



# CENTER FOR WOMEN IN TRANSITION

## Save the date

JOIN US AS WE WELCOME CARINE FOR AN UNFORGETTABLE EVENING EVENT!



### Thursday, April 28

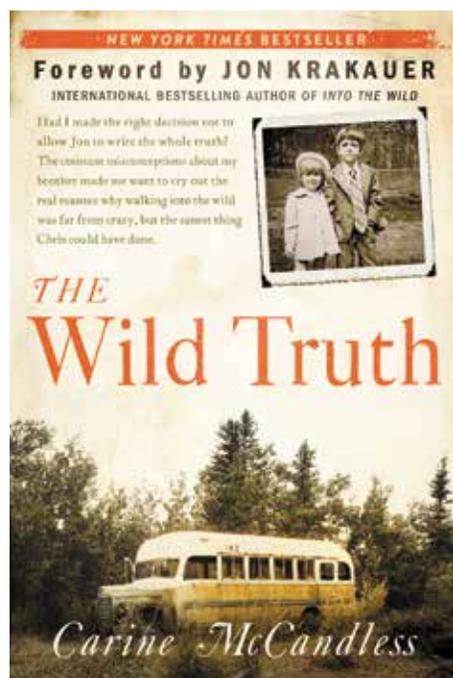
The Pinnacle Center, Hudsonville

Doors open at 6pm

Find more information at [cwitmi.org/events](http://cwitmi.org/events)

Center for Women in Transition proudly announces author and advocate Carine McCandless as our 2016 Reach for the Stars keynote speaker. Carine recently published her first memoir, *The Wild Truth*, revealing previously off-the-record details about the violently abusive childhood home she shared with her brother Chris McCandless. Chris became the subject of international conversation after author Jon Krakauer profiled his life in the book (and subsequent movie) *Into the Wild*.

Carine tells us, "*Into the Wild* wasn't Chris's entire story, and what remained unsaid lived within me." Feeling she had an obligation to explain her brother's actions - cutting off contact with his family and eventually journeying into the Alaskan wilderness where he later perished - Carine decided to speak her truth. She shares her advocacy with schools and other organizations, educating about the devastating impact domestic violence has on children, families and communities.



"A lot of people came away from reading [my book] without grasping why Chris did what he did. Lacking explicit facts, they concluded he was merely self-absorbed, unforgivably cruel to his parents,...or witless. Two decades after her brother's death, [Carine] decided...to tell the entire story...without concealing any of the heartbreaking particulars."  
Jon Krakauer

"The Wild Truth is an important book on two fronts: It sets the record straight about a story that has touched thousands of readers, and it opens up a conversation about hideous domestic violence hidden behind a mask of prosperity and propriety."  
National Public Radio (NPR) review

Check out an exclusive excerpt of *The Wild Truth* at [cwit.org/events](http://cwit.org/events).



## DIRECTOR'S LETTER

I have been leading Center for Women in Transition for almost 8 years now, and I am grateful to work in and with this community. It's an honor to call West Michigan home, and a privilege to share it with generous, dedicated people.

As I often do this time of year, I would like to express my gratitude. The giving spirit of our community empowers our staff and Board of Directors to continue working for healthy, safe relationships for all.

In the recent months your community support has been especially tangible:

Our calendar year end appeal, launched in November 2015, raised more than ever for our agency – over \$210,000! Our staff, Board, and volunteers are awed by your commitment to our mission. The funds raised in this campaign will be put to immediate use serving women, men and children recovering from abuse.

Our 2015 Adopt-a-Family program served over 85 families this year. From the moment contributions begin arriving to the last gift wrapped and out the door, your investment gives these clients something truly incredible – a sense of normalcy and compassion. They could relax and enjoy the traditions of the season with those they love.

Thank you, West Michigan, for your leadership and advocacy – especially on behalf of vulnerable populations. I welcome another year of working with you as we continue making our community a place of social justice, health, and safety for all.

Charisse Mitchell  
Executive Director



The Center's mission is to respond to, reduce, and prevent domestic and sexual violence. This mission will be achieved through education, collaboration, and advocacy, with crisis and supportive services to victims and survivors.

Email: [mail@cwitmi.org](mailto:mail@cwitmi.org)  
Website: [www.cwitmi.org](http://www.cwitmi.org)

**Executive Director:**  
Charisse Mitchell

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Mat Nguyen  
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Christine Wright

The Center for Women in Transition is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization.

## Welcome

We welcome two new staff members to the Center this month!

**Danielle Stewart** to the role of domestic violence/sexual assault advocate. Danielle graduated from Grand Valley State University in 2014 with a BA in Public and Nonprofit Administration. After college, she spent a year as an AmeriCorps member providing disaster relief in areas across the state with the American Red Cross. Outside of work, she enjoys playing music and spending time with her nieces and nephew. Danielle is "eager to continue serving the Ottawa and Allegan communities and honored to be part of empowering women to reach their full potential."

**Erin Van Putten** to the role of domestic violence/sexual assault advocate. Erin graduated from GVSU with a B.A. in criminal justice and minor in psychology. She is just a few weeks away from obtaining a M.S. in forensic psychology. Previously, Erin worked as a foster care case worker in Grand Rapids. She is looking forward to empowering clients as they journey toward defining and becoming the person they wish to be.



[www.facebook.com/cwit.mi](http://www.facebook.com/cwit.mi)



# 2015 VICTIM SERVICE NUMBERS

## CLIENT SERVICES

**61**

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE:  
SHELTER ADULTS

**62**

SEXUAL ASSAULT  
THERAPY

**78**

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE:  
SHELTER CHILDREN

**54**

SEXUAL ASSAULT  
NURSE EXAMINER

**199**

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE:  
NONRESIDENTIAL

**201**

CRISIS INTERVENTION  
OUTREACH

**49**

TRANSITIONAL HOUSING:  
ADULTS

**37**

CHILDREN'S THERAPY

**102**

TRANSITIONAL HOUSING:  
CHILDREN

**643**

WALKINS

TOTAL CLIENTS YTD

**1486**

## NON CLIENT SERVICES

**12,122**

VOLUNTEER HOURS

**95** VOLUNTEERS

**22,036**

NIGHTS OF  
TRANSITIONAL HOUSING

**5,333**

NIGHTS OF  
EMERGENCY SHELTER

**206**

WARDROBE FOR WORK

**1406**

GIRLS ON THE RUN

# I ♥ CONSENT

Sexual Assault Awareness Month

- Consent** is a clear and affirmative YES.
- Consent** is enthusiastic and mutual.
- Consent** means talking to your partner.
- Consent** can be verbal or non-verbal.
- Consent** is active and not passive.
- Consent** means you can change your mind.
- Consent** means taking the time to ask.

Questions? [cwitmi.org/consent](http://cwitmi.org/consent)



Supported by:

Center for Women in Transition  
Grand Valley State University Women's Center  
Ottawa County Department of Public Health

Lakeshore Alliance Against Domestic & Sexual Violence  
Safe Haven Ministries  
Young Leaders Against Violence

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Do you heart consent? Join CWIT this April as we launch the newly developed “I Heart Consent” social norms campaign during Sexual Assault Awareness Month. The campaign will help to create a greater understanding of what consent means and empower our community to support survivors. Our collaborative partners include Grand Valley State University Women’s Center, Ottawa County Department of Public Health, Safe Haven Ministries and Young Leaders Against Violence, and Lakeshore Alliance Against Domestic & Sexual Violence (LAADSV).

The campaign includes a five-poster “I Heart Consent” series that helps to define consent, logos for social media, and message wristbands for community and campus outreach. The campaign’s positive messages help to create safe and respectful relationships and communities that are empowered to support survivors and respond to misperceptions about sexual violence. The campaign will also be promoted through the third annual “Paint the Town Teal” campaign, encouraging downtown Holland businesses to display the “I Heart Consent” posters and create a teal-themed window display for a week in April. We have the power to educate others by helping to create a safe, respectful, and caring community. How will you promote consent?

Campaign materials will be available to download at [cwitmi.org/consent](http://cwitmi.org/consent) starting in March. Printing campaign wristbands and posters has been made possible through an Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) grant from the GVSU Women’s Center.

## WHAT IS A NONPROFIT?

Nonprofit organizations anchor our communities, providing critical resources and services while employing more than 1 in 10 Michigan workers. In Ottawa and Allegan counties alone the Center is among more than 600 registered nonprofit organizations.

What is a nonprofit, exactly? The term “nonprofit” refers to an organization’s tax status—these groups receive special treatment because they exist for the public’s benefit, rather than to generate financial return for owners or investors. In recent years many leaders in the nonprofit sector have pushed back against this term, asking why an organization should be defined by what it doesn’t do, rather than what it does do. Some suggest alternatives like “social impact sector” or “NGOs.”

What if we broaden our notion of “profit” or “capital”? Rather than financial assets, social service organizations like Center for Women in Transition create human and social capital. Our agency measures the impact of our work in safer homes, healthier family relationships, and the power of individuals to make their own life choices.

We are thankful for so many of you who choose to invest in our organization, seeing and expecting a return in the lives of people who have experienced abuse. We are grateful.



## Testimonial from Jessica O.

**We met Jessica a few months ago at an event in Allendale. A veteran student at GVSU, Jessica has shared her story with students on campus and has now offered to share her story here, too. Please be mindful that parts of her story may not be appropriate for young or sensitive readers.**

It's amazing, looking back, how seemingly innocuous events can be so harmful. I was in San Diego, living and breathing my dream career in the Navy, when I went out to celebrate my birthday with a group of male and female sailors. A young man Tim, clearly a Marine, asked for my number, but I said no. Something about him crept me out. An acquaintance of mine told me I was being too uptight and gave him my number. If I could travel back in time, I'd have stopped her. I'd have been more firm. But he was attractive, and I second guessed myself. A few days passed, and I got back into my routine. I worked hard, studied hard, and stayed late. Then the texting began.

At first, I was flattered. It was non-stop questions, begging for dates, and middle of the night calls telling me I'm beautiful and clever and funny. Our first date was perfect, and I felt special. Months passed and I moved with him to Valley Center, California, two hours away from my job. I started dressing more to his tastes than to my own, and asking permission to go places I used to go on my own quite comfortably. Maybe it was my first love and this is how it's supposed to be? He would show me ways in which he could break my arm, or pin me in our bed and whisper "I could kill you right now." I figured he was being playful, but the thought stuck.

I lost focus at work. My phone was always ringing and buzzing. Where am I? Who am I with? Why am I talking to him? All day long, I felt like I wasn't where I was supposed to be or with people I was allowed to be with. Tim was out training in the field when he sent me a copy of a video he had made just before my own deployment. The video showed me

having relations with many of his friends. I never gave my consent for something like that, and I would never have done that willingly. It was clear he had drugged me, but with what? I was trapped. He said that if I ever tried to leave him, he would release the videos to my chain of command and I would lose my security clearance and my job.

Finally, Tim left for Afghanistan, leaving me in California. I sent letter after letter explaining that I never wanted to see him again. He called me a whore and a cheater. I deployed on active service, although I was a complete wreck. Tim returned to our house and things got even worse. My vehicle was wrapped around a tree, my pets were brutally killed, and all of my personal belongings were burned or sold. He sent huge amounts of letters to my commanding officer as well as the captain of my ship. I was investigated and my clearance was in jeopardy. My two suicide attempts prior to deployment were discovered. Every time I went to mandated therapy on ship, Tim would send me an email asking how my group therapy was and telling me he had eyes and ears wherever I went. "Just wait until you get home, little girl."

While deployed, I found friendship and eventually a relationship with the man who is now my husband. Soon we became pregnant. If Tim hadn't ended my career, being pregnant certainly did. I returned to San Diego homeless and expecting our first child. My future husband secured a house and some basic furniture and we've lived together ever since. The abuse left scars - no longer am I the fiery, carefree young woman that I was. Tim stalked me for years after the end of our relationship, continuing to mentally and emotionally abuse me.

In the two years since leaving the Navy, I moved to Michigan. I live with my husband, my mother, and my two children in Allendale, Michigan. I was diagnosed with PTSD and Major Depressive Disorder. Every day is hard but I'm slowly recovering.

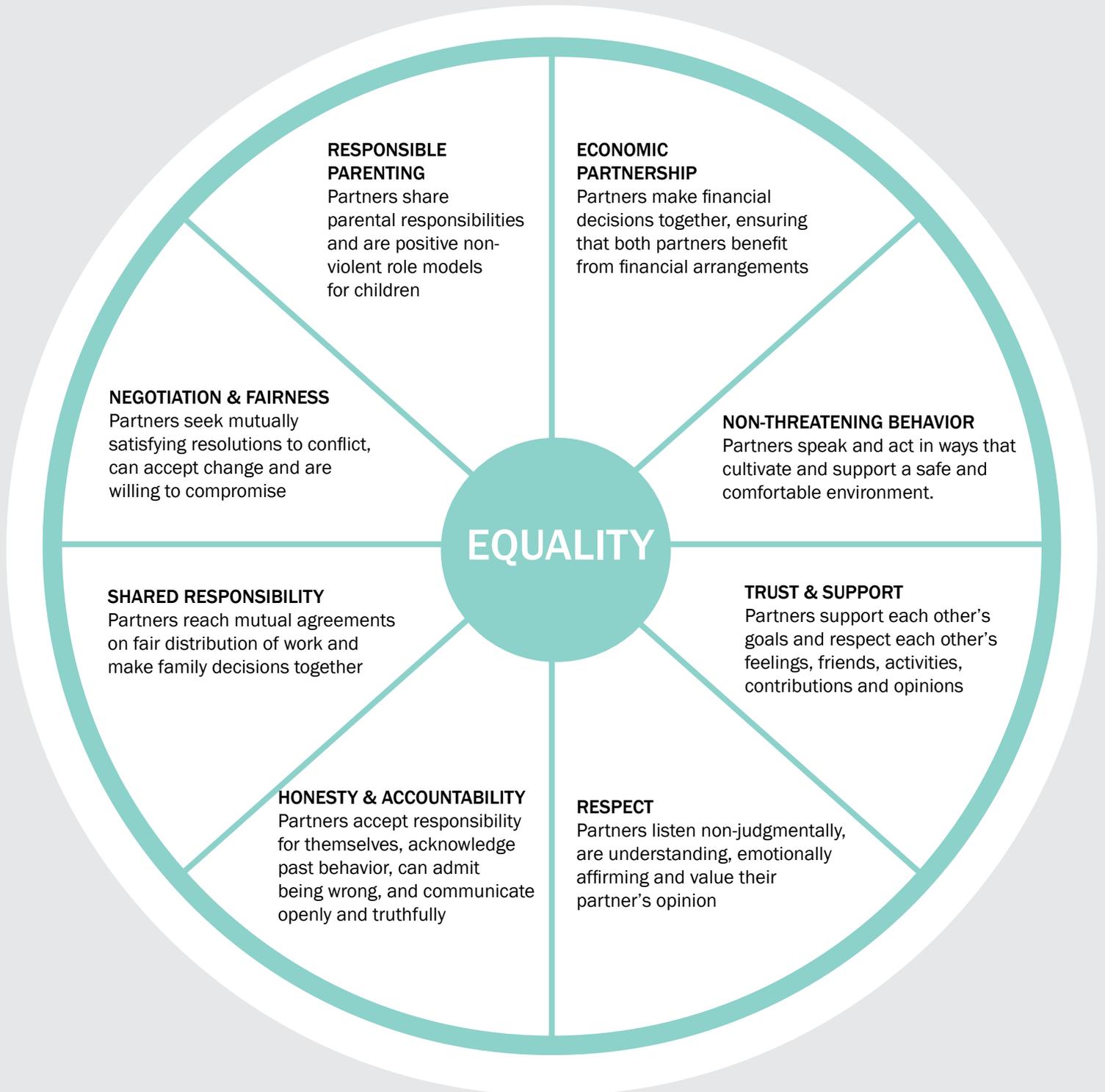
Someday, I will explain to my daughters the importance of trusting your instincts. When something or someone makes them feel as if something wrong is happening, there is no shame in saying clearly and firmly "no, I don't think so" and standing firm. It's a tough balance between teaching them to be safe, and also not crippling them with the fears that I am forced to carry for the rest of my life. I don't want anyone to kill their spirit as thoroughly as Tim killed mine.

To anyone out there in the middle of a relationship that is slowly stealing your life away, it isn't your fault if you try to escape and fail. My torturer had to go to a war zone for me to escape and even then, it wasn't a clean getaway. Follow your gut and protect yourself. Remember that your child would much rather be poor with a happier you, than more stable with a miserable you. If anything, this experience has put a lot of what I value into perspective. I may be older and tougher and more jaded, but this also means that someday, I may be able to prevent others making the same mistakes and choices I once made and to spot the people who manipulate and hurt others in time to stop them.

**To those of you in the struggle, you are not weak. You are not stupid. You are not useless, and nobody deserves to live like this.**

# EQUALITY IN RELATIONSHIPS

We often talk about respectful, healthy relationships. But what does this really mean? It means both persons in the relationship deserve to be treated lovingly and fairly. The graphic below is an example of what constitutes a balanced and equal relationship.





## SPRING SUPPORT GROUPS

Our spring session support groups will be held April 14 – May 26. Dinner is provided for participants along with free childcare.

- Domestic Violence Education and Support in English and Spanish
- Self-Empowerment
- Peer-Led
- Spanish

Please call our crisis line at 616.392.1970 or 800-848-5991 for information about meeting times and location.

## IN THE COMMUNITY

# May 21

**Postal Food Drive for the Holland area.** How do you participate? It's easy—just fill your pre-delivered bag with non-perishable food items and hang it on your mailbox. Our agency, along with others in the area, is a direct recipient of these donations. In fact, our emergency shelter saves thousands of dollars thanks to the Postal Food Drive!

\*We also have volunteer opportunities available during Postal Food Drive. Contact Sherry at 616-494-1747 for more information.

# Thank you

**YanFeng/Johnson Controls Inc., Care & Share program.** Your generous donation in support of our mission brings healing to the women, men and children we serve.

**ODL,** for your generous and lasting investment in our mission.

**Springview Foundation,** for your support of our emergency shelter Ginny's Place.

**Counterpart,** for your ongoing advocacy for local women and children.

**Haworth Inc.,** for your continuing investments in our agency's mission.

**TEGNA Foundation,** for your support of our programs and services.

**Mignon Sherwood Delano Foundation,** for your contributions to our transitional housing program.

**JR Automation,** for your generous gift towards our programs and services.



## LUNDY BANCROFT COMMUNITY TRAINING

The Center is proud to co-sponsor an upcoming community training on the dynamics of domestic violence. Led by nationally-recognized expert on the complexities of abuse and effective batterer intervention, Lundy Bancroft, author of *Why Does He Do That?*

The training is open to all and is appropriate for teachers, church leaders, law enforcement personnel, and friends and family members of those who have experienced abuse. Registration information available at [cwitmi.org/events](http://cwitmi.org/events).

**Monday, May 23, 2016  
9am-3pm**

Hope College's Haworth Inn and Conference Center, Downtown Holland  
Cost \$25 per person, includes light breakfast and lunch



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*Save the date*

**Thursday, April 28**



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## WHAT'S INSIDE

Announcing our 2016 Reach  
for the Stars speaker

Equality in Relationships

2015 Victim Service Numbers