



Newsletter

www.shelterhousenwfl.org
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Administrative Office
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Fort Walton Beach, FL 32548

Spring 2014

Shelter House Becomes Certified Rape Crisis Center

Shelter House is now the certified rape crisis center for Okaloosa and Walton counties, receiving official notification from the Florida Council Against Sexual Violence (FCASV) in March.



and have responded to calls for victim support at the hospital immediately following a violent assault.

Shelter House advocates are on call 24/7 to accompany victims during medical examinations and law enforcement interviews. Over the next several months, the staff-driven Rape Response Team (RRT) will expand to include volunteers. These volunteers will be provided with training before responding to calls.

Shelter House provides services to sexual violence victims age 12 and above. Younger victims are referred to the Emerald Coast Children's Advocacy Center. While Shelter House does not directly serve child victims, advocates are available to counsel adults who were assaulted as children as well as secondary victims, such as the parents of young sexual assault victims.

In addition to direct services offered to victims, Shelter House is reaching out to the community to provide awareness education. The sexual violence program coordinator has delivered numerous presentations throughout Okaloosa and Walton counties to agencies, medical entities, law enforcement and the general public. The coordinator also chairs the Sexual Assault Interagency Council (SAIC) in both Okaloosa and Walton counties. These groups bring together people who work with victims of sexual assault in our community, including law enforcement, hospitals, mental health and government.

Shelter House has served domestic violence victims in Okaloosa and Walton counties since 1985, and is the area's only state-certified domestic violence center. All domestic and sexual violence services are confidential and provided at no charge to participants.

The 24/7 hotline number for domestic and sexual violence victims is 850-863-4777. Anyone interested in volunteering should call the administrative office during normal business hours at 850-243-1201. Shelter House has offices in Fort Walton Beach, Crestview and DeFuniak Springs.

Shelter House began providing sexual violence services to the community in 2013, with the goal of becoming a certified center this year. Services include a 24/7 hotline, crisis counseling, medical and law enforcement accompaniment, support groups and emergency shelter. The center also offers community education and support for friends and family members of victims. With the announcement, Shelter House became the first new rape crisis center to achieve certification since 2005.

"Our staff worked diligently to achieve this certification and ensure that our community did not go without these critical services," said Shelter House Executive Director Michelle Sperzel. "We took on this challenge knowing that we would not receive FCASV funding until after Shelter House was certified. Doing the right thing was the only option. The community support has been phenomenal. Our community partners, including law enforcement, medical, peer agencies and donors, made this possible."

Shelter House added a full-time sexual violence program coordinator to its staff and put all of its existing advocates through rigorous training on working with sexual violence victims. Shelter House started receiving rape crisis phone calls shortly after announcing the addition of sexual violence services in June. Since that time, Shelter House has expanded services to include support circles for victims, one-on-one peer counseling sessions and a Rape Response Team that responds to calls from area emergency departments.

In the short time Shelter House has been offering services to sexual violence victims, advocates have worked with diverse survivors. In fact, the first call the agency received after announcing the addition of sexual violence services was from the husband of a rape victim. He wanted to know how he could help her through the healing process.

Victims have ranged in age from teens to sixties. Some victims knew their attacker while others were assaulted by a stranger. Most victims are local residents, but Shelter House has helped two

spring breakers who were raped while vacationing here.

Advocates have counseled victims whose trauma occurred many years ago

Sexual Assault Awareness Month

Sexual Assault

Awareness Month

April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month. Throughout the month, we

remember and celebrate those who have survived sexual violence and work to raise awareness and prevent future violence.

It is estimated that 60% of sexual assaults are never reported to law enforcement, and 97% of rapists never spend a day in jail. These staggering statistics are just one reason why we need to all be aware and talk about it.

Here are a few simple ways you can join with Shelter House in our efforts to make this a violence free community:

- Volunteer – Shelter House has opportunities to fit any schedule. You can help out with one event or come into the office every week.
- Follow us on Facebook and Twitter and share the articles, information and events we post.
- Donate items for sexual violence hospital kits: new socks and underwear, elastic waist pajama or athletic pants, brushes, bags and travel size toothpaste, deodorant and hand sanitizer.
- Take care of yourself. If you are a survivor, whether recent or many years ago, contact Shelter House to speak to one of our advocates or join a Support Circle with other survivors.
- Buy and wear a Shelter House *Be the Good in the World* t-shirt to show your support and tell people why you're wearing it.

Message from the Executive Director, Michelle Sperzel

The past several months have been filled with lots of hard work and extreme challenges for the staff at Shelter House. We have worked diligently to continue to provide lifesaving services to women, children and men in our community while pushing our own personal limits to grow and expand the agency to include sexual violence services. This process went well beyond just offering the services to individuals in the community. For many staff it meant a paradigm shift from only talking about domestic violence to talking about domestic violence and sexual violence. For other staff it meant confronting head on trauma they have experienced in their own lives. Greater still, it took the entire agency standing on the shoulders of our founders and saying we will use the foundation you created to offer this much needed service to victims in our community.

The expansion of our center and the state certification couldn't have been accomplished without the strong community support of volunteers and donors such as the Shelter House Board of Directors, the Dugas Foundation, Destin Charity Wine Auction Foundation, Mike and Angela Ragsdale with 30A, the Rosemary Beach Foundation and the Regatta Bay Golf Tournament. Your investment in women, children and men in Okaloosa and Walton

counties is amazing. Thank you for helping us create a program that will help victims of sexual violence and their support network.

Many of you might be asking what becoming a certified Sexual Violence Center actually means for Shelter House. Well, this is not a grant or a pilot project – this is an addition to the very foundation of services Shelter House provides. Shelter House has been providing domestic violence services to the community for more than 25 years, and we will continue to do so. We will apply that same tenacity and expertise to providing domestic and sexual violence services for the next 25 and beyond to our community. We will continue to offer our core services – 24/7 hotline, emergency shelter, outreach, legal assistance and prevention – but these services have expanded to include sexual violence victims. We have been training all our staff, taking sexual violence calls and leading special sexual violence support circles for several months. New to the agency is our Rape Response Team and hospital accompaniment. Just last month that team sprang into action, responding to calls from local hospitals for rape victims. Although we were all very sad that we needed to rush to the hospital to help these young women, we were very glad and proud that they had someone to call who would be their advocate during their time of need.

The shift to provide sexual violence services was not a huge leap for the staff of Shelter House. Domestic and sexual violence often happen within the same relationship. Our major shift providing services has come from working with victims that have only been touched by sexual violence and their support network. In the next few months, we will be offering even more services to the loved ones of victims. We couldn't do this without you and your support.

Although the state certification is a huge focus for us right now, there are plenty of other changes happening at the agency. Next month we are hoping to start the much needed remodel and update of the emergency shelter. We begin by building an expanded laundry room and porch. Please like us on Facebook and watch the construction album for exciting changes. Although the project is being partially funded with a grant from the Department of Children and Families, we will be looking for volunteers to help us complete the remodel on budget and on time. We will also be sending out a special update this summer about the project. Together we are building a new future for Shelter House, and together we will provide a safe and caring place for victims and their families to go in their time of greatest need.

Kind Heart Kennel Keeps Families Together



With the opening of the Kind Heart Kennel in October 2013, Shelter House became the first and to date only domestic violence center with an on-site kennel in Northwest Florida. Since that time, the response has been more than we ever could have imagined.

The Kind Heart Kennel has hosted dogs, cats and fish. The shelter residents who have utilized the new service were all incredibly grateful for the opportunity, and the pets have responded well to the new environment.

The program includes indoor/outdoor dog kennels (pictured right), a cat room, HEPA filters in all bedrooms for residents with pocket pets like gerbils and a dog run.

One family who stayed in shelter held nightly reunions in the backyard with their dog and cat. Throughout their eight-week stay, they were able to spend time together, heal and make plans for the future. The survivor worked through feelings of self-blame and emerged an independent, confident woman. She secured housing that allowed pets. On the

first night in their new home, the whole family slept peacefully in one big bed.

Seeing the families so happy to have their beloved pets with them was expected. However, we never considered the side effect that adding the kennel would have on our staff. Having the pets at shelter often brightens the day of our advocates. Seeing the residents interact with the animals and hearing about their shenanigans has helped lower the stress level for everyone.

The Kind Heart Kennel has worked with one of its partners, Panhandle Animal Welfare Society (PAWS), to get one visiting dog up to date on its shots, and every animal has received a care package upon leaving shelter to help them transition to their new home.



Community support for the Kind Heart Kennel has been wonderful, but more donations are still needed. We are currently in need of cat litter, large and extra large collars and leashes, dog waste bags, waste bag dispenser and a new extra large wire kennel. Donations are accepted at the administrative office located at 102 Buck Drive in Fort Walton Beach between 8am and 5pm, Monday through Friday.

Thank you for your help in keeping every member of the family together!

Young Volunteers Make Lasting Impact on Their Temporary Home

The military is a huge presence in our community, and we all appreciate the service these brave men and women provide to our country. However, there are a select few who take the spirit of service a step further and offer their time and talents to help the local community.

Over the last two years, SrA Rayna Yamamoto, 30, SrA Emmett Unbehagen, 21, and SrA Cameron Janow, 25, have given countless hours in service to Shelter House.

"I love volunteering for Shelter House," said Yamamoto, who grew up as an Army brat. "The people we work with are very genuine about wanting to help people, and they always show appreciation for the volunteers."

Hurlburt-based Yamamoto and Unbehagen first got their feet wet volunteering for a big event in 2012. Their crew worked until 2am breaking down the event. Fortunately for us, the long day did not sour them on helping

Shelter House.

"To me, Shelter House means another chance, another opportunity to give someone a better experience in life," said New Orleans native Unbehagen. "We cannot predict the



From left to right: Yamamoto, Unbehagen and Janow.

events that will happen in our lives, but we can make the best of everything that does happen."

Shelter House made a lasting impression on

Janow, a Tennessean who is stationed at Eglin Air Force Base, during his first volunteer experience. "The event was incredibly fun, but it was about far more than that," Janow explained. "Despite the festivities, it was about the difference you knew that you were making by helping such an incredible organization. You knew that you were directly contributing to Shelter House and that Shelter House was directly making a difference in people's lives. That spoke bounds about the organization. It spoke bounds about the staff that work there, and it is for that reason that I knew I would forever be involved."

Since that time, these three have become fixtures at every Shelter House event. They have brought in donations, captained teams of volunteers at the Luminaria Run, tended bar at Purses with a Purpose and even built a new playground at the shelter.

This trio of dedicated airmen is a walking definition of the word "service".

Walk Her Way Returns to Rosemary Beach



Will you walk in wedges? Strut in stilettos? Prance in pumps? Walk Her Way, a one-mile fun walk in high heels, returns to Rosemary Beach on Friday, June 13.

You don't want to miss out on the fun as men, women, children and even a few dogs take to the streets of Rosemary Beach in high heels to raise awareness about domestic violence.

Walk Her Way is produced by Rosemary Beach Foundation to benefit Shelter House and the foundation. Visit www.walkherway.com for more information or to register.

Mother's Day Drive

Every woman should feel special and appreciated on Mother's Day. Shelter House is collecting items for mom gift bags that we'll give out at our pre-Mother's Day self-care night. We currently have a big shortage of makeup. Other items needed include nail polish, bath gel, books magazines, journals, chocolate, gift certificates or anything you think might brighten mom's day!

Destin Charity Wine Auction Weekend



Join us April 25—27 for the Destin Charity Wine Auction Weekend. Recognized as one of the nation's "Top 10 U.S. Charity Wine Auctions" by *Wine*

Spectator magazine, this is the Foundation's largest annual event.

The event draws wine aficionados, gourmet chefs and celebrity vintners from around the globe to enjoy world-class wines. Funds raised will benefit 12 local charities impacting the lives of children in need, including Shelter House.

Activities throughout the weekend include patron dinners, the annual auction and the 2nd Annual South Walton Beaches Wine & Food Festival. The live auction

is high-energy featuring rare and distinctive wines, spectacular trips and other incredible one-of-a-kind items.

The auction and the festival will both take place at Grand Boulevard at Sandestin Town Center's North Lawn.

For more information or to purchase tickets, visit www.dcwaf.org/events.



WAM! Workshops

Shelter House continues its WAM! (Women & Money) program this spring with several FREE workshops.

The Day of WAM! covers an array of topics including basic checking and saving, dealing with creditors, types of loans, taxes, identity theft, budgeting on a low income and retirement planning. The Day of WAM! will be offered on April 26 at First Baptist Church in Crestview and again on June 28 at Fort Walton Beach Public Library. This program runs from 10am to 3pm and includes lunch.

In May, Shelter House will offer two additional free workshops: Credit Repair on May 10 and All About Mortgages on May 17. Both of these workshops take place from 10am to 12pm at the Fort Walton Beach Public Library.

All WAM! workshops are free and open to the public. Men are welcome to attend. Please call 850-243-1201 to reserve a seat.



Allstate

Foundation

WAM! programming is made possible by a grant from The Allstate Foundation.



Tenth Purses with a Purpose Event Draws a Crowd

More than 250 shoppers came out to Silver Sands Premium Outlets in March for the Tenth Purses with a Purpose event. The VIP party on Friday night offered shoppers the opportunity to bid on designer handbags. They were also treated to food from Carrabba's and wine as well as a purse fashion show. The fashion show was emceed by Jami Ray of 30A Street Style and featured hair and makeup by Pin Up Girls Hair Studio and music by DJ Shane of Rock the House.

In addition to the 650 purses up for sale and auction, scarves in fun spring colors donated by Ella Madison Boutique and sunglasses from Lynn Roberts International were available for purchase.

Saturday shoppers snapped up the remaining purses at deeply discounted prices. The two-day event raised more than \$8,500 to support programs and services such as a 24-hour rape and domestic violence hotline, emergency shelter, child advocacy, support groups and violence prevention classes.



(Top Right): Shelter House Board Member Monica Talley (left) poses with fellow purse fashion show model Past President Wendy Clines.



(Bottom Right): Jami Ray (left) takes a break from emcee duties to check out the purse finds of Leigh Peacock (center) and Shaye Smith.



(Bottom Left): Shoppers had 650 purses as well as wallets, scarves, sunglasses and t-shirts to choose from.

Shelter House Shopping List

Immediate Needs:

Diapers (large sizes)
Baby wipes
Juice
Trash bags
Resealable plastic bags (quart & gallon)
Canned tuna & chicken
New bed pillows
Tampons
Deodorant
New socks & underwear

Monetary:

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

Food:

Non-perishable/canned food & fruits
Frozen foods
Cold food items (meat, milk, eggs, etc.)
Breakfast cereal
Mac & cheese

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

April

Destin Charity Wine Auction Weekend (Grand Boulevard): April 25-27

Day of WAM! (First Baptist Church of Crestview): April 26

May

Credit Repair Workshop (Fort Walton Beach Public Library): May 10

All About Mortgages Workshop (Fort Walton Beach Public Library): May 17

June

Walk Her Way (Rosemary Beach): June 13

Day of WAM! (Fort Walton Beach Public Library): June 28

Shelter House, Inc. does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, age, national origin, mental or physical disability/disability status, sex/gender, pregnancy, military status/status as a veteran, genetic information, citizenship, immigration status, marital status, sexual orientation, gender orientation, limited English proficiency, language spoken or other legally protected status.



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