

[CREAKING, HEAVY BREATHING]

JIMMY CARPER: The following program contains language or images of a frank or sensitive nature--

MAN: (MOANING) Oh, Frank!

JIMMY CARPER: --which may be considered objectionable by some. Listener discretion is advised.

[THEME MUSIC]

THEME SONG: *After Hours, After Hours.*

JIMMY CARPER: Oh, yes. You've tuned in to *After Hours*, a continuing tradition on KPFT Houston 90.1 FM. The crew of *After Hours* is ready to bring you news, interviews, and music geared for gay and lesbian people. Here at *After Hours*, we may be diverse, but we have one thing in common-- we are out of the closet and urge everyone to come out of their closets.

That means standing up for yourself, taking responsibility for your own life, and being proud of who you are. Realistically, we know not everyone can do that because of age, job, or frame of mind. That's OK. We're here for you too. So sit back, relax, and enjoy this week's edition of *After Hours*.

[THEME MUSIC]

HOST: We're on, we're on.

JIMMY CARPER: We're on, we're on, yes! [LAUGHS]

JEWEL GRAY: And we're gay. You've tuned in to *After Hours*, if you haven't told yet. This is Jewel Gray. I'm sitting here with Jimmy Carper.

JIMMY CARPER: Ta-da!

JEWEL GRAY: Michael Crawford's in here. Matt's in here. Rainbow is here.

JIMMY CARPER: Jim!

JEWEL GRAY: Jim.

JIMMY CARPER: The non-gay one.

JEWEL GRAY: Gina. God, we're full tonight. We wish you were here.

JIMMY CARPER: And you could be.

JEWEL GRAY: Throw our tent up out in the street, yes. And you could be.

HOST: You can come down and take your clothes off, too.

JEWEL GRAY: Yeah. But we got this nice camera out here. So if you're wearing a white hooded sheet or have a swastika stamped on your forehead, we will know.

JIMMY CARPER: Yeah, and we won't let you in.

JEWEL GRAY: That's right, that's right. Hey, it's like having one of those bars where they have a bouncer who just lets the cool people in.

JIMMY CARPER: That's right.

JEWEL GRAY: All the geeks have to stand outside.

JIMMY CARPER: All the real cool queers are here tonight.

JEWEL GRAY: I've never made it into one of those bars, I want you to know.

JIMMY CARPER: [LAUGHS]

JEWEL GRAY: I'm always one of the geeks standing out at the door wondering why aren't they letting me in. Could it be that I'm wearing white socks tonight?

JIMMY CARPER: Yeah, yeah, well.

HOST: Well, I mean, I've made it into those kind of places. Not because I'm not a geek, but because I was in cool drag. And you're not missing anything.

JEWEL GRAY: That's what I figure, that's what I figure. Well, you're telling me that we got celebrities on the cover of the twit this week?

JIMMY CARPER: We do, we do. Not only a woman, but--

JEWEL GRAY: That's right.

JIMMY CARPER: --Houston celebrity Pink.

JEWEL GRAY: Pink. And we do some of Pink's music for a couple of months now. We've really latched on to that, and saw the talent there, and been sharing it with you.

JIMMY CARPER: She has this great CD out, and we play it every chance we get.

JEWEL GRAY: That's right. I have Diana [? Manis ?] here tonight, who's going to talk to us about Switchboard training. They've redone the whole thing. It's all different, new, and improved. And you have to be 18 to listen later. So if you're not 18, you have to turn it off when I give you this signal later.

And it'll be like-- what was that old signal they used to do in the *Q Zoo*? Tookie, tookie! That was it. Oh, I remember, yeah. Tookie, tookie.

JIMMY CARPER: That's it, huh?

JEWEL GRAY: The *Q Zoo* symbol.

JIMMY CARPER: Under 18, you have to turn off.

JEWEL GRAY: That's right. So if you're under 18, we're going to tell you to turn the radio off in a little bit. And we'll tell you when to turn it back on.

JIMMY CARPER: Oh, OK.

JEWEL GRAY: So don't worry about that.

JIMMY CARPER: So you'll know. OK.

JEWEL GRAY: We got some-- Judy sent us some information that I think we're going to share.

JIMMY CARPER: I mean to tell you. She has been just cutting them things out of the papers and stuff.

JEWEL GRAY: One of those unsung heroes in our community.

JIMMY CARPER: Yes, yes. Just to keep us up on what's going on in our world and your world, and to let you know what's going on.

JEWEL GRAY: And we sure appreciate it because I tell you what, if I had to do this, it would take me way longer than it would take her.

JIMMY CARPER: She is quickly becoming the *After Hours* news department.

JEWEL GRAY: And I love that. I was talking with one of the people who is either with or going to be with very shortly *After Hours*, and was talking about doing some news summaries. And this would certainly help that.

JIMMY CARPER: You bet.

JEWEL GRAY: And that way, we could give you some of the stuff going on around town. We know you hear national gay radio when you listen to that other program.

JIMMY CARPER: Yeah.

JEWEL GRAY: And we used to do that. But it gets so late, and we got so much to do here that we just figure if it's played in town once--

JIMMY CARPER: Well, you know, it's a different show. This Way Out is a real conservative-sounding type of news magazine, and--

JEWEL GRAY: Oh, we're gonna get letters and calls about that.

HOST: It's boring.

JIMMY CARPER: [LAUGHS] And we're just--

JEWEL GRAY: I didn't say that, mind you.

JIMMY CARPER: We're just a bit more radical here.

JEWEL GRAY: That's right. When I tell people-- I tell people we're the David Letterman of Lesbian/Gay radio. That's right.

JIMMY CARPER: Now, that's not to say-- we feature spots from This Way Out all the time. When it's something cool and--

JEWEL GRAY: Something that's pertinent that really needs to be repeated, and everybody--

JIMMY CARPER: Because those are some pretty professional folks there.

JEWEL GRAY: That's right. But what I'd like to do is put together something where you can get the local news. Some of the gossip. And maybe we'll send our man about town over to--

JIMMY CARPER: Or woman about town.

JEWEL GRAY: --JR's, maybe. Or to the Mining Company and see-- I was over the Mining Company once, and I could not--

JIMMY CARPER: You're kidding!

JEWEL GRAY: Yes, no.

JIMMY CARPER: How did that happen?

JEWEL GRAY: I had to take my shirt off to get in.

JIMMY CARPER: [LAUGHS]

JEWEL GRAY: I had to take my shirt off. It's of those nights where you have--

JIMMY CARPER: It was a bare-chest night?

JEWEL GRAY: It wasn't bare chest. It was no shirt night or something. It wasn't a bare-chest night. So I was fortunate, I just had to take the shirt off.

JIMMY CARPER: Oh, OK.

JEWEL GRAY: But let me tell you, don't tell me I can't come into a bar because I won't take my shirt off. Because you'll be standing there, and this queen was.

JIMMY CARPER: [LAUGHS] I love it.

JEWEL GRAY: [INAUDIBLE]. And I did it with Switchboard people, too.

JIMMY CARPER: Good for you. Good for you.

JEWEL GRAY: But I'd like to get some local news together. Maybe we send our man about town over to the Mining Company, see if he can get through the Mining Company from one end to another without putting his feet on the floor. I'd like to have a report about that.

JIMMY CARPER: I have seldom been able to make my way through there without getting my knees dirty.

JEWEL GRAY: That's right. I want to send Sara over to the Latina bar--

JIMMY CARPER: That's right!

JEWEL GRAY: --and get some perspective from over there and see what's going on. So we want to-- I'm looking at putting a news piece, maybe 10 or 15 minutes, together so we can get some real, local, our town news. And maybe a little gossip about what's going on in town, maybe a little speculation here and there. What do you think that so-and-so is going to do now that they don't have a lover?

JIMMY CARPER: Gossip, gossip, gossip.

JEWEL GRAY: That's right. And who do you think so-and-so is going to do. We'll be careful not to slander anybody and only give initials, like-- what was it that lesbian said the other night? She worked for an airline, she couldn't say what the name was. But the initials were TWA.

[LAUGHTER]

JIMMY CARPER: Oh, that's funny.

JEWEL GRAY: So maybe we can give out initials and nobody would know.

JIMMY CARPER: I see.

JEWEL GRAY: But we got-- I think we got a pretty interesting night together. I feel pretty good. I don't know about anybody else.

JIMMY CARPER: We've got a guy here that's going to talk about movies.

JEWEL GRAY: Oh, that's right. The Movie Club, that's right. And I want to take a second while I'm thinking about it and say hi to the guys at the Milam House, where I've taken up new residency. A new job.

JIMMY CARPER: How are those guys?

JEWEL GRAY: Oh, those guys are pretty good. I'm real impressed with those guys, and I have great affection for them. It's been easy to get next to them. And I know a couple of them are listening tonight, so I thought I'd say hi and let them know that we're thinking about them.

JIMMY CARPER: We got some new music tonight in the Queer Music Zone. Kitchens of Distinction, One Dove, and--

JEWEL GRAY: What happened to bands named The Beatles or Dave Clark Five? What was that in the kitchen?

JIMMY CARPER: Kitchens of Distinction.

JEWEL GRAY: Kitchens of distinction. Crash-- what is it, Test Crash Dummies?

JIMMY CARPER: Yeah, Crash Test Dummies.

JEWEL GRAY: What is it, Somebody No Pain or Somebody of Pain?

HOST: House of Pain.

JEWEL GRAY: House of Pain. Where do they get these names? What happened to names like The Beatles?

JIMMY CARPER: Stone Temple Pilots.

JEWEL GRAY: Yeah, right. Well, so if you know what happened to names like The Beatles, give us a call, you know? Maybe they used them all.

JIMMY CARPER: 526-5738.

JEWEL GRAY: That's right. And you know, I also wanted to ask people, if they feel like it tonight, that I've heard some pretty awful OJ Simpson jokes this week.

JIMMY CARPER: [GROANS]

JEWEL GRAY: And while I won't repeat these awful, awful jokes, if you have heard an awful joke, call us and we'll put you on the air, and you can tell us your awful joke. So I was thinking-- oh, I'm telling you, some awful jokes. And it was on TV on the Comedy Central channel. I watch the comedy channel a lot for some reason. But it was pretty bad jokes.

They've got this thing about the man on the street, and they go out and ask people a joke. And this is what everybody's talking about now.

JIMMY CARPER: No!

JEWEL GRAY: And they were-- oh, my God. Awful, awful. Anyway. So, you want to do something from Pink?

JIMMY CARPER: Ooh, you bet.

JEWEL GRAY: And I'll go in there and warm them up in the green room.

[LAUGHTER]

JIMMY CARPER: She does a great song for the gay and lesbian community called "Give and Take."

JEWEL GRAY: Great.

JIMMY CARPER: So thank you, Pink, for this song.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

JEWEL GRAY: All right, we're back. That was cool. I liked that one. That's the new album? Kitchens of Distinction. I like that, now that I think about it. "In a Cave." 4 minutes and 34 seconds, just in case you were taping.

And we know a lot of you out there do tape.

HOST: Hi, Jack.

JEWEL GRAY: Yeah, Jack. I'm not going to say anything.

[LAUGHS]

I'm just not going to say anything. I've got Diana [? Madis ?] here with me. We'll just chat a little bit with Diana about the Switchboard training. And first what we should say is that Gay and Lesbian Switchboard is about to do another training class, and it will be August--

DIANA: August 5, 6 and 7.

JEWEL GRAY: Fifth, sixth, and seventh. Now, the fifth is a Friday night.

DIANA: That's right, so it's going to be from 6:30 until 10:00.

JEWEL GRAY: 6:00 until 10:00 on Friday. So it's four hours Friday night. And then from what?

DIANA: 8:30 AM to 6:00 PM on Saturday and Sunday.

JEWEL GRAY: 8:00 to 6:00 on Saturday and Sunday. Well, that's a little different than the last time you were here. It was two weekends. What's gone on since the last time you were here about that?

DIANA: Well, we've revamped training so that we could consolidate the two weekends into one so that everybody would-- people who work nowadays don't have the opportunity to take off two weekends in a row a lot of times. So we thought it would really be better, and we would get more volunteers if we just did one weekend. And it really has worked out well. Last time was our first test of this, and it really turned out well, so we're going to do it again.

JEWEL GRAY: And Gina Malaby is--

DIANA: That's right. She's one of our--

JEWEL GRAY: --the first graduate of that class.

DIANA: --graduates, and she is excellent.

JEWEL GRAY: Excellent. And I understand that the whole training has changed around. I mean, you obviously have to condense a lot of things, but your emphasis has changed a little bit.

DIANA: Well, we train a lot about active listening. That's the main thing that we do. And we also spend a little more time on the resource manual, so people will be more familiar with it and able to really locate things for people in the community like you, who want to call us. 529-3211-- Gay and Lesbian Switchboard.

JEWEL GRAY: Well, in the first part of your sentence, you said-- now I've lost it. You just said-- can you repeat back to me what you just said?

DIANA: Not really. Not at this hour.

JEWEL GRAY: You said-- oh, active listening. That's what it was. And I thought, when I heard that, well, why don't you tell us a little bit about what active listening is and what value there is at the Switchboard-- how that transpires at the Switchboard-- active listening.

DIANA: Well, active listening is a technique that we can use in our daily lives. So it's really something good that everybody needs to learn. It really is a kind of a non-directive, non-judgmental way of listening to people and not solving other people's problems but maybe giving them a little feedback so that they can recognize what the problem really is. So it's very difficult to explain. It's techniques that we try and--

JEWEL GRAY: Since I've done that, maybe I can put a face on it. Active listening is parroting back what someone says, so they hear it back.

DIANA: I didn't know you wanted me to train people to do active listening.

JEWEL GRAY: No, I just thought that it would be a good idea that people understand what it is that we teach people to do.

DIANA: OK. We do a little of that, and then we focus on feelings to find out how people are feeling right now.

JEWEL GRAY: How do you do that?

DIANA: We ask people, how do you feel about that?

JEWEL GRAY: Right. You ask people how they feel. Now, we're talking about something-- a lot of people don't understand how this would be for information referral service-- how people feel. But with an information call, it sometimes turns into being something else.

DIANA: That's right. People may call because they're breaking up with a lover or something, and they really don't know what to do or who to ask or talk to. And they may call us and ask if there are any organizations out there. And while we're looking it up or while we're talking to that person, we may find out that they have a lot of unresolved issues that they really don't have anybody to talk to about. And that's what we're there for.

JEWEL GRAY: Right. Those kind of things that you can't tell your parents or people you work with. And sometimes, you can't tell the people you're closest to because it's involving them.

DIANA: That's right. So we help them all reach in and really look at what their feelings are.

JEWEL GRAY: And how do you do that? You parrot back their feelings, you paraphrase, you do a lot of open ended questions where people have to-- and that's basically what active listening is.

DIANA: It allows people to talk. We don't do the talking, necessarily. We allow the person-- the caller-- to do the talking.

JEWEL GRAY: And one of the things that I know-- because I'm also with the switchboard-- is that we don't give advice.

DIANA: No, that's not what we're there for.

JEWEL GRAY: We don't tell people what to do.

DIANA: We don't solve peoples' problems.

JEWEL GRAY: That's right. That's not what we're about. But we are there to listen and be kind of an anonymous support person in your life. We have some people who call us often to reconnect with that support over and over because they don't have that connection in their life.

DIANA: They don't have a network out there, and that's kind of what we are. We're a resource for you. Out in the community, you have really nobody to talk to, or you do have somebody to talk to you, and you just want somebody else to talk to who's not going to tell you what to do, who's not going to be judgmental, who's just going to listen if you have a problem-- and be compassionate.

JEWEL GRAY: And I know that one of the things that they offer during that conversation is problem solving where-- with the right questions asked-- it puts person-- it reminds them of things they have done or have not done, and it helps them define their goals and reach those attainable places.

DIANA: One of the things that I've found when I've been on the phone to the switchboard-- and I do a shift every week. I find that people will say, when they hang up, well, thank you for solving my problem or, thank you, your advice was very good. And I always remind them, I didn't give you any advice. You came up with your own solution, or you came up with what we were talking about. Not me.

And I think that kind of validates them, too. Not to think that, no, I'm not going to be able to tell you what to do. I would never even presume to do such a thing because I don't know all the circumstances around whatever the problem is. And then you could come back at me and say, well, you told me wrong. Well, I'm not going to take that responsibility, and I train people not to take that responsibility.

JEWEL GRAY: That's a good point that that's what you train people how to be objective and how to not take responsibility for fixing or be responsible for their problems.

DIANA: And to not be judgmental.

JEWEL GRAY: Right. Non-judgemental.

DIANA: No matter if it's something that you really feel very strongly about, you have no right to tell someone else not to do it.

JEWEL GRAY: You have no right as a switchboard volunteer.

DIANA: Well, that's very true.

JEWEL GRAY: I believe that you don't have any right otherwise, but the capacity we're talking right now is a Switchboard operator.

DIANA: That's how we train people.

JEWEL GRAY: And that training and that kind of conversation we talked earlier could turn into an information referral call, but then there are the information referral calls that turn into this peer counseling that we're talking about.

DIANA: And we're not trained counselors, and we don't train people to be counselors. And that's what I always tell people also. And when people call, I tell them, we are not trained counselors. We can give a referral to a trained counselor, but we are not.

JEWEL GRAY: Tell me what it is about-- well, let's go back to the information referrals first. The kind of information referrals that The Switchboard offer are doctors, lawyers, dentists. But what are the little esoteric things that people don't know The Switchboard offers.

DIANA: Oh, you put me on the spot. A lot of new groups that are forming-- we get a lot of information about that.

JEWEL GRAY: Exactly. Changing phone numbers, changing positions in [INAUDIBLE].

DIANA: And right now, we're hoping to go online with a computer, so we'll be able to be up to the minute with the changes. Right now, we're kind of old fashioned, and we do everything by hand. But hopefully, in the very near future, we'll be online with a computer. And anyone out there who really has information they'd like listed with The Switchboard, we have a way of doing that also. So please call The Switchboard. Let us know, and we'll send you a form to fill out.

JEWEL GRAY: Back to the information referrals. The esoteric things would be like Dameron's Guide. We could tell you what bar to go to if you had to fly to Paris for business.

DIANA: That's right. And I've had people call me from out of town saying, oh, I forgot my TWIT. Can you tell me where the bars are located?

JEWEL GRAY: From San Antonio, from Austin-- who have gone there and didn't have their local guide, and they could call us. Another thing that we can offer is HIV service information-- where, when, who, and how-- what doctors, what clinics, where, what time they're open. We also offer things like 12-step meeting hours, Lambda Center, which is the gay and lesbian AA center that offers 12-step meetings there. We know their schedules. We know about immediate fundraising information in town, stuff that goes on in Friday nights. We can tell you that. There's a lot of information that Switchboard can offer.

DIANA: Right. We have a lot of things that are right at our fingertips, so if you need any information at all, give us a call. Now let's go back to training. I want people to call The Switchboard and sign up for training. I've got a training class.

JEWEL GRAY: You'll take some numbers and names here tonight, won't you?

DIANA: That's right. Give me a call here.

JEWEL GRAY: And you'll take names and numbers and get back at people. If anybody's interested in joining the Gay and Lesbian Switchboard, you can call Diana here tonight.

DIANA: Let's tell them about what the commitment is. We're asking for three hours a week for six months.

JEWEL GRAY: For six months. What we ask for after that is four hours a month-- on top of the three hours a week-- of communal work.

DIANA: Or small donations. We are always looking for donations. It takes very little to run The Switchboard.

JEWEL GRAY: Either/or or and. Right. Either/or/and. Yes. And you sit on the Board of Directors there, alongside me. By the way, if I haven't made it clear past, Diana is my lover.

DIANA: No, you didn't make it clear, but thank you.

JEWEL GRAY: Oh, I'm sorry. Uh-oh. Uh-oh. And we both share a seat on the Board of Directors there.

DIANA: Well, we don't share a seat. I'm in charge of education.

JEWEL GRAY: I don't think we could share a seat, girlfriend. Get me? Come on. But we do share the experience of the Board of Directors there, so we know a lot of stuff. But you are a new volunteer. You've only been two years.

DIANA: Two years.

JEWEL GRAY: And in that two years, a lot of things have changed. I mean, it was a lot different when you came on, so I wanted to highlight some of the things that are going on at Switchboard for change. I know that recently-- because I was there-- that we spent all day Sunday locked up at Chapultepec's on Richmond, hammering out a new-- what is it Bill says-- ethos-- for The Switchboard-- a new ethos for the switchboard and a new direction and a new feel. What do you think about all that stuff?

DIANA: I'm very excited about it. I think it really is going to help change the atmosphere. We kind of feel like nobody out there really cares about us. A lot of times, we go into this room, and we answer the phones. And then we go home. And we don't see each other very much. So what we're trying to do is we're trying to make it more of an organization where we continue the bonding process that we start out in the training class. It's a very intimate experience. You become very-- well, I don't mean intimate-- but it will change your life. Join The Switchboard, and it will change your life.

JEWEL GRAY: And I told you that a little more than two years ago.

DIANA: You really did, and I didn't believe you. And I join The Switchboard, and it has.

JEWEL GRAY: It changed your life.

DIANA: We have a new volunteer-- volunteer here.

JEWEL GRAY: Volunteer here. A volunteer here.

DIANA: It's late. I'm usually in bed at 10 o'clock. You know I am.

JEWEL GRAY: Yes, we're getting to be old ladies.

DIANA: Oh, be quiet.

JEWEL GRAY: Oh, be quiet.

DIANA: But she's been really, really great. And she's one of the ones who's going to help us put our computer online service in effect, so I'm really excited about her. And she was in our last training class, so why don't I get her over here and let her say something about how it's changed her life in three months.

JEWEL GRAY: Three months? Oh, boy. Gina is going to sit in the chair, say, I don't really think it has changed my life too terribly much.

DIANA: They're joking.

JEWEL GRAY: Except that long drive. You come from so far away to volunteer.

GINA: Yeah. But no, I think it does. What Diana was saying is true. It really does change your life.

JEWEL GRAY: What changes your life?

GINA: Well, it's that--

DIANA: It makes you more aware.

GINA: It makes you more aware, and it educates you. And you're more aware of the problems that gay people have when they call up. And it helps me because I listen to their problems. Like Diana says, you're trained listeners. You're really not supposed to be giving advice, but you listen to them. And you listen to the pain that they're going through, and you're thinking that there is no reason that they need to go through that.

And it helps you because you feel anger that they have to go through that pain. And then it helps you because you realize, well, don't have to go through that pain, either. And to me, it's like I've come out more, and every day I come out to a new person. It strengthens me, and I don't think I would have that courage if it wasn't for The Switchboard because it gives you that confidence.

JEWEL GRAY: Well, I agree. Yeah, I agree. I think that what it is is it makes you more aware. You have such an expanded consciousness of things around you that you never had before. When I joined Switchboard, it did the same thing for me. I lived up in the Heights. I lived with my lover for six years. We barely got out. We watched a lot of TV.

We went down to Marion's and shot pool on Friday nights, and played softball, and did all that kind of stuff and just were not involved. And I joined The Switchboard, and what it did was it put my fingers on the pulse of the community. I could see all the things that were in the community because of the information we have available for us and the things that come past us.

And one of the things that we do-- and one of the things that they teach you in training-- is to continue your own education, so that you are continually updating the information you have inside you. Everybody who works on the phones also works in the communities. We stand at bars and people say, when is that TGRA meeting, or when is that TGRA fundraiser? Well, that's Friday night on the 13th. So we don't only do it on the phones. We do it out in the-- I know because I've seen lots of Switchboarders do it because we just become the fingers on the pulse of the community.

GINA: Well, what I like, too, is the continuing education because we have that once a month, and you get to learn so much. And then the information I got on AIDS-- because it's amazing how ignorant I was on AIDS.

JEWEL GRAY: Did you think you were pretty update?

GINA: I did. I remember when I first started. In training, we went over some AIDS facts and different safe sex. And one of the things about brushing your teeth before having sex-- I would never have thought of that, and I tell all my friends. And they come to me now. It's like some kind of advice-- Gina, I did this.

JEWEL GRAY: Do you find yourself able to listen to your friends and communicate better with your friends--

GINA: Oh, definitely.

JEWEL GRAY: --and people you deal with because of the things you learned in training? See, that's what I try to impress upon people is what they can take away from Switchboard-- not necessarily what we want from them but what they also get to take away from The Switchboard-- that active listening and the things that it teaches you about patience, and being supportive of other people, and being non-judgmental, keeping your mind open to all things and all possibilities. Those kind of things are real important, and I know that it really affects how I deal with people in my outside life.

I guess people here that listen to this show regularly will pretty much know that as a person, I'm pretty non-judgmental, but I wasn't always like that. I really wasn't because I didn't know how not to be. I didn't know how not to be judgmental until I learned how to listen. And when I learned how to listen, I learned that I didn't have to put myself into what I was hearing. I was not involved. I could listen safely without judging, and I didn't know that until I learned these things from The Switchboard. And I was wondering if that was the same kind of experience you had-- that you didn't know that you had the power and the right until they pointed it out at The Switchboard?

GINA: Yeah, that's exactly what I was saying earlier, too. Yeah, you do bring it in, and you do the act of listening with your friends. And I was using one of the techniques, and I was talking to a friend. And I was like, well, you sound angry. And it helps them analyze their feelings.

JEWEL GRAY: They hear it back.

GINA: Yeah. And they're going, oh, Gina, you're doing-- it was one of my really, really good friends. And for some reason-- because that was always my problem because I always felt when someone came to me with a problem, I had to tell them what to do. And then I would get mad because they wouldn't do it. Well, why do you keep coming to me? And so it does train you, and you do better with your friends. And they do talk to you more. And it does really good because I was real hyperactive and I get--

JEWEL GRAY: No duh! Duh. I was just thinking, I wonder if we're getting all this. Hyperactive? Duh. We need that at Switchboard.

GINA: But it seems like it takes me a little bit longer to blow my cork because I always say I have a real short fuse and when it blows, it blows. Stand back. So it it's helped me calm down quite a bit.

JEWEL GRAY: Well, I'm glad you were here tonight to talk about it because it really matters to me that people understand what The Switchboard is. Most people really don't have a lot of idea. And everybody's kind of intimidated or afraid of the unknown, so it's been my personal-- I don't know-- journey to try to make people understand what it is The Switchboard does. And that was beautiful, and I really appreciate it.

GINA: Well, thank you for having me talk.

JEWEL GRAY: Great. So Diana does that. She's the one who puts these classes together. And Gina was just talking about continuing education. I would like to see, in the future, us, at The Switchboard, open up continuing education to anybody in the community if they want to learn something. There's a lot to be learned, and it's easy to learn it. They give these continuing education classes Saturday mornings, and I think they're talking about doing it sometime during the week to offer people who can't be there on Saturday mornings.

DIANA: That's right. We're going to take a look at that. Right now, we have some space donated, and we're inviting everybody to come. But it's not going to be the first Saturday in August because training is going to be that class on that day.

JEWEL GRAY: So training is going on. And like I said earlier, Diana will take names and numbers. If you're interested, you can call what number, Jimmy?

JIMMY CARPER: 529-3211.

JEWEL GRAY: He really is in here with me. That's not just him breathing. He really is here.

DIANA: And the hours that we're open at The Switchboard that you can call in are, generally, from 3:00 in the afternoon to midnight.

JEWEL GRAY: All right. We gave the requirements earlier-- about three hours a week. Those are not three hours you spend by yourself. Those will be three hours you will have a partner who's an experienced person at The Switchboard, so you won't be there by yourself. And you won't be put on the spot.

DIANA: You don't work the phone shift alone for four months.

JEWEL GRAY: Right, so you're not on the phones by yourself. As a matter of fact, if for some reason your experienced partner can't show up, we ask you to go home because we don't want you down there by yourself in the beginning.

DIANA: We want people to be as comfortable as possible and to feel that they are well trained.

JEWEL GRAY: And we listen. Not only do we teach listening, but we listen, too. And we work around. There have been occasions when you've made special cases when people just couldn't finish an hour of training or get there an hour on Friday night or something that you're willing to listen and to see how the things-- now, I know that now that training is condensed that it's even more important that people be there the whole time.

DIANA: But we can make exceptions. We do ask that if you have to leave for a couple of hours, that's fine. But we really need the commitment for the first weekend. We can always make arrangements after that for the phone shifts and even for a couple of hours, like I said. But really, we need you to be able to make the bulk of a class. And we have classes every three months, so if you can't make this class-- if you already have commitments for August 5, 6 and 7th, then give us a call at The Switchboard, and we'll put you on the list for the next class that will be in November.

JEWEL GRAY: November. Right. So I guess that's it-- Switchboard training.

DIANA: And one of the main reasons-- I want to add-- that the training has changed is that I believe in listening and getting feedback from the people that I train. And that is the feedback that I got. They thought it was too long, and I've really changed the whole agenda for the training class. And it's very flexible now. And we base it upon the bulk of the people in the class. Some people go very fast. Some people go slower. But it really has changed. And it's really a fun weekend, so I really encourage everybody to call in if you've got a couple hours.

JEWEL GRAY: And it's a great place to meet people. I've met three, four, three-- four lovers there.

DIANA: We're not telling people to come to The Switchboard to get lovers.

JEWEL GRAY: But we're great people, and that's entirely possible. Believe me.

DIANA: We bond.

JEWEL GRAY: That's right. We bond, we bond. Let me tell you. There's no orgies on the floor, but we never forget your name.

JIMMY CARPER: No, but I always like to think of The Switchboard office itself as a safe haven for its members.

DIANA: That's right. It is.

JEWEL GRAY: It's always been available. Somebody is in the neighborhood who had a drink too many, isn't comfortable driving, they can stop at The Switchboard and crash for the night. It's always been a place where you could go and spend a quiet hour at a place when there's no one on a shift. And it's always been a place to go to be with other friends that you know there and visiting and talk. It's always a place to go if you're having a fight with your lover, and you just want to get out for a little while. You can go down and visit somebody you don't know and make friends. But it is.

And I always say-- when I talk about organizations on the radio, I always remind people-- you have something in common the moment you step in the door because everybody else chose this organization, too. And they chose it for whatever reasons just like you did, so you have something in common-- that this was the organization.

And there will be common traits among those people because this is a special kind of organization. It's not a big party, party organization, although we have our blowouts, let me tell you. But it's not a party, party organization. It really is a service organization. And those people that show up there have similar traits.

DIANA: And we all have various jobs in the community. We have people who work in retail, to doctors, PhDs.

JEWEL GRAY: Psychiatrists, lawyers.

DIANA: Residential coordinators. And by the way, I would like to thank the other residential coordinator, Billie Walker. I told her to listen tonight. I'm on call this weekend, and I've had the weekend from hell.

JEWEL GRAY: Yeah, you can say that.

DIANA: Hell.

JEWEL GRAY: But you can't say, beep.

DIANA: And I thank her for her cooperation and her assistance.

JEWEL GRAY: OK, then. If you're interested, Diana is going to be in the lobby for a few minutes, and we're going to go to some music. And then we'll come back and tell you what station we are, and then we'll talk a little bit more.