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After 10 years, Time for Change still sparking change in women's lives

By Ryan Carter, Staff Writer

Posted: 03/05/2012 03:34:30 PM PST

SAN BERNARDINO - If you played the odds, you might have bet against Kim Carter even still being alive.

She could very well have been just another statistic - by her own account, she was mired in drug addiction to dull the pain of a dysfunctional youth.

But the 49-year-old founder of Time for Change Foundation knows a thing or two about surviving.

And now, as the San Bernardino nonprofit she founded 10 years ago celebrates an anniversary, she and her staff have managed to help hundreds of women in San Bernardino County go from being destitute to having hope.

If there's an inspiration for what Carter has started, the memory of Harriet Tubman - the Civil War-era nurse who escaped slavery only to rescue slaves - readily comes to her mind.

"I know I'm in a direct line with Harriet Tubman - in my mind. That's who I draw strength from," Carter said. "Could you imagine being a slave and escaping and getting to freedom but instead of staying there, she chose to go back into slavery to help other people get free? That's what I believe we do here at Time for Change."

For Carter, it's about women finding self-sufficiency in a world where many are enslaved by their pasts. Don't get her started on what those pasts are. There's the resume dotted with criminal

offenses; the woman who can't rent because of an arrest; the woman homeless because she can't find fair and affordable housing; the woman hooked on drugs, but who still has children to feed, despite a rap sheet.

Women renew their lives in one of two San Bernardino transitional living shelters Time for Change runs. Referred to Carter's foundation from other agencies, they learn how to live - understand finances, how to raise children, how to get a job and keep one, how to break away from a cycle of addiction, bad influences and what Carter calls the "disease of incarceration."

More than 500 women - and their children have been served at those shelters, she said.

They are women like Juanita Burnett, 48.

She calls herself a walking billboard for Time for Change.

"You know, since I've been here what they gave me back? It was my dignity. My self-esteem. I'm still learning things about myself in this program."

Lucky for Burnett, Carter learned just enough about herself to start the foundation, but it was a journey that almost killed her.

While she and her organization are touting 10 years of serving San Bernardino County women, Carter is celebrating a larger rebirth - 18 years of being clean and sober.

She still remembers as a 7-year-old, having her first drink.

"Molestation, broken family, hopeless, and helpless, the only thing that

I could do was turn that anger inward," she said.

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Kim Carter, founder of Time For Change Foundation, holds a picture of her mother, daughter and her, inside of her San Bernardino office. The organization serves homeless women and their children, to get them back on a path to self-sufficiency. (Ryan Carter/Staff)

program in San
Bernardino County

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FYI

Time for Change Foundation will hold its 10th-Year Anniversary Gala at 6 p.m. April 12 in the Valencia Room at the National Orange Show Events Center, 690 S. Arrowhead Ave., San Bernardino.

Information, sponsorship and ticket sales: 909-886-2994, or email jkunkel@Timeforchangefoundation.org.

What Carter, a New York native, remembers vividly was that no one intervened to stop a spiral that for several years in her youth led to addiction, crime, frequent stints in prison, and the indignity that goes along with it all. It became a vicious cycle until age 30, but with the help of a treatment program, she found some hope.

"I still had a little resolve left, that I could take one more step," Carter said.

Despite a subsequent bout with cancer - she said she was once told she had 90 days to live - Carter found herself alive, and cleaning herself up.

She wanted to become an accountant, but it didn't pan out.

But she still had that next step in her.

By 2000, with her husband's help, she had bought her first home - one that she ultimately moved out of so that it could become the first of her two foundation shelters. Since then, the organization has grown to include a case manager, bookkeeper and a communication director.

And that staff is looking forward to completing the renovation of a multi-family complex for women who have transitioned out of the shelters.

Carter looks back on the 10 years with awe, but also with a forceful purpose.

Homelessness? Bad breaks in life? Drugs? Self destruction?

"That doesn't negate your citizenship," she said, almost preacher-like, from her office, adorned with pictures of her daughter and her mother. "Maybe you're ashamed to hold your head up. But life is not over for you."

Contact Ryan [via email](#), or by phone at 909-386-3884.

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