Thirty Minutes Of Torture

When Jane Doe went to court on December 19, 2011, she was understandably distraught. The night before, she and her two children had returned home to find their house filled with smoke and her husband unresponsive in a chair. Both the police and fire department responded, and after learning about a past incident of domestic violence and a recent threat to burn the house down, it was suggested she apply for a protective order to have her husband vacate the premises.

After a sleepless night, she heard her name called and walked to the front of the courtroom. Less than six feet away stood her husband. What followed was in the words of one person, “thirty minutes of torture” - a back and forth that could become a primer on how to break the will of a domestic violence victim. But what’s more shocking is the fact that the browbeating didn’t come at the hands of her husband, but instead from the presiding judge.

It started right out of the box.

“M’am, there are shelters. It confounds me that people tell me they fear for their life and then they stay in a situation where they can remove themselves and go to a shelter.”

When Doe explained that she didn’t want her children to spend the holiday in a shelter, the questions changed tact. Listening to the exchange and hearing this woman choke back sobs as she tries to answer the barrage is so painful, it makes you want to look away.  

Continued on page 2
Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Friends,

Someone recently noted that the House of Ruth has become like “Kleenex” – the icon for an entire category: in our case, domestic violence services. It was meant as a compliment and we proudly accept it as such. Yet, while there is a definite sense of pride in knowing your work is considered the gold standard, there’s also a very real concern that the status quo will be accepted as “good enough.”

In our view, we aren’t there yet.

There are still too many judges whose attitudes toward victims are a holdover from another time. There are still too many legislators who don’t understand the dynamics of domestic violence and, therefore, can’t grasp the importance of crafting legislation to end it. And there are still too many victims who, even if they are able to achieve physical safety, have no hope of gaining economic independence.

That’s why we’re determined to keep developing services that can improve outcomes and make our long-term vision a reality – that one day, every woman will be safe in her own home.

You’ll read about some of those new services and programs in this newsletter, including one particularly monumental new undertaking. Recently, we were awarded a grant from The Weinberg Foundation to create a measurable definition of success that can be applied to domestic violence programs across the country and, eventually, the world. In the coming weeks, experts from around the U.S. will meet at the House of Ruth to begin work. It is a daunting task, to say the least, but it’s a project that we believe has the potential to ultimately improve thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of lives.

All of which leads me back to where I started – pride. Pride at the passion exhibited by the people who work here. Pride at the reputation that the House of Ruth garners in this community. Pride when I see victims overcome insurmountable odds in order to provide their children with peaceful, healthy lives. And pride at the commitment of our supporters whose generosity allows us to say we’re not there yet, but we won’t stop until we are.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Sandi Timmins
Executive Director

Sandi Timmins
Playing Catch Up

It took the United States over 200 years to make domestic violence an issue worthy of national attention. Argentina, on the other hand, isn’t willing to wait that long. Having come out from under the rule of a military junta less than 30 years ago, they’re in the process of crafting a judicial system that can better protect victims and hold abusers accountable - and they’re turning to their counterparts in Maryland to help them get there.

This past September, a delegation of judges and attorneys from Buenos Aires and Cordoba made its second trip to Maryland as part of an educational exchange that began in 2010. The purpose of this visit was to learn how domestic violence advocates use civil law to protect victims of domestic violence and to exchange ideas about best practices for providing victim services.

“It’s not surprising that they specifically requested the focus be on domestic violence,” said Judge Nancy Shuger, the trip’s organizer, “Argentineans have a strong sense of family and keeping that family structure healthy and in place is very important to them.”

Over a six-day period, the delegation observed protective order hearings, had one-on-one discussions with Maryland prosecutors and legislators, toured shelters and met with staff of the House of Ruth Maryland to understand the full scope of its services. “They were especially interested in how the House of Ruth works — they don’t have anything like it there. There is only one shelter in the entire country and that’s run by the government,” explained Judge Shuger.

In Argentina, there are no non-profits to take up the baton so coordination between the criminal justice system and private organizations comes as a totally new concept. “We know from experience,” said Judge Shuger, “one can’t succeed without the other.”

Hopefully, dialogue between the two groups will continue. The Argentinean delegation has expressed a strong desire to put a system like Maryland’s in place to address domestic violence and everyone involved wants to see that become a reality. “You have to dream big,” says Judge Shuger. The House of Ruth couldn’t agree more and especially when so many Argentinean women’s lives are at stake.

What Does Success Look Like?

By rough estimates, there are approximately 2,000 emergency domestic violence shelters in the United States, yet there is no such thing as an accepted definition of what constitutes success. Certainly, safety is always the immediate goal, but how does time spent in a domestic violence shelter impact victims’ lives down the road? Does a woman feel safer as a result of her stay? Do her children have a better sense of well being? Did the services at the temporary refuge provide a launch pad for a more self-sufficient, independent life? Those are just a few of the questions that a group of national experts will be coming together with staff from the House of Ruth Maryland to tackle. It’s part of a two-year grant from The Weinberg Foundation to develop a set of outcome measures that can eventually be applied to programs across the country, and possibly one day, the world. A daunting task, but one that the House of Ruth is honored to be a part of — both in the defining stages and as the “laboratory” where the final results will be tested.

2013 EVENTS:

April 18, 2013: Annual Spring Luncheon
May 18, 2013: MAC Half Marathon
July 10, 2013: Crabaret
September 4, 2013: Clearing House Sidewalk Sale
September 10, 2013: Golf & Grapes
No one had to convince Maria that it was time to leave. Ever since her baby daughter had been born, her boyfriend’s controlling behavior had gotten more and more threatening. The tipping point had come the night before when he had flown into such a rage that he struck her while she was holding their infant in her arms. As soon as he stormed out of the house, Maria threw some things in a bag, took her 3-month old daughter and drove to the one friend she knew wouldn’t turn her away. And so began her six-month odyssey as a single mother trying to hold on to her baby and her job while living out of a suitcase, dependent on the kindness of friends and relatives.

It might still be the situation today had Maria not qualified for a pilot program of the House of Ruth Maryland called Safe Homes Strong Communities. Funded by a Federal Recovery Grant in 2009, it was created to provide domestic violence survivors with rental assistance and the transitional services they need to build independent lives in stable, permanent housing. Maria is one of 90 survivors who participated in the House of Ruth’s three-year pilot program and one of the 95% who is now totally self-sufficient and living safely in the community. Although rental assistance is provided for six months, the program is not a hand out – instead it’s a comprehensive package of training, childcare and mentoring services to help victims get their footing and gain economic independence.

The pilot program has been so successful that the House of Ruth was determined to continue it in spite of the original funding ending in June 2012. To that end, they’ve secured new funding and have expanded the program to include victims who aren’t currently employed. “Over the last three years, we learned what worked and what didn’t, so we’ve been able to tailor the program for optimum success,” said Janice Miller, House of Ruth’s Director of Client Services and the person who oversees the program. “For instance, it’s often very difficult for a victim to get the money for a security deposit, let alone cover the other incidental, unexpected costs of moving so we’ve changed the program to provide step down assistance – in other words, give them the help when they need it the most.”

Working in tandem with community partners like Marian House, Johns Hopkins School of Nursing and Maryland New Directions, a job training and career development center, the women learn everything from interview skills to budgeting to how to deal with co-workers on the uncomfortable topic of domestic violence. The goal in this next year is to place an additional 60 women in the program and if the pilot is any indication, that means at least 92% of them will be able to assume and pay their own rent within four to six months.

The program has received national attention. In fact, recently a group in California contracted the House of Ruth to help them set up a similar program. “Their population is quite different from ours, but the model still works,” says Miller. “It doesn’t matter whether a victim is Hispanic or African American, whether they live in a rural community or an urban environment – they all cite the same concerns – housing, childcare and employment. And that’s what this program is designed to address.”

For Maria, it was the leg up she needed. Having been promoted a few months ago, she recently bought her daughter a Hello Kitty suitcase, but is the first to point out - this suitcase is intended solely for mother/daughter vacations.

For more information on House of Ruth’s Safe Homes Strong Communities program, contact Janice Miller, Director of Client Services, by emailing: Janice@hruthmd.org.
Golf & Grapes

This past September a number of women (and a few men) picked up clubs and started swinging on behalf of the House of Ruth Maryland. The event called Golf & Grapes was hosted by the Baltimore chapter of the Women Presidents Organization, and included a golf clinic to introduce new players to the sport, followed by a 9-hole game and a reception afterwards. The event was such a success; the participants asked for an encore so mark your calendar for the 2nd Annual Golf & Grapes to be held September 10, 2013 at Turf Valley Country Club.


Clearing House

On September 5, they came early and they came from neighboring states to get deals on furniture, fine china, art and decorative items. It was the Annual ClearingHouse Sidewalk Sale to benefit the House of Ruth Maryland and this year, it was bigger and better than ever. Truly, this is no ordinary sale – the people at ClearingHouse start collecting for it a year in advance and 100% of the proceeds go directly to the House of Ruth. Judging by the smiles on the shoppers that day, it was a win/win for everyone – people left carrying bags and boxes of newfound treasures, while $15,000 was raised for victims of domestic violence.
We Honor All Those Who Have Embraced Our Mission And Made It Their Own.

The House Of Ruth Maryland deeply appreciates the support of those who share our vision of dignity, respect and safety for women and children. We also appreciate those who donate and choose to remain anonymous. Thank you for your generosity and commitment.

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- The Abell Foundation
- The Kenneth S. Battye Charitable Trust
- Charles Crane Family Foundation, Inc.
- Combined Charity Campaign
- Combined Federal Campaign
- The Fund for Change
- Katzoff Family Group Trust
- Marion I. and Henry J. Knott Foundation, Inc.
- Marjorie Cook Foundation, Inc.
- Mary K. Dubois Charitable Remainder Trust
- Maryland Charity Campaign
- Maryland Legal Services Corporation
- The Osprey Foundation
- The Rouse Company Foundation
- Selma Lee Owrutsky Revocable Trust
- United Way of Central Maryland
- Venable LLP
- Wal-Mart Foundation
- The Harry & Jeanette Weinberg Foundation
- Zanvyl and Isabelle Krieger Fund

#### Protectors ($10,000-$24,999)
- Alexander and Louise Armstrong Foundation
- Alice Shaver Foundation
- Allegis Group Foundation
- The Allstate Foundation
- Alvin and Fanny Blaustein Thalheimer Foundation, Inc.
- ARINC Incorporated
- Baltimore Women’s Giving Circle
- Bijoux
- CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield of MD, Inc.
- Cecilia Young Willard Helping Fund
- Clearing House, Ltd.
- DTS Systems, Inc.
- Eddie’s of Roland Park
- Erickson Living
- Estate of Margaret A. Throne
- Estate of Ruth Fegley
- Greater Kansas City Community Foundation
- The Louis H. Gross Foundation, Inc.
- Helen Clay Frick Foundation
- Helen P. Denit Charitable Trust
- The David and Barbara B. Hirschhorn Foundation, Inc.
- The Letaw Family Foundation, Inc.
- Joseph Meyerhoff Fund, Inc.
- Merritt Properties, LLC
- The P&G Fund of Greater Cincinnati Foundation
- Procter & Gamble Cosmetics
- Sylvan/Laureate Foundation, Inc.
- T. Rowe Price Foundation, Inc.
- United Way of the National Capital Area
- Verizon
- Verizon Wireless
- WPW Foundation

#### Guardians ($5,000-$9,999)
- 2003 JHW IV Charitable Lead Trust
- AEGON/Transamerica Foundation
- Anne-Tisdale Direct
- The Lois & Irving Blum Foundation, Inc.
- Brown Advisory Charitable Foundation, Inc.
- The Bunting Family Foundation
- DLA Piper US LLP
- Fidelity Charitable Gift Fund
- Goldseker Foundation
- H. Chace & Helen S. Davis Fund of BCF
- Helen S. and Merrill L. Bank Foundation, Inc.
- Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine
- JP Morgan
- Kathleen Murphy Gifting Account
- Legal Aid Bureau
- Mano Swartz Furs
- Maryland Athletic Club
- McCormick & Company
- Nextgen Foundation Charitable Foundation Trust
- Nordstrom, Inc.
- The Robinson Foundation
- St. George’s Garden Club
- Think Energy
- United Way
- University of Baltimore Student Bar Association
- WAWA
- Wells Fargo Foundation
- Westview Savings Bank Fund
- Whiteford, Taylor & Preston Charitable Trust

### Protectors ($5,000-$9,999)

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<td>WPG Solutions, INC</td>
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Have Lunch With A Star

 Reserve your table now for the 12th Annual Spring Luncheon to benefit the House of Ruth Maryland, featuring Anna Deavere Smith. While you may know her best from her roles on screen and film, she’ll share with us her life’s passion: the study of who we are as a nation, our community, our character, our diversity. Through characters and personal narration, she’ll tell the story of social justice, including issues of domestic violence, in our nation.

 Thursday, April 18, 2013 • 11AM – 1:45PM
 Baltimore Marriott Waterfront Hotel
 Co-Chairs: Olwen Modell & Amy Newhall
 Silver Sponsor: Eddie’s of Roland Park
 For tickets and sponsorship information, call 410-554-8448.