



Signs of Hope

Spring 2008

Our Mission: To break the cycle of domestic abuse by providing crisis intervention, support services, education and advocacy to survivors, their families and the community.

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A Safe Place Board of Directors

Ellie Brillon
 Nancy Eames
 Andrea Lewy
 Priscilla MacInnis
 Genevieve Ouimette
 Brian Page
 Maureen Pecora
 Rose Phillips
 Michelle Roycroft
 Melanie York



DIRECTOR'S CORNER

By Marsie Silvestro

Recently, one of my shelter staff shared a story that underscores the everyday reality of A Safe Place's commitment to breaking the cycle of domestic abuse. A conversation was heard between two little boys whose mothers were receiving our services. I have changed the names to protect confidentiality. "I know our mommy loves us," Johnny said. "How do you know that?" asked his new-found friend. "Because when my daddy hits my mom he tells her if she screams, he will hit us worse. And you know what? My mommy never screams."

This is hard to hear, but it is an account that is told in some shape or form by so many people who walk through our doors. The work we do at A Safe Place is not easy, but for 30 years it has been the crucial work of a very committed staff. Last year we served some 1600 people, seeing them for 33,500 service units (15 minute increments). If that number is extrapolated over 30 years, A Safe Place has potentially served over 50,000 people—more than twice the population of Portsmouth—giving 1,005,000 units of service. Now if that isn't a "Big Give," I don't know what is!

Like many of you, our organization is faced with economic challenges as the cost of our heating oil, utilities, health insurance, shelter maintenance and the like rise. But even through this, A Safe Place will keep all of our services free. It is one area where we will not compromise, as many of our clients come to us suddenly homeless, fleeing

for their safety, with just their children and the clothes on their backs; most have difficulty affording basic needs.

From those few dedicated women who began the Task Force on Family Violence 30 years ago in Portsmouth, to the Green Porch Lights in the 1980's that announced safe homes for victims of domestic abuse, to expanding our locations to Salem and Rochester, A Safe Place has cast a wide safety net over all of Strafford and Rockingham counties. Providing continuous 24-hour coverage to abuse victims in need, this "net" of satellite offices, shelter and advocates has helped transform people's lives.

Moving forward, we know that our mission continues to be a necessary life-saving goal, as domestic abuse continues unabated. A Safe Place and our services remain steadfastly essential to those seeking safety. So I invite you to help us celebrate our 30 years of "giving big." Host a 30th Birthday Party for A Safe Place, and invite your family and friends; we'll come and speak! Have it at your home, your workplace, a picnic, or a yard sale. Be creative! Ask your friends and family to donate their time and skills; "loan" them \$5, \$10, or \$30 and ask them to multiply it 30-fold to benefit A Safe Place! Make it fun!

Let us know other ways you can help us celebrate! It will truly be a "big gift" to have you join A Safe Place to celebrate our 30 years, as well as to honor the women, children and men who walk through our doors as victims—and leave as survivors!



A Safe Place *turns the* **BIG 30!!!**

2008 is a BIG year for A Safe Place as we mark our 30th anniversary, and we have BIG plans to celebrate! We invite you to join us in the BIG endeavor. In the spirit of Oprah Winfrey...think outside the box and give BIG this year... here are a number of BIG ways to give to A Safe Place:

- ☞ Host a house party... invite your family and friends over to learn about A Safe Place, our services and the work we have done over the past 30 years. If each person gives, that will add up to something BIG!
- ☞ Donate to A Safe Place in memory of a loved one, or list A Safe Place as a benefactor in your will.
- ☞ Donate a door or raffle prize for our 30th Anniversary events.
- ☞ Sponsor a donation drive to collect items on our wish list. You can download our wish list from our website at www.asafeplacenh.org.

Welcome NEW BOARD MEMBERS

Andrea Lewy: Her personal experience brings Andrea to A Safe Place's Board of Directors. Having been impacted by domestic abuse, Andrea wants to help A Safe Place grow and stay strong in the services it provides to survivors. Andrea is currently an assessor for the town of Newton and has many years of experience with financial and tax administration. Andrea joined the Board in December 2007

Brian Page: For years Brian has made the education about and prevention of domestic abuse a personal and professional priority. He joined the Board of Directors in November 2007 to continue his drive to improve services and support to victims. Currently, Brian serves as the Police Chief in North Hampton and has been in the field of law enforcement for over 20 years. He grew up in New Hampshire and has received his Associates Degree in Criminal Justice and Psychology from Hesser College, as well as a Bachelors Degree in Criminal Justice.

Melanie M. Yorke: Melanie joined A Safe Place's Board of Directors in the fall of 2007. She was interested in A Safe Place because of her concerns for women and children in unsafe living conditions. Born and raised in York, Maine, Melanie currently lives in Cape Neddick. With an Associate Degree in Retailing from Westbrook College and a Bachelor Degree in Business from Franklin Pierce College, she is currently the Branch Manager at Federal Savings Bank on Woodbury Ave in Portsmouth. Melanie has three grown children and one grandson.



Critical Wish List Needs

- ◆ Gas Cards
- ◆ Large Plastic Storage Bins
- ◆ Diapers, Wipes and Powdered Formula
- ◆ Feminine Hygiene Products
- ◆ Teen Girls Clothing
- ◆ Toilet Paper & Paper Towels
- ◆ 13 Gallon Trash Bags
- ◆ Colored Xerox Paper
- ◆ Desktop or Laptop Computer (Windows XP)

For an ongoing list of regular needs download our wish list from our website www.asafeplacenh.org

Thank you for your support



A Survivors' Story

She may be small in stature but her courage is larger than life. She fled nearly half way across the country to escape the terror that not only was her life but that of her children as well. In doing so, they lost their home, their lively hood and a big part of their support system. That would be enough to force anyone into despair. "Hannah" (the name has been changed to protect her identity) and her children arrived in New Hampshire with the bare minimum to survive. This is how she describes her story...

We left behind a business that had been liquidated, a home that had been decimated and a husband/father that was not only abusing us but also actively abusing drugs. He had been lying and cheating his way through our lives for a number of years. With each month that passed, the abuse only got worse. With no end in sight, and after a horrific assault, I filed a restraining order, I quickly connected with some local services. Then, I packed up the kids and what we needed for the next few days and left. I was able to get information about A Safe Place from an agency in the state that we lived in before we escaped.

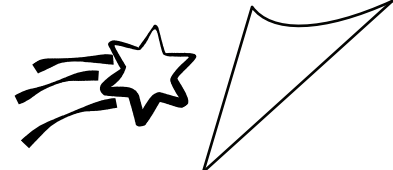
When we arrived in New Hampshire, I made contact with A Safe Place. They were able to help me, along with a Pro Bono Attorney, to complete the final restraining order without having to go back. In addition, advocates connected us with numerous social services in the area. I got connected with a counselor for myself and for the children to start dealing with all of the pain that we were feeling. The first several months were extremely difficult for all of us. But, I did my best to remain optimistic about our future. However, there were times that I felt really down; particularly around the holidays. On the days that I was having a hard time, I knew that I could contact the Advocates at A Safe Place to talk through whatever I was experiencing. They helped by providing gifts for my family for Christmas. I had been so concerned about how I would be able to afford gifts and A Safe Place really came through for me.

These days, I am feeling healthier, stronger and happier in spite of the many problems that we are still facing. I am employed, enrolled in school and looking toward my next steps in creating a bright future for

myself and my family. My children are all connected with wonderful supports in the community and are working diligently at healing from the trauma that they experienced. When people ask me how I am able to maintain such a positive outlook, I tell them that it is partially due to my faith in God, my family and my new support network. I don't think that I would be in the position that I am in now-safe and free from domestic abuse-without the constant support of the many wonderful Advocates at A Safe Place.

Hannah
Rockingham Co., New Hampshire

Survivor Update: Since our last publication recounting "Kathy's" story, we have received news that after 3 long and costly years of legal battles, she has obtained sole rights and responsibilities for her children, and has been permitted to move out-of-state to be closer to her family support system. We wish "Kathy" and her children many safe, healthy and happy years together...



Doing a little "Spring Cleaning"?

donate your old cell phone to A Safe Place...



A Safe Place gives old cell phones to victims of domestic abuse to use as an Emergency 911 phone.

Since 2005, A Safe Place has been recycling the cell phones we can not use for victims through an organization called Shelter Alliance. You can organize a drive in your neighborhood, workplace, school or organization to collect phones. You can drop off your collected phones at any of our three offices in Rochester, Salem or Portsmouth or you can send them directly to Shelter Alliance. Who will then send A Safe Place a monetary donation for the phones. Go to www.shelteralliance.org to print out a free USPS shipping label for your phones.

A Safer Place: The A Safe Place Shelter



By Kim Kleckner-Miller, M.Ed.
Shelter Manager

A Safe Place has been around for 30 years and provides domestic abuse support services, including emergency shelter, advocacy, teen and adult education and crisis support services to 48 towns & cities Rockingham and Strafford Counties. To successfully reach such a large area, A Safe Place has four sites or "arms" in different areas, each reaching out with the same values and mission but providing various core services. The A Safe Place shelter is just one arm of our organization. The office sites each serve a specific area (Rochester, Portsmouth, and Salem), while the shelter, kept in a confidential location, accepts people from all A Safe Place service areas, and beyond.

In essence, our shelter provides free and confidential, temporary shelter to those fleeing from the danger of an abusive intimate relationship and who are seeking safety. We house up to 16 women and accompanied minors. Although we cannot shelter adult male victims in the house, A Safe Place will shelter all victims of domestic abuse, and thus we work with men to find alternative accommodations for confidential, emergency shelter.

In addition to fulfilling this most basic need, the shelter staff answers the 24-hour crisis line and offers on-going support and advocacy to its residents through various programs and activities (dependent on available funding we are able to provide not only personal and

emotional support but material support as well.) We strive to achieve the basic mission of A Safe Place: *To break the cycle of domestic abuse by providing crisis intervention, support services, education and advocacy to survivors, their families and the community.* Within the shelter, and throughout A Safe Place, we achieve this through a model of empowerment.

...our shelter provides free and confidential, temporary shelter to those fleeing imminent danger ...

After a woman is welcomed into our shelter, we sit down with her and create both immediate and long-term goals. Although we do not have a time limit women stay with us, by setting goals with a timeline in mind gives women a sense of accomplishment. Assisting the woman in proposing her own date, rather than imposing one upon her, empowers her to take back her life.

Activities involved in meeting our mission and fostering positive self-esteem and independence among the women we shelter are extensive and usually accomplished through a peer mentoring relationship between residents and staff. These include, but are not limited to, the following: safety planning; assistance with court procedures, (i.e. restraining orders, accessing affordable legal counsel, court accompaniment); peer support; support groups (adult and youth); referrals to other organizations; assistance in accessing and understanding other necessary social services; and

advocating on their behalf. However, the peer-to-peer support, between two or more current residents, can sometimes be the most rewarding type of support – not only for residents to receive, but for the shelter staff to witness. House ("Care and Concern") meetings and group activities are some of the means by which these relationships are fostered.

Virtually "living" with the sheltered women allows the staff to witness many miracles, such as the power of the simplest of things we tend to take for granted. But most fortunately, we are granted the privilege of witnessing a woman choose freedom; develop a relationship with herself; and then reach out to others... like the "arms" of the A Safe Place (always open to catch all who are running, ready to escape abuse.)

But most fortunately, we are granted the privilege of witnessing a woman choose freedom; develop a relationship with herself; and then reach out to others...

It speaks volumes for our Founding Mothers who, 30 years ago, established this venue wherein not only dedicated staff and volunteers come together to break the cycle of abuse, but survivors can take back their power and join with others to achieve that mission, as well. It truly makes the shelter a home out of which grows independence, respectful communication and healthy relationships.



Thank You for Your Support

On behalf of the people that we serve, A Safe Place extends our heartfelt gratitude for the generosity of our communities in supporting A Safe Place. We will be honoring all our donors individually in our Annual Report; however, we would like to thank the following organizations and companies for recently going above and beyond in their support:

In-Kind Donations to Support Victims of Domestic Abuse

- Bethany Church, Greenland
- Hannaford's, Rochester (Milton Rd)
- 1st Congregational Church, Rochester
- 1st United Methodist Church, Rochester
- St. Mary's Parish Rochester
- Grace Community Church, Rochester
- Walmart, Rochester (Farmington Rd.)
- Walmart, Somersworth, (High St.)
- Midas, Somersworth (High St.)
- Dover Womansaid



Food Donations for Volunteer Training

- Hannaford's, Portsmouth
- Hannaford's, Dover Field's
- Me & Ollie's, Portsmouth (Route 1)

Donations for our Flatbread Pizza Co. Fundraiser

- Boston Red Sox
- New England Patriots
- Attrezzi's in Portsmouth
- Rye Airfield



Thank you to all who supported the...

Third Annual

Porch Light Award Gala

Celebrating Voices of Change

Sponsors

- Wheelabrator Technologies
- Portsmouth Regional Hospital
- CB Walsh
- Exeter Hospital
- Lynn Hodges
- Sprague Energy
- Jo Lamprey
- Ocean Properties
- Aquarion Water



In-Kind Donors

- Allegra Printing and Imaging
- Ambrosia Gardens
- Calypso Communications
- Dan Splaine Photography, LLC.
- Harbor Lights



On Monday December 10th, A Safe Place and Sexual Assault Support Services hosted the 3rd Annual Porch Light Award Gala at the Wentworth by the Sea Hotel. The event honored New Hampshire State Representative Terrie Norelli for all the work she has done to improve New Hampshire's laws to protect victims of sexual violence. Guest speaker, Jeanne Shaheen, shared with attendees the milestones New Hampshire has made over the years in improving services for victims of domestic abuse and hold abuser accountable for their actions.

It was a night filled with celebration and inspiration.

THANK YOU to Former Board Members

Mike Jeresaty & Lynne Hodges

To **Mike Jeresaty** for his 2 1/2 years of service to the board and for serving for 1 1/2 years as our board chair and for his countless hours of golf tournament planning.

To **Lynn Hodges** for her 3 years of service to the A Safe Place board of directors and for her unwavering support and generosity. Lynn was also honored as a Sign of Hope.

Welcome New Staff

A Safe Place is excited to welcome the following new staff/ new positions to our organization.



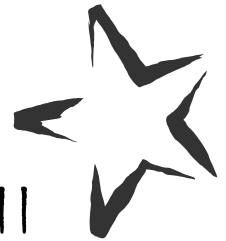
Rochester Office

Bonnie, AVAP Advocate: It is an honor to be working at A Safe Place. Thank you to everyone for being so warm and welcoming me. I look forward to learning from all of you. As an advocate, I hope to make a valuable contribution to those who seek our services.

Volunteer Stars



Be a Sign of Hope!!!



"How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world". ----
Anne Frank

Thank you for all your help....

Thank you to our 3 interns this year. We truly appreciate all the work you did for survivors and wish you the best in your careers.

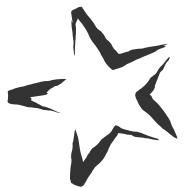
Gina (Rochester Office) UNH graduate student in Social Work
Jill (Shelter) UNH undergraduate in Psychology
Marie (Outreach and Shelter) UNH undergraduate in Psychology

We appreciate all you do... the following volunteers have recorded over 100 hours:

Maxine - Portsmouth Administrative Support
Marie - Portsmouth Outreach
Megan - Portsmouth Administrative Support

Volunteer Appreciation Week: April 28th - May 2nd

On Wednesday April 30th, A Safe Place will be honoring our volunteers from the past year for all their work. If you did not receive your invitation, please contact Jennie at 603.436.4619 x14 or jennies@asafeplacenh.org for the details.



Get Involved with the Volunteer Program:

A Safe Place welcomes community members to volunteer at our organization. How? There are so many ways, big or small, long term or sporadically. Your participation and support will make a difference in the lives of so many in your neighborhoods. We have direct service opportunities - working with those whose lives are personally affected by domestic abuse or non-direct service - supporting our administrative team in providing education and outreach, mailings, grant writing and so much more!!! As you can see, A Safe Place needs your assistance in a multitude of activities ranging from hotline calls and hospital accompaniments to sorting, scrubbing and filing!

Our next direct service training will be Friday May 30 - Thursday June 5. If you are interested please contact Jennie at 603.436.4619 x14 for more details.



When your home is no longer safe: Homeless and a victim of domestic abuse

By Nicole C. and Beth C., Advocates

Pretend for one moment you are a victim of domestic abuse. Would you want: a) housing or b) to be safe from abuse? In a perfect world, you could choose both, but we all know this is not a perfect world. So, when a lack of affordable housing prevents you from having both, what would you choose?

50% of homeless women and children are fleeing a domestic abuse relationship.

(Joan Zora, 'Woman battering: A Major Cause of Homelessness,' 25 Clearinghouse Review 420 (1991))

Nationally, of all homeless women and children, about 50% are fleeing abuse. This translates into trouble in New Hampshire as well, as we are faced with high rental costs, limited access to subsidized housing, and very modest resources through public assistance. All of these issues make homelessness a reality for women in New Hampshire fleeing domestic abuse.

Abusive people actively control and isolate their partners, further restricting resources and support networks that their victims can access. One common tactic an abuser uses is economic control, which includes such behaviors as limiting access to bank accounts, intercepting paychecks, squandering the family's financial resources on personal vices or comforts, or forcing the victim to provide for family necessities on a small allowance.

The prospect of saving enough money for first and last month's rent and security deposit (approximately \$2000) is daunting under such circumstances; even \$10-\$20 a week would be a challenge. Relying on child support is not wise, either, as abusive partners—more often than not—refuse to meet their child support obligations. As a result, women living domestic abuse are too often left with the difficult choice of staying in the abuse, or living without a home.

Women and their children fleeing abuse are forced to stay in an array of unstable housing options: motels, shelters, campgrounds, cars, or "couch surfing" between friends and family. Often these options are not available—shelters may be full, friends and family may be unable or unwilling to help, motels too costly. When these options are available, they are often short-term, hindering women's opportunity to secure stable long-term housing.

Safe and stable long-term housing is difficult for many abuse victims to attain. Section 8 Housing lists have a 3-5 year waiting period, local public housing may take a year for an apartment to open, and public assistance does not provide enough to even cover rent. To demonstrate, a family of three will receive around \$600 per month; the average cost of a 2-bedroom apartment in the Greater Portsmouth, Rochester area averages \$1039 per month. You do the math.

Closer to home, Seacoast victims of domestic abuse have faced unimaginable barriers to safety and permanency. Since January, A Safe Place has heard such accounts as:

- ◆ A woman who was turned away by her family when she left her partner was forced to sleep in her van with her two boys. She decided to go back to the abuse.
- ◆ Another woman moved herself and her four children into a one-bedroom apartment that had only space heaters for a heat source.

Although emergency shelter is a core service offered by A Safe Place, the reality is that 16 beds to serve 48 towns is not enough. The majority of our service-users (more than 95%) do not use our shelter services. ASP advocates at all sites work to help abuse victims achieve independent housing by accompanying women to housing authority appointments; giving information and referrals for security deposit assistance; providing education and assistance to apply for Section 8; advocating with local welfare offices for emergency rent/mortgage support; and connecting service-user to housing attorneys.

One study found that 46% of homeless women reported staying in an abusive home because they had no where to go.

(Wilder Research Center, Homelessness in Minnesota 2003, 22 (February 2004))

housing options with women, yet we are well aware that the options available are limited, requiring difficult decisions. Safely leaving an abusive partner is not an easy task. But when leaving a life of abuse also means leaving warm housing, community supports and personal belongings, the barriers are multiplied.

So what would you choose—safety and homelessness, or abuse and a roof over your children's heads?



News

Contact Information

Check out our New Website!!!

A Safe Place launched a new website in January. If you haven't been online to check it out...be sure to stop by.

The new design is easy to navigate and offers lots of educational information about domestic abuse and A Safe Place. We also have several brochures you may download to share.

www.asafepacenh.org

Portsmouth

Office 603.436.4619 (tty)
Hotline 603.436.7924 (tty)
Fax 603.436.7951

Rochester

Hotline 603.330.0214 (tty)
Fax 603.335.2631

Salem

Hotline 603.890.6392 (tty)
Fax 603.894.7394

Remember:

You don't have to be in crisis to call.

24 - Hour Crisis Line in NH
1.800.854.3552



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