed and beaten by a gang of boys.

We immediately went to meet her, took her to the hospital and encouraged her to complete a sexual assault forensic exam in order to obtain valuable evidence about her assailants. She was uneasy about reporting the crime, but with our help and with us by her side, she agreed to talk with police. The incident frightened her so much she decided she'd finally had enough; it was the proverbial straw that broke the camel's back.

When she was released from the hospital she reached out to us again. We helped her obtain a treatment bed to address her addiction and assisted her in getting necessary documents (state identification, birth certificate, social security card). We also connected her with other helpful agencies who could assist with housing, mental health care, and food stamps and helped her address old warrants on both sides of the state line.

As things began to fall into place, Ms. X began to recover from years of abuse and trauma that come with life on the streets. With support and advocacy from The Justice Project, she found the courage to carry through with the prosecution of her assailants. Thanks to her, they are now in prison and off the streets.

She has been in her apartment for over a year, is receiving Social Security Disability benefits, therapy, and has been drug free for 18 months. She has a part-time job at a local thrift store and has reunited with her family. Ms. X did the hard work, but the Justice Project was there to partner with her, to help her obtain the necessary tools and conditions needed for success.

Women with outcomes like Ms. X should encourage us all to never give up on very challenging individuals. While outcomes may differ depending on the person, we continue to see women recover from life on the streets. It validates our belief that every person can grow and thrive, regardless of their many challenges, and that creative solutions can be found to resolve even the most difficult problems.

## Volunteer Highlight – Pat Roberts

Friends of the Willow Tree are grateful for volunteer extraordinaire, Pat Roberts. Pat has been collecting needed items for our women for several years. She petitions her two book clubs, former and present co-workers, and her large circle of friends for donations.

Pat believes in the importance of her work, so she jokes that if her friends get annoyed with her requests she will "just have to make new friends." She feels a personal connection to the struggles of our women and knows the importance of sharing with women friends since she has faced the challenges of being a single mother. Pat and her friends help fill the supply closet with much needed toiletries and send small gifts and treats to help us celebrate all the holidays at The Willow Tree.

Pat and her husband John have a son, daughter-in-law and two grandchildren. Besides family, she stays busy with her work at EJ's boutique, travel, needlework (especially making prayer shawls), reading, Zumba, the theatre, and the ballet. With all she does, we are so fortunate to have her support for The Willow Tree women.



## Jazz for Justice Annual Fundraiser

The Justice Project signature annual fundraiser, Jazz for Justice, is quickly approaching!

This year's event will take place on Fat Tuesday, February 9th from 6:00 pm to 8:30 pm at The Bauer in the heart of the KC Crossroads Arts District. We're excited to welcome Mary Sanchez from the Kansas City Star as the Jazz for Justice Honorary Chair!

Guests will be treated to entertainment from the Yakety Sax Quartet, spirits and an array of food donated by: Moxie Catering, Mama Mel and Company, Cupini's, Mildred's Coffeehouse, The Rieger Hotel, Artego Pizza and Anton's Taproom.

While there is no cost to attend, this is a pivotal fundraiser for The Justice Project and donations are encouraged. RSVPs are appreciated. Please e-mail your attendance confirmation to Maureen Carroll at [admin@piqueco.com](mailto:admin@piqueco.com). If you cannot attend Jazz for Justice but would still like to contribute, please send a check or money order to: The Justice Project, P.O. Box 32804, Kansas City, MO 64171.



## Kris Wade NAMI Award

Kris Wade, Executive Director and Co-Founder of The Justice Project, was recently honored with the 2015 Community Service Award, presented by NAMI-KC. Justice Project board member Brenda Phillips nominated Kris for the award, "because she exudes confidence and compassion in the exemplary work she does providing advocacy and criminal justice system navigation for women in poverty suffering from mental illness, homelessness, domestic violence, addiction, prostitution or other forms of trafficking exploitation."

Brenda goes on to state that, "While her administrative duties keep her very busy, she still finds time to be hands-on with a population who may need housing and assistance getting to court. She really inspires others to make community service a central part of their lives."



Kris is a member of the Coalition Against Human Trafficking in Kansas City, Missouri, the Kansas Attorney General's Human Trafficking Advisory Board and Policy Group, Missouri Probation and Parole Reentry Program Community Advisory Group, the Family Court of Jackson County Juvenile Division Advocacy and Mentoring Program, and Kansas City Hate Crimes Task Force.

She is also a guest lecturer at the University of Missouri Kansas City, Penn Valley Community College in Kansas City, and Fontbonne University in St. Louis as well as a contributing panelist on human trafficking at the United Nation's Commission.

Congratulations on the well-deserved award and thank you for all that you do for Kansas City women in need, Kris!



As we all know too well, there are areas in Kansas City where many families struggle through poverty and strive to survive. These neighborhoods are part of the city many never see.

Sister Berta Sailer of Operation Breakthrough wanted to increase awareness about the hardships faced by the children and families they serve who live in these neighborhoods, so she created a bus tour dubbed, "The City You Never See."

The City You Never See bus tour takes groups around to 5 or 6 stops at various points in neighborhoods surrounding Operation Breakthrough. At each stop, a neighborhood ambassador gets on the bus and talks to the group about the struggles they face on a daily basis.

Sister Berta approached Kris Wade, Executive Director of The Justice Project, about participating in this educational project and she agreed without hesitation.

At her neighborhood stop, Kris talks to the group about the efforts of The Justice Project in assisting women as they struggle to escape prostitution, drug use and human trafficking. Response has been so positive about the information Kris shares that she's been asked to continue participating into 2016.

Christine Minkler, Project Manager for Advocacy Initiatives with Operation Breakthrough said, "I think that for most of us, human trafficking is a crime that only happens in some faraway place. Kris Wade helps us understand that there are people in our own communities being exploited. She is a powerful advocate for a difficult topic."

Operation Breakthrough schedules tours for groups of 20 or more on weekday afternoons or as their schedule allows. They charge \$375 per group to offset their direct costs. Contact Christine Minkler at [christinem@operationbreakthrough.org](mailto:christinem@operationbreakthrough.org) for more information or to schedule a group tour.

