Ending the Abuse

In February of 2014, when Ray Rice entered an elevator with his then-fiancée, Janay Palmer, they had no idea how that short elevator ride would impact the issue of intimate partner violence in Maryland and in the United States. This time the issue was different. The focus wasn’t on the victim, it was on him and his behavior: why did he do this?

In the world of intimate partner violence, the focus is almost always on the victim. Why does she stay? Why doesn’t she leave? Why does she let him treat her this way? This focus can also be seen in provider communities across the country, where services are provided for victims, but rarely are there programs that are directed to changing the abusers’ behavior.

In the early 1980’s, the House of Ruth Maryland (HRM) began what was then the “Batterers’ Program” and later became the Gateway Project. After all these years, the idea is the same: if we can change his behavior – end the abuse – we protect the current victim from further violence or prevent him from making another partner his victim. “I love working with the abusers because the work is solution-focused”, said Lisa Nitsch, Director of Clinical Services & Education at the House of Ruth Maryland. “I work with the individual who is exclusively capable of ending the abuse.”

And ending the abuse is the goal of the Gateway Project. The Gateway Project is unique in its field because it is a program designed for inner-city men who have been court-ordered to attend. The program is based on a 28-session curriculum, divided into two stages, that address key themes in helping men become better partners, better parents and ultimately, better members of the community. Men who have successfully completed the program are welcomed back as positive role models and mentors for other men. Continued on page 2
The goal of Stage One is for abusers to acknowledge that they themselves are accountable for the abuse ("I beat her up"). The abuser must demonstrate that he recognizes that his behavior is destructive and unacceptable before he can progress to the next stage. In Stage Two, abusers continue to better understand how their choices can hurt or help their intimate partners, their children and ultimately themselves. During this process group facilitators help abusers learn healthy behaviors that are respectful and non-abusive, and encourage them to begin using those behaviors.

On a balmy Wednesday evening, three men ranging in age from their mid-20’s to mid-30’s, made their way down the stairs to the Gateway Project group room. They had already “done their time” and completed the program, but gave up their summer night to come back to mentor other abusers. “This story is just one of the many positive outcomes we’re seeing from the Gateway Project,” said Nitsch. “Men who have completed the program come back and sincerely want to help other men make positive changes in their lives.” The men who come back as mentors aren’t recruited or chosen, they self-select and their return reflects their strong desire to help others in their community. Having a man who has completed the program come back and sincerely want to help other men make positive changes in their lives. The men who come back as mentors aren’t recruited or chosen, they self-select and their return reflects their strong desire to help others in their community. Having a man who has completed the program come back and help others is powerful. It motivates group members to hear from someone they believe has “walked in their shoes”. The return also supports the mentor in his efforts to continue making good choices for his partner and his children. Mentors do an excellent job of reinforcing a critically important message to other men: while the process of change is not easy, it’s truly worth it.

To learn more about our Gateway Project, please contact Lisa Nitsch at lisanitsch@hruthmd.org.

**Letter from Executive Director**

Dear Friends,

**Why does she stay?**

For those of us who work in the field of intimate partner violence, this question almost always comes fast on the heels of sharing any story about a victim who chooses to stay with her abusive partner. “But, if it’s so bad, why would she stay?” the bystander asks. “Why doesn’t she just leave?”

Women being abused are in situations we don’t easily see. The decisions she is faced with have repercussions we seldom consider. She stays because he has completely isolated her from friends and family and she has nowhere to turn. She stays because he drives her to and from work and meets her during her lunch break, leaving her no opportunity to run. She stays because he’s moved her away from all she knows and won’t allow her to work so she has no resources. She stays because everyone in the community knows who he is and no one will believe her if she told them what he does to her. She stays because he’s threatened to kill her if she leaves - or even more terrifying to her, he’s threatened to kill her children.

The correct questions are, Why does he do it? Why does he think it’s okay to control her? Beat her? Choke her? Threaten her? We need to move away from judging her for staying, and begin insisting that he stop the abuse.

Join us in shifting the thinking – and changing behaviors.

For too long, intimate partner violence has been accepted as a women’s issue. In truth, it’s the abuser who must change and men need to be active, encouraging other men, modeling healthy relationships, and getting involved in the conversation. Every mother, sister, daughter, aunt, colleague, neighbor, is a potential victim. We all need to work together to end the violence.

Gentlemen, I encourage you to Man Up! Become part of a community wide campaign to educate, to reinforce messages and to model healthy relationships. You can help us get started:

1. Contact our offices at 410-889-0840 or terri@hruthmd.org and let us know that you’re interested in being on our Men’s Council. This group will be part of developing and implementing a broad outreach designed to make lasting change in how we view and respond to intimate partner violence.

2. Attend our Man Up! event.

3. Speak up. When you hear an insulting comment or see abusive behavior, say out loud that it’s not ok. When someone says, “why does she stay?” ask them “why does he beat her?”

From July of 2012 through June of 2013, 50 women, children and men in Maryland died from intimate partner violence. They didn’t die because she stayed; they died because an abuser wanted the absolute power over her, and took lives to achieve it.

The violence must stop. Now.

Sincerely,

Sandi Timmins
Executive Director
Have You Considered These Easy Ways to Support the House of Ruth Maryland?

Double your shopping pleasure - holiday purchases, greeting cards or anything you do online - by enrolling in a program that donates to the House of Ruth Maryland every time you shop:

- **Amazon Smile**: Will donate .05% of your purchase price to the House of Ruth Maryland. www.smile.amazon.com
- **Cards for Causes**: Will donate 20% of the purchase price of your personalized special occasion cards. www.cardsforcauses.com
- **GoodSearch**: Will donate a penny for every search you do through their Yahoo-based search function. www.goodsearch.com
- **Goodshop**: Will donate based on your purchases from more than 2,800 participating stores (donation varies by store). www.goodshop.com
- **Gooddining**: Will donate a percentage of your dining out dollars at various restaurants nationwide. www.gooddining.com
- **iGive**: Will donate based on your purchases through iGive.com (donation varies by store). www.igive.com

Please make sure to select the House of Ruth Maryland as your charity of choice through these programs!

If you know of other programs you’d like to see included in this list, please contact Cheri Parlaman at cparlaman@hruthmd.org.

Above and Beyond

Victims of intimate partner violence who come to the House of Ruth Maryland typically face many challenges as they try to get out of an abusive relationship. Our staff are here to help. When that help reflects effort that goes above and beyond the norm, we like to recognize it. Wanda Ashley, a Senior Client Services Coordinator at the House of Ruth Maryland, recently used her Russian language skills to help one such client. “I overheard a conversation and I thought the client may have been foreign born. I spoke to her in Russian, asked her name and how long she has been in the US. She smiled, hugged me and laughed, asking how I came to understand her language,” said Wanda.

After a short conversation with the client, Wanda went back to her office and, using Google translate, created a welcome letter, then did some research to find information in Russian about intimate partner violence for the client. Wanda then brought the package back to the client and asked if it was helpful. “With the biggest smile, she said it was accurate and thanked me for making the effort. Her smile is why I love this work, especially for immigrants. Just by looking at her, she was frail, thin and had sad eyes, it was clear she suffered severe trauma and I know I did something small that made her feel more comfortable.”

Staff like Wanda are part of the reason the House of Ruth Maryland is seen as a safe haven for victims. We appreciate the dedication to the victims, above and beyond the call of duty, that is so often demonstrated by staff at the House of Ruth Maryland.
Special Thanks To

• Unregistered Nurse Booking & the organizers of Ladyfest Baltimore, a 2-day festival of female-fronted bands, that raised $2,700 this summer for the House of Ruth Maryland

• Banana Republic and Gap, Inc. employees for volunteering their time to help open the Kidz Clothes Zone in our emergency shelter

• iLife, a group of Faith Christian Fellowship in Owings Mills, for hosting various events and happy hours to help raise money for the House of Ruth Maryland

• Rowhouse Grille in Federal Hill, for hosting VOICE’s August happy hour and donating 20% of the proceeds to the House of Ruth Maryland

• Mary Anne Rishebarger, Demetria Barrett, and Jaslyn & Amanda Kelley, for planting flowers in front of our administrative office building

• Maryland Athletic Club for hosting the annual MAC ½ marathon with proceeds benefiting the House of Ruth Maryland

• The Lions of Glen Burnie, who invited us to a recent meeting to receive a donation

• The Maryland Rebels Motorcycle Club, for hosting a Walk-a-Thon and raising over $3,000 for the House of Ruth Maryland

• Anne Stick, for teaching weekly art classes for the families and children in our emergency shelter, teaching them to screenprint, make paper mache, and paint

• Sharan Lindsay and staff from the YMCA for hosting a “Healthy Living” evening at our emergency shelter, including Zumba and healthy snacks

• Julia Naoui for donating fabulous decorator fabrics from her design business, Home Accents, for B-More Bags

• Ulla Popken, an Internet clothing retailer located in Maryland, for sponsoring Fashion Splash! at Ruth’s Closet, designing and printing promotional materials, and donating new summer and fall apparel for sale at Ruth’s Closet

• Lee Andersen, a clothing designer located in Laurel, Maryland for donating clothing for sale at Ruth’s Closet

• Errikka Ferguson-Jones, owner of Ferguson’s Hats for a lovely donation of beautiful hats to Ruth’s Closet

• Dr. Tanveer Padder for donating a delicious dinner for families in our emergency shelter

How You Can Support House of Ruth Maryland Through Your Workplace Giving Campaign

We ask that you support the House of Ruth Maryland through your workplace campaign. You can talk to your payroll department or if you are in one of the following campaigns, you can use the House of Ruth Maryland numbers listed below:

United Way of Central Maryland: #143
Maryland Charity and Combined Charity Campaigns: #8143
Combined Federal Campaigns: #75849
United Way of the National Capital Area Campaign: #9416

To make your support go even further, contact your Human Resources department to find out if your company provides a matching donation for employee donations or will provide a financial donation to match your volunteer hours.

For more information on matching gifts and workplace giving, please contact the Development Department at 410-554-8448.
Success in the Summertime

After a downpour in the early afternoon of July 10th, the skies cleared in time for more than 500 guests to enjoy a lovely evening at the House of Ruth’s 12th Annual Crabaret fundraiser. Guests were treated to a wonderful array of culinary creations crafted by Chef John Shields and beverages donated by Heavy Seas Brewing Company, and then danced the night away with the Swinging Swamis. New to this year’s event was auctioneer Johnathan Melnick who energized the crowd, raising over $16,000 in the live auction and another $15,000 in the silent auction. Thanks to our generous sponsors, donors and attendees, over $150,000 was raised at Crabaret, all to support programs and services for victims of intimate partner violence.

If you missed this year’s event, stay tuned for information about Crabaret 2015, coming soon!

Thank you again to this year’s sponsors:

**Title Sponsor** The Allstate Foundation

**Platinum Sponsor** Anonymous

**Silver Sponsors** Carmen & Vicki Deyesu • PayPal • Sylvan/Laureate Foundation

**Bronze Sponsors** Joyce Ann Burman & David Greif, II • Sheryl Goldstein & Gregg Bernstein • John and Nancy Erickson • Monica Hausner • Bonnie & Art Serpick • Vision Technology Services • The Warner Companies

**Copper Sponsors** AMH Consulting • Anonymous • Kaci Byers & Kandi Metz • CIGNA • The Clearing House, Ltd. • Continental Title • Beth Goldsmith • Amy & Albert Harris • The Goldsmith Family Foundation, Inc. • Kravet Furniture • Iori k • Mary Miller and Charles Hirsch • Jeff & Holly Musgrove • Amy L. Newhall • Old Bay • Rona Smith & Barbara Gamse • Towson University • Tydings & Rosenberg, LLP • Cory and Stanford Z. Rothschild • Tom & Trish Thibeault • Dawn & Jay Weinstein • Terri G. Wurmsen

**Print Sponsor** Anne-Tisdale Direct

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**Photo Booth Sponsor** Aesthetics by Katzen at Katzen Eye Group

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A Town Hall Meeting

On June 30th, a very special evening was provided for our Prince George’s County women’s groups. The Prince George’s County Chapter of the National Coalition of 100 Black Women sponsored a fabulous dinner followed by a town hall meeting with Angela Alsobrooks, States Attorney for Prince George’s County. Ms. Alsobrooks started the meeting by telling clients about recent legislative changes that will benefit victims of intimate partner violence (IPV). She was also refreshingly honest about ongoing limitations of the court system’s response to the needs of victims of IPV. She then offered to follow up personally with some clients on problems they were experiencing and gave helpful feedback to several others. Ms. Alsobrooks even stayed and took photos with some of our clients and made them feel as though their voices were heard.

We thank States Attorney for Prince George’s County, Angela Alsobrooks for her time. We also want to extend our sincere appreciation to the Prince George’s County Chapter of the National Coalition of 100 Black Women, Inc., led by Outreach Chair Jennifer Dickens. In addition to this special event, they have donated snacks, school supplies, clothing, holiday dinners, gift cards, and more for our families in the past. Their generous support helps the House of Ruth Maryland provide the best service possible to our clients in Prince George’s County.

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2014 Upcoming Events:

**Jessica Meredith Jacobsen Memorial 5K**
September 13

**One Great Thing**
October 23-26

**Adopt A Family Drop Off Dates**
December 10 – 13
One Great Thing 2014

A Fashionable Sale

One Great Thing is a shopping extravaganza October 23-26 at the House of Ruth’s resale boutique, Ruth’s Closet. Featuring great deals on luxury coats & winter accessories, including designer-label handbags, shoes & boots, fine & costume jewelry, hats, scarves & gloves, this event is not to be missed.

For the best selection, purchase a ticket for the Preview Event on October 23, from 5-8 pm. Tickets are $30 each and are available beginning September 23rd at Ruth’s Closet, online at www.hruth.org or by phone at 410-581-9780.

Ruth’s Closet is located at 9131 Reisterstown Road in Owings Mills, in the Valley Village Shopping Center.

Special Thanks to Ruth’s Closet’s Founding Sponsors: Mano Swartz, Bijoux, and Gail Kandel.