



Newsletter

www.ShelterHouseNWFL.org
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Administrative Office
16 Ferry Road, SE
Fort Walton Beach, FL 32548

Summer 2015

Survivor Listening Projects Produce New Programs

As a Shelter House supporter, you are no doubt familiar with our core services. The 24-hour crisis hotline and emergency shelter have been part of the agency for its entire 30 year history. Through our three Outreach offices, advocates see more than 1,000 participants each year. However, you might not be familiar with several programs that have been added in recent years.

Through a series of survivor listening projects, Shelter House and the Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence gathered information about which additional services our participants felt the agency should offer. The data collected led to the development of new programs designed to meet the needs of those we serve.

The listening projects revealed that survivors faced many challenges when seeking therapy. Their complaints included having to wait months to get an appointment with a therapist and having to tell their story to multiple people before getting to someone who could help them. One survivor even reported that her therapist terminated their therapeutic relationship because he said he could not watch her go back to old habits again.

In response to this issue, Shelter House partnered with COPE Center and successfully pursued a STOP grant from the U.S. Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women. A COPE therapist is now co-located at Shelter House's Fort Walton Beach office. The response from participants has been tremendous. As one survivor stated, "It was so helpful to have my advocate and therapist both there to talk to me."

As part of the STOP grant, Shelter House created tip sheets for survivors seeking mental health services and for therapists working with domestic violence survivors. A white paper on the intersection of domestic violence and mental health issues was commissioned and is being distributed to advocates, therapists, law enforcement and other community partners who work with survivors in order to facilitate their

understanding. The research showed a need for more integrated services and cross-training for mental health practitioners and victim advocates.

Shelter House also has a play therapist on-site one day each week. Play is the primary form of communication for children, which makes play therapy so important for children who have witnessed violence.

Play integrates complex cognitive, emotional and social elements and is influenced by a child's

environment. Toys can provide distance from the trauma for these children, allowing them to take it outside of themselves, analyze it and work through it. In play therapy, an environment of safety, security and stability is created. Freedom and a sense of control is established. Some

benefits of play therapy include increasing social skills and self-control, cognitive development, behavior modification, improved problem solving skills, better communication and addressing emotions that surface. The play therapist is funded by Destin Charity Wine Auction Foundation.

The newest program brings a critical skill to the women at Shelter House—literacy. The agency was chosen by ProLiteracy, a leading global literacy organization, to launch a pilot program where domestic violence centers teach literacy to survivors. Shelter House is one of only three centers in Florida selected to offer ABLE classes (Adults Building Literacy Empowerment). Much like the economic empowerment skills Shelter House teaches, being able to expertly read is a crucial factor for success, particularly for women living on their own and supporting their families. The classes begin this month and will focus on job readiness with the underlying goal of improving literacy while covering topics like searching for jobs, writing resumes and cover letters, filling out applications and interviewing.

These programs are all defined by survivors and designed to meet their needs.

Sexual Violence Program Update

END SEXUAL VIOLENCE

It has been just over a year since Shelter House became the certified rape crisis

center for Okaloosa and Walton counties. In that time, the agency has filled a need in the community, worked to improve the way sexual violence services are provided and advocated for victims' rights.

From the time Shelter House started providing services to sexual assault survivors, we have fielded 187 calls on our 24/7 crisis hotline from those seeking our services and referrals to other resources in the community. Advocates have provided nearly 400 hours of counseling to survivors in the last year alone.

The Rape Response Team (RRT) which responds to calls from hospitals, law enforcement or victims themselves, has been activated 41 times. An activation means that one of our advocates immediately leaves the office, their home or wherever they happen to be when the call is received and travels to the hospital where a sexual assault victim is being treated.

In addition to working directly with sexual violence survivors, Shelter House staff have reached out to the community to provide education. Another important initiative involves training staff at local bars and nightclubs on how to help prevent sexual assaults on their customers.

Our sexual violence program coordinator was also instrumental in building a Sexual Assault Interagency Council (SAIC) in both Okaloosa and Walton counties. SAIC brings together advocates, law enforcement, hospitals, mental health and government.

We are honored to be doing this work and look forward to further growing the program in the years ahead.



Message from the Executive Director, Michelle Sperzel

After almost 8 years as Executive Director of Shelter House, I will be leaving July 15, 2015, so that I may pursue another exciting career opportunity and move closer to family.

I am extremely proud of Shelter House and the work we have accomplished over the last several years. Since 2008, we have been expanding and developing programs because the survivors we serve told us they needed them in order to be safe. One of the first programs was the economic empowerment program and our children's program. That was followed by the transitional housing program which has grown to ten apartments throughout Okaloosa and Walton counties. We started the Kind Heart Kennel so everybody in the family, including the family pets, could be safe. Being an animal lover myself, this innovative program will always be special to me. We started a domestic violence and mental health program and now have a mental health therapist onsite. Recently, we started an adult literacy program. We are teaching survivors to read, a skill that many of us take for granted.

The past two years have been filled with multiple construction projects. We expanded the shelter from 24 beds to 36 beds, enlarged the Destin Charity Wine Auction Foundation Children's recreation room and revamped the shelter's backyard to accommodate a full-size commercial playground. In the past six months, we opened the new program office, which is double the size of the office that we were in, going from 2,000 square feet to more than 4,000 square feet. The new building allows us to have multiple spaces dedicated to survivor services.

As our programs grew, so did our reputation throughout the state. Our advocates have spoken at countless regional, state and national conferences about the work that we've been doing and have been called upon by other centers to duplicate some of our life-saving programs. Amongst all the things we have accomplished together, I believe our proudest moment is establishing Shelter House as a dual center and starting the Sexual Violence program. I will never forget the first time we responded to a hospital rape call. I sat in my car and cried

because we were doing the work and also cried for the person who needed our help.

Today, I can say I will be leaving a solid, growing organization that is recognized as a community partner and one of the area's greatest champions of survivors. We have done amazing things together over the past several years, and we were able to do it with the support of the community. It has been such an amazing journey.

I have enjoyed the work at Shelter House because it's a dynamic organization with great people, creativity and vision. I have learned so much from the women and children who walked through our doors and from the stories of donors who are survivors themselves. I extend my deepest gratitude to all of our survivors, board, partners, corporate members, staff and volunteers. You have all taught me a great deal about empowerment, acceptance, service and the meaning of community. You have all left a mark on my heart.

Kindly,
Michelle

New Executive Director to Take Helm at Shelter House

With the announcement of Michelle Sperzel's upcoming departure in July, Shelter House's Board of Directors formed a search committee to hire a new leader for the agency. The committee diligently reviewed resumes and interviewed the top candidates before making their final selection.

The new Executive Director, Rosalyn Wolkovien, will be familiar to our long time Shelter House supporters. Rosalyn previously worked as the Financial Manager

of Shelter House for two and a half years and has stayed involved with the agency as a community supporter by participating in the Luminaria Run and Walk Her Way, attending Purses with a Purpose and serving as a speaker at the WAM! Conference.

Rosalyn most recently served in a financial manager/analyst role at Northwest Florida State College, where she was responsible for managing the overall fiscal operations of the \$45 million Northwest Florida State College Foundation. Rosalyn is also a

current member of Junior League of the Emerald Coast and previously served on the Board of Directors for AAF Emerald Coast.

Rosalyn is a graduate of the University of Texas at Austin and while she considers herself a Texan at heart, she has found her home in Miramar Beach with her husband Nick and two children, Mila and Romy. In her spare time she enjoys live music, reading, and traveling with friends and family.

Mother's Day at Shelter House



the hands of your abuser.

These are the struggles the women at Shelter House have survived to get to where they are today. For Mother's Day, we celebrate them and the positive changes

Being a mom is a hard job. Imagine on top of that living in a home where you never felt safe, were never thanked or celebrated and always worried about what your children might hear, see or experience at

they are making.

Shelter House advocates hosted a special Mother's Day-themed self-care night with 16 moms and 10 children in attendance. In addition to food, drinks and plenty of chocolate, the mothers were treated to a little pampering. Britney Llantini, a Mary Kay representative, was on hand to spoil the moms with makeup and skincare products. A nail station was set up where the women could try out different shades and take home the color they liked best.

The fun continued with a spirited game of bingo and raffles where the moms could win fabulous prizes like massages and beach totes filled with towels, sunscreen and shampoo.

While the mothers had their fun, our youth

advocates kept the kids entertained with pizza, juice and crafts. Each child made a special, one-of-a-kind necklace to give to their mom on Mother's Day. Many of the children we work with have never been able to, in some cases, even allowed to give their mom a gift.

To top off the evening, Pure 7 Studios donated their services to photograph each mom with her children. This was a first for many of the families and will be a memorable keepsake for years to come.

Thank you to St. Peter Catholic Church, Destiny Worship Center and all the individuals who donated bags, baskets and other items for the Mother's Day self-care night. All the women were able to take home a care package as a reminder to take a little time to spoil themselves.

Celebrating 30 Years and a New Office



Shelter House has plenty of cause to celebrate! 2015 marks 30 years since Shelter House was founded. In 1985, Shelter House was formed when members of the League of Women Voters, the National Organization of Women and Business and Professional

Women formed a coalition to help prevent the abuse of women and children in the community. The purpose was to provide shelter and supportive services for women and children who are victims of domestic violence. The first shelter opened in a leased three-bedroom, two-bathroom home. Today, Shelter House owns its own emergency shelter which recently expanded to 36 beds.

An open house on April 30 served two purposes. First, we celebrated 30 years of serving women, children and men in Okaloosa and Walton counties. The second reason to celebrate was moving in to our new Program Office! More than 70 people attended. The festivities included guided tours, a ribbon cutting with the Greater Fort Walton Beach Chamber of Commerce and birthday cake.

Thanks in large part to a lead grant by Impact 100 of Northwest Florida and funding for children's areas from Destin Charity Wine

Auction Foundation, Shelter House moved into a new Program Office located at 16 Ferry Road, SE in Fort Walton Beach. The building houses Outreach advocates and administrative staff and serves as a hub for all of the agency's activities and services.

While more than 330 women and children stay in our Emergency Shelter each year, 1,000+ are served through the Program Office. Participants meet with advocates, attend support groups, see a mental health therapist and bring their children in to work with a

contracted play therapist. The new Program Office offers a welcoming environment and even features a separate children's waiting area where kids can be kids.

We would like to thank the dozens of dedicated volunteers who gave hundreds of hours to phase one of the Program Office and Emergency Shelter renovation projects: St. Peter Catholic Church, Family of Faith Community Church, Junior League of the Emerald Coast, Ernie Carey and members from Eglin Air Force Base, Hurlburt Field and Duke Field,

including groups from Eglin's 96th MDG, Security Forces, and Company Grade Officer's Council and Hurlburt Field's Red Horse Squadron, Mission Support Group, 1st SEOMS and the 24th SOW Key Spouse Group.



Back to School Backpack Drive



Shelter House is holding our annual Back to School Backpack Drive to ensure all the children we serve are set up for success right from the start of the new school year.

Having all new school supplies bolsters the confidence these kids who are already dealing with extreme circumstances in their personal lives.

You can help the kids at Shelter House by donating backpacks, pens, pencils, erasers, scissors, spiral notebooks, folders, glue, glue sticks, crayons, colored pencils, pencil cases, composition books, markers, highlighters, notebook paper and construction paper.

Donations can be dropped off at our Program Office located at 16 Ferry Road, SE in Fort Walton Beach.

Shelter House is proud to host our 5th Annual Luminaria Run to End Domestic and Sexual Violence this year.

The unique twilight run will take place on Saturday, December 5 with runners taking off at 4:30pm. The run, which includes 5K and 9K courses, begins and ends at Bubba Gump Shrimp Co. in Destin.

More than 2,000 luminaria bags line the courses throughout the Indian Bayou neighborhood. These luminarias represent how Shelter House and our community partners light the way to a safer place for victims and survivors of domestic and sexual violence in Okaloosa and Walton counties. The 9K distance serves as a reminder that a woman is assaulted or beaten every nine seconds in the U.S.

We invite runners to get your GLOW on! An

award will be given for the "glowiest" runner. Glow packs will be available for purchase when you register online and up for sale at packet pick up and on race day.

Packet pick up will take place 5pm to 7pm on Friday, December 4 and race day registration opens at 2pm on Saturday.

The after-party will take place at Bubba Gump Shrimp Co. with s'mores, hot chocolate, gumbo, hot toddies and the signature sweet finish courtesy of KaraBoo Bakery.

Look for registration to open on August 1 with early bird pricing

continuing through September 30. A registration link will be available at www.ShelterHouseNWFL.org. You can stay up to date on the Luminaria Run Facebook page at www.Facebook.com/ShelterHouseLuminariaRun.



4th Annual Walk Her Way



Visitors to Rosemary Beach might have been a bit shocked on a recent Friday night to see more than 220 men, women and children walking in high heels and colorful costumes. Presented by Rosemary Beach Foundation to benefit Shelter House and the Foundation, Walk Her Way raises awareness and funds to fight domestic violence.

Thank you to our 2015 sponsors:
30A.com, 30Avenue, 30A TV, August + Brill, Bamboo Bicycle Company, Beach TV, Bombora Sun & Surf, Bud & Alley's Restaurant Group, Davis Properties, Grayton Beer, Henderson Barrett, George and Dianne Lindahl, Moonpize, Perspicacity, Rosemary Beach Cottage Rental Company, Rosemary Beach Fitness, Rosemary Beach Racquet Club, Rosemary Beach Realty, Rosemary Beach Trading Company, Sacred Heart on the Emerald Coast, Schwarzkopf Family, Sea Oats Beach Service, Silver Sands Premium Outlets, Sixpence Productions, SoWal.com, Tamara and Carl Tricoli, UPS Store—Inlet Crossing, Warren Averett and Waterstone Mortgage Corporation.



Shelter House Shopping List

Immediate Needs:

Diapers (large sizes, 4+)
Baby wipes
Juice
Trash bags
Resealable plastic bags (quart & gallon)
Canned tuna & chicken
New bed pillows
Tampons
Deodorant

Monetary:

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

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

October

Destin Charity Wine Auction Wine Spectator's Top 100 Dinner (Bijoux, Sandestin): October 16

Walk 4 Respect (Destin Elementary School): October 31

November

Seeing Red Wine Festival (Seaside): November 5—8

December

5th Annual Luminaria Run to End Domestic & Sexual Violence (Bubba Gump Shrimp Co., Destin): December 5

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.

Sponsored by Shelter House, the Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence and the State of Florida, Department of Children and Families.



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