“Jason hit me. You have to come get me.”
Twenty-eight year old Meghan placed this phone call to her mother when she could no longer take the beatings. “I can’t imagine the confusion, the questions, and emotions that my parents must have felt during their 45 minute ride to come get me,” said Meghan. For Meghan, that phone call was the first time she acknowledged that her fairytale wedding and marriage had become a nightmare and finally admitted that she needed help.

Meghan’s story started like so many others. They met, fell in love, had a perfect wedding on the white sand beaches of Antigua and began their happily ever after. Then came the hard times, two unexpected family deaths in one weekend and her husband’s job loss and things began to crumble. First it was just unpleasant to be together, then he became more aggressive – yelling and screaming at her – and then he started to physically abuse her.

Meanwhile, Meghan hid the pain from everyone, including her family, and threw herself into her work. She worked longer and harder - climbing the corporate ladder and avoiding her husband - but still hoped to salvage her marriage. Everything changed the day after the worst beating, when he told her he was going to kill her.

With the support of family and friends, Meghan began the process of leaving her husband, obtained a protective order and filed for divorce. Continued on page 2
Like many other victims, her story doesn’t end here. He continued to harass her, violating the protective order and calling her from jail – even though he was in jail for violating the protective order. After several months of his continued abuse, his bail was finally revoked and he was convicted and sentenced. At long last Meghan was free to pick up the pieces of her shattered dreams and begin again.

Meghan was grateful that she escaped and decided that one way to heal was to volunteer at the House of Ruth Maryland. She joined other T. Rowe Price employees to support One Great Thing, an annual sale of designer clothes and accessories donated to Ruth’s Closet, the House of Ruth Maryland’s upscale resale boutique. During her work with One Great Thing, Meghan learned about the House of Ruth Maryland’s Storytelling Project.

The Storytelling Project is part of the Trauma Informed Care Model that informs programs and services for victims of intimate partner violence at the House of Ruth Maryland. In this model, Community Engagement is important component of recovery and a way for survivors to take an active role in improving their situation and that of others.

In the Storytelling Project, survivors increase their community engagement skills by sharing their stories of intimate partner violence through public speaking, advocacy and writing. By developing and sharing their experiences, survivors increase their sense of purpose and control, and in their own way contribute to the larger effort to change the attitudes, behaviors and systems that perpetuate intimate partner violence.

“This project gives survivors an opportunity to tell their story, in a way that will benefit themselves and others,” said Sally Hess, Training Institute Coordinator at the House of Ruth Maryland. “We work with them on putting their thoughts together in a meaningful way and on general public speaking skills so they can effectively share their story.” During the eight week program, participants receive support and personal feedback from coaches, including representatives from a local Toastmasters group. The project concludes with a private, invitation only presentation by survivors and a celebration of their accomplishment.

“For me, sharing my story through the Storytelling Project with a group of others who had been through similar situations was very therapeutic, it was helpful to know that I wasn’t alone,” said Meghan.

When asked what she hoped victims and survivors of intimate partner violence could learn from her story, Meghan said, “The imprint of abuse is very much still there. What I can say is that there is a light at the end. It’s not the same light I imagined when I first met Jason. But this is who I am now and I am OK with that. I learned along the way that I didn’t have to forgo my dreams and ambitions, I just had to recalculate my route.”

For more information about the Storytelling Project at the House of Ruth Maryland, please contact Sally Hess, Training Institute Coordinator, at shess@hruthmd.org. For more information about One Great Thing, please contact Terri Wurmser, Director of Development at terri@hruthmd.org or visit www.hruth.org.

Legislative Accomplishments

The Maryland General Assembly ended in April and the victims of intimate partner violence have many new protections. Two of our high priority bills passed and several other important bills also passed.

The House of Ruth Maryland would like to thank Sean Malone and Lisa Harris Jones from the lobbying firm Harris Jones and Malone for their pro bono lobbying support. This year we worked closely with Beth Doory, Caitlin McDonough, and Ashlie Bagwell, from Harris Jones and Malone, who were extraordinarily helpful with getting our bills passed. We also want to thank the Marjorie Cook Foundation for their continued support of our legislative effort.

What’s new:

1. A judge will now be able to order other additional relief as necessary to protect a person eligible for relief from abuse, in addition to a protective order. This might include ordering the respondent to turn over the victim’s passport, not remove the victim from his health insurance, not allow the respondent to park in front of the victim’s house, or not interfere in her immigration application.

2. People who are in dating relationships and sexual relationships will now be covered under the protective order statute. Prior to passage of this law, they were only covered by peace orders.

3. Victims who are residents of the State of Maryland will now be able to file for a protective order even if the abuse is alleged to have occurred in another state.

4. Conspiracy or solicitation to commit murder will now be included on the list of crimes for which a victim can get a permanent protective order.

For the last several years, the House of Ruth Maryland has fervently opposed legislation that would create a presumption of joint custody on the initial petition for divorce. This legislation was introduced again this year but did not reach the floor for a vote in either chamber.

For more information about our work with the General Assembly, please contact Dorothy Lennig, Director of the Marjorie Cook Legal Clinic at dlennig@hruthmd.org
Letter from Executive Director

Dear Friends,

Hope.

A small word with potential for a big impact. Hope can turn tragedy into triumph, failure into success and misery into well-being.

The recent events in Baltimore make it hard to see hope. The reality of the violence that was broadcast internationally was hard to watch for some, yet merely the continuation of the day-to-day experience of so many who live in the city.

Hope.

We know, through the nearly twenty year history of the Gateway Project, the House of Ruth Maryland’s abuse intervention program, that change is possible. We know that abusers can stop abusing. We know that with the right skills and the right motivation, people who have used violence in relationships can not only change behaviors, but become examples for others.

Hope.

Last summer, we launched a feet-on-the-street grassroots initiative designed to move thinking away from the notion that intimate partner violence is a women’s issue. It’s not. It’s truly a men’s issue. When men hold each other accountable, we see change and hope.

Creating a platform to bring men together to define and lead this work, we invited a cross section of the community to be part of a task force. The eighteen men who agreed to be a part of this work include representatives of the professional world, law enforcement, faith-based communities, men who have completed our Gateway Project, the Baltimore Ravens, men who work at House of Ruth Maryland, youth leaders, men who have lost family members to IPV and men who witnessed IPV as children.

This committed group of men defined their mission as working hands-on in our community to change attitudes and beliefs about what it means to act like a man. Their official declaration:

We lead the way to challenge the attitudes and beliefs of men, so women and children can live free from intimate partner violence. We take personal responsibility to prevent intimate partner violence and take action when it occurs.

These men are leading the way for our community, to create hope for women and children who are abused, hope for a city full of young men who need role models, and hope for a Maryland that is free from intimate partner violence.

If you’d like to join the effort, visit our website for more information and learn how you can Man Up!

Sincerely,

Sandi Timmins
Executive Director

2015 UPCOMING EVENTS

Crabaret
July 9

Clearing House Sidewalk Sale
September 9

Baltimore Ravens 5K
September 9

One Great Thing
October 1-4

Man Up
November 3

Hidden Treasures

On September 9, the Clearing House, Ltd. will be hosting the 25th annual Sidewalk Sale. For nearly fifteen years, the Sidewalk Sale has supported the programs and services at the House of Ruth Maryland, raising over $150,000 for the victims of intimate partner violence. This also marks the 5th year that BB&T is sponsoring the event.

What can you find at the Sidewalk Sale? “A little bit of everything,” said Lisa Hudson, co-owner of the Clearing House. “Each year, the selection is different, as these are items that are donated at our store, but we’ve had everything from furniture to complete china sets to luxury linens.”

The Sidewalk Sale starts at 10 am, there’s always a long line and they only accept cash or check. “Even the year it was pouring down rain, there was still a line,” said Hudson. “It’s a great way for us to support the community and for the community to take advantage of great prices on unique treasures.”

The Clearing House is located in the Padonia Park Shopping Center at 200 W. Padonia Road. To learn more about the Sidewalk Sale, please contact Lenora Henry, Associate Director of Development, at 410-554-8448.
Special Recognition

The hours are long, the work is hard and the stories are often heartbreaking. Yet Wanda Ashley, Client Services Coordinator and a House of Ruth Maryland employee for nearly 20 years, always goes above and beyond for her clients. This year, we’re pleased to let you know that because of her long-time dedication to her clients, Wanda was awarded a 2015 Governor’s Victims Assistance Award. Awarded by the Governor’s Office on Crime Control and Prevention, the award recognizes outstanding work in the area of victim advocacy and services that exceeds expected work responsibilities, and exemplifies a high level of commitment and dedication to the field of victims’ rights and services and to the victims themselves.

Wanda was honored at the Governor’s Victims Assistance Awards Luncheon on May 8. When asked about the award, she deflected the praise and said simply, “It’s great awareness for the work that we do.” We congratulate Wanda and thank her for being an outstanding advocate for the victims of intimate partner violence.

Ruth’s Closet Shines Anew

After over four years in business, it was time for Ruth’s Closet to get a fresh look. A resale boutique featuring women’s clothing and accessories and a social enterprise of the House of Ruth Maryland, Ruth’s Closet generates financial support for the programs and services at the House of Ruth Maryland and is run almost exclusively by volunteers. “We wanted to keep costs down, but still have a remarkable space,” said Jen Talbert, Social Enterprise Manager at House of Ruth Maryland. Thanks to Barbara Zadek, that dream became a reality in March. Barbara contacted some friends and was able to secure donations for carpentry, painting and supplies needed to renovate Ruth’s Closet.

“It’s great to be able to maximize the space at the store through the renovation,” said Talbert. “We especially thank Barbara for leading this effort, along with George Brown and Casey Murray from Greenleaf Construction and Steve Dodge from ProPaint Systems for their contributions to the new look at Ruth’s Closet!”

To learn more about Ruth’s Closet, please contact Jen Talbert, Social Enterprise Manager, at jtalbert@hruthmd.org or contact the store directly at 410-581-9780. Ruth’s Closet is located in the Valley Village Shopping Center at 9131 Reisterstown Road in Owings Mills.
Spring Luncheon Recap

“Your voice shakes when he's in the room and it doesn’t when he's not here. I know there’s something wrong and I’m here to help if you need me.” Those words changed her life forever, said this year’s Spring Luncheon Speaker, Leslie Morgan Steiner. “It took me two more years before I left for good,” she went on to say, but with the support of family and friends she was able to leave an abusive marriage that would have likely ended in her death.

Leslie shared her story of hope with nearly 600 people who joined the House of Ruth Maryland for our 14th Spring Luncheon. Also featured in this year’s program was Biffrey Braxton, who shared his story of witnessing his mother’s abuse at the hands of his father and the lasting impact that has had on his life.

We want to thank the many people who joined us for this year’s luncheon and the many sponsors who made it possible! We hope to see all of you again at Spring Luncheon 2016!

For more information about the 2016 Spring Luncheon, contact Lenora Henry, Associate Director of Development, at 410-554-8448 or lhenry@hruthmd.org.

Open House for Latino Community

In April, Adelante Familia, the House of Ruth Maryland’s Latino services program, hosted an open house for service providers who work with Latino clients in Baltimore City and Baltimore County. Over 25 people attended the open house, representing organizations that focus on healthcare, social services, education and immigration law. As part of the program, staff members gave presentations on the bilingual programs and services at the House of Ruth Maryland that are available to Latino victims of intimate partner violence.

It was a great outreach opportunity and we thank all the organizations that participated.

To learn more about Adelante Familia at the House of Ruth Maryland, please contact Kate Jakuta, Senior Outreach Specialist, at kjakuta@hruthmd.org.
Join us at Crabaret for a sensational summer sunset, live in the BMA’s sculpture garden, to benefit House of Ruth Maryland. Feast on Chef John Shields’ crabby concoctions complimented by a bevy of beer from Heavy Seas, and show off your best dance moves as you get down to the beat of the Swingin’ Swamis.

13th Annual Crabaret
Thursday, July 9, 2015
6:30pm – 10pm • Gertrude’s at the BMA
Chairs: Lauren Kimlel and Kandi Metz
Price: $100 before June 30, 2015 • $125 Starting July 1, 2015
Tickets available at: www.hruth.org

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For more information or to become a sponsor, contact Lenora Henry, Associate Director of Development at 410-554-8448 or lhenry@hruthmd.org.