

LOVE . . . THE TIE THAT BINDS

by Gwen Swan

For 25 years **CWAH** has provided lifelines to thousands of people as they've ploughed through the wreckage of just that kind of hardship. While the facial features changed with each client, the typical financial picture remained constant – poor, un- or underemployed, and unequipped to bridge the financial gap created by structural racism, mental health issues or a lack of education. But today, hardship has a new profile. Kelsia and Alphonso Ivy are the poster couple.

Between them, they hold five degrees – two advanced. Their four children are all "A" students. Three are in the Parkway School District and their oldest daughter is on a scholarship at the Columbia College for Dance and Music in Chicago. Their solid marriage, preceded by a friendship that began when they were 16, is borne of a strong faith in God and a genuine love and respect for one another. They are homeowners, active in their community and in the parent-teacher organizations that support their children's schools.

Four years ago, Alphonso's technical position as a temporary employee with AT&T put him in the "upper echelon," with an annual salary of nearly \$80,000, enough to support his family and allow Kelsia to work part-time and start her consulting firm . . . a charmed life by American standards. Then the bottom fell out.

While on an assignment in Oklahoma, he got the call informing him that his position was ending; he was being transferred to another division. His hours and salary were cut in half; his workload tripled. The foundation tumbled, as did his spirits. The societal dictates that artificially defined a "man" and the excessive demands of the job weighed heavily on him. Repossessions and a foreclosure dragged him further into the abyss, resulting in both physical and mental deterioration.

At his lowest point, Alphonso became emotional, and, while not ashamed to shed tears in front of his partner and best friend, he "wouldn't unless it was for a really good reason." Kelsia's response to those tears was "I'd rather have my husband than money. I gave him permission." Alfonso resigned from his job.

Kelsia, his family and God shored him up. CWAH gave them a lifeline. "We women love to shop," said the articulate and beautiful Kelsia. When her spirits and finances were at their lowest, the CWAH Boutique provided a much-needed lift. Clothing, furniture and family travel were provided and gratefully accepted by the Ivy family. Kelsia and her children attended Health and Wellness, Fitness, Nutrition and Computer Training classes, and participated in the Youth Entrepreneurship program. . Kelsia also participated in the Job Readiness class, which culminated in a paid mentorship with BJC Behavioral Health, a position she still holds today. For Alfonso, CWAH served as an example of the value of "giving back".

Throughout these challenges, Kelsia and Alphonso communicated openly with their children about what was going on. "*We can never let both our candles go out at the same time,*" was the mantra and method that kept the marriage strong. They alternated grieving periods that allowed them to defuse.

Three years later, the Ivy Family continues working through the financial challenges, but remains strong as a unit and in pursuit of their goals. Alfonso is in the prestigious Masters program in Clinical Mental Health Counseling at UMSL; Kelsia is developing her consulting business – transitions brought about by the hardship of job loss. The details of their lives are much larger than the space allocated for this article, but the salient point is this: *What do you do when you lose "everything"?*

You redefine and reassess the term "*everything*." In life's equation, the defining thread is love . . . love of family, love of community, 25 years of love demonstrated by organizations like CWAH; and you "never give up." Alphonso put it succinctly, "we're on Transition Boulevard; but we're on the road to Success Way." Sounds like they're already there!

What do you do when you lose "everything"? When the financial foundation that supports your home, family, lifestyle and future suddenly tumbles, and you're struggling to avoid falling into the sinkhole created by circumstances beyond your control?



People Against Poverty Campaign



Too many families are at this intersection; help CWAH reroute them to an avenue of increased hope and renewed vision. Our programs and services offer opportunities for them to become more self-reliant.

The St. Louis American

And



**Community Women Against Hardship
2013**

People Against Poverty Campaign

Seeking to Identify and Assist 20 Families

You can nominate a family to receive these services and point them in a new direction. Because sometimes we need to know, there is an alternative route.

Mail or fax your letters to:
The St Louis American Newspaper
4242 Lindell Blvd.
St. Louis, MO 63108
Fax: 314-533-2332
Attn. People Against Poverty

ALL LETTERS DUE BY OCTOBER 24, 2013



Donate Today!!!

CWAH
3963 West Belle Pl
St. Louis, MO
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Items you can purchase...

Babies, children and adult clothing	Art Supplies
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Sheets, Pillows,	Job Opportunities
Comforters	Laclede Gas Cards
Shoes, Boots,	Laptops
socks	School supplies
Theater Tickets	T-shirts
Toiletries	Under garments



LOOKING FOR THE MAN IN THE MIRROR

As I, turn up the collar on
My favorite winter coat
This wind is blowing my mind
I see the kids in the streets
With not enough to eat
Who am I to be blind?
Pretending not to see their needs....

I'm starting with the man in the mirror
I'm asking him to change his ways
And no message could have been any clearer
If you want to make the world a better place
Take a look at yourself, and then make a change....

Excerpts from Michael Jacksons "Man In The Mirror"

As you look in the mirror this Holiday Season; hoping you will be the change that's makes the difference!

Thanks
CWAH

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"I leave you finally, a responsibility to our young people". For the world really belongs to youth, for youth will take over its future management. Our children must never lose their zeal for building a better world. They must not be discouraged from aspiring toward greatness, for they are to be the leaders of tomorrow."

Mary Beth McLeod Bethune

Howard University, the Mary Beth McLeod Bethune House, National Museum of African American Art, Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the Lincoln Memorial, Dr. Martin Luther King Memorial, picnic alongside the Potomac River and so much more presented these families memories that will certainly last a lifetime.



Oleta Adams 25th Anniversary Gala Celebration

Sunday, November 3, 2013

Concert Begins at 5:00pm

Doors Open at 4:30pm

Sheldon Concert Hall

3648 Washington Blvd

St. Louis MO 63108

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Angela J Martin

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Ms. Sharon Harvey- Davis

2013 Outreach Awardees

Mr. Elson Williams

Ms Lynette Watson

Sponsors:

Ticket Information

\$100 Corporate Reserved Seating in center main level & Post Reception with artist.

\$60 Reserved seating on main level & post reception with artist

\$45 Reserved seating on main level

\$30 Reserved Seating in balcony

At door \$5 will be added to ticket price

Tickets Available by mail

Community Women Against Hardship
3963 West Belle, St Louis MO 63108
(314) 289-7523

www.cwh.org

or by Metro Tix 314-534-1111

Ameren Missouri, Missouri Lottery, First National Bank,

First Bank, Centric Group, Major Brands, and Dr. Kay E. Royster

Special thanks to all who made our trip to DC possible, we are truly grateful:

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Our 25 year journey....

The efforts of wonderful volunteers throughout this 25 year journey have shown the power of an idea, a dream. We share the dream that all God's children live with the help of other loved ones and as a part of a community. We cannot survive alone. Some of us grow up accepting our lives as they are, and believing that it would take a miracle to live the dream of knowing each day we can feed our children, provide shelter, and be a part of the community of man. Community Women Against Hardship feels great spiritual joy in making that "miracle" an attainable goal, a reality. Our reward has been in watching families come together, watching mothers and fathers developing a sense of hope that their lives and their children's lives can change for the better.

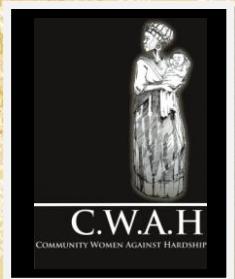
On behalf of the Board of Directors, staff, and our wonderful volunteers, we are grateful for your support! Thanks for all that you do...

Gloria L. Taylor

Founder & President

"Remember the seeds we plant today are the flowers we see tomorrow...."

Community Women Against Hardship
3963 West Belle Pl
St. Louis, MO 63108
(314) 289-7523
www.cwah.org



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