



Newsletter

www.shelterhousenwfl.org
24-Hour Hotline: 1-800-44-ABUSE
Administrative Office
102 Buck Drive
Fort Walton Beach, FL 32548

Spring 2012

Economic Empowerment

Through a grant from The Allstate Foundation, Shelter House has offered its WAM! (Women and Money) workshops and conferences promoting economic empowerment to our participants and the community for two years. Financial abuse and domestic violence often go hand in hand. A woman seeking to leave her abuser is often hesitant because he has controlled the finances, not allowed her to work or caused her to have a spotty work history and left her with zero confidence that she can make it on her own. This is why economic empowerment is so important.

The funding from Allstate has enabled Shelter House to teach women how to make and manage their own money. Participants have attended courses on budgeting, saving, credit, housing, bankruptcy, taxes and more. Starting with the basics and building from there has allowed these women to reclaim control of their finances and their lives.

Since 2011, Shelter House has held two WAM! conferences, drawing more than 200 people, and has presented numerous free workshops open to the public on topics such as Women and Cars, Investing 101, Job Skills and Resume Building, Organizing Your Finances and Cooking on a Budget.

Vicki McCain, owner of Kitchenique in Destin, has been a particularly avid supporter of the WAM! program. Through her Cooking on a Budget workshops, Vicki has taught dozens of women how to shop for and cook fresh, healthy meals for their families, even with limited funds. She has donated her time, space in her store and food to educate people on how to make delicious, affordable meals.

Another component of the WAM! program is the Day of WAM!, a full day of financial education classes for domestic violence victims held at one of Shelter House's three outreach offices. This setting puts participants at ease, allowing them to speak more freely and ask questions about their particular financial situation, which too often is a result of their abuser's control.

One very tangible part of the grant is the Individual

Development Account (IDA) program. Participants can open a savings account through Shelter House and our partner, Wells Fargo, and make regular deposits to work toward a financial goal such as housing, transportation or debt reduction. The grant matches the deposits at double the contribution and pays out after six months, meaning a participant who puts in \$500 will have a check for \$1,500 sent on her behalf for the designated financial goal. Participants have used IDA to pay off cars, save for housing and pay down medical bills.

More recently, Shelter House added the YES! (Youth Economic Strategies) program to the agenda. Like WAM!, YES! workshops are offered to the public as well as programs specifically for the children of our participants. Learning early in life how to take care of their own money puts youth on the path to a lifetime of financial independence. Topics covered in YES! include banking, saving, credit, setting financial goals and job skills.

In less than a year, Shelter House has worked with more than 200 domestic violence victims to develop financial safety plans. Since the award of the first grant in 2010, more than 800 people have raised their financial IQ through WAM! and YES! workshops, classes and conferences. We thank The Allstate Foundation for partnering with Shelter House in our efforts to bring economic empowerment to our community.

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 nonprofit 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.



Allstate
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Walk Her Way



Men, women and children of all ages are invited to Walk, Strut or Stroll in High Heels to Stop Domestic Violence at Walk Her Way, a fun walk at the Town Center in Rosemary Beach on Friday, June 15 at 5:30pm, benefiting Shelter House and the Rosemary Beach Foundation. Walkers will be led around the square by a "second line" jazz band as they show off their favorite pair of high heels. The good time doesn't stop when the walk ends. Stick around for the after-party featuring Heat and The Zydeco Gents.

You are encouraged to decorate your shoes to reflect your style and personality. Heels will be available for purchase at the event and at packet pick-up the day before the walk. We welcome team registrations, and awards will be given for the team that raises the most money as well as those that have the best theme and best costumes.

Advance registration is \$30 for adults and \$15 for children under 12 and includes a t-shirt. Registration the day of the walk will be an additional \$5 per person.

There will be a shoe drive from April 15 through May 15 with the primary goal of collecting large size high heels for our male participants to wear during the walk. We don't want the gentlemen to be left out. Donations can be dropped off at the Shelter House office located at 102 Buck Drive in Fort Walton Beach or at participating stores in Rosemary Beach.

For more information or to register, visit www.walkherway.com or call Shelter House at 850.243.1201. Sponsorships are available through the Rosemary Beach Foundation at 850.231.7382.



Message from the Executive Director, Michelle Sperzel

Every day I am inspired by the strength and resiliency of the women and children at Shelter House. Seeing them grow and thrive makes me grateful to be doing this work. Many women flee to the security of our emergency shelter, sometimes after years of deliberate, often severe and repetitive abuse at the hands of their intimate partners. For others, it takes just one occurrence for a woman to come to our shelter.

The women we serve in outreach, transitional housing and our emergency shelter have remarkable abilities to overcome traumatic life events. Not only have they been able to survive physical and psychological violence, they have safely negotiated another step in the sometimes dangerous path of leaving and stopping the abuse. In order to survive abuse and safely find their way to Shelter House, participants had to develop a plan to get to the shelter or office, have confidence, determination, energy and sheer force of will. They had to get information about Shelter House,

consider all their options and use their previous experiences as a source of inner strength. At the same time, these women had to organize many different life factors such as work, school and family. They have to do all of this while trying to maintain some normalcy for themselves and their children.

It takes such courage to stand up against someone or something you fear. That is exactly what these women are doing when they seek our services - facing a fear and saying, "No more. I deserve better." What impresses me most is regardless how much a woman is juggling, she will talk about this time of her life being a turning point and that she never knew what she was made of before this moment. I feel so lucky that we get to celebrate that moment. That moment when she realizes that she has options. That she knows she is a strong, empowered and fearless woman. She acknowledges that the road might be hard, but it is safe and it is hers.

When I say "we" I mean you, the staff and everyone who is involved with Shelter House. We are all able to celebrate our women and children's strength, perseverance and resilience. The staff, women and children couldn't do this work without your help. The outpouring of support from the community the past few weeks has been amazing. From the group of women at Raspberry Attic Salon to the Gulf Coast Chapter of the American Society of Military Comptrollers and everyone that helped restock the pantry. Because of your support, we have snacks for the kids and diapers for the babies. We have sheets, dishes and cribs for our transitional housing apartments. The women have comfort food and healthy food to choose from in the pantry. You are supporting them on the journey to independence and safety they have chosen. Thank you for celebrating women and children who are choosing a new path - one that is inspiring and violence free. Thank you for believing in them.

Share the Shelter

When there is violence in a home, everyone is a victim. With that in mind, Shelter House is teaming up with Alaqua Animal Refuge, a no-kill animal shelter in Freeport, for the second annual Share the Shelter benefit concert. The two organizations have joined forces to raise awareness and funds to save the lives of people and animals impacted by violence.

Having seen the tragic results of animal abuse and domestic violence – from burned cats, dogs with broken limbs and starved horses to black eyes and broken ribs – we are compelled to take action. It is time to do more than shelter animals and women from cruelty; we want to stop the abuse. The way we do that is by raising awareness about the issue in our community.

The concert, slated for Saturday, September 29, will return to the amphitheater at Gulf Place on 30A in Santa Rosa Beach. The full lineup of performers has not yet been announced, but organizers are pursuing high profile musicians in Atlanta, Nashville and beyond. Walton County favorite Geoff McBride, most recently seen on NBC's "The Voice", has signed on for the event, and local favorites Daphne Willis, Bryan Kennedy, Kelsey Anna and Chris Alvarado are also confirmed.

Concertgoers should expect a full day of music, food and fun. Dogs will be allowed at this year's event, and VIP passes as well as discounted tickets for children will be available for purchase. Tickets go on sale in July.

The 2011 concert drew more than 500 music fans and brought in

over \$21,000 for Shelter House and Alaqua Animal Refuge. This year's event is expected to draw at least twice as many attendees.

More than two-thirds of abused women also report violence toward their animals, and many women stay with their abusers because they fear leaving their pets behind.

The funds raised from Share the Shelter are put to immediate use right here in Okaloosa and Walton counties. Alaqua Animal Refuge is located on a picturesque, 10-acre farm where homeless, lost and abused animals can run, play and relax while waiting for their forever home. Alaqua adopts out 100 animals per month and houses more than 250 animals at any given time. Shelter House staffs a 24/7 domestic violence crisis hotline and offers confidential emergency shelter to at-risk women and their children. Additional programs include outreach services, group counseling, child therapy and primary prevention classes for youth. Through all its programs, Shelter House touches more than 5,000 lives annually, teaching victims and the community about recognizing the warning signs of abuse, staying safe and cultivating healthy relationships.

Visit the Share the Shelter Facebook page at www.facebook.com/SharetheShelter for updates on artist and vendor confirmations. Stay tuned for information on the Share the Shelter pre-party and early ticket sale coming in July.

For more information on sponsorship, volunteering or being a vendor for this event, please contact Shelter House at 850.243.1201.



Get to know a Shelter House Volunteer

Michelle Ramsey became interested in volunteering at Shelter House after touring the agency as part of her training to become a sexual assault response coordinator at Hurlburt Field. "We toured several local organizations," explained Michelle. "As soon as (Shelter manager) Carrie began to talk about the resources Shelter House provides, I knew this was an organization I had to be a part of."

While studying for her master's degree in mental health counseling with a concentration in forensic counseling at Walden University, Michelle has been volunteering and interning in Shelter House's confidential emergency shelter. "In Shelter, I have learned that a college education does not make you an expert," she admitted. "Working with experienced advocates has taught me what is not in the books. I take my work on the hotline very seriously and seek

to grow my knowledge as I gain experience."

After graduation and licensure, Michelle plans to work with women and children impacted by domestic violence. "I look forward to offering pro bono services to women and children who most need counseling but can't afford it," she said. "Shelter House and the services they provide are in line with my goals and aspirations. Thank God for the work they do."

One of Michelle's most memorable moments as a volunteer came when a young boy in Shelter ruined his only pair of tennis shoes and his mother could not afford a new pair. "The boy had to wear his mother's Birkenstocks to school and couldn't participate in gym class," she recalled. "A few days later, a pair of new shoes showed up, and the young man and his mother were so overwhelmed they started crying. Then the

advocate on shift and I started crying. It was so heartwarming and made me realize how blessed I am and that there are people out there who think of others in need and not just of themselves."

Michelle is happy to give her time to help women and children facing challenges. "Some people just need someone, anyone, to listen. These women and children have experienced things no one should ever have to experience. When they are able to talk about what they have been through and someone listens without judgment, they don't feel as alone as they did the day before," she said.

"Since that first day I went on the tour more than a year ago, Shelter House has become my family," Michelle said. "I would not be the woman I am today if it weren't for them."

The Princess & Pirate Ball



Ahoy, Mateys! The 2nd Annual Princess and Pirate Ball is drawing near. Join Shelter House at Linkside Sandestin Golf and Beach Resort on Saturday, May 12 from 5pm to 8pm for this family-friendly gala event.

Your entire family is invited to wear their best princess and pirate costumes for an evening of dinner, dancing, treasure hunts, character pictures and more.

The enchanted evening includes a children's costume contest where the Best Princess and Best Pirate plus a parent will win a ride on a float in the Billy Bowlegs Torchlight Parade on May 31. Each princess and pirate will be judged based on authenticity, creativity and originality of the costume and character name. A silent auction and raffle items will also be available throughout the evening.

Advance tickets are \$99 for a family of four, or \$20 for children and \$40 for adults. An additional \$10 per ticket will be charged for tickets purchased at the door.

Tickets can be purchased online at www.shelterhousenwfl.org.

If you would like to donate an auction item or are interested in sponsorship, please contact us at 850.243.1201.

Mother's Day Drive

Mother's Day is a time to honor, celebrate and pamper moms. The mothers we work with at Shelter House deserve recognition for the work they are putting in to keep themselves and their children safe as they move toward independence and a new start.

Shelter House is collecting items to be distributed in goodie bags to our Shelter and Outreach participants on Mother's Day. Items sought include: nail polish, make up, gift certificates for salon and nail services, chocolate, bubble bath, bath gel, journals or diaries, paperback books, magazines, lotions, manicure kits, etc. We're interested in anything you think will brighten mom's day!

We are also seeking professional pamperers to donate their services for a day of luxury. If you work for a hair or nail salon that is interested in treating our participants to a special day, please call us at 850.243.1201.

The deadline for donations is Monday, May 7, and we will need volunteers that week to help assemble the bags. Donations can be dropped off at our administrative office located at 102 Buck Drive in Fort Walton Beach between 8am and 5pm, Monday through Friday.



Transitional Housing Update

Thank you to everyone who has supported our transitional housing program since it kicked off in the fall. We now have four families settled safely in apartments with a fifth moving in this month.

Shelter House will continue accepting donations of household items to help these families set up housekeeping through Friday, April 13. Please note that we cannot accept donations of used upholstered furniture or used linens, pillows, etc.

You can drop donations at our administrative office located at 102 Buck Drive in Fort Walton Beach between 8am and 5pm, Monday through Friday.

Beads for Bowlegs



Now that Mardi Gras is over what are you going to do with all those beads lying around the house? Donate them to Shelter House, of course!

Shelter House will have a float in the Billy Bowlegs Torchlight Parade on May 31 featuring the winners of The Princess and Pirate Ball children's costume contest. Friends, family and staff will walk alongside the float throwing beads out to the crowd.

Help us spread some good cheer by donating your unwanted beads. Please bring donations to our administrative office located at 102 Buck Drive in Fort Walton Beach between 8am and 5pm, Monday through Friday.

What We've Been Up To



(Above): At the 2nd Annual WAM! Conference in January— Shelter House Executive Director Michelle Sperzel with keynote speaker Regina Leeds and WAM! Committee members Rosalyn Wik and Gili Woodhams.



(Above): Business was brisk at Ladies Night Out, a benefit held by Raspberry Attic Salon in Downtown Fort Walton Beach to benefit Shelter House. The event drew about 80 women and raised over \$2,000.



(Above): The Okaloosa-Walton Community Action Team (CAT), led by Shelter House's Primary Prevention program, stunned shoppers at Destin Commons with a healthy relationship-themed flash mob.



(Left): Shelter House Executive Director Michelle Sperzel and graphic designer Becky Wagley accept a Gold ADDY Award from AAF Emerald Coast for the Share the Shelter poster design.

(Below): Carrabba's Chef Nellie demonstrates how to make Chicken Parmesan at our cooking class.



Shelter House Shopping List

Immediate Needs:

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

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:

Dressed to Give Charity Fashion Show (Silver Sands Factory Stores): April 19, 5:30pm—7:30pm

7th Annual Destin Charity Wine Auction Weekend (Sandestin Golf & Beach Resort): April 27—29

May:

The Princess & Pirate Ball (Sandestin Golf & Beach Resort): May 12, 5pm—8pm

Billy Bowlegs Torchlight Parade (Downtown Fort Walton Beach): May 31, 7pm

June:

Billy Bowlegs Pirate Festival—Treasure Hunt & Purse Booth (Fort Walton Landing): May 31—June 2

Walk Her Way (Rosemary Beach): June 15, 5:30pm

September:

Share the Shelter (Gulf Place): September 29

December:

2nd Annual Luminaria Run to End Domestic Violence (Sandestin Golf & Beach Resort): December 8

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