

The Freeman Flash

FEBRUARY/MARCH 2014

ELIZABETH FREEMAN CENTER'S OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER

ISSUE XXVI



International Women's Day, March 8th

International Women's Day is right around the corner, and we can't wait to see you there! In a time when women's rights seem under attack, our celebration is a chance to gather and remember the joy of community. It's food for the soul and fire for the heart on the long path toward gender equality and justice.

Call Flavours at (413) 443-3188 now to make your reservation. There will be two \$35 seatings, one at 5:30pm and one at 7:30pm. We'll also have door \$1 raffle prizes and will hold the drawing for our Berkshire Pure Indulgence raffle!



A Dream Ticket

Imagine basking in a luxurious spa day at Canyon Ranch...



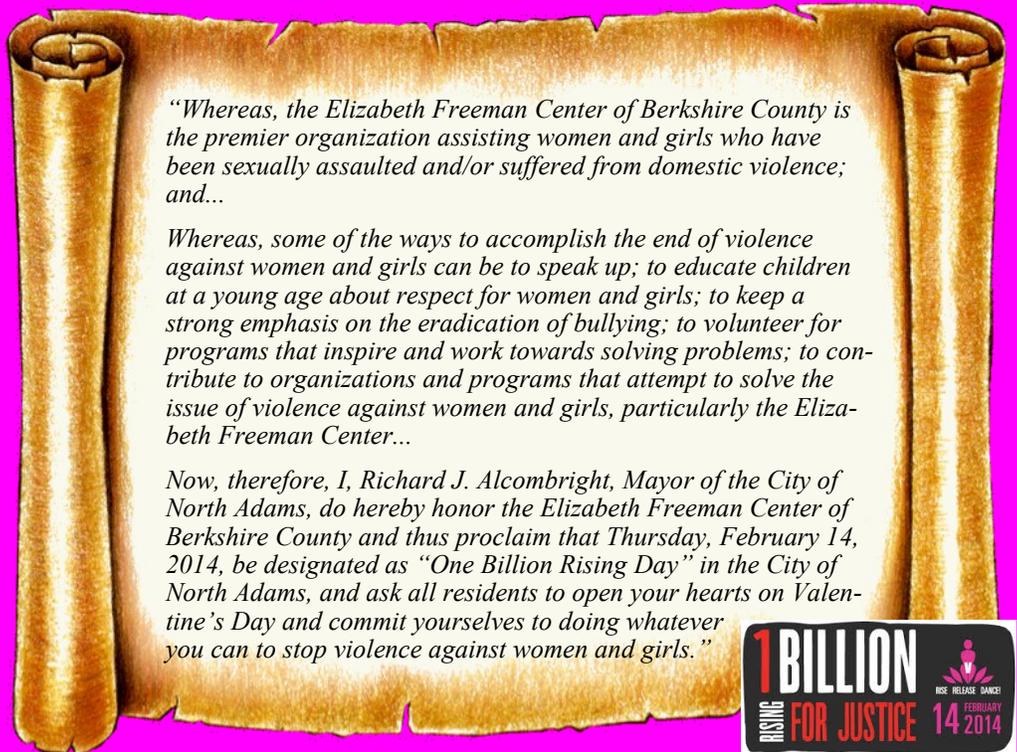
Or holding passes to all of the cultural destinations in the Berkshires...



The chance to win either of these experiences could be yours for \$10! Berkshire Pure Indulgence raffle tickets are available online, at Elizabeth Freeman Center offices, or at Bagels Too and many other fine Pittsfield businesses. All proceeds benefit Elizabeth Freeman Center.

North Adams Rising

On February 12th, North Adams Mayor Richard Alcombright issued a proclamation to mark One Billion Rising, the annual event each February 14th when millions of people rise up to demand an end to violence against women and girls. We are excited that Mayor Alcombright is such a strong supporter of this work and are honored to be included in his proclamation, from which we include selections here. A very special thank-you to Rachel Branch for being the force behind this proclamation!



Pittsfield - 43 Francis Ave.
(413) 499-2425
Gt. Barrington - 40 Railroad St.
(413) 429-8190
North Adams - 85 Main St.
(413) 663-7459
24 hour hotline 1-866-401-2425

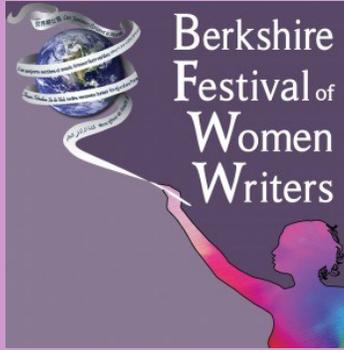


Supported locally by: Berkshire United Way • Northern Berkshire United Way • Williamstown Community Chest • City of Pittsfield • Verizon Foundation • Town of Great Barrington • Berkshire Life Charitable Foundation • Women's Fund of W. Mass. • Aria Foundation • The Green Foundation • Berkshire Bank Foundation • Many community members, groups, busi-

The Power of Words

March brings with it warmer weather (hurray!) and the Berkshire Festival of Women Writers, with 58 events including readings, performances, panel discussions, workshops, and more.

Two that caught our eye are **“Writing that Matters: Social and Environmental Activism Through the Written Word,”** a panel discussion at 11am on Sunday, March 16 at the Beacon in Pittsfield, and **“Channeling Rachel Carson: Finding Your Inner Muckracker,”** a lecture and discussion by Carol Goodman Kaufman, who has written about domestic violence in the past and will be speaking about using writing to change the world at 2pm on Sunday, March 30th at Congregation Knesset Israel in Pittsfield.



Sexual Assault Awareness Month

April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month. The issue affects us all (1 in 5 women and 1 in 71 men are sexually assaulted in their life) and yet it is still often shrouded in secrecy or shame. No more! So many of us have experienced assault, or have helped someone dear to us through recovery, it is time to be proud of our courage and the courage of our loved ones, and to speak out against rape culture, sexism, and victim blaming. As always, Elizabeth Freeman Center will be hosting a variety of events for the month. Let us know if you'd like to be involved – call Becca at (413) 499-2425.



EFC's own Katie S. at one of our Sexual Assault Awareness rallies in Pittsfield last year

What You Need to Know for Tax Season



Each year, millions of dollars go unclaimed by people who do not file their taxes to receive an **Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)**. If you earned any money (even \$1) in 2013, are part of a low- to moderate-income household, and are a US citizen, you could qualify to receive an EITC refund worth up to thousands of dollars.

What more information or help (and who doesn't when it comes to taxes)? Don't go to H&R Block! Local **Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) sites** will do your taxes for free if you are low- to moderate-income. Berkshire County has VITA sites in Pittsfield, Lee, and Great Barrington. Visit <http://www.berkshirehabitat.org/services/vita-tax-program> for more information. Still have questions? Call us here at Elizabeth Freeman Center, (413) 499-2425.

Commercial Elliptical For Sale!

Looking to get in shape and get some exercise in a fun, easy, low-impact way? We are selling a used E820 Sports Art Fitness Elliptical Machine, generously donated to us by a community member. \$500 or better offer. Contact Becca at (413) 499-2425 if you are interested in acquiring it. All sale proceeds will support Elizabeth Freeman Center.



Vigil Held in Support of Women in Abuse Case after Scott Muir was Acquitted



Scott Muir

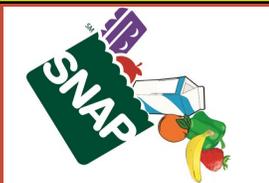
On February 11th, 60 people gathered in a candlelight vigil in Great Barrington to show support for the five alleged victims of former school counselor Scott Muir, who in January was acquitted of 19 counts of sexual abuse. In their testimony, the victims recounted how Muir used his position as counselor to molest them as third and fourth graders.

The Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN) estimates that, out of every 100 rapes: 40 get reported to the police, 10 lead to an arrest, 8 get prosecuted, 4 lead to a felony conviction, and 3 will result in the rapist serving time.

It takes tremendous courage for survivors of sexual assault to come forward publicly, and we work for the day when those who come forward to the justice system can expect to receive just that: justice.

Visit the Facebook page “We Believe You” at www.facebook.com/webelieveyouyoureotalone to support victims of child sexual assault in Berkshire County and beyond.

In The News...



This month, Congress passed and the President signed the 2014 Farm bill into law. This bill includes an \$8.7 billion cut in food stamp benefits over the next 10 years, causing 850,000 households to lose an average of \$90 per month.

The cuts work by doing away with the “Heat and Eat” policies of Massachusetts and 14 other states, which allowed anyone who received energy assistance to be automatically eligible for additional food stamp benefits.