

Womenews

Women's Center of Montgomery County

Presidential Notes:



By Joyce Skobinsky

HAPPY NEW YEAR! As we begin the year 2005, I hope your acts of kindness and generosity to others continue to be rewarding, and that you are blessed with the gifts of good health and happiness.

As I look right now at the future of the Women's Center I see a dedicated staff and volunteers striving to keep up with the business of helping others in a fast and changing world of volunteerism, and of technological advances. In recognizing these changes, we as an organization may have to change some of the formerly successful techniques of recruiting volunteers, and of raising funds. Folks today have less time, less money and greater needs. That is not to say that the desire to help others is less; I don't believe it is. What is needed is to find a way for volunteers to serve within the context of their busy lives. The demands on our young working parents and the varied activities offered to our retired population often makes it difficult to find time for volunteering, even though the desire to do so is there. We do know that we must replenish our number of volunteers if we are to remain a volunteer organization. So how can we make it work? . That is currently what our Strategic Planning Committee is exploring. This will take research and creative thinking and planning to figure out how we can recruit and utilize new volunteers with the limited number of hours they can allocate for service.

We are continually looking for funding from new and various sources. Funding from private corporations is essential. One way to get this funding is by educating corporate executives that our goals for ending domestic violence will benefit their employees and their company as they reduce lost man hours due to domestic and work place violence. Our board development committee is working on ideas that will hopefully bring us corporate partners. If you have any contacts or expertise in how to accomplish this task, we would like you to work with us on this particular challenge.

Internally, we need the continued support of our membership for our special events fundraising projects. Most of our funding is directed to be used on programs and direct service. This does not allow for maintaining our offices, buying supplies and offering salary raises for our employees or well deserved "thank you" perks for our volunteers. So please participate and attend special events when possible. Our major fund raiser "The Champagne Brunch and Silent Auction" is being held on Sunday, April 10th at the Meadowlands Country Club. This is a very lovely event for inviting spouses and friends to support the center and be inspired themselves by the work that we do. It is truly a celebration!

Changes in the Thrift Shop from merchandising to general operation are also being examined by a board committee to maximize its potential as a good source of income. Your help in stocking our shop by contributing household items, jewelry and quality clothing that you no longer need goes a long way in bringing us added revenue.

With the help of staff and talented new board members, we are updating our website to provide more information about the Women's Center in a stylish and creative format. Our goal is to attract more people to our site and enhance our visibility about our services and volunteer opportunities. This is a work in progress.

Our Nominating Committee is currently looking for outstanding community leaders and talented individuals to serve on the Board of Directors. If you or anyone you might like to recommend desires to serve in this capacity, please let me know.

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You have previously been alerted that there will be some proposed changes to our by-laws, and mission statement, which will require Board approval before being sent to our active members for a vote. Currently, we are refining some points, before we pass them along for your vote.

As you can see, your board faces some real challenges ahead. I have no doubt that we will succeed. We will progress slowly but deliberately and with careful thought.

Our volunteers delivering direct services are doing a superb job in counseling and with legal advocacy. It is a constant learning process which requires up to date information, and skills review. Your attendance at in-services is essential to keeping up to date with the information you must have for the people you serve. We admire your dedication and diligence. Right now, staffing our hotline after hours and on weekends has become a critical issue. If you have had the training, and have the manual, you can do this. Please just give it a try. It is not necessary to make a long term commitment from the start. See how it feels. If you are willing now and again to take some time, let your volunteer coordinator know this. We really need you.

Finally, I extend a warm welcome to the new volunteers and recent graduates of our counseling training. May you enjoy many hours of satisfaction from your new endeavor.

GOOD LUCK TO ALL OF US FOR CONTINUED SUCCESS IN 2005!

Jenkintown Office Is Now Collecting Cell phones

The Women's Center has become one of 1200 domestic violence agencies in 49 states to participate in a cell phone fundraising program sponsored by Shelter Alliance.

Once discarded cell phones are collected, they are mailed to Shelter Alliance in Miramar Florida. They evaluate each phone and decide its worth. They will pay up to \$40 for newer telephones.

Our first shipment earned us \$176, so spread the word and keep the phones coming. For further information on Shelter Alliance check their website at www.shelteralliance.net

Upcoming Jenkintown In-services:

Wednesday, January 12, 2005

1:00 p.m. – 3 p.m.

Paul Bukovec of MENERGY will discuss the many issues involved in understanding and treating abusers.

Paul is a local expert with extensive experience in the field.

Monday, January 24, 2005

7-9pm (*TENTATIVE*)

Join in on a discussion of the most recent findings on the link between animal and human abuse.

Book Club Meetings

January 19th Selma will lead the discussion and have the meeting at her house. The book will be "The Great Fire" by Shirley Hazzard.

All book club meeting start at 7:30 for socializing and 8:00 the discussion begins. Any questions call Dorothy at 215-782-2259.

NORRISTOWN VOLUNTEER UPDATE

INSERVICES

The WAP holiday party was a blast!! Thank you for the wonderful company, recipes, and our usual Pollyanna excitement. Can't wait to next year!

Our next scheduled inservice is January 11, 2005 from 1-3 in the Norristown office. Our guest speaker is the Executive Director from the Montgomery County Mediation Center. She will be discussing their mediation services, training and restorative justice program. This will be a very informative inservice, let me know if you plan to attend.

The next Legal Remedies information session will be January 18th, 2005 from 5-7pm. The attorney will be Peter Bort and the topic will be open. This program has been very successful, please let callers know this program is available and refer them to the Norristown office.

POLICE ROLL CALL TRAINING/VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

We will begin our annual police roll call trainings during the next 3 months. If you are interested in signing up for your local police department to discuss Women's Center services and the permission slip program, please let us know in Norristown.

WELCOME

A warm welcome to our two new Norristown volunteers Megan and Libby. Both have started their practicum and are learning the ropes in the office and prothy! Keep up the good work!

Keep warm and Happy Holidays,
Jenn B.
Norristown Volunteer Coordinator

Volunteer Spotlight: Ginny S.

by Courtland Smith, Jr.

Editor's note: Before Ginny S. retired, she had spent time in sales at US Healthcare and before that as a teacher. In the conversation that follows, she reflects on her past and explains why she is passionate about the volunteer work she does at the Norristown office. Sitting next to her on the sofa was "the Bandit Prince," a large, furry cat that lives with her and also is a survivor of domestic violence. Ginny adopted him from Laurel House about three years go because pets are not allowed to stay at the shelter.

What was it that drew you to the Women's Center initially?

I'm a survivor of domestic abuse. Thirty-five years ago, you just accepted your lot; there was no group like the Women's Center's to help you change your situation. I looked at my relationship as my fault. When I heard about the center, I was interested in women's issues anyway, and I decided that was where I was headed.

After I joined the ranks of the Women's Center in the '80s, I had to suspend my volunteering because my work had become so time-consuming. At that point, though, I said, "I'll be back." Since retiring eight years ago, I've spent time each week either in the room adjacent to the Prothonotary's office at the courthouse or in the Norristown Women's Center office across the street. Basically, I help abuse victims obtain PFAs—discuss what they have to do and what's going to happen next. They often are overwhelmed by the process, and it can be intimidating.

Has the work you've done over the years been satisfying, and if so, how?

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The most telling reason I was drawn to the work is because of the emphasis we put on empowerment. When I was going through my problems, I did feel powerless. As basic and important as the concept of empowerment is, I never thought about it. Today, when I see these women come in, I know what they're going through, I know what they're feeling, and I marvel that they have the courage, and that we're there to help them. They're so appreciative."

Occasionally, if one of the women we've been following is going to appear in court because her abuser has violated the PFA, we'll be there to support her. We'll introduce ourselves and let her know who we are. At the Norristown office, we work with the police, because they send us the permission slips to contact victims.

What talents or experience do you bring to our work?

I have always been aware of people who were less fortunate than I. Empowerment is something we offer. Some might think my teaching background would come into play—educating abuse victims, for example, but somehow I think of that as support. And that was one thing I was missing a lot in my life. So that was what I wanted to give—the sense that the abuse victim is not alone.

Sometimes, there are a lot of people lined up to file their PFAs. We tell them it takes at least an hour to go through the process, which is very structured. Basically, we stick to that task and guide them to the next stop along the way. Other stops will be to Yolanda or C.J., PFAD clerks in the court administration office, the judge's office and, lastly, the sheriff's office.

It amazes me that domestic violence still goes on—with all the literature and acknowledgment that abusing your mate or spouse is a no-no, that so much of it continues to be such a major part of some people's lives. It's encouraging that the police, generally, have really done a turnaround.

When I first started, I felt that their attitude, was ... "those silly little women who get in our way." Today, they depend on us and really work with us. We deal with a lot of the departments, and we get much more support now than we used to. Recently, I have been so encouraged by specific incidents where the police utilize our services and voice respect for what we contribute.

When I ask women how they decided to apply for a PFA, they often say, it was the police department that made them aware of us. Often when women enter shelters, they go back to their abuser a number of times. It takes a tremendous amount of courage to follow through with their plans, and it comes from a sense of powerlessness, asking themselves, "Whose going to be there to help me?" The Women's Center is saying, "We're here to help you," which, to me, is a lifeline.

Was there a seminal moment in your personal journey to remove abuse from your life when you really felt you could effect a change?

I went to counseling, and it helped me clarify some things. I had this intense dream, and it was giving me a message that I could look at separation (from my husband). Before, I couldn't even think about it. Whenever I hear the question from well-meaning people, 'Why don't abuse victims just get up and leave?' I resent that. It's not a helpful remark. They haven't walked in a victim's shoes.

Personal abuse is not a subject everyone feels comfortable talking about. Remember, though, years ago no one discussed the matter outside the home. As long as we talk about it, we can address the issues that allow it to persist.

As a teacher, I always thought it was my role to empower or to open up the student's minds and create an atmosphere where they could learn—as opposed to just telling them. I don't like telling people what they should think or do. Instead, we say to abuse victims, 'These are your options' When working with victims, I like the word 'sharing.'

And sharing each week her experience, insights and feelings for others are what Ginny does so well. As a volunteer, a survivor and someone whose heart touches others in important ways, she's at the head of the class.

**January is Stalking Awareness Month.
How Much Do You Know About Stalking?**

1. The majority of stalking victims are celebrities:
True False
2. How many people are stalked in America every year?
A. 400,000 B. 1 Million C. 800,000 D. 1.4 Million
3. What percentage of women who are stalked by an intimate partner are sexually assaulted by that partner?
A. 11% B. 21% C. 31% D. 41%
4. The majority of women stalked by their current or former intimate partners are also physically assaulted by that partner.
True False
5. What percentage of stalking victims are men?
A. 5% B. 11% C. 22% D. 44%
6. What percentage of stalkers are women?
A. 2% B. 9% C. 13% D. 25%
7. Most stalking victims who had obtained a protective order against their partner had the protective order violated by the stalker.
True False
8. How many states have stalking laws?
A. 25 B. 34 C. 48 D. 50
9. What percentage of male stalking victims are stalked by other men?
A. 10% B. 25% C. 40% D. 60%
10. More than 80 percent of women who were stalked on campus knew the stalker.
True False

ANSWERS ON PAGE 7

*Survey developed by National Center for Victims of Crime

Sometimes, Doctors Find Answers Far Off the Charts

Carmen came to my clinic because of a scalp condition. She was 37 years old, slender, casually but fashionably dressed, with the broad bill of a red baseball cap obscuring her face.

Thick, silky black hair slid out from the sides as she shyly removed the hat to show me the crusted scabs on her head. Carmen's hands were well manicured and her makeup carefully applied. It was clear that she was embarrassed, and she slapped the cap back on as soon as I had examined her head.

I reassured her that this was a common fungal skin infection and was easy to treat. To give her some distance from this, I quickly moved onto the other parts of the medical interview- past medical history, past surgical history and so forth.

During the course of my questioning, Carmen mentioned offhandedly that she had been having aches and pains on her left knee, right shoulder, the back of her head and on her stomach. She described pins-and-needles sensations in these areas for the past six months.

I performed a thorough physical exam, but found nothing amiss: there was no swelling in the joints, there was normal sensation in the skin, there was no sign of trauma or injury. I could find nothing to link these symptoms to any known disease.

"It's probably just the routine aches and pains of life," I said. "you are perfectly healthy."

Carmen smiled a tight smile, and we talked for a few minutes about general steps to maintain good health: Pap smears, balanced diet, exercise. I gave her a prescription for a lotion to treat her scalp, and then we shook hands and said goodbye. I turned back to my paperwork as she let herself out of my office.

"Oh doctor," she said, as she was walking out. I looked up from my writing. Carmen was already outside the office, with her hand on the doorknob, getting ready to pull it shut. "Can I ask you a question?"

"Sure," I said, putting down my pen.

Carmen paused, and from under her baseball cap she seemed to focus on a spot beyond me. Her voice grew more tentative. "Do you think...?" She hesitated again, her eyes drifting, as if searching for another, perhaps safer, spot upon which to rest.

"About the parts that hurt me..." Her lower lip retreated ever so slightly under her front teeth. Her question came out as one of genuine curiosity. "Do you think it's at all important that these are the same spots where my boyfriend shot me with a dart gun?"

The "hand on the doorknob" phenomenon is well known in medicine. A physician can proceed assiduously through a complete history and physical with a patient, but it is only when the patient is halfway out the door that the important information spills out.

I often wonder why this happens, why the crucial information so often waits until after the visit has finished. Perhaps it is because the formality of the standard doctor-patient visit precludes revealing such personal, vulnerable details.

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Or maybe such details simply seem out of place, or unimportant, because they aren't about livers, spleens or cholesterol levels. Maybe only when patients are fully dressed and standing upright, somewhat removed from the medical setting, if only by a few feet, do they regain enough humanity and strength to reveal such things. Whatever the reason, there is something about that moment-halfway out the door, hand on the doorknob- that is critical.

There was a long pause as Carmen's dark eyes finally settled on mine. I wanted to kick myself; how could I have missed it? Why weren't my antennae alert to domestic violence, something that is so frightening common that every single day, I should have at least one patient who has experienced it?

I stood up and extended my hand to Carmen, to invite her back in from the outside, to pull her back from across the threshold. Now it was time for the real visit to begin.

Governor Signs Bill Providing Confidentiality to Victims of Domestic Violence

Legislation sponsored by Rep. Katie True (R-Lancaster) and designed to protect victims of domestic violence and stalking by keeping their addresses confidential is now law.

On November 30, the Governor signed into law True's House Bill 1262, which establishes the Address Confidentiality Program to provide victims of domestic violence and stalking with the legal means to prevent their assailants from using public records to locate them.

"Victim's who make the decision to escape an abusive and violent relationship will now know that Pennsylvania law is there to help them in their quest to start a new, safer life for themselves and their children," True said.

The Address Confidentiality Program offers victims a legal substitute address provided by the Office of Victim Advocate, which could be used to fulfill the address requirements of court and government records, such as drivers' licenses, traffic tickets, motor vehicle registrations, court petitions and school records.

"Relocating is not always enough," True said. "Abusers and assailants can be relentless and crafty in tracking down their victims. That's why the fewer people who know where a victim of domestic violence or stalking is, the safer that victim will be."

"I will continue to work with the Governor, law enforcement, the judicial system and all concerned Pennsylvanians to protect the innocent victims of these repugnant crimes."

ANSWERS TO STALKING QUIZ:

- 1) False 2) 1.4 million 3) 31% 4) True 5) 22% 6) 13% 7) True
8) 50 9) 60% 10) True

Benefit the Women's Center When You Shop On-Line! Website Shopping Links

The Women's Center of Montgomery County will earn a percentage of each purchase you make with our online vendors if you link to their site through the Women's Center website at www.wcmontco.org:

Staples.com
Boscovs.com
Barnes&Noble.com
IBM.com
PetSmart.com
Priceline.com
MusiciansFriend.com
Kmart.com
Amazon.com
OldNavy.com
Modell's Sporting Goods
Verizon Wireless
Proflowers.com
Entertainment Book

Women's Center of Montgomery County

Jenkintown Office

215-885-8440

Korean: 215-886-8725

Thrift Shop: 215-885-0620

FAX: 215-885-8156

Norristown Office

610-279-1548

FAX: 610-279-7740

Pottstown Office

610-970-7363

FAX: 610-970-0705

Lansdale Office

215-853-8060

FAX: 215-853-8065

Bryn Mawr Office

610-525-1427

FAX: 610-525-1429

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