



Newsletter

www.shelterhousenwfl.org
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Fall 2011

Shelter House Receives Transitional Housing Grant

Shelter House was recently awarded a grant for \$250,000 from the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) for a transitional housing program. This grant is the largest Shelter House has ever received and is the organization's first federal grant on its own. This highly competitive grant was awarded just as the previous transitional housing grant, a partnership with Bridgeway Center, was coming to a close.

"This grant is critical for those we serve," said Shelter House Executive Director Michelle Sperzel. "There is little to no transitional housing for victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence and stalking in Okaloosa and Walton counties."

Transitional housing is needed by domestic violence victims because they are often financially abused as well. This can leave victims with bad credit, limited education, spotty employment history, limited job skills, prior evictions and even criminal convictions. These factors can inhibit a victim's ability to get a job and secure housing. Public housing is not a viable option for at-risk victims due to long waiting lists.

Through the transitional housing program, Shelter House will provide rental subsidies, utilities payments and assistance with related expenses such as security deposits. Victims will receive assistance for up to two years based on need, and the amount of assistance will decrease over time as the participant's financial health improves.

In addition to housing, participants will receive support services, including financial literacy and mentoring, safety planning, employment skills training, help accessing educational opportunities, referral to appropriate benefits programs and services, assistance with childcare and counseling.

"Understanding financial management is transformational," explained Sperzel. "This program is not just about paying for housing. It is about empowering victims to take care of themselves, to develop an economic stability plan that will allow them to reintegrate safely back into our community with confidence."

The OVW grant will be spread over three years and will allow Shelter House to assist at least five participants and their children. "We never want a victim returning to the home of her batterer because that seems like her best or only option," said Balon Loftin, the recently promoted Outreach Manager who will lead the grant program.

With grant funding, Shelter House is adding a Housing/Outreach Advocate to its staff to work closely with transitional housing participants. The advocate will conduct a housing needs assessment upon first meeting applicants and will follow up with weekly meetings and as-needed home visits.

Program participants will be housed in apartment complexes throughout the community and will not be identified to neighbors as participants. Apartments will be furnished with a combination of participants' possessions and new or used furniture according to the individual's needs and preferences.

Initially, leases will be held by Shelter House to ensure the anonymity and safety of participants with responsibility moving to the participant over time as the participant's contribution gradually increases. Once a participant leaves the program she will receive support and services for at least three months, but help will be offered indefinitely according to individual need. Exiting participants will also complete a survey to provide feedback for continued improvement of the program.

"The primary purpose of the program is to promote victim safety and economic stability by providing the victim with the support necessary to make the goal of economic stability a reality," stated Sperzel. "Achieving self-sufficiency instills confidence in survivors and gives them the opportunity to restart their lives in a healthy environment for themselves and their children."

Donations Needed for Transitional Housing apartments

Dishes
Glasses & Cups
Silverware
Serving Utensils
Pots & Pans
Coffee Makers
Microwave Ovens
Food Storage Containers
Towels
Sheets
Pillows
Shower Curtains
Bath Mats
Brooms, Mops & Vacuums
Lamps
End Tables

Luminaria Run

Shelter House and Sandestin Golf and Beach Resort are teaming up for the inaugural Luminaria Run on Saturday, December 10. The course will be lined with more than 2,000 luminarias, lighting the path for the runners and representing how Shelter House and its community partners light the way to a safer place for victims of domestic violence in Okaloosa and Walton counties.

The race includes 5k and 9k courses winding throughout Sandestin. Where the 9k runners split from the pack, no luminarias will light the way to symbolize the darkness experienced by domestic violence victims. All runners will come back into the light to complete the race. The 9k distance serves as a reminder that a woman is assaulted or beaten every nine seconds in the U.S.

The public is encouraged to purchase a luminary bag to be placed along the course in honor or in memory of a loved one. Bags are available through a \$10 donation to Shelter House and can be picked up and dropped off at Shelter House.

This is a twilight race starting at 5pm and beginning and ending at Sandestin's Baytowne Marina. Registration for the 5k is \$25 for adults in advance or \$35 on site and \$10 for children in advance or \$15 on site. The 9k race costs \$40 in advance or \$50 on race day for adults and \$15 in advance and \$20 on race day for children. Walkers are also welcome.

Visit www.shelterhousenwfl.org to register and call 850-243-1201 for sponsorship information.



Message from the Executive Director, Michelle Sperzel

In the past few weeks I have been asked several times about the number of success stories we have every year. Each time I am asked this question I give the number of people that we serve and I tell a story about a woman or child that we helped. But honestly that doesn't tell the whole story. Every woman, teenager, child or man that calls us is a success. It takes such courage and boldness to say to yourself, "I am not going to settle. I deserve more. I want better than this."

Many people that use our services are taking a huge risk of losing financial stability or the support of friends and family. They are sometimes criticized for breaking up the family or rocking the boat. So what is success? Is it a woman who attends group for the first time? Is it the mother who packs emergency bags and has them ready to go on a moment's notice? Or is it the woman who stays with us in Shelter for eight weeks, finds a job and never speaks to her abuser

again? I think it is all of the above. For one woman success might be a quiet and safe night holding her child. For another it is filing for divorce. To the teen that calls our hotline success is telling someone that her boyfriend hit her. A man who seeks our help finds success in the form of a friend that won't pass judgment. Their empowerment signifies success.

We are all so results and goal driven that we often forget that we need to meet people where they are. We need to ask them what they want and need in order to help them achieve it rather than setting arbitrary goals that do not consider the unique individual in front of us.

So what is success to Shelter House?

It is that we are here. It is that there is a place in Okaloosa and Walton counties that is dedicated to serving and advocating for victims of Domestic Violence. It is empowering the women, children and men that we

serve so that they can reach whatever milestone is right for them. Success means being judgment free and helping them along their path with our services. It is having a place that is staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. It is never turning anyone away. It is having walk-in emergency services and having advocates in court. Success is having advocates in schools and after-school programs. Success is restarting the transitional housing program and launching our new youth program. Success is Shelter House touching more lives and creating a safer community.

We can't and don't measure success in the traditional sense...we measure it in lives changed and saved. Last month you helped a woman and her child flee from an abuser that followed her across state lines. You helped provide shelter to 34 women and children and you helped answer 125 crisis phone calls. That is success. Thank you for helping us achieve it.

Women and Money Program Updates

Shelter House will host its 2nd Annual Women and Money (WAM!) Conference on Saturday, January 28, 2012, at Sandestin Golf & Beach Resort.

The conference will start at 8:00 am with registration and breakfast. Attendees will become empowered to take control of their own financial lives. Sessions throughout the day cover a variety of topics such as Investing 101 and 102, Car Basics, Cooking on a Budget, Organizing Your Finances, Budgeting, Taxes and a Couponing Panel.

You will walk away from these workshops with tangible skills you can immediately put into use in your daily life. A past Cooking on a Budget workshop attendee said, "The instructor gave us tips I didn't already know about purchasing, preparing and storing food. Her tips on how to buy certain foods for less cost are really great for me as a single mom." Several women who have attended the Car Basics workshop commented that they feel more empowered and independent now that they are armed with more knowledge and know which questions to ask at the garage.

We are excited to add a youth track to this year's conference through our YES! (Youth Economic Strategies) program. Youth topics will be Budgeting, Banking, Savings, Job Interviews and Resumes and Youth at Work.

This year's keynote speaker is *New York Times* bestselling author Regina Leeds. Known as the Zen Organizer, Regina has helped such diverse clients as housewives, executives and movie stars organize their lives. Her philosophy shows you not only how to declutter your physical home or office but also how to order your financial house. Regina teaches that organization allows you to control your environment, which in turn gives you control over various aspects of your life, including your finances. Regina's books include *One Year to an Organized Life*, *One Year to an Organized Financial Life* and *The Idiot's Guide to Decluttering*. A native of New York City, Regina now lives in Los Angeles.



Allstate
FOUNDATION

The 2nd Annual WAM! Conference runs from 8:00 am to 3:00 pm. The registration fee is \$25 and includes all workshops, breakfast and lunch. Scholarships are available. To register, please complete and return the registration form enclosed in this newsletter or go to www.shelterhousenwfl.org/wam_register.html.

If you are interested in being a sponsor for the 2nd Annual WAM! Conference, please call the office at 850-243-1201.

Upcoming WAM! Workshops:

Cooking on a Budget—November 12 (full)

WAM! Conference—January 28

Job Skills & Resumes—February 11

Organizing Your Finances—March 10

Cooking on a Budget—April 14

About The Allstate Foundation

Established in 1952, The Allstate Foundation is an independent, charitable organization made possible by subsidiaries of The Allstate Corporation (NYSE: ALL). Through partnerships with non-profit organizations across the country, The Allstate Foundation brings the relationships, reputation and resources of Allstate to support innovative and lasting solutions that enhance people's well-being and prosperity. With a focus on teen safe driving and building financial independence for domestic violence survivors, The Allstate Foundation also promotes safe and vital communities; tolerance, inclusion and diversity; and economic empowerment. For more information, visit www.allstatefoundation.org.

Get to know a Shelter House Volunteer

The decision to quit her job and go back to school led volunteer Jovie to Shelter House. As a Criminal Justice major at Troy University, she was encouraged to volunteer either with juveniles or at a domestic violence center.

Jovie attended domestic violence court as part of a class assignment and was impressed by the Shelter House advocate assisting the women who were going before the judge. "I was amazed by all the information she was giving them," Jovie recalled. "She inspired those women and gave them hope, even if it was for one moment. That's when I knew I needed to volunteer with Shelter House."

For the past eight months, Jovie has volunteered in many different areas at Shelter House, from stocking the pantry and stuffing

envelopes to representing the agency at expo events. "Jovie is a very dedicated volunteer and always tries to make time for anything we ask of her, sometimes even rearranging her schedule so she can help," said Cindy Holmes, Shelter House Volunteer Coordinator.

When Jovie came to Shelter House, she thought she had a good understanding of domestic violence. Through training and volunteering, she discovered she still had much to learn. "It takes time and empathy, but most importantly, I learned that in order to work here you must go in without judging or criticizing even if the lives of the participants do not make sense to you," she said.

Jovie's favorite moment with Shelter House came at one of the expo events. "I was at a low point in my life but kept it to myself,"

remembered Jovie. "However, after an evening of introducing myself to the staff and making a presence, I could not believe how empowered everyone made me feel for helping at the event. Then I had an 'ah-ha' moment as I looked around and realized that I have never met so many professional, intelligent women working together for such a wonderful cause. I actually got a lump in my throat."

Jovie has a passion to do something good for others and knows her efforts have helped to educate the public about what a serious problem domestic violence is. "By volunteering, we get people talking about domestic violence," she said, "and it gives me spiritual energy that lifts me up to carry on despite any of my personal worries."

Holiday Drive

The holidays are fast approaching, and here at Shelter House we are making preparations to ensure our shelter residents and outreach participants have holiday meals for their families. Each year, we hold holiday drives that allow the community to donate food items that will brighten the season for those we serve.

We will assemble and deliver holiday meal baskets for Thanksgiving and the Winter holidays. Please drop off Thanksgiving items by November 21 and Christmas items by December 19. You can help us by donating the following items at 102 Buck Drive in Fort Walton Beach:

- Frozen turkey/hams (11/21 & 12/19 only)
- Green beans
- Boxed mashed potatoes
- Gravy
- Stuffing mix
- Cranberries
- Rolls
- Corn
- Condensed milk
- Pumpkin puree
- Pie crust

Giving women gift cards is another way to provide them with a holiday gift. Shelter House believes in empowering women and gift cards are a way of allowing women to shop on their own. Women who have been affected by abusive relationships are empowered by being able to do something as simple as grocery shopping for their family. Gas cards are also welcome. What holiday gift could be better than empowerment!

DCWAF & New Youth Department

Shelter House is excited to announce the formation of its new Youth Department. The establishment of this new department is largely thanks to the contributions Shelter House has received over the last three years as a benefiting charity of the Destin Charity Wine Auction Foundation and the community.

Aimee Tabb, who formerly oversaw youth programs under the umbrella of the Outreach and Prevention Department, will head up the new department. "The new structure allows Shelter House to devote more time and resources to young people in Okaloosa and Walton counties through primary prevention and awareness programs as well as facilitating teen violence groups," explained Tabb. You can continue supporting Shelter House



by attending these upcoming DCWAF events.

Taste of the Beach will be November 4-6 with various culinary and wine events occurring daily along the Emerald Coast. For a complete listing of events and to purchase tickets, visit www.TasteoftheBeach.com.

Wine and Dine in Paradise will be here before we know it! Join us April 27 and 28 at Sandestin Golf and Beach Resort for the event that closes out the year. If you'd like to volunteer for this event on behalf of Shelter House, please contact us at 850-243-1201.

Since partnering with the Destin Charity Wine Auction Foundation, Shelter House has been able to renovate the children's recreation room at Shelter, offered counseling by a child therapist for children who have witnessed violence in their home, provided countless children with a home free of domestic violence and taught youth healthy relationship skills that will equip them to break the cycle of domestic violence. Thanks to DCWAF, Shelter House will continue providing these much needed services to our community.

Birthday Kits



With children of all ages in and out of our Shelter on a regular basis, we want to ensure that each child gets to celebrate their birthday in a special way while staying in Shelter. Please help us create birthday kits so every child's birthday is celebrated!

Each kit can include the following items: balloons, streamers, plates, napkins, cake mix, frosting, candles, etc.

Birthday kits can be dropped off at our administration office located at 102 Buck Drive in Fort Walton Beach. Your donated birthday kits will brighten the day of children whose lives have been touched by family violence.

What We've Been Up To



(Above): Shelter House Board President Wendy Clines and staff accept a check for \$40,000 from Destin Charity Wine Auction Foundation.



(Above): Winners of the Ninth Annual Shelter House Regatta Bay Golf Tournament Steve Johnson and Loretta Maurer. The tournament raised more than \$9,500 for Shelter House.



(Left): Happy shoppers at the fall Purses with a Purpose event at Silver Sands contributed more than \$4,200 to Shelter House.



(Above): The Clothesline Project was on display at the Northwest Florida Regional Airport in October in honor of Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

(Below): Shelter House volunteers and staff at the Little Black Dress Party. We received \$7,350 from the event!



Shelter House Shopping List

Immediate Needs:

Dirt Devil "U" Vacuum Bags
Clorox Wipes
Magic Erasers
Trash bags
Universal Remote Control
Storage Shelves
Ziplock Storage Bags (Sandwich & Gallon)

Monetary:

Gift cards for gas and grocery stores
(WalMart, Kmart, Target, Publix)

Food:

Non-perishable/Canned food & fruits
Frozen Foods
Cold food items (meat, milk, eggs, etc.)

Cleaning Supplies:

Laundry & disinfectant soap
Dryer sheets
Disinfectants (e.g. Lysol)

If your organization or place of work would like a cell phone drop off box, call the office at 850-243-1201 or email info@shelterhousenwfl.org.

Upcoming Events

November:

Taste of the Beach: Nov. 4-6

Evening of Giving (Silver Sands): Nov. 20

December:

Luminaria Run (Sandestin Golf & Beach Resort): Sat., 12/10, 5 pm

January:

WAM! Conference (Sandestin Golf & Beach Resort): Sat., 1/28, 8 am—3 pm

February:

Job Skills & Resume Workshop: Sat., 2/11, 11 am—1 pm

March:

Organizing Your Finances Workshop: Sat., 3/10, 11 am—1 pm

Purses with a Purpose: Fri., 3/30, 6 pm—8 pm & Sat., 3/31, 10 am—2 pm

April:

Cooking on a Budget Workshop (Kitchenique): Sat., 4/14, 11 am—1 pm

Wine and Dine in Paradise (Sandestin Golf & Beach Resort): 4/27-28

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