Invisible Shackles and Chains

“I would take the children into the bedroom to feed them, so I could take a couple of small bites too.” - Isabella

The physical abuse in a relationship is so easy to see. It was easy to see when Isabella’s abuser choked and punched her when she was pregnant, kicked her and repeatedly left bruises and marks on her body. What is far more difficult to see and just as damaging is the emotional abuse and financial control that is often part of abusive relationships.

Isabella was married to her abuser for more than 7 years and had several children with him. When she first came to Adelante Familia at the House of Ruth Maryland, she came seeking advice and food; her abusive husband would not allow her to eat the food she bought with “his” money. He had disconnected her mobile phone service, making it impossible for her to call 911 for help when he beat her. After talking with a Bilingual Outreach Specialist, Isabella made it clear that she wouldn’t seek a protective order, but left with food, a safety plan, and the knowledge that even if her phone was disconnected, she could still call 911.

Adelante Familia is a program at the House of Ruth Maryland that is focused on providing culturally appropriate services for victims of intimate partner violence in the Spanish speaking community. “We often see women who aren’t yet ready to take action, who are just looking for information,” said Janice Miller, Director of Programs and Clinical Services. “They come to us because they need to start talking about the ‘what-if’ scenarios: What happens if I stay? What happens to the children? What happens if I leave? Our goal is to help women in these situations create a safety plan so they are prepared. At Adelante Familia, women can be seen on a “walk in” basis, making it easy for them to come in, meet with someone who speaks their language and understands their culture. Continued on page 2
This begins to build familiarity and a comfort level, which can be a pathway when she is ready to take action."

Several weeks later, Isabella returned, with fear in her eyes. "I think he’s planning to take my children away," she said. This fear motivated her to seek a protective order. With the support of her Bilingual Outreach Specialist, she received the protective order and later revealed the depths of the financial abuse that she was living with - she wasn’t allowed to use “his” money to buy soap, shampoo, laundry detergent or even diapers. She had done the best she could for nearly a month, trying to keep her children clean using only water. Staff at Adelante Familia responded by providing her with a gift card to a local grocery store so she could purchase some basic necessities for her family.

"Adelante Familia can be a lifeline to someone who is in distress," said Janice. "It can be overwhelming to negotiate the legal system, social services, school issues, child support, etc., when you are struggling to just survive. Adelante Familia can provide victims of intimate partner violence links to critical resources and help them complete paperwork needed to access support. It's a wrap-around service that truly helps the victim get back on her feet."

Isabella’s abuser has now moved out of the home. With the assistance of the staff at Adelante Familia, she is enrolling her children in Head Start, getting a job, and seeking child support from her abuser.

"Isabella’s story is on the way to a happy ending," said Janice. "Without the ability to provide an initial in-person contact, in her language, Isabella might still be living under the control of her abuser."

To learn more about Adelante Familia at the House of Ruth Maryland, contact Janice Miller, Director of Programs and Clinical Services at janice@hruthmd.org.

Letter from Executive Director

Dear Friends,

Traveling to different countries brings a valuable perspective. Unfamiliarity with the native language makes simple things like ordering from a menu or taking public transportation difficult – especially if the people you reach out to for help don’t speak English. With the experience of this frustration and confusion in my own visits overseas, I try to envision myself in the place of our clients who are in situations much like the family in this month’s cover story.

Last year, 12% of the victims the House of Ruth Maryland served were primary Spanish speakers. Imagine the desperation these women feel when the terror at home is compounded by the inability to communicate to seek help. The additional barriers to resources are significant. There may be problems with immigration status. Challenges to finding a job are often insurmountable when the victim doesn’t read or write English. Cultural differences may affect decisions that impact safety for her and her children. She may have misinformation about our laws and our systems.

Assisting clients in overcoming these obstacles requires us, at House of Ruth Maryland, to be able to speak Spanish, to be present in the community, and to provide, or facilitate access to, the services that each person needs in her unique situation. We are growing our bilingual staff, which has included a dedicated bilingual children’s therapist, the only one available in Baltimore City. This position was made possible through the generous support of the Baltimore Women’s Giving Circle and the Knott Foundation. We formed a partnership with St. Mark’s on the Hill Episcopal Church, located in a community with a heavy concentration of Spanish speaking residents. Together, we created a food pantry and safe place for women to drop in and talk with our staff.

We still have a lot to learn. Understanding cultural differences, and the particular needs of victims in the Latina community, is critical to the success of our programs. With the support of Casa de Esperanza, a nationally recognized leader in the work to end intimate partner violence in the Latino community, House of Ruth Maryland is launching the Mujeres Escuchando project to engage the community in our program design. Led by HRM staff and a core group of committed volunteers, local Latinas are being trained to conduct listening sessions with other women in the community. The information from these sessions will be compiled under the guidance of staff from University of Maryland’s School of Social work, who specialize in the mental health needs of Latino immigrants and in cultural competency in research. The findings will be used to develop our programming and ensure that we stay continually responsive to the communities we serve.

Successful outcomes with clients require that we are easily accessible and welcoming, and our services meet the needs of each situation. We are grateful to so many who are making that possible in our Hispanic and Latino communities.

Sandi Timmins
Executive Director

Sandi Timmins
One Great Thing!

Gucci, Prada, St. John, Manolo Blahnik. Are these names that make you want to grab your purse and head for the door? Or do they make you long for the bank account usually needed to nab those names? If you answered “yes” to either of those questions, then you need to be at the One Great Thing Preview Event on October 1 at The Shops at Kenilworth.

The One Great Thing Preview Event is your chance to be among the first to select from the many items that have been donated to our One Great Thing sale this year. This annual event features fur coats, luxury outerwear, designer handbags, boots, shoes, evening gowns, special occasion wear, designer clothing, fine, costume & fashion jewelry, and accessories galore. Visit and “like” our Facebook page at facebook.com/ruths.closet.HRM to see a sampling of what will be available during the sale!

After the ticketed Preview Event on Thursday night, we’ll restock the store and One Great Thing will continue through October 4, no ticket required. Hours for the event are: Thursday 5-9pm; Friday/Saturday 10am-9pm; Sunday 12-5pm.

Tickets for the Preview Event will be on sale beginning September 11 at www.hruth.org, or in-person or by phone, 410-581-9780, at Ruth’s Closet.

For more information about One Great Thing, please contact Terri Wurmser, Director of Development at 410-261-3027 or terri@hruthmd.org.

Now That I Can

While many people only think about their cash donations when it comes time to give to their favorite charities, there are many other ways to contribute financially. “Planned giving is a way to give that most people don’t think about when they focus on their giving strategies,” said Susan Hussey, House of Ruth Maryland Board Member. Planned giving includes gifts such as life insurance policies, estate gifts, and charitable annuities.

“It doesn’t have to be much to make a big difference to an organization like the House of Ruth Maryland,” said Susan. “I have a planned giving strategy that provides for my family and also includes the House of Ruth Maryland. At one point in my life, I wasn’t able to give back and now that I can, I feel like it’s my responsibility to do more and this is one way that I can.”

To learn more about planned giving at the House of Ruth Maryland, please contact Terri Wurmser, Director of Development at 410-261-3027 or terri@hruthmd.org.
Appeals Court Success

While many of our supporters know that the Marjorie Cook Legal Clinic at the House of Ruth Maryland represents hundreds of clients each year, accounting for thousands of hours in the courtroom, what may be less apparent is how much more Legal Clinic attorneys accomplish.

In May of 2015, House of Ruth Maryland Managing Attorneys Mary Pezzulla and Shaoli Sarkar stood before the Maryland Court of Special Appeals, defending our client. The client had obtained a Protective Order and her abuser appealed the order, saying the entire Protective Order statute was unconstitutional, the judge issuing the order was wrong and the gun surrender provision of the Protective Order violated his Second Amendment right to bear arms.

Appellate argument is an important moment for litigating attorneys because if you win, that one case can affect the law for everyone in the State of Maryland. Because these cases have such broad reach, the most concerning element of this appeal was the challenge to the gun surrender provision. In Maryland, when a person has a Protective Order issued against them, they must surrender any firearms and cannot acquire any new firearms. However, in 2008 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that no state could absolutely prohibit an individual from owning or possessing guns in their home. “While Maryland has not weighed in on this issue yet, every federal and state court to have examined the constitutionality of the firearm surrender provision in a protective order have upheld its constitutionality, including the federal court covering Maryland,” said Mary Pezzulla.

In addition to filing written arguments (a “brief”), Shaoli and Mary prepared for the hearing by participating in a moot court where some of Maryland’s best attorneys fired questions at them, challenging them for two hours. This preparation served them well when they appeared before the 3-judge panel to present their arguments.

In July, the Maryland Court of Special Appeals issued its decision, holding that the Circuit Court was correct to issue the Final Protective Order, which is a big win for our client. Because the abuser did not challenge the constitutionality of the Final Protective Order statute in the original case, the Court of Special Appeals declined to rule on the constitutional issues.

To learn more about the Marjorie Cook Legal Clinic at the House of Ruth Maryland, please contact Dorothy Lennig, Director of the Legal Clinic at dlennig@hruthmd.org.

The Mask You Live In

As part of the Man Up initiative and with the support of Merritt Properties and Coach For America, the House of Ruth Maryland recently held a screening of The Mask You Live In, a documentary by Jennifer Siebel Newsom that follows boys and young men as they struggle to stay true to themselves while negotiating America’s narrow definition of masculinity. The film powerfully illustrates how we, as a society, can raise a healthier generation of boys and young men - boys and young men who have the skills to engage in healthy relationships.

The audience of nearly 300 included the Baltimore Ravens rookie class of 2015. Their participation is part of the ongoing community partnership between the Baltimore Ravens and the House of Ruth Maryland. The goal for the rookies: “Get them up to speed — not just on what it is to have a job for the first time hopefully in the National Football League, but to be a future husband, a future father, a better son,” said Harry Swayne, Ravens’ Director of Player Development.

As part of the program, Joe Ehrmann, Executive Director of Coach For America, provided welcoming remarks and spoke of his role in the documentary. After the viewing, Mr. Ehrmann led a brief discussion on how our perceptions of masculinity contribute to intimate partner violence. John Miller, Senior Counselor with House of Ruth Maryland’s Gateway Program for court ordered abusers, shared the vision of the new and growing Man Up Initiative: “To lead the way to challenge the attitudes and beliefs of men so women and children can live free from intimate partner violence.”

Proceeds from the screening of The Mask You Live In support the Man Up Initiative at the House of Ruth Maryland.

To learn more about the Man Up Initiative, please contact Sally Hess at shess@hruthmd.org.
Summer Nights!

On a sultry summer afternoon, the 2015 Crabaret kicked off with skies that showered guests for a short time and then opened up, revealing a perfect summer evening in Baltimore. Held once again at Gertrude’s and in the Baltimore Museum of Art’s sculpture garden, the evening featured music from the Swingin’ Swamis, beverages from The Wine Source and Heavy Seas Brewing Company, a live auction, and a silent auction with items donated from many local businesses!

On behalf of Crabaret Co-Chairs Lauren Kimlel and Kandi Metz, we thank our guests, sponsors, volunteers and all the local businesses who donated to make the evening a success. Over $125,000 was raised to support the programs and services provided to victims of intimate partner violence at the House of Ruth Maryland!

For more information about Crabaret and to find out how you can get involved with next year’s event, please contact Lenora Henry, Associate Director of Development, at 410-554-8448 or lhenry@hruthmd.org.

2015 Upcoming Events:

September 9
The Clearing House
25th Annual Sidewalk Sale

September 9
Ravens 5K and Fun Run

October 1-4
One Great Thing,
The Shops at Kenilworth

October 3
Jessica Meredith Jacobsen 5K

November 3
Man Up!, M&T Bank Stadium

December 5
B-More Bags Trunk Show and Sale, Ruth’s Closet

For more information on our upcoming events, please visit www.hruth.org

In Memory Of

Each year, the House of Ruth Maryland is fortunate to receive gifts made in memory of individuals who are no longer with us. These gifts are a tribute to the person who has passed. They honor the memory of those we love and the things that were most important to them. In this edition of Houseline we recognize individuals who have been honored with a memorial tribute between February 1 and July 31, 2015. We thank the generous donors who make it possible for us to recognize their loved ones.

Steven Michael Ashby
Margaret Baynes
Ann Bland
Ruth O’Donnell Brown
Janet Crabbill
Linda Cymrot
Mary L. Davis
Norma Diederichs
Kisha Frielson
Sheri Fuller
Ruth Kehrli
Mary Kleinman
Linda Mandell
Henry Mayer
Natalie “Toby” Mendeloff
Claire McCardell
Helen Nagel
Marie Pohorence Henry
Salomon
Mona Schneckenburger
Elizabeth Walters

Special Thanks to Gertrude’s and the Baltimore Museum of Art for their support of this event.
The evening will feature a silent auction, live music, heavy hors d’oeuvres and special guests from the Baltimore Ravens!

**Man Up**
Presented by The Baltimore Ravens

**Event Co-Chairs:**
- Jeff Musgrove
- Jeff Gordon
- Peter Korzenewski

**Tickets:** $250
Sponsorships still available!

*For more information about Man Up, please contact Lenora Henry, Associate Director of Development, at lhenry@hruthmd.org or by phone at 410-554-8448.*