

# The Tenant VOICE

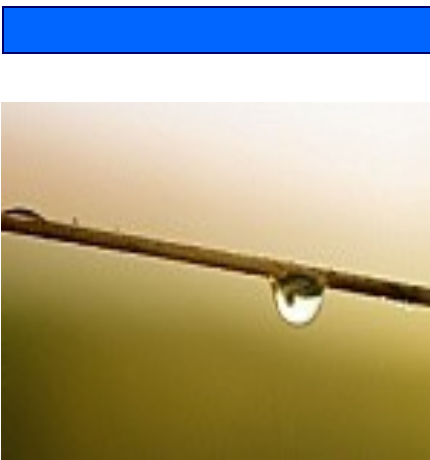
## West Michigan Therapy — Housing Plus Programs

### Housing Support Services Walk in Office Hours

Walk in hours are available on a weekly basis for tenants who are involved in HARP, HPRP, MPRI and TBRA. Please utilize this time to meet with your Case Manager for issues that need immediate attention.

If have not yet met with a case manager and would like to schedule your first appointment, please contact Jennifer at 739-6840 ext 2042.

Volume 4, Issue 1  
Spring 2010



Ann Dean  
Wednesdays 9am—4pm

Eirann Betka  
Fridays 9am—1pm

Tyrone Pearce  
Thursdays 1pm—5pm

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*Go confidently in the direction of your dreams.  
Live the life you imagined.*

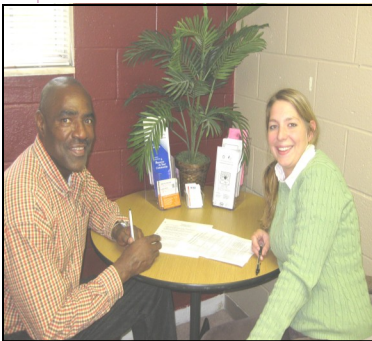
Henry David Thoreau

*Refreshments and  
treats are available  
at the Tenant  
VOICE Committee!*

## Support Service News and TENANTS of the Month ~ Spring 2010



As a young adult Cynthia began experimenting with drugs and alcohol but always felt she could control her use. It worked for a short period of time but then, at age 25, she tried crack cocaine for the first time. That was really the beginning of a 15 year nightmare. As her addiction progressed she spent less and less time with family and more on the streets. Finally, in 2001, at age 38, she was ordered to West Michigan Therapy's Second Chance program by the Courts. For the first time in years she had an opportunity to appreciate what addiction had done to her life. She was sober and returned to school, graduating from Ross Medical School in 2006. She began working at a local doctor's office and everything was going very well. Unfortunately, a personal tragedy was waiting for Cynthia. She suffered the loss of her mother. Cynthia continued working but relapsed under the stress of this significant loss, and lost her job. She began using again and was active in her addiction for another 18 months. She became homeless and her life was consumed with stays at the local mission and going from house to house or finding her next high. Finally, in November 2007, Cynthia had enough. She knocked on her sister's door, expecting that she would not be welcomed. Her sister looked at her and said, "We have been waiting for you." Her sister allowed her to stay the night and she entered WMT Transitional Living Center the next day. Today, Cynthia is housed through the HARP program. She is reunited with her husband and enjoys a close relationship with her children and grandchildren. Cynthia is grateful for each day she can spend with her family and friends. Congratulations, Cynthia.



Ronald with WMT Housing Resource Specialist, Eirann Betka

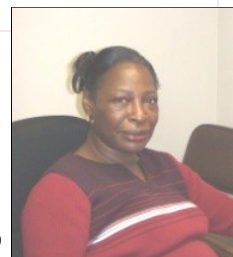
**Ronald Williams**, at the age of 57, had spent 53% of his life incarcerated. He was raised in a two-parent family and did not experience any hardship while growing up, so his criminal activity was a surprise to his friends and family. He first was incarcerated at the age of 17 for armed robbery. When he was released, at the age of 20, he had received a full scholarship to Hillsdale College to play football. He excelled on the field and earned Freshman of the Year Honors. He was also the lead rusher on the team. Due to poor choices he was unable to finish his education at that time. He does not offer any excuses for his situation and takes full responsibility for his prior actions. Ronald returned to Muskegon in November 2008 after serving 27-1/2 years in the Georgia Penitentiary system. A year prior to being released it was determined that he was legally blind. He was able to earn his Bachelor's Degree in Human Resources from Mercer University in Macon, Georgia while he was incarcerated. Despite all his efforts, life was hard when he returned and he found himself homeless. He was accepted into the CHI/TBRA program in March 2009, and is now living in his own apartment. During his free time he speaks to various groups including substance abuse clients at our out-patient office and at functions held by The Association for the Blind. Ronald is currently attending Toastmasters to improve his public speaking skills and is being trained to facilitate an Empowerment Workshop for disabled members of our community. He understands that life is about choices, and that choices determine where you go in life. Ronald is determined that all future choices will be for the betterment of his community.

"A lot of things have happened to me since I got out of prison." These are the words of Gerri Williams, a woman who was released from prison in May 2008. To help her get re-established in the community, Gerri participated in several of West Michigan Therapy's programs: Women Against Relapse (WAR), the Relationships group, and the Family group. Each service was so helpful to her, and when staff was not able to help her with a particular need they would point her in the direction of outside resources.

Gerri had completed an Associate's Degree in Accounting prior to being incarcerated. Since January 2009 she has been taking classes at Baker College and will complete her Bachelor's Degree in Business Management in December 2010, achieving one of the goals she'd set for herself upon her release. Gerri is proud of having been on the Dean's List for three terms, and will work to be on it again this term.

Gerri was housed through the CHI/TBRA program in May 2009. She recognizes her case worker's concern for her and that her relationship with her family is still going well. "When I came home from prison I didn't have anywhere to go and didn't have family support," Gerri says. "The staff at West Michigan Therapy became my support." She intends to complete her Business Management degree, then continue her education. Ultimately, she wants to work with disadvantaged and recovering people, whether with her business background or by going into counseling, working in a social service agency to be able to give back.

Finally, Gerri's goal is to stay clean. "So many people had the opportunities I have had but they didn't do their part," said Gerri. "If you don't seek the help, you won't get the help (you need)." She has worked hard to come to this point, and is pleased with her life today. She adds, "I'm content. I'm content."



# Tenants in Action

## *WMTJ Housing Tenant presents at the 4th Annual Summit on Ending Homelessness*

The Theme of the 4th Annual Summit on Ending Homelessness was "Change That Makes a Difference". As in years past, the staff of West Michigan Therapy was selected to present, along with other leaders in Michigan, to share our strategy on ending homelessness in our community. Our break-out session was entitled, "The Realities of Field Work." We presented on our unique, outcome based, proven system for the delivery of high-quality support services in a scattered-site setting and all the intricacies that go along with it. Ronald Williams, a current tenant in the Chronic Homeless Initiative/Tenant Based Rental Assistance Program, presented along with the staff of West Michigan Therapy. He shared his personal story of homelessness and how his unwavering determination for stability and contribution to his community have led to a



Left to right: Housing Resource Manager, Jennifer Stewart, Ronald Williams, and Housing Case Manager, Ann Dean

newfound passion of motivational speaking and community involvement. Ron stated, "Perhaps, until you attend such a conference, you really have no idea on how many people are involved in the fight against homelessness and how hard they work in this field. This opportunity has provided me with a greater appreciation of our system, our government, and the people who work in it."

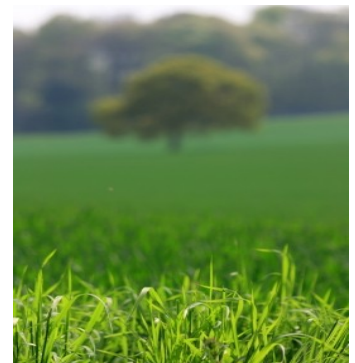
*West Michigan Therapy would like to take this opportunity to thank Ronald for sharing his time and talents with us and with all the participants who had the privilege of hearing him speak this past October in Lansing.*

*Read Ronald's story on page 2!*

## Spring Tenant VOICE Committee

When: Tuesday, June 8, 2010, at 2:30 p.m.  
Where: Louis McMurray Conference Center

*Please RSVP to our housing staff at 739-6840 ext. 2025. Transportation is available with advance notice. Please contact the number above and speak with Tara by Tuesday, June 1 to reserve a ride. We hope to see you there!*



# AmeriCorps-What is it?

Some of you may have noticed a few AmeriCorps workers at WMT. You may be wondering: what is an AmeriCorps worker? AmeriCorps is a federally-funded program established to get people involved with their community. AmeriCorps workers are placed with a variety of agencies that assist in many ways, such as with disaster relief, community outreach, hunger, public safety, and much more! AmeriCorps workers are given a living stipend, healthcare, a tuition grant at the end of service, and the experience granted by the service within their agency. If you would like to find out more about AmeriCorps, or to apply to serve, go to [www.americorps.gov](http://www.americorps.gov).

# Get to Know WMT AmeriCorps Workers!

**Laura Anys** is attending Muskegon Community College where she is getting her Associate's Degree. She then plans on transferring to Grand Valley State University to pursue a Spanish Education major. Laura enjoys theater, soccer, and cooking. After college, she plans to move to Spain, where she will teach English. **Neoki Davis** is a graduate of Baker College. She graduated with an Associate's Degree in Early Childhood Education. Neoki is a Pre-K teacher aide at Glenside Head Start, and has been a CASA (Court-Appointed Special Advocate) volunteer since last November. She enjoys reading and spending time with her godson.

**Kellie Gertsweiler** is a graduate of Eastern Michigan University. Kellie graduated with both a Bachelor's Degree in Criminal Justice and a Master's Degree in Social Work. She and her family have recently relocated to Muskegon from Ann Arbor, Michigan. Kellie enjoys camping, hiking, swimming, and everything that living close to Lake Michigan offers her and her family.

**Tara Mikkelson** is a graduate of Baker College. She graduated with an Associate's Degree in Human Services. She plans on continuing her education at a later time. Tara is married, likes to watch movies, play video games, and spend time with her family and friends. When not at WMT, Tara substitute teaches for Head Start/Kindergarten, and involves herself with animal rights charities and events.



## United States Census: Why It's Important

Every ten years, the United States Census Bureau obtains information involved with the census. What is this information, and why is it important? The information gathered by the census is vital to all states and communities. It shows us. . .

- How many seats in the U.S. House of Representatives a state gets
- How many electoral votes a state gets
- How much government funding to provide to each state

There are some major changes coming in the 2010 census. One is the use of a short-form instead of a long-form. Some of the questions asked will involve your:

- Race
- Gender
- Name, and more

You will receive a census survey in **March of 2010**. It is very important that you participate. Fill it out, and send it back. If you do not, a census worker may come to your home to ask you the questions in person. Remember, filling out the census will help your community!

### Things to Remember:

- It is a short-form with only basic questions!
- Filling it out will help your community!



## You're Moving?

You've just decided that you will be moving into a new place. You are excited and want to begin packing your personal things right away. You call your closest family and friends to tell them your great news, and they are happy for you. When you move it is important that you establish residency at your new address as soon as possible. Having a different address with various agencies and companies can cause BIG headaches for you in the long run.

Here is a checklist of people/places that you will want to inform of your new address:

- |   |                                   |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| ○ Friends and relatives                       | ○ Schools                         |
| ○ Electricity/Gas/Water                       | ○ Telephone/ cell phone company   |
| ○ Cable / Satellite Company                   | ○ Doctor/Dentist                  |
| ○ Internet provider                           | ○ TV/video rental companies       |
| ○ Your employer (s)                           | ○ Credit card companies and Banks |
| ○ Insurance company                           | ○ Insurance company               |
| ○ Social Security Administration              | ○ Subscriptions                   |
| ○ Unemployment Office                         | ○ Veterans Affairs                |
| ○ Secretary of State (Motor Vehicle Division) |                                   |

**Remember to fill out a change of address form with the United States Post Office as well!**

## West Michigan Therapy—Housing Programs – Transitional Living Center

### HEADQUARTERS

130 East Apple Avenue, Muskegon, MI 49442

### HOUSING PROGRAM

2333 Jarman, Muskegon Heights, MI 49444

Phone: 231-739-6840

Fax: 231-739-5940

Web Site: [www.wmttlc.com](http://www.wmttlc.com)



### Agency Policy

It is the policy of WMT to offer treatment and shelter services to all who need and can benefit from them regardless of race, gender, religion, sexual preferences and/or physical handicaps.

West Michigan Therapy, Inc., a not-for-profit 501 (c) 3 agency, was incorporated in 1985 to provide outpatient services for persons and families who were experiencing substance abuse problems. Today WMT provides services that are covered by State and Federal grants, Medicaid, commercial insurances and private donations. We provide counseling, housing services for the homeless, and treatment services at a reasonable cost.

Service fees are based on a sliding scale and are established according to the person's ability to pay, taking into consideration family income and size.

If you or someone you know suffers from substance abuse or dependency, please don't wait—there is a solution! Call West Michigan Therapy at 231-728-2138 for an appointment. Walk-ins are welcome! We are located at 130 East Apple Avenue in the City of Muskegon. **WMT works to re-create the HOPE that RECOVERY is POSSIBLE!**

We have a staff of qualified counselors including Certified Addictions Counselors, Master's Level Clinicians and Doctors of Psychology; some of our counselors have been working in the field for more than twenty years.

WEST MICHIGAN THERAPY

2333 JARMAN ST.

MUSKEGON HEIGHTS, MI 49444



community foundation

### Muskegon County

This program is made possible in part by a grant from the JASAM Fund of the Community Foundation for Muskegon County.



### Mission Statement

To provide every individual who struggles with the effects of substance abuse, including homelessness, the tools and support systems necessary to improve their quality of life.

### Promise

WMT promises to provide services in a dignified and ethical manner encompassing the realities of the entire family system to any person that requests such services despite his or her ability or inability to pay a fee for service.

### Values

WMT values the safety and prosperity of the community.

WMT values family involvement in treatment and recovery.

WMT values a holistic approach to providing services to all individuals.

WMT values the integrity and confidentiality of the persons served.

WMT values the principles of spirituality.

WMT values community collaboration and partnerships.

