

# Womenews

Women's Center of Montgomery County

## Executive Director's Report



*The Women's Center of Montgomery County is very fortunate to include many talented, dedicated and interested volunteers among our membership. It is truly one of the best aspects of working at the Center that we get to interact with these dynamic individuals, who help to shape our programs and influence our organizational focus, direction and response to domestic violence on a daily basis. In lieu of my monthly article, I would like to share this space with one of these individuals, Pauline McGibbon, our Volunteer Legal Advocate who enriches her work and ours with her previous experiences as an advocate in Ireland.*

### Domestic Violence in Ireland

The island of Ireland is about the size of the State of Indiana, with a population of about 5.5 million (Republic of Ireland - 3.84 million, Northern Ireland - 1.7 million). The population of Indiana is about 6 million.

Northern Ireland (NI) was for more than thirty years the site of a violent and bitter ethno-political conflict known as "*The Troubles*" between Nationalist Catholics, who want Northern Ireland to be politically reunited with the rest of Ireland, and Unionist Protestants who want it to remain part of the United Kingdom. A peace agreement was negotiated in 1998, and most of the armed groups ceased their activities, however the possibility of resurgence of violence is still high. Many issues remain unresolved, and the devastation caused by this conflict, resulted in immense social, political and economic deprivation, despair and hopelessness among the citizens of this small, artificially constructed state.

In any country or region experiencing increased levels of violence through political terrorism and war, the victims of domestic violence have problems in finding help and sustainable solutions, because the society in which these victims live is in turmoil. Personal forms of violence are amplified and problematic when the wider society is itself engaged in violence – the '**volume of violence**' has been turned up.

Forms of violence against women are accentuated during conflict – for e.g. using rape as a weapon of war. This has sometimes been the case in NI. In 1994 for example, a woman named Margaret Wright was lured to a social club on the supposition that she was a catholic and was stripped naked, brutalized and murdered. Her body was dumped in a garbage can. In an earlier case, a young single mother enjoying a night out was 'befriended' by a group of people who invited her to a house party, pretending to be Catholics, as she was. Later she was taken upstairs a by a group of men who tortured her for several hours and cut her throat. The abuses to which these women were subjected were made worse by the fact that others, including women, stood by and watched it happen. In the 1970s a gang of men roamed the streets of Belfast (the Shankhill Butchers), targeting Catholics for torture and murder, and in one case cut a female victim's breasts from her body.

Arson attacks on the homes of female single parents have resulted in the deaths of women and children. Because these women were Catholics living in Protestant neighborhoods, the sectarian and sexist nature of the violence against them overlapped. There have been a small number of gang rapes in NI, in which the women's religion has formed a further pretext for sexual assault, freeing the perpetrators in their minds from individual responsibility.

*For women caught up in this conflict, religion and ethnicity have offered additional incitement to violence.*

The rates of domestic violence related homicide rates in NI are higher than in the southern part of Ireland or elsewhere in the UK, places that have not experienced political conflict. This is attributed to the availability of weapons, particularly where members of the police and security forces hold personal protection weapons. The majority of victims have been married to these men – police officers, prison guards, British soldiers, politicians, judges, business people, etc. There are a large number of households with guns. Paramilitary organizations (the factional groups involved in the campaign of violence) also had access to arsenals of weapons. For women faced with the difficulty of reporting to the police abuse by men who are themselves police, or women who would have to break the code of silence to report paramilitary members to the police, the choice is one of a rock or a hard place. Both are extremely dangerous.

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## NORRISTOWN VOLUNTER UPDATE

### **In-Services:**

Our next in-service will be Tuesday, September 8<sup>th</sup> from 1-3pm. Our guest speakers will cover the topic of mental illness. Below is a description of what is planned:

Overview of Montgomery County Mental Health System – services, supports and how to access  
Crisis Intervention, Mobile Crisis Services, and the Involuntary Commitment Process  
Recovery Story: An individual in recovery would share their success story

### **Legal Remedies:**

There will be no Legal Remedies workshop for August.

The next Legal Remedies Workshop will be on Tuesday, September 15<sup>th</sup>, 2009 from 4:30-6:30pm in the Norristown office. Shelley Bobman will be the attorney. The discussion will be open to civil and family law. The information sessions are held at our Norristown office at 18 West Airy Street, 4<sup>th</sup> floor. Please call 610-279-7474 to register to attend. Also, please refer a family member or friend to this valuable program!

### **A New Kind of Support Group:** Time for Healing Spiritual Based Support Group

Healing from domestic violence hurts and other life issues that have left one broken and scarred.

Fridays from 6-7:30pm at the Norristown office: 18 West Airy Street, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor. Contact Denise at 215-681-6595 or Women's Center at 610-279-7474

Happy summer!

Jenn B.

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## **Pottstown's Potpourri**

Recently, a group of women came together in the Pottstown office for a singular purpose: to become trained as domestic violence counselors. This group consisted of women of differing ages, races, socio-economic backgrounds and differing life experiences. As Deanna instructed this group on the topic of domestic violence and prepared them to answer our hotline calls, the relationships that were being developed between the women themselves would also prove to be beneficial to them for the experiences they were soon to encounter.

As each member of the training group graduated from the initial training and began to undergo their practicum, they naturally experienced some tentativeness and uncertainty about answering their first calls. Their desire to be prepared for every contingency and not to give any wrong information is indicative of their strong commitment to helping the victims and to fulfilling the mission of the Women's Center. The bonds this group developed during the initial training have continued to serve these women during their practicums via the support they provide one another to become more confident in their volunteer efforts.

They reassure each other when uncertainty threatens to undermine their efforts. As they take more calls and assist more victims, they share their experiences and learnings with each other. When a call is particularly intense or difficult, they help to deescalate the stress level for each other. They extend themselves to each other, just as they extend themselves to the victims that call or come into our office.

The Pottstown staff feels grateful to have such a wonderful group of volunteers and is looking forward to all the wondrous possibilities they will afford this office and its clients.

*Kristine Wickward*

*Legal Advocate - Pottstown*

## *Congratulations*

We are pleased to announce a new addition to the Rosner family! Congratulations to long-time Women's Center volunteer Sherry Rosner and her family as they celebrate the birth of grandson Scott Ryan Braterman. On July 15<sup>th</sup>, Sherry's daughter Sam and husband Brett welcomed their son, Scott, weighing in at 7lbs. 5ozs.

Scott begins the fourth generation of Women's Center members, joining great-grandmother Evelyn, grandparents Michael and Sherry Rosner, and aunt Rachel. We are thrilled for the entire Rosner family, and extend our best wishes to new parents Brett and Sam!

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: PRESS RELEASE FROM THE**

National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV)  
1120 Lincoln St., Ste 1603  
Denver, CO 80203

### **The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence Admonishes California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger for Eliminating State Funding for Domestic Violence Programs**

July 30, 2009, Denver, CO- California's governor, with the swoop of his pen, has cut the heart out of the state's vital programs and services helping women, children and families deal with domestic battery, assault and violence. His line-item veto of the state's \$20 million anti-family violence program is an attempt to bail out California's budget deficit by targeting the programs whose users are the least likely to speak out and fight back because they are too busy struggling to save their lives, their children and their physical safety.

This is not a "furlough," this isn't even an IOU. This is a cruel act by a political "terminator." This veto will have to either be overridden by the state legislature or reinstated by them at a drastically reduced level in order to get the governor's support.

The real tragedy is that other states are also suffering budget shortfalls and are making cuts in human needs programs and services. If they don't see a national outcry about California's heartless disposal of programs that help almost 100 shelters and service providers, they will follow the leader and make their own cuts and terminations.

Shelters and anti-violence programs are NOT just places where people who have been battered come to "cool off." These shelters are domestic violence crisis centers where women, children and families are not only patched up but counseled and steered to agencies, programs and services that can help them heal and thrive. In many instances, with early identification of a problem, families can deal with the violence together and children witnessing violence can be counseled and nurtured.

Our nation is horrified by the rapes of refugee women in Darfur and the cruel abandonment of Katrina's survivors left standing on a bridge, and we should be equally outraged that the state of California is abandoning the tens of thousands of fragile and wounded women and children who rely for their safety and future on the services and referrals provided by the shelters and centers. We must work with California's political leadership to remedy this situation and also stand firm so that the governor's cutting tool doesn't continue a swath across our whole country.

Advocates for violence prevention from all over the country will be calling on California's governor to help reinstate funding for the programs and services. We send and spend our money in California, as tourists, consumers of California's products and parents of children going to California's colleges to name a few examples. He will hear from us at both his Sacramento (916-445- 2841) and Los Angeles (213-897-0322) offices.

## Many Children Resilient to Domestic Violence

By Crystal Phend, Staff Writer, MedPage Today Published: April 30, 2009

Reviewed by Dori F. Zaleznik, MD; Associate Clinical Professor of Medicine, Harvard Medical School, Boston.

SAN FRANCISCO, April 30 -- Half of children exposed to domestic violence remain resilient to the psychological damage, likely because of personality and parenting, researchers said.

These children, who witnessed abuse of their mother but developed positive coping skills rather than internalizing and externalizing symptoms, were 61% more likely to have an easy temperament, according to Cecilia Martinez-Torteya, of Michigan State University in East Lansing, and colleagues.

Positive adaptation was also linked to mothers who were not depressed, the researchers reported in a longitudinal cohort study in the March/April 2009 Child Development.

There's no question that exposure is traumatizing for many children, the researchers noted. They reported that youngsters exposed to domestic abuse were at 3.7 times greater risk (95% CI, 1.86 to 7.36) of internalizing and externalizing symptoms than their unexposed peers.

Prior studies have consistently shown a negative effect, with trauma symptoms reported in children as young as 1-year-old, "threatening the child's ability to process and manage emotions effectively."

But some children behave well and function emotionally despite witnessing domestic violence, Martinez-Torteya's group noted.

To determine what factors were involved, they analyzed findings within a larger, longitudinal study of the effects of domestic violence on women and their children in urban, suburban, and rural areas in a Midwestern state.

Half of the original 206 women in the study had experienced domestic violence during pregnancy. The analysis included 190 children (95 boys) assessed yearly from ages 2 to 4.

Overall, 54% of domestic violence-exposed children appeared to be resilient, defined by positive adaptation (nonclinical levels of both internalizing and externalizing behaviors) maintained over the years of follow-up.

By comparison, 82% of children never exposed to domestic violence against their mother showed the same lack of internalizing and externalizing behaviors.

The risk of negative adaptation rose as frequency of exposure to domestic violence increased, with a medium to large effect size:

- Odds ratio 2.7 for one-time exposure (95% CI 1.19 to 6.15)
- OR 3.94 for two-time exposure (95% CI 1.57 to 9.90)
- OR 5.34 for three-time exposure (95% CI 2.12 to 12.91)

"Children who experience intermittent domestic violence exposure might benefit from periods of less stress and of relatively higher-quality family functioning," the investigators noted.

However, negative adaptation was not more likely with a longer duration of exposure (OR 1.98 for one versus three follow-up time periods, 95% CI 0.82 to 4.79).

The only protective factors seen in the study were an easy temperament --defined by regularity, approachability, high adaptability, positive mood, and lower reactivity (OR 0.39, 95% CI 0.26 to 0.58) -- and mothers who reported less depression (OR 1.14, 95% CI 1.03 to 1.25).

"Mothers with good mental health are more likely to model appropriate responses to stressful events and help their children achieve healthy emotion regulation," Martinez-Torteya's group concluded.

Race, cognitive ability, income and -- surprisingly -- positive parenting were not significant factors in a child's resilience.

The findings suggested that "positive adaptation in the face of adversity is common and embedded in the processes of normal development," the researchers said. They cautioned, though, that the study relied primarily on maternal reports and that children were only assessed during the early childhood period. As a result, the results may not generalize to older children.

To 'inform' on the activities of a paramilitary, whether political or personal, resulted in physical punishment or death and/or exclusion of families from their communities. One common punishment was '*tarring and feathering*' where the victim was tied to a post and hot tar and feathers were poured over their heads. They were left in the street for many hours as a warning to others. The majority of women who received this punishment had dated British soldiers, the enemy.

In the cases of those with personal protection firearms, (police officers, prison guards, soldiers), these were not removed from the abuser because of the need to protect him against paramilitary assassination. The victim was forced to choose between the protection of her family against political enemies or protection of herself by removal of a gun used to threaten and terrorize her. Firearms may be commonplace in the USA, but they remain unusual in most homes in the UK and Ireland. Northern Ireland is the exception.

The interaction of militarism and masculinity in NI means that there is a wider tendency to threaten to use guns in the control and abuse of women in their homes. Thus, women in NI have lived for decades in an '**armed patriarchy**'.

The destabilizing effects of conflict situations often result in the breakdown of the structures of law and order. In NI, due to a perceived risk to their security, the police do not always respond to calls in certain neighborhoods. The lack of police response subsequently undermines court-restraining orders that depend on police action for enforcement. Before the peace process began in the mid 1990's, when the police did respond, they had to be escorted into many communities by the British army. This usually entailed a convoy of 6-8 heavily armed vehicles with personnel wearing bulletproof vests and carrying machine guns. It was common practice in neighborhoods that as soon as the police/ British army were seen, residents would come outside and bang their trash can lids (metal at that time) on the ground to make so much noise that everyone was warned of the military presence. Not only did such practices draw considerable attention to the offence, they added to the anxiety of having to ask the police for help at all.

In rural areas, domestic violence calls were responded to by police using helicopters for protection against sniper fire and remote control bombs. During particularly tense periods in the conflict, intermediaries were often used, usually clergy, often priests whose spiritual duty was to keep families together. The attitude of the clergy towards domestic violence victims became a crucial factor in whether or not these women found the help they needed in times of crisis.

Women who were reluctant to or unable to contact the police sometimes tried to seek help from the paramilitary groups who 'policed' their neighborhoods. These groups handed out vigilante style punishments, a common one being shot through the kneecaps. No-one was punished in this way for domestic abuse.

What the examples from NI show is that political conflict imposes considerable constraints on women experiencing domestic violence. In any country in which the security services have a heightened perception of the military role and the police culture predominantly subscribes to traditional female roles, assaults on women can more easily result in murder, because of the proximity of firearms among army and police personnel

Women in conflict situations know that a cessation of the political violence does not bring a cessation of all violence. They also know that they have to find ways to challenge those who have used violence in the past. Men should not be allowed to rationalize its use, but neither should they be excluded from the possibilities of change.

**Women's Aid** is the lead voluntary organization in Northern Ireland addressing domestic violence.

Domestic violence and other forms of violence against women are **widespread in Northern Ireland**. The PSNI (Police Service of Northern Ireland) Statistics for **07/08** indicate that they responded to a domestic incident **every 23 minutes** of every day of the year. The 24-Hour Domestic Violence Helpline managed 24,153 calls in 07/08.

***The number of all recorded offences of murder in Northern Ireland in 07/08 total 25; of these 11 had a domestic motivation.***

### **Domestic Violence as a Human Rights Issue**

Faced with all the evidence of violence the assertion that 'Women's Rights are Human Rights' still meets resistance. On one hand, it is simple - that as human beings women have human rights. However women have been marginalized in the world of human rights, relegated to 'special interest'.

Last year (2008) marked the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)** with its stirring assertion that 'the equal and inalienable right of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world'.

## SUPREME COURT DECISIONS

Recent U.S. Supreme Court decisions will affect school policies that subject students to invasive searches, and how accused rapists and other violent offenders are prosecuted. In June, the Supreme Court ruled unconstitutional the strip search of an Arizona middle-school student by school officials who thought she might be carrying prescription-strength ibuprofen. Two other U.S. Supreme Court rulings from recent weeks address defendants' post-conviction rights to DNA testing and defendants' rights to confrontation when crime laboratory reports are offered as evidence.

### **Strip Search of Teen Girl Unconstitutional**

The Supreme Court ruled last week that the strip search of a 13-year-old girl suspected of violating her school's drug policy was unconstitutional. Experts expect the 8-to-1 decision to dramatically reduce such searches in school districts across the nation, some of which have already banned the procedure because of its potential to degrade students.

The case, *Safford Unified School District #1 v. Redding*, centered around Savana Redding, who in 2003 denied charges that she brought prescription-strength ibuprofen to her middle school in Safford, Arizona. School officials searched Redding's backpack and outer clothing for the contraband but found nothing. They then escorted her to the school nurse's office, where she was told to partially remove her bra and underpants, leaving her breasts and pelvic region partially exposed. Nothing was found in the search.

Redding, now 19, was so humiliated that she never returned to the school.

Redding's mother filed suit against the school district and against the assistant principal who ordered the search, arguing that it violated the U.S. Constitution's Fourth Amendment protections against unreasonable search and seizure. A federal district court ruled in favor of the school district, but the full U.S. Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit sided with Redding, as did the Supreme Court in this decision.

"The content of the suspicion failed to match the degree of intrusion," retiring Justice David Souter wrote in the majority opinion. Justice Souter stated that the school officials were within their rights when they searched Redding's backpack and outer clothing for the pills – simple prescription-strength ibuprofen. But he said they went too far in an "embarrassing, frightening and humiliating" search of Redding's undergarments.

Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, at present the only female on the Court, had worried earlier that her male colleagues did not appreciate the humiliation and trauma Redding faced. "They have never been a 13-year-old girl," she told *USA Today* after the case was argued.

The Court did not rule out strip searches in the cases of more dangerous contraband, or if there is a more specific tip. The Justices also made clear that they were not debating schools' no-drugs policies. "Unfortunately, the court missed an opportunity to provide clearer guidance to school officials," General Counsel to the National School Boards Association Francisco Negrón wrote in an oped in *USA Today*. "While the court did not nullify zero-tolerance policies, it did require schools to determine the dangerousness of a drug before deciding how intrusive to make a search. It did not specify what it meant by dangerousness. How are school officials to gauge that?"

The decision was not a complete victory for Redding. The majority ruled that the case against the assistant principal could not proceed, because the law was unclear about the constitutionality of strip searches at the time Redding was searched. A separate claim against the school district, based on its practices and policies, was not part of the appeal to the Supreme Court and will go forward, the *New York Times* reports.



UNIQUE HANDBAGS & ACCESSORIES

## Adornment Expressive Accessories hosts its Bi-Annual Handbag Drive

To benefit the  
Women's Center of Montgomery County

Adornment Expressive Accessories in Skippack, PA will be holding their bi-annual handbag drive to support the Women's Center of Montgomery County. The bags collected aid in the efforts of the center to help the women we serve feel more confident!

Time to rid your closets of gently used handbags, briefcases and backpacks. Adornment will be collecting the handbags throughout the month of August. For every bag that you donate, you will receive a coupon for \$5 (up to \$20) that can be used immediately or for a later purchase through 9/6/09 at Adornment.

A great time to save while updating your look for the Fall!

So far, Adornment's handbag drives have been successful with over 600 bags collected through the last two!

Adornment is a women's boutique in Skippack that specializes in unique handbags, accessories and jewelry. Please visit [www.adornmentea.com](http://www.adornmentea.com), or call 267.640.7956 for information regarding hours, products and directions.

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Yet in that year, the *Women's Rights Division of Human Rights Watch* sent out an alarm call stating that:

***'Millions of women throughout the world live in conditions of abject deprivation of, and attacks against, their fundamental human rights for no other reason than that they are women. Abuses against women are relentless, systematic, and widely tolerated, if not explicitly condoned. Violence and discrimination against women are global social epidemics.'***

Nearer to home, we know only too well the abuse of women's human rights that is domestic violence.

## Save the Date!

Women's Center of Montgomery County hosts our

### **Fifth Annual 5K Walkathon:**

### **“TAKING STEPS TO END ABUSE”**

Do your part to STOP domestic violence in our community and raise awareness!

Join us at Montgomery County Community College

Blue Bell, PA

Saturday, September 12, 2009

10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Online registration now available at [www.wcmontco.org](http://www.wcmontco.org)

For more information on how to on the Special Event Planning Committee for this event, contact Maria at our Elkins Park office at 215-635-7340.

#### Women's Center of Montgomery County

##### Elkins Park Office

215-635-7344

FAX: 215-635-7347

Thrift Shop: 215-885-0620

##### Norristown Office

610-279-1548

FAX: 610-279-7740

##### Pottstown Office

610-970-7363

FAX: 610-970-0705

##### Bryn Mawr Office

610-525-1427

FAX: 610-525-1429

##### Colmar Office

215-996-0721

FAX: 215-996-0725

[www.wcmontco.org](http://www.wcmontco.org)

**1-800-773-  
2424**

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Elkins Park, PA 19027

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# **Me, Miss Krause and Joan**

## **Transformational Power in a One Hour Play**

**A PLAY TO BENEFIT ABINGTON FRIENDS MEETING'S RIGHT SHARING FUND. PART OF THE PROCEEDS WILL ALSO GO TO SUPPORT THE WOMEN'S CENTER OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY.**

Experience the personally transformative power of the theatre in this performance and conversation. Deep personal experience is fertile ground for acting, but usually an actor's source of inspiration is hidden from the audience. This piece reveals what goes on in an actor's homework, in search of answers to the question, "How would I play Joan of Arc?"

The performance weaves scenes from the life of Joan of Arc with moments and people—particularly one special teacher, Alvina Krause—from the performer's life experience. The play is structured around these pivotal moments of Kemper's education as an actor, with an interplay of light and, significantly, darkness: in the re-living of a rape that took place as the actress walked home from a performance, woven into the trial of Joan of Arc.

The tapestry of experiences reveals a theme: there are things so true and so eternal that no violence can kill, so real and so important they can never die. An audience discussion follows the performance.

**The play is recommended for mature audiences only.**

**Martha Kemper** is a professional actor, an independent theater artist, and Associate Professor of Theater at Penn State Abington College. She received a Bachelor of Speech Science from Northwestern University and a Master of Fine Arts from Penn State University, as well as having completed five years private acting study with Alvina Krause, professor emeritus, Northwestern University



**Saturday September 26 --- 7:30 PM**  
**Abington Friends School 520 Meetinghouse Rd.**  
**Jenkintown, PA 19046-2934**  
**Josephine Muller Auditorium**  
**Tickets \$15 Donation**  
**For more information: [mlk11@psu.edu](mailto:mlk11@psu.edu)**

**5k**  
**Walk**  
rain or shine

**Save the Date!**

Saturday, September 12, 2009



**The Women's Center of Montgomery County**

# Taking Steps to End Abuse

**5<sup>th</sup> Annual Walk**

## **When and Where:**

Saturday, September 12, 2009

**10 am to Noon**

Montgomery County  
Community College  
Blue Bell, PA Campus

## **Activities for All:**

Photo in a UPS Truck- **\$5.00!**

DJ ED Z

Diaper Derby

Domestic Violence Jeopardy

Drawings for Free Prizes

Food to Satisfy Your Hunger!

**(Coffee, fruit, pastries, snacks,  
refreshments, and more!)**

## **How it Works:**

\$10 Registration Fee

Register online or

download a form at:

**[www.wcmontco.org](http://www.wcmontco.org)**

Begins 05/01/09

Invite Friends,  
Family and  
Co-Workers to join!

**All Proceeds Benefit:  
The Women's Center  
of Montgomery County  
Domestic Violence Program**