



The Women's Group of Mt. Vernon

"The place for friendship... the space for healing."

Community Support and Education for:

- **Women's Issues**
- **Domestic Violence**
- **Sexual Violence**
- **Child Abuse**

Recognizing the lack of local area resources for domestic violence in the Mt. Vernon area, Mattie Palmore and Kari Warren founded **The Women's Group of Mt. Vernon** in 2004. Because of logistical complications with daycare, transportation, and working hours, many of the women in the Route 1 Corridor of Fairfax County, Virginia, are unable to seek the support systems located elsewhere in the county. Working as Family Advocates for a homeless transitional housing program, Mattie and Kari saw firsthand the need for this type of support group in a local arena.

Working closely with clients with housing and economic struggles, an all-too-common theme emerged. Many of their clients were single women who were on the verge of homelessness due to issues of domestic violence. In 2004, Mattie and Kari established a peer support group that meets locally, provides daycare, and if needed, provides transportation to our meetings by members of the group. This fellowship for women was established to provide community peer support and education in the areas of domestic violence, child abuse, sexual violence and other women's issues. It is provided as an adjunct service to educational programs provided in this area. One of the key elements of these meetings is validation. In a setting of peers, women learn to embrace themselves as they are and to move forward in their lives. Using other women as a sounding board, members are able to identify their needs, seek resources, and establish friendships. As of December 2007, over 100 women in the community have attended our monthly meetings.

You may see members distributing mirrors with the slogan, ***"I Love Myself—I Know I'm Grand!"*** These mirrors are meant to build positive reflections and are a central part of our theme. No matter what has happened, it is the movement forward that matters most of all. Heralding this premise, members come to an acceptance and love of themselves. ***"I Love Myself—I Know I'm Grand!"*** has become a trademark theme of the Women's Group.

The Women's Group of Mt. Vernon produces an annual "Women's Day" conference—a day of pampering and empowerment. This event is coordinated with local government agencies, non-profit organizations, businesses, licensed clinicians, and ministers. Working with a nominal budget and the generosity of our community, we are able to provide a conference which includes motivational speakers, educational workshops, clinical and spiritual counseling and the biggest draw of all--massages! All of this is at no cost to the participants. The goal is to educate, motivate and empower the women in attendance. Thus far, the average attendance has been over 120 women, with their children enrolled in the daycare facility provided by local volunteers and Indianapolis' very own, MamaMia, a children's entertainer. Guest speakers have included: Cathy Lanier (D.C. Chief of Police); Yvette Cade (domestic violence burn victim); Mildred Mohammed (former spouse of the infamous "D.C. Sniper"); and Suzy Long (author, *Healing for the Abandoned Wife*). Senator Toddy Puller and Delegate Kris Amundson have faithfully offered the opening remarks and the welcome for our Women's Day, while the Mt. Vernon District Police Department has been a constant presence of support and education for the women of Mt. Vernon for this special day -- and throughout the year.

The group's mission statement is simple; "Our struggles were meant to build us up, thus allowing us to be a blessing and healing comfort to other women until they, too, can love themselves." It is this uniting theme that allows us to continue to reach out to those who otherwise may not come forward with their stories and their pain.