A new time of year and a new location surround the fifth consecutive Circle of Friends Women's Retreat in Holyoke. It is scheduled Saturday, June 6 from 9 a.m.-12 noon and 1-4 p.m. at the Peerless Center.

With "Foundations" as the theme, Circle of Friends will explore a number of ideas to assist women in building a foundation for themselves. Organizers note Christ and His word are foundations that keep us strong, but they want women to have the tools to build their own foundations around that.

Keynote speaker Jan Loesch will share how her earthly foundational qualities affected her spiritual foundation. Her testimony will include her story of overcoming obstacles to establish her own foundation. Loesch serves as executive director of the Caring Pregnancy Resource Center in Northeast Colorado.

Amy Marner will also share her personal testimony involving her story of when she moved to Holyoke.

Linking music as a foundational tool, Sarah St. Martin will serve as worship leader to open and close the day's retreat. Organizers feel her music will be uplifting and refreshing.

Program planners will serve as facilitators for this year's Circle of Friends retreat. As part of that, they will lead workshops.

Working together to outline this retreat program to benefit the community's women are Sheryl Farnsworth, Beth Penfold, Julie Wiebke, Susan Baker and Bev Atkins.

"How do we deepen our relationship with God?" will be the focus of Baker and Atkins' workshop, titled "A retreat for those who thirst for living water."

They will set up an environment that is beautiful where quiet time with the Lord can be enjoyed. They will note the significance of such time and will use devotional inspiration to give women the tools to find their own retreat place and time to be refreshed.

Penfold wants other women to see that God wants each person to know and understand His love. "One major way to experience this is to study His word as a love letter to us," she said. Her workshop is titled "God's Word is a love letter, not a second-hand love letter."

"Living Truly" is Wiebke's workshop theme, in which she will explore "How do I take the scriptures and live it?"

She notes a personal relationship with the Lord is a foundation, but it's not enough to just say one is a Christian. On the other hand, demonstrating a Christian life doesn't necessarily mean witnessing constantly. Living the life can be seen through any number of spiritual gifts. Her workshop will explore the discovery of one's own spiritual gifts.

"Sony, Sunburns, Stickers and Stew" is Farnsworth's fun title for her workshop which will delve into knowing and understanding God's love.

She emphasizes if one doesn't understand the word, there's no life in it. Her workshop will explore learning how to ask questions when reading the word and how to find encouragement by it. While it's about a relationship with Jesus, it's also about relationships with others and gaining perspective and encouragement through them.

As a tool-building activity during Circle of Friends, those attending will have the chance to make their own keychain of scriptures. "We're equipping women to have the tools to grow," said Farnsworth.

These will be personal keychains, and women will choose the scriptures that touch their hearts. There will be scriptural examples addressing fear, depression, anxiety, strength and more. Circle of Friends women will be able to choose the ones they like for their individual keychains.

The purpose is to note that God will encourage with verses that speak to situations.

“I hope this is just a beginning,” said Atkins, adding she hopes each woman will add more verses to their keychains as they find ones that lift them up.

A fun skit is planned to model how to make these scriptural keychains.

In addition to linking to the Lord, Circle of Friends is set up to establish relationships and link women within the community to each other.

Previously scheduled in February, Circle of Friends retreat timing has been moved to accommodate schedules of younger women who aren’t able to attend in February due to school activities.

Organizers feel the move to the Peerless will facilitate workshops within the day’s activities.

As another change, women will be on their own for lunch. They can bring their own lunch to eat at the Peerless or the park or can choose a restaurant. Those attending should plan to line up their own daycare this year, as well.

Point Blank for girls continues

In conjunction with the Circle of Friends women’s retreat, a Point Blank experience is planned for junior high and senior high girls.

Point Blank is in its second year and will join the women for music and some sessions, but will break out for its own retreat for girls at the Peerless. The afternoon Point Blank activity will be a surprise for the girls.

Point Blank is dedicated to giving junior high and senior high girls opportunities to develop positive, supportive friendships with each other while growing in a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Coordinators for Point Blank are Ashley Geist, Brittany Krueger and Darci Tomky.

Those who have questions about Point Blank can email pointblank holyoke@gmail.com or call/text Krueger at 520-4437.