

Womenews

W o m e n ' s C e n t e r o f M o n t g o m e r y C o u n t y

Executive Director's Notes by Maria Macaluso



It may be the child in me, but the start of June still puts me in 'report card' mode, a time to take stock of the past year, to reflect on our accomplishments and to assess those areas of potential growth and improvement. If I had to grade the Women's Center over the past year, I can report with some great satisfaction that we have truly continued to grow over the past year, to provide quality services and programs to the community, to strengthen our strong organizational base, and to achieve many, if not all, of the goals we set early in the year. Most importantly, there is a passionate, hopeful and creative sense of vision for our future embodied in our Board's planning efforts that helps to inspire and elevate our work on a daily basis. Simply stated, it feels pretty good here at the Center!

In sharing with you some of this year's successes, I guess I should start with the basics that everyone usually wants to know: the numbers. In terms of our domestic violence work, in the first ten months of the fiscal year (through April 30th), we served 2,806 new victims of domestic violence, as compared to 2,664 for the same period last year. We had 6,364 counseling contacts with domestic violence victims during this period, compared to 5,645 for the same period last year. In terms of counseling hours, our staff and volunteers provided 3,209 hours of domestic violence counseling in the first ten months of this year, as opposed to 2,785 hours last year.

What is amazing about those numbers is not just that we continue to increase our provision of services to victims of domestic violence, but rather that they only reflect those contacts which are domestic violence related. The proverbial tip of the iceberg, we never report on those callers and contacts who are seeking support, information and referral, or simply in need of someone to listen. Because these services are not funded, we rarely track the work being done by our volunteers in providing a strong support system for a large community of women in need of a human connection. Those calls number in the thousands each year, and we are equally proud and satisfied to offer haven and comfort to these individuals who, while not experiencing violence, are genuinely in need. When I am frequently asked by our funders how we measure our success, my answer is always that we do not evaluate success by how many victims leave their abuser but rather the fact that every time an individual in need calls our hotline, they are able to reach a caring, dedicated counselor on the phone, willing to listen. I would like to thank our most committed, trained and talented group of volunteers for all that you do to ensure that we meet that goal on a daily basis!

In addition to the number of people served, I am also very pleased with the progress of our Community Education and Training effort. Over the past year, we have increased the number of trainings we offer, both internally and to the external community. In January, we offered a skill-building training to our volunteers and crisis counselors from sister organizations on handling challenging crisis callers. In February, we offered a workshop to help those counselors deal with some of the frustration and stress of crisis work. And in March, we trained more than 30 of our own staff and volunteers counselors in elder abuse counseling skills. Each of these day-long trainings were video-taped to ensure that those unable to attend could still benefit from the opportunity to enhance their skills.

In terms of our internal training for our volunteers, we have also spent the past year revamping and revitalizing our 45-hour training program in an effort to make it more adaptable to the changing needs of our new volunteer recruits. Recognizing that volunteers have different needs and availability, we have worked very hard to make our trainings more accessible and

Legal Back to Basics In-service Jenkintown Office

Date: Wednesday, July 27th
Time: 10:00 a.m.
Location: Our New Facility at Elkins Park Square Community Room
Old York Road, Elkins Park

Please take advantage of this opportunity to catch up on current events and reinforce your legal knowledge about the Protection from Abuse process.

Please note that the Legal Back to Basics training is a mandatory in-service for all hotline counselors. If you are not able to physically attend this session, we ask that you contact your volunteer coordinator to request a copy of the video taped session for your review.

NATIONAL COALITION OF FREE MEN SUFFERS FINAL DEFEAT

(Los Angeles, CA) Today the California Supreme Court denied review to a men's rights group seeking to challenge the women only policy at several Los Angeles shelters for battered women and their children.

The lawsuit claimed that the shelters engaged in illegal sex discrimination. The shelters, however, receive gender specific funding from the state for very good reasons.

The Battered Women's Protection Act specifically funds shelters for women and children. The act is gender specific because women in crisis have particular privacy and safety needs. The shelters sometimes have communal bathrooms and bedrooms, many children with abusive fathers fear men, and batterers could easily find their victim if they were allowed access to the shelters.

The California Women's Law Center and O'Melveny and Myers LLP, representing the shelters *pro bono*, argued successfully to the California State Court of Appeal that the case had no merit.

"The Legislature has recognized that women and children need private shelters during this time of crisis in their lives and provides funding accordingly. In the event that the National Coalition of Free Men wish to open their own shelter, they are free to do so," said Katie Buckland, Executive Director of the California Women's Law Center.

State Senator Sheila Kuehl said, "I am pleased with today's court decision. Battered women shelters have been designed for women and their children for very good reasons- the preservation of safety, privacy, and peace, as well as the numerically greater need for places for women and children."

Book Club Meetings

- June 15th Elaine will lead the discussion on 1000 white women by Jim Fergus at Judy M's house. Also please bring your choice for the book you will do next year.
- July 20th Martha will lead the discussion on The Kite Runner by Khaled Hosseini at Ellen B's house.

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

20th Anniversary Celebration Korean Women's Support Committee

Soon-mi, Seo welcomed us to the 20th anniversary celebration of the Korean Women's Service Committee. Betty Aptaker, a long-time member of the committee, praised Jeung Hee Kim, founder and still the backbone of this organization. Maria Macaluso, Executive Director of the Women's Center, also greeted us. As usual, a superb buffet was presented, all prepared by the Committee's volunteers. A fine art exhibition and sale was displayed, the work of the Monday morning art class which is headed by Jeung Hee Kim. To our delight, a short violin solo was given by Eum-hae Kim, accompanied on piano by Young-Seon, Lim. And once again, Sue Pang, in traditional Korean dress, performed a lovely dance. We were all thanked for supporting the work of this important Committee. ESL tutors were also thanked. We are very grateful to St. Mark's Church for opening their doors to us year after year. And we are all looking forward to the Committee's 21st anniversary.

Submitted by Ruth Smith

Exposure to Violence Harms Children's Health

Source: www.endabuse.org/newsflash

May 12, 2005

Being abused, exposed to domestic violence and having a mother who abuses substances are associated with a high number of health problems for low-income pre-school children. In fact, the mother's poor health and the child's level of trauma are the strongest predictors of poor child health. Those are among the findings from a study reported in the March 2005 issue of the Journal of Pediatrics.

Researchers looked at 160 pre-school age children from low-income Michigan families and found that three in four (78 percent) had been exposed to some form of violence either in the home or community. Nearly half (46.7) of the children in the study had been exposed to at least one incident of mild or severe violence in their family.

The children who were exposed to violence suffered symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, such as bed-wetting or nightmares, and were at greater risk than their peers of having allergies, asthma, gastrointestinal problems, headaches and flu. Children experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder had four times the risk of asthma and gastrointestinal problems than their peers

Violence Exposure and Traumatic Stress Symptoms as Additional Predictors of Health Problems in High-Risk Children was written by Dr. Sandra A. Graham-Bermann, PhD. And Julie Seng, PhD, CNM. They write: "Although stopping intrafamilial and community violence may be daunting projects beyond the scope of health care providers' direct practice, clinical interventions to increase the mother's safety and improve her ability to protect her child are of the highest priority. Child traumatic stress symptoms are also treatable, and referring violence-exposed child patients to group or individual therapy specifically aimed at bolstering their power to cope and at reducing post-traumatic stress reactions may be effective in preventing some of the adult [consequences] of these adverse childhood events."

"Advocates are trying to get more money for prevention and intervention services for children exposed to violence in the *Violence Against Women Act* that Congress will consider this year," said Family Violence Prevention Fund President Esta Soler. If lawmakers really care about improving children's health and prospects, they will allocate these funds."

ACLU Hails Ruling That Fair Housing Act Prohibits Discrimination Against Victims of Domestic Violence

In First Ever Ruling, Court Finds Domestic Violence Constitutes Sex Discrimination Under Law

BRATTLEBORO, VT — In an important victory for battered women, the first case ever to hold that the Fair Housing Act prohibits discrimination against domestic violence victims settled this week. The American Civil Liberties Union was co-counsel with Vermont Legal Aid in the domestic violence and housing discrimination case *Bouley v. Young-Sabourin*.

"This important ruling will ensure that when a woman is victimized by domestic violence, she is not doubly victimized with eviction as a result," said Emily Martin, a staff attorney with the ACLU Women's Rights Project. "For the first time, a court has ruled that under the Fair Housing Act, a woman cannot be thrown out of her home because she was battered."

The defendant in the case agreed to settlement shortly after the federal court issued a first-of-its-kind ruling that discriminating against victims of domestic violence constitutes sex discrimination under the Fair Housing Act. The judge ruled that because women are most often the victims of domestic violence, the protection the Fair Housing Act provides against sex discrimination is applicable in these instances.

The ruling is important because women who experience domestic violence are often threatened with homelessness as a result. If a woman knows that she may be evicted if her landlord learns about the violence in her relationship, she is more likely to keep the abuse secret and less likely to seek help from police or courts, the ACLU said. According to the Department of Justice, women living in rental housing experience intimate partner violence at three times the rate of women who own their homes.

Quinn Bouley, the plaintiff in the case, lived with her husband and children in a small apartment building. When her husband brutally attacked her one night, she managed to call the police and flee the apartment. Her husband was arrested and never returned to their home.

Immediately after the incident, Bouley's landlord sent her a letter of eviction. Bouley sued, claiming that the reason she was evicted was because her reaction to being assaulted did not concur with the landlord's gender stereotypes about how a female victim should act. The court agreed that Bouley had a valid claim of sex discrimination, paving the way for a trial. The case settled closely on the heels of this ruling.

The ACLU maintains that the principle set out in the federal judge's ruling should be applicable to other areas of the law and believes that the federal judge's ruling will help battered women everywhere take the steps they need to keep themselves and their families safe.

"Women who have been abused need to be protected from their abuser, not penalized for surviving the assault," said Lenora Lapidus, Director of the ACLU Women's Rights Project. "If women know that seeking help won't jeopardize their home or their job, they are far better able to escape from violent relationships."

The following is an excerpt from an article written by James Lang. To read the entire article log on to <http://toolkit.endabuse.org/Resources/MenMasc>

Men and Violence

Compared with women, men are overwhelmingly involved in all types of violence. It is mostly men who commit acts of personal violence- against women and girls, as well as towards other men and boys. Men are also most often implicated in other types of “organized” or institutional violence as victims and perpetrators of violence. Around the world, militaries consist of only men or mostly men. Men fight more than women- in wars, in the home, schoolyard, and on the street. Men own guns and weapons more than women, and are imprisoned and murdered more than women. It is also a fact that men control more resources and power than women.

Men and violence seem to go hand in hand. As does violence and power. But that is not to say violence is a natural condition for men, or a natural part of being a man. Nor is it to say that all men are in positions of power. Men are taught to use violence, and violence as a means of problem solving and control is culturally sanctioned, both implicitly and explicitly, in different ways throughout the world.

When we narrow the scope to men’s violence against women and girls we are speaking of gender-based violence. GBV is mostly men’s violence towards women and girls, but it can also be violence toward other men and boys (in the form of bullying, baiting, gay bashing, sexual abuse, etc.). Gender-based violence takes many forms- physical, sexual, psychological, restricted freedoms, coercion and/or threats. GBV occurs in both the public and private spheres and cuts across race, class, caste, region and religions.

One short definition of gender-based violence is any form of violence used to establish, enforce or perpetuate gender inequalities and keep in place gendered orders. In other words, gender based violence is a policing mechanism.

Two reasons the term “gender-based violence” is useful with the above definition is that 1) it helps us ground violence firmly in gender which opens doors to more carefully explore the gender socialization process surrounding men and women, and 2) it also helps one think more about the connections between gender-based violence and other types of violence used as a “policing mechanism” to keep social hierarchies in place and thus perpetuate inequality-such as the violence of racism and the violence of poverty.

Imagine a world in which violence against women and girls was eradicated. How do we get there? We have to work together- men and women- and different groups of women and men. And we have to be aware of our own positions and privilege. It is our job to teach through words, but also through example.

Mission Statement of the Women’s Center of Montgomery County

The Women’s Center of Montgomery County is a volunteer, community organization with a primary focus on freedom from domestic violence and other forms of abuse. Our programs, policies and procedures reflect our strong commitment to empowering women.

continued from Page 1

more flexible to ensure that we can continue to attract and retain volunteers to build on our already-strong pool. I'd like to thank the members of the Counseling Services Committee, led by Marilyn Rosskam, for their dedicated efforts to elevate our training programs and to seek new ways to educate and train our volunteers!

In a similar vein, this committee has also created an assessment tool which was recently sent out to all of our direct service volunteers. The purpose of this exercise – which contains more than 80 questions that we felt all volunteers should know if they are to confidently handle calls to the hotline – is to help us assess whether we are offering enough in-services on appropriate topics to help them feel nurtured and supported in their work. Although the results are anonymous, we truly believe that the results of this assessment will help us build on the training opportunities we are able to offer to our volunteers, thereby enhancing their ability to provide quality service to the community.

Our community education efforts have also been given a creative shot in the arm by our Community Education Coordinator, Janine Kelly and her volunteers. My special favorite is their production of a coloring book, *My Hands Are Not for Hurting*, which helps young children learn non-violent behaviors. In addition to raising awareness about domestic violence, we have taken tremendous strides this year toward providing programs that empower young women and help them develop healthy self-images, which is so much a part of our mission!

And speaking of missions, I am also very pleased with the recent conclusion of the process to adopt a new mission statement for the Center. More than the actual statement which was ultimately adopted, the fact that a membership organization could come together – despite disagreements over content or wording – and overwhelmingly approve this change, along with more than ten changes to our bylaws, is an amazing testament to how far we have come in the past seven years! I want to thank all of you who worked together and worked hard to bring us to this point!

Almost two pages and I still have so much to be proud of this year for the Center! As I said, it has been a very satisfying year! Our Medical Advocacy Projects at both Abington Memorial Hospital and Central Montgomery Medical Center also continue to thrive, as does our new office in Bryn Mawr. One of the things I am most proud of in Bryn Mawr is the recent creation of a support group for the family and friends of domestic violence victims. This is a visionary and much-needed service to offer the community, and it has also proven to be a wonderful way to attract new volunteers and the Center. Thanks to Jamialah Carroll and her very creative volunteers for all that they are doing to strengthen our new office in the community!

I would also like to recognize the efforts of many of our Board members, including our Planning Committee (chaired by Marilyn Rosskam) and our Development Committee (chaired by Thom McGowan). These two committees, in particular, have been a vital source of inspiration for me, with so much creative energy and leadership charging every meeting that it would be impossible not to succeed with their guidance!

Not to neglect our Nominating Committee, chaired by Ann Miller, which has brought to us an interesting, diverse and talented pool of new Board recruits who will be joining the Board in July. And, lest the Special Events Committee feel slighted, I can not thank them enough for their amazing work on this year's Champagne Brunch. In addition to exceeding all of our hopes and goals for revenue and attendance, this committee held an event of which we were most proud. Everyone who attended has been ecstatic and effusive in their praises. You created an event that was elegant and tasteful but, most importantly, warm, social and friendly.

It would be impossible to do justice to all of the hard work performed by our staff and volunteers, but I did want you all to know how much I have appreciated all of the excellence and energy of the past ten months. As we close out this fiscal year on June 30th and enter our 30th anniversary year, I am excited to think what we can achieve with so many wonderful people on board and working to ensure our success!

Upcoming Events: Community Education

ALL VOLUNTEERS:
WELCOMED, NEEDED, AND WANTED!

MY HANDS ARE NOT FOR HURTING:

June 8, 2005 – Mulberry Child Care - Collegeville - 10:00 AM – 11:30 AM Bryn Mawr

July 15, 2005 – Girl Scouts – Bensalem – 12:00 PM – 12:30 PM Bryn Mawr

July 26, 2005 – Girl Scouts of Southeastern PA – Miquon – 1:00 – 1:20 PM and 1:30 – 1:50 PM
Bryn Mawr

August 16, 2005 – Girl Scouts of Southeastern PA – Miquon – 1:00 – 1:20 PM and 1:30 – 1:50 PM
Bryn Mawr

HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP WORKSHOPS:

July 15, 2005 – Girl Scouts – Bensalem – Self Esteem Workshop – 12:30 PM – 1:15 PM Bryn Mawr

July 15, 2005 – Girl Scouts – Bensalem – Healthy Relationships – 1:20 PM – 2:10 PM Bryn Mawr

TABLE EVENTS:

June 16, 2005 – Senate Republican Caucus Services – Red Hill – 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM Pottstown

Women's Center Gala 2005



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

www.wcmontco.org

**1-800-773-
2424**



DATED MATERIAL

**NONPROFIT
ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
JENKINTOWN
PA
PERMIT NO. 5**