

CWJC of Rusk County helps women discover true worth

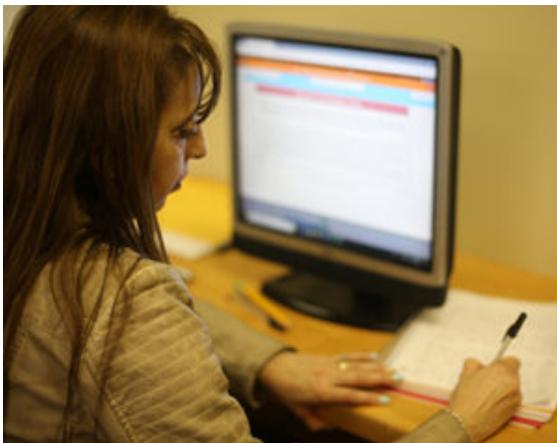
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HENDERSON—When it comes to making an impact on women’s lives through the ministry of Christian Women’s Job Corps, Christie Gambrell’s basic perspective is simple.

“At CWJC, we help meet the felt needs of women as we help them find their true worth through Jesus,” Gambrell said.

As executive director of Christian Women’s Job Corps of Rusk County, Gambrell has worked with hundreds of women over the past several years. CWJC of Rusk County, which opened its doors in 2002 in Henderson, seeks to reach women with the love of Jesus while helping equip them for life and employment.

Among the ministry’s diverse offerings are English-as-a-Second-Language, which includes citizenship classes, and life skills training that addresses money management, healthy relationships, computer classes, Bible storying and mentoring.



Computer classes are among the

many practical life skills taught at Christian Women's Job Corps of Rusk County. The CWJC site located in Henderson has helped equip women for life and employment since 2002. (WMU photo by Pam Henderson)

Volunteers also provide literacy and high school equivalency tutoring. Additionally, the Rusk County ministry is one of six CWJC programs in the nation that include a WorldCrafts artisan group, a fair trade compassion ministry of national Woman's Missionary Union.

"We work with about 50 women every year and usually about that many volunteers," Gambrell said, "When you work with this many women, you see women who succeed and women who don't. But that's true in every form of education and Christian ministry.

"We've had some wonderful successes. Each semester, we see women successfully enter the workforce. This past year we had four women who received their citizenship. We have women who've gone to college. We have one who's working on her master's degree right now."

CWJC success story

She said they also have participants "who we've gotten to see their children go to college and their children get awards which is so fantastic because that goes back to the founding thought of Christian Women's Job Corps that you're changing the children's lives and changing the family."



Nita Tirado, a participant in CWJC of Rusk County, said mentoring she has received through CWJC “has been the biggest thing that has helped me in my life,” She said the mentoring program has helped her and her husband “to be better parents and to guide our kids on God’s path.” (WMU photo by Pam Henderson)

Nita Tirado is among those success stories. She first came to CWJC to get help with earning her GED. She then enrolled in the life skills classes, where she gained computer skills and other practical training.

Even more significantly, she learned about the gospel of Christ and accepted Jesus as her Savior. Following her CWJC involvement, she successfully found employment before eventually getting married and becoming a stay-at-home mom.

Her CWJC classes “gave me confidence in general,” Tirado reflected. “My favorite class out of life skills was Bible study,” she added. “It was amazing for me. It really was. I just felt peace. It was something that I was needing at that time in my life.”

Mentors matter

Over the past few years, Tirado and her husband have been paired with a CWJC volunteer couple who provide mentoring and Bible study.

That connection “has been very important in my family’s life because our mentors are the sweetest people,” she emphasized. “In my life, I’ve never had anybody like them.

“They show you love as a couple. They’re older and they’re still holding hands, and that just gave me this really nice feeling of that’s how I want to be with my husband when we’re old.

“The mentoring has been the biggest thing that has helped me in my life. It helps us to be better parents and to guide our kids on God’s path. That’s the biggest blessing of coming here for me.”

Gambrell noted recruiting mentors typically is one of the biggest challenges for most CWJC sites.

Participants “who are able to have mentors are the ones that I always see the greatest success with,” she added. “I don’t think people understand the importance of having somebody who’s your personal cheerleader, someone to stick with you and encourage you. That’s especially true with single women or women who don’t have a supportive family.”

Partnership with WorldCraft



Christie Gambrell points out the earrings crafted by the WorldCrafts artisan group affiliated with CWJC of Rusk County, Texas. She affirmed that “it’s been such an amazing thing for our ladies to be part of WorldCrafts,” National WMU’s fair trade artisan ministry. (WMU photo by Pam Henderson)

Along with CWJC’s primary emphases of mentoring, tutoring, ESL classes and job skills training, Gambrell said, the program’s partnership with WorldCrafts has been a significant resource.

“Our county is rural. We have over 900 square miles, lots of little communities, and there aren’t a lot of good work opportunities for women,” she explained. “Early on in our program, we began to look for ways to help women supplement their incomes.

“It’s been such an amazing thing for our ladies to be part of WorldCrafts,” Gambrell said. “Having a student artisan business allowed our ladies to be able to do something to help earn income. I remember one girl who had never made anything in her life. She couldn’t believe that people were buying things that she made.”

In addition to the WorldCrafts partnership, CWJC of Rusk County artisans also produce products that are distributed locally, including crocheting chemo hats for chemotherapy patients in area hospitals.

“Christian Women’s Job Corps has been a wonderful way to reach women in the community with the gospel of Jesus Christ, with encouragement for their lives and with support,” Gambrell said. “Our mission field is right here.

“The national WMU has been such an encouragement to us. They help us with promotional materials, with training, with so many things, and our state WMU has been a great support as well,” she affirmed. “There are always needs in your community and we as people of the Lord are called to reach out to those around us.”

‘I enjoy helping people learn’



Christie Gambrell (right), executive director of CWJC of Rusk County, visits with Sandra Jimenez, a CWJC participant who also serves as an aide to assist other women involved in the program. Jimenez emphasized that CWJC is “an amazing place to learn.” (WMU photo by Pam Henderson)

Diana Willis, one of the CWJC volunteer tutors committed to helping meet those needs, has 16 years of experience as a high school math teacher. Noting that many of the participants pursuing their GED needed help with math, she said, “I felt like I could make a little bit of a difference.

“I enjoy helping people learn something that they don’t know,” she added. “I feel like my spiritual gift is service and I feel like it’s a service to help someone improve their life and work toward their GED if they don’t have it. It’s just fulfilling to know that I’m helping somebody along that path.”

Citing CWJC of Rusk County’s practical impact in the lives of participants, Gambrell said she has seen many of the women go on to gain “a variety of jobs that make them feel like they’re women of worth.”

“It’s great to see them become someone that they didn’t think they could be,” she concluded. “It’s because somebody believed in them and somebody invested in their lives. That’s what Christian Women’s Job Corps is all about.”