This past January, many of the leading names in intimate partner violence research and policy, along with some of the country’s most innovative practitioners traveled to Baltimore to tackle a question that’s been plaguing intimate partner violence service providers for years - what constitutes success? The two-day symposium hosted by the House of Ruth Maryland is part of a Weinberg Foundation grant to develop a set of outcome measures that can eventually be applied to programs across the country, and possibly one day, the world. In this case, the House of Ruth is both the grant recipient and the Petri dish – the place where the outcomes will not only be developed, but also put to the test and evaluated.

The symposium was a first step to understanding what research currently exists and how that knowledge can be applied to a much broader framework. For a service organization like the House of Ruth that is focused daily on individual victims’ lives, it was a luxury to have this group of esteemed experts share new findings and provide feedback on current practices. One new tool that came to light is the Threat Appraisal Scale. Unlike the Lethality Assessment survey, which determines a victim’s safety when they first contact an intimate partner violence program for help, this new tool is a way to track his or her safety over time. To a layperson, that may sound like splitting hairs, but for a victim it could very well mean the difference between life and death. Continued on page 2
Over the course of the next year, the House of Ruth will continue to hone and tailor a set of universal outcomes that can be applied to intimate partner violence programs as comprehensive as the House of Ruth or as small as a two-person shop. Outcomes that will also take into account cultural and geographic differences – a critical necessity when those differences often directly impact services. By year’s end, the outcomes will be put to the test at the House of Ruth Maryland and perhaps for the first time ever, determine not only which interventions are most likely to keep a victim safe initially, but which are most likely to promise long term success.

The House of Ruth Maryland is partnering with the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence and Lityx, LLC, an analytic solutions and research company, to fulfill the grant from the Weinberg Foundation to develop and test the final outcome measures.

Dear Friends,

It’s not surprising that in the process of helping more than 100,000 victims of intimate partner violence over a 36-year period, the House of Ruth Maryland has amassed a huge amount of knowledge on how to keep women and children safe, and how to prepare them for independent, abuse-free lives. However, amassing the knowledge is very different from translating it into a model others can follow.

That endeavor requires careful thought, time, and the help of world-class statisticians and researchers – luxuries not at our disposal… until now.

In this newsletter, you’ll learn about a massive undertaking, underwritten by a grant from the Weinberg Foundation, for the House of Ruth Maryland to create and evaluate the first-ever universal standard of measurement that can be applied to intimate partner violence programs worldwide. It is a project with the potential to ultimately touch countless lives. And the House of Ruth Maryland is proud to be the experiential resource to lead this effort.

To be sure, the House of Ruth Maryland will remain a lifeline for local victims of intimate partner violence – a lifeline offering counseling, shelter, advocacy and legal representation to all those in need. Ours is a business of crisis. There are no “ordinary days” when you’re talking about clients who depend on you for their very lives, but there are “extraordinary opportunities” to take one’s knowledge and experience and apply it to a larger canvas. The Weinberg Foundation grant is such an opportunity.

Right now, all eyes are on Maryland and the organization your generosity has built.

Thank you for your support and your unwavering belief that all women and children have the right to live in peace.

Sincerely,

Sandi Timmins
Executive Director

Calling It Like It Is

In this issue, you may notice that we are using the term “intimate partner violence” instead of “domestic violence.” While the majority of the public still refers to the issue as domestic violence, health care practitioners, law enforcement officials and many in the service field are using the term intimate partner violence to specifically address abusive situations among people who are or were involved in an intimate relationship, regardless of whether or not they are married, engaged or even living together. We believe this distinction is necessary given the number of women who are threatened, stalked and terrorized by current or former intimate partners.
Another Good Year In Annapolis

The 2013 Legislative Session was another successful one for victims of intimate partner violence and the House of Ruth Maryland, with three of our highest priority bills being passed into law. Two of the bills create funding for legal services to the poor (a situation all-too-common for victims of intimate partner violence) and the third will enable the Baltimore City Sheriff’s Department to take over the job of serving protective orders. Given that protective orders in Baltimore City are currently served by the police at a rate of only 30%, this move is one that the House of Ruth has advocated for years. It wouldn’t have happened without the help and support of Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake, the Office of the Sheriff and the Baltimore Police Department. We are also deeply grateful to Lt. Governor Anthony Brown, Senator Brian Frosh, Delegates Kathleen Dumais and Guz Guzzone, and Sean Malone of Harris Jones and Malone for their tireless help in ensuring victims of intimate partner violence have a voice in Maryland.

Cultural Bonding

Recently, 28 people from all walks of life – from university deans and prosecutors to academic officers and a deputy mayor – found themselves together on a flight to Israel. It was part of an eight-day trip, hosted by the Weinberg Foundation, which included many of Baltimore’s most recognizable names, including the House of Ruth Maryland’s Executive Director, Sandi Timmins. The purpose was to introduce local business leaders to Weinberg’s projects in Israel, as well as give the group a sense for the history and culture of the country.

Although intimate partner violence wasn’t on the official agenda, Sandi Timmins was able to spend time with her Israeli counterpart, the Executive Director of Jerusalem’s largest battered women’s shelter. “In spite of our differences in culture and how victims access our services, the problems and challenges we face are the same,” said Timmins. “Abuse is abuse no matter what language you speak.”

When asked to collapse eight days of enlightenment into one take away, Timmins was quick to answer. “So much of what I learned was about the unimaginable adversity the Jewish people have had to face and overcome. It just goes to show if you have the will and the strength to come together as a community, you can push through anything. I believe the same could be true if we all came together against intimate partner violence.”

Golf & Grapes

On September 10, 2013, the Women President’s Organization, Baltimore Chapter, is excited to present the 2nd annual Golf & Grapes event with Title Sponsor Anne-Tisdale Direct. Join executive women at the Turf Valley Resort for a one hour golf clinic beginning at noon, followed by 9 holes and end the day with a Wine & Networking Reception. A great time for networking, making new friends and refining your golf swing so you can make more deals on the course. Can’t make the whole day? Just join us for the Wine & Networking Reception from 5-7. All proceeds benefit the House of Ruth Maryland. For more information or to sponsor this event, contact Jana Stengel at 410-554-8448 or by email at jstengel@hruthmd.org
Ironically, the subject came up when they first started dating. Christine still isn’t sure what prompted her, but she distinctly remembers asking about past drug use and/or issues with depression. His answer was no, he’d never experienced either. Her doubts started to grow soon after they became engaged and he moved into her house. Almost overnight, it seemed the smallest, most inconsequential things would set him off. “If I disagreed with him about anything, even if it was as innocent as saying – Gee, I’ve never heard of that, he would just blow up,” said Christine. “He kept saying he had an anger issue, but his behavior got increasingly bizarre.”

At Christine’s insistence, they went to see a counselor. The counselor wasted no time in recommending her fiancé seek psychiatric help. It was during a follow up visit that she learned he had wrestled with mental health issues his whole life and those “issues” included a conviction for stalking and “throwing a deadly missile.” That discovery made his rage and threats all the more frightening.

This past January, when he left temporarily, for an out-of-town job, Christine made her move. She told him it was over and that’s when the real nightmare began. “He’s made it very clear that he intends to kill me.” After learning that her situation ranked at the top of the lethality assessment scale, Christine sought safety at the House of Ruth Maryland Shelter.

She might still be there today had it not been for her two dogs and one cat. Unable to find anyone to keep them, she’s now gone into hiding at a friend’s place, closer to her old neighborhood, in order to make clandestine visits to her house each day to feed, walk and cuddle her animals.

“I try to go at different times. I park different places. I look at every car on the street in case one of them might be him. I even leave mail in the box so he won’t know I’ve been there. I try to be vigilant, but I can’t really relax or breathe until I’m gone,” she explains.

Lately, the danger has escalated. With a court date looming on his violation of the protective order, Christine knows the chances are good that he’s back in town. For that reason, Christine recently decided to put her pets into the House of Ruth’s Pet Shelter program. Done in partnership with a local rescue, her two dogs and one cat will be housed temporarily at no cost until Christine can make other long term arrangements. The one caveat is that she will not be allowed any contact with them during their stay.

“I hate doing this, but these last few months have been no kind of life for them. I don’t know where or when this is going to end, but I’ve got to do whatever I can to make sure we all come out of it alive.”

The House of Ruth Maryland’s Pet Shelter Program has been in existence for close to eight years. For more information, you can contact Kim Kufel, House of Ruth’s Contact Center Manager by emailing kkufel@hruthmd.org.
Special Thanks To:

- Liz Rhode, Betsy Bracken and the MAC Timonium for hosting Ruth’s Closet’s one day designer fashion show
- BB&T for supporting the House of Ruth Maryland through their Lighthouse Project and sending volunteers to garden, paint and generally spruce up our facilities
- Ulla Popken, Bijoux, Mano Swartz and Gail Kandel for their continuing support of Ruth’s Closet as Founding Sponsors
- Joyce J. Scott, Minàs Gallery, Goya Contemporary and many local artists for hosting and supporting our May Art Auction
- Cupcake Boutique for allowing us to host the 2nd Annual Pretty for Preakness event and to Gia’s Café, The Vintage Baker, and Winter Distributing for providing snacks, cupcakes, and drinks
- Josh Gomby and Harry Connolly for their design and photography skills
- The staff at DSW Shoes for spending an afternoon volunteering with our B-More Bags program
- UMaryland Law School students for hosting an Easter Egg Hunt & Spaghetti dinner for our residents
- BGE & Constellation Energy for performing maintenance & giving our residential facilities a new coat of paint
- The Maryland State Bar Association for cleaning and updating our children’s areas with new furniture
- Karyn Kittrell, Miss Historic Maryland’s Outstanding Teen 2013, for coordinating volunteers and resources to put together backpacks (filled with school supplies & hygiene items) for our children
- Sorso Café in Federal Hill for hosting our Young Professionals Group happy hour
- NAMADU (National Association of Mothers and Daughters United Worldwide) for hosting a “Day of Pampering” for the mothers in our shelter for Mother’s Day
- StoneFace Promotions for hosting an event in support of the House of Ruth Maryland
- PW’s Sports Bar and Grill for hosting a bingo night to support the House of Ruth Maryland

Laughs, Tears, Social Commentary And Lunch

It’s not often that an ordinary person can hold a ballroom spellbound, but that’s exactly what Mary Calderone did when she took the stage at this year’s House of Ruth Maryland Annual Spring Luncheon. Coming on the heels of Lt. Governor Anthony Brown who spoke briefly and eloquently on his own personal experience with intimate partner violence, Mary gave the audience of more than 700 people a glimpse at her life over the last 10 years. That glimpse included 17 moves and 3 jobs in order to escape an ex-husband whose reign of terror stopped only during the time he was behind bars. Mary’s courage and grace under fire earned her a standing ovation and was a prelude to the luncheon’s featured speaker – renowned playwright, actor and professor, Anna Deavere Smith.

For the next hour, Ms. Smith performed excerpts of actual interviews she had conducted with victims around the country. The language was sometimes rough, other times startling as the audience got up close and personal with what it’s like to walk in a victim’s shoes. Interspersed with humor and social commentary, the talk was unlike any previous Spring Luncheon – a fact that was applauded by all who attended. “Over the course of the past 11 years, we’ve had speakers cover everything from politics to the Supreme Court,” explained Sandi Timmins, Executive Director of the House of Ruth Maryland. “But this is the first time that the issue of intimate partner violence has truly been the star of the show.”

The House of Ruth Maryland thanks its sponsors, supporters and guests for making this year’s Annual Spring Luncheon such an overwhelming success. The monies raised go directly into providing safety and services for victims and their children, and the planning for next year’s event is already well underway.

Top 2 photos by Papercamera - Tracey Brown Photography
Bottom 2 photos by Larry Russell, LDR Photo Images, LLC
Join us for smooth jazz with crustacean flair.

11th Annual Crabaret
Thursday, July 11, 2013
6:30 pm – 10 pm
Gertrude’s at the BMA
Chairs: Joyce Ann Burman, Kandi Metz and Kenneth Petty
Price: $90 before July 1, 2013 • $125 after July 1, 2013
For tickets, call 410-554-8448 or visit www.hruth.org

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