



Belinda Pittman-McGee

HELPING MOMS HELP THEMSELVES

BY JOANNE WEINTRAUB

TWENTY YEARS AGO, Belinda Pittman-McGee was coming out of a bad marriage. She had three kids and few resources.

A women's shelter helped her get back on her feet. Since 1994, she has repaid that debt many times over at Nia Imani Family, an organization she started to help other mothers in need.

As founder and executive director of the 14-unit Milwaukee residential center, Pittman-McGee oversees a program that provides women with free housing and counseling while they get their lives sorted out.

The mothers, who live at Nia Imani for up to two years, are struggling to keep their families together and get job training in the face of domestic violence, alcoholism, drug abuse or other serious problems.

"I know what they're facing," Pittman-McGee says, "because I've been there."

After her own shelter experience, Pittman-McGee managed to find an apartment and start a child care business. But the apartment was so small that she wound up sending two of her children to live with relatives.

Her family life improved when she began cleaning houses and attending an educational program through the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. People she met there and through her business helped her open Nia Imani in '94.

Referrals for the privately funded nonprofit agency come from the court system and from social workers, but participation is voluntary. "Women are here because they want to be here," Pittman-McGee notes. "Otherwise it wouldn't work."

Women and their children live in the center's apartments while the moms attend job training and classes for such basic skills as house-keeping and money management. There are also support groups for women trying to get or stay clean and sober.

Pittman-McGee is especially proud of one Nia Imani graduate honored at the group's last benefit gala.

"She celebrated 10 years clean and sober," she notes. "Like a lot of our ladies, she's come a long, long way." ■

6/19 MIDSUMMER MAGIC

Benefits Old World Wisconsin Foundation. Savor samples from local restaurants and quench your thirst with tastes of wine, beer and beverages, all included in your ticket price. Relax as live music fills the charming Crossroad Village. 6 p.m. Casual attire. \$50, with discounts for Friends of OWW members. Old World Wisconsin, S103 W37890 Hwy. 67, Eagle, 262-594-2922, friendsorww.org.

6/19 ANNUAL SUMMER

SOLSTICE SOIREE Benefits The Urban Ecology Center. Come and celebrate the longest day of the year at our amazing green building, featuring organic culinary delights, a fabulous silent auction, great live music and the magic of the UEC. 6 p.m. Summer cocktail attire/guys leave ties at home. \$150/person. The Urban Ecology Center, 1500 E. Park Place, 414-964-8505, urbanecologycenter.org.

6/21 8TH ANNUAL GOLF

CLASSIC Benefits Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee. Come support Catholic Charities at this great event. Price includes lunch, cocktails and dinner at the auction dinner party. 10:30 a.m. \$300/person \$1,200/foursome. Ozaukee Country Club, 10823 N. River Rd., Mequon, 414-769-3400, ccmke.org.

6/21 8TH ANNUAL AUCTION

DINNER PARTY Benefits Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee. This great event includes a raffle, silent and voice auctions, and wine pull. Cocktails followed by dinner and program. 5 p.m. Casual/dress attire. \$50/person. Ozaukee Country Club, 10823 N. River Rd., Mequon, 414-769-3400, ccmke.org.

6/21 LIBERTY MUTUAL

INVITATIONAL Benefits National Kidney Foundation of Wisconsin. Open to amateur golfers in competitive and noncompetitive divisions. Winning competitive team is invited to a three-day national championship. Entry includes premium gifts, lunch, reception and dinner. Noon. Golf/country club attire. \$1,600/competitive foursome, \$1,400/noncompetitive foursome. Westmoor Country Club, 400 S. Moorland Rd., Brookfield, 262-821-0705, ext. 13, kidneywi.org.

6/21 WILSON CENTER GOLF

CLASSIC Benefits Sharon Lynne Wilson Center for the Arts. A full day of golf, including lunch, dinner, prizes, raffle items and an auction. 10 a.m. Golf attire. \$325. Merrill Hills Country Club, Waukesha, 262-373-5029, wilson-center.org.

6/21 20TH ANNUAL FRIENDS OF WISCO CHARITY GOLF OUTING

Benefits Wisconsin Lutheran High School. Includes 18 holes of golf, gifts, awards and hole event prizes, with lunch and dinner included. 9 a.m. Golf attire. \$135. Evergreen Golf Club, N6246 Hwy. 12, Elkhorn, 414-453-4567, ext. 2012, wolbs.org.

6/22 UPAF'S 2010 CAMPAIGN

FINALE Benefits United Performing Arts Fund. Don't miss the excitement as UPAF announces the results of its 2010 fundraising campaign. Proceeds benefit 34 nationally recognized performing arts groups in Greater Milwaukee. 4 p.m. Location TBA, 414-273-8723, upaf.org.

6/23 LIGHT THE NIGHT FOR

SIGHT WALK & PICNIC Benefits Prevent Blindness Wisconsin. Includes all-day admission to the zoo, parking, picnic, contests and children's activities. Teams and families are encouraged to participate. 8 p.m. Casual attire. \$20/adult, \$5/child, plus pledges. Milwaukee County Zoo, 10001 W. Blue Mound Rd., 414-765-0505, preventblindness.org/wi.

6/24 MARQUETTE UNIVERSITY

HIGH SCHOOL GOLF INVITATIONAL Benefits Marquette University High School. Alumni, parents, grandparents and friends of MUHS gather to support a wonderful Jesuit, urban college-preparatory school for young men. The cost includes golf, lunch and dinner. 11 a.m. Golf attire. \$175. Fire Ridge Golf Club, 2241 County Rd. W, Grafton, 414-933-7220, ext. 3045, mubs.edu/golfinvitational.

6/24-6/26 7TH ANNUAL

CHICKENFEST Benefits Kiwanis Club of Darboy. A community celebration of all things chicken, two evenings plus all day Saturday. Rides, entertainment, craft fair, refreshments and chicken to eat, plus other food. Fireworks Friday evening. 5 p.m. Casual attire. Free. Darboy Community Park, Corner of Noe & Midway Rd., Appleton, 920-993-9664, darboychickenfest.com.