

HouseLine

House of Ruth Maryland Changing Attitudes. Saving Lives.

March 2016

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HOUSE OF RUTH
MARYLAND



The Clothes On Her Back

"I only wear black clothes because he doesn't want people looking at me," was the answer long-time volunteer Lillian Augustus heard when she asked one woman why she only picked out black clothing for herself in the Clothes Closet in the Emergency Shelter at the House of Ruth Maryland. Over time, Lillian worked with her to pick out some colors and finally convinced her to try on a conservative red blouse. After putting it on, she told Lillian, "this makes me feel good."

When women and children arrive at the Emergency Shelter at the House of Ruth Maryland, they often arrive with very few personal items and sometimes they only have what they are wearing. The Shelter supplies basic toiletries and other necessities, but providing clothing can be difficult because of differences in sizes, styles, comfort, etc. "It was our vision to have a place where women could 'shop' to replace everyday essentials and, instead of us handing them clothes from a stack of donations that may or may not be comfortable for them, we wanted to let them pick out items for themselves," said Terri Wurmser, Director of Development at House of Ruth Maryland, who oversaw the creation of the Clothes Closet.

Control is a common element in abusive relationships. One of the ways many abusers wield this control is to dictate what victims can and can't wear. It can be subtle and often starts as, "I don't want you to wear that because I don't want others to hit on you." This may make the victim feel loved, but can become more and more controlling over time, and the penalty for violating the clothing rules can be severe. One victim lamented, "I used to have beautiful clothes, but he cut them all up and told me I didn't deserve to wear nice things." *Continued on page 2*

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As the idea for the Clothes Closet came to fruition, it was clear that a strong volunteer with an eye for fashion was needed, and Lillian was the perfect fit! Lillian jumped in and with donations of clothing displays, jewelry cases and lots of clothes, shoes and accessories, the vision for the Clothes Closet became a reality. "I love fashion and this gave me an opportunity to take that love and help victims start rebuilding their self-esteem by helping them pick out clothes they love and that look good on them."

The Clothes Closet at the Emergency Shelter at the House of Ruth Maryland is now a peaceful oasis where residents can come and enjoy a safe shopping experience. The Clothes Closet is open to all clients of the House of Ruth Maryland and is staffed entirely by volunteers. All items in the Clothes Closet are donated and residents can "shop" for free. The shop has clothes, shoes, new undergarments, some work uniforms, and accessories such as jewelry and handbags. It has been such a success that plans are in progress for a similar 'shop' for children's items.

Nearly six years later, Lillian is still volunteering at the Clothes Closet where she maintains the shop and oversees the volunteers who work there. She's also worked on programming for residents at the Shelter, including sessions on preparing for a job interview, which featured a short presentation from representatives from Banana Republic followed by "shopping" for an outfit for interviews. Over the recent winter holidays, upon learning that Help Portrait was coming to do makeup and professional portraits for the families, Lillian quickly put together a Fashion Show for residents so they had new outfits to go along with their portraits.

What keeps Lillian coming back? "Knowing I make a difference. One young woman asked me to help her pick out an outfit for a job interview. I helped her pick something out and about a week later she came back and told me she got the job and that she thought she got the job because of the outfit."

If you want to learn more about volunteering or donations at the House of Ruth Maryland, please contact Faith Savill at fsavill@hruthmd.org.

Letter from Executive Director

Dear Friends,

It was over fifteen years ago that I started volunteering at House of Ruth Maryland. I was at a point in my professional and personal life where I was able to make a serious commitment of time to a cause that was very important to me - helping victims of intimate partner violence. I started answering calls on the hotline, one of the hardest jobs at House of Ruth Maryland. As you pick up each call, you need to be ready to talk to a person in crisis, and prepared to hear about the most horrifying situations.

Being a volunteer was important to me then, and now as the Executive Director at House of Ruth Maryland, I understand just how deeply the agency depends on so many people giving so much of themselves to the work that we do. In honor of National Volunteer Appreciation Month in April, this entire edition of Houseline is focused on volunteers. I want you to hear some of their stories, see how much they enrich our services and the difference they make in the lives of the women and children we serve.

Volunteers contribute to almost every program at the House of Ruth Maryland. Members of the St. George's Garden Club bring flowers and plants, weed the gardens and provide quiet sanctuaries on our grounds for the women in our Emergency Shelter. Every year, the University of Maryland College Park Cheerleading Team hosts "Shop for Mom," an evening when children can choose holiday gifts to surprise their mothers with. Sales Associates at Ruth's Closet contribute to making our retail store a success by helping our shoppers find great treasures. Childcare Assistants play, laugh, and comfort the children who are enrolled in our state-licensed childcare program. Behind the scenes, volunteers staff our front desk in the evenings, complete data entry, and will do nearly anything needed for the cause.

I encourage you to visit our website, www.hruth.org, to see if there is a volunteer position that works for you. Or, maybe you're not at a place where you can give of your time right now. You can still volunteer, by sharing our messages on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn and by adding your voice to conversations in our community, making clear that violence against women will never be tolerated.

Last year, 440 volunteers donated over 7,000 hours of service, providing the monetary equivalent of over \$160,000 to the House of Ruth Maryland. It's a truly impressive gift that's personal, and touches so many of the people we serve.

Our heartfelt appreciation goes out to everyone who gives so generously of their time and talent. I encourage you to consider joining us in our mission to provide victims with the services they need to rebuild their lives, while we confront the attitudes, behaviors and systems that perpetuate intimate partner violence. Until we end violence against women, there will always be work to do.

Sincerely,



Sandi Timmins
Executive Director



Sandi Timmins

Annapolis Times

Volunteers for the House of Ruth Maryland aren't limited to just working with donations or clients. For the last several years, House of Ruth Maryland has been fortunate to have the volunteer services of Harris, Jones and Malone to support our lobbying efforts during the Maryland General Assembly. They work with us to help pass legislation that keeps victims in Maryland safe.

This year, we are monitoring the following legislation:

HB 155/SB 278 - Criminal Law – Stalking and Harassment – House of Ruth Maryland worked with the Governor's Family Violence Council, the Maryland State's Attorney Association, the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence, the Sexual Assault Legal Institute, and many others to revise the current stalking statute. This bill would add "serious emotional distress" to the list of acts that would define stalking. Under the current law, the defendant must place the victim in fear of an act of physical abuse to be convicted of stalking. In addition, the bill would remove the word "malicious" from the stalking, harassment, and misuse of electronic mail statutes.

HB 314/SB346 Peace Orders – Grounds for Relief – Currently, harassment is one of the acts of abuse under the peace order. At the time the peace order was drafted, this was the only law referring to harassment. Since then, the legislature has passed several kinds of harassment laws. This bill would amend the peace order to include these laws including telephone misuse, misuse of electronic communication, revenge porn, and various visual surveillance laws.

Family Law – Protective Orders – Notification of Service – Repeal - In 2010, General Assembly passed a law requiring law enforcement to notify the Department of Public Safety within 2 hours after serving an interim or temporary protective order on the respondent. This is really helpful for alerting the victim that the respondent has been served, which can be a very dangerous time. This law has a sunset provision and it will end on December 31, 2016 if we do not remove the sunset. This bill would remove the sunset provision.

HB 167 – Domestic Violence – Person Eligible for Relief – This bill modifies who is a person eligible for relief under the protective order statute to fix a redundant part of the current law.

HB 274 - Family Law - Divorce - Corroboration of Testimony – Under current law, divorcing parties must corroborate their testimony in order for the court to grant their divorce. This bill removes that requirement.

Helping with our legislative agenda is a great way for you to volunteer! Like our Facebook page at facebook.com/houseofruthmaryland for action alerts when legislation is being considered and contact your elected officials. Visit mdelect.net to find contact information for your elected officials.

To learn more about the legislative agenda at House of Ruth Maryland, contact Dorothy Lennig, Director of House of Ruth Maryland's Marjorie Cook Domestic Violence Legal Clinic at dlennig@hruthmd.org.

Special Thanks

- To **Rebecca Rodgers**, owner of Sass Upscale Resale Boutique for collecting donations for Ruth's Closet. Her store has become so popular for donations, donations are dropped off every other week and sometimes every week!
- To **Reverend Rosalyn Crosby**, Pastor and members of Adams Chapel AME Church for coordinating a toiletry drive in October for Domestic Violence Awareness Month and donating baskets and bags of needed items from our wish list.
- To **Joan & Jonathan Schochor** for providing a beautiful floral arrangement for our clients to see as they enter our administrative offices.
- To the **Baltimore City Fire Department**, for their annual holiday programming at our emergency shelter, where children learn about fire safety, receive holiday gifts, and are able to play in the fire truck!
- To the **University of Maryland Cheerleading Team**, who organize "Shop for Mom," each December, helping the children to choose and wrap holiday gifts for their moms!
- To the **Bar Association of Baltimore City Young Lawyers Division**, for including our families in their annual Science Center Holiday Party.
- To **Molly Kastina** and the **JHU University of Finance and Controller's Office** for making sure that every child in our emergency shelter receives toys and gifts every holiday season!
- To the **University of Maryland Athletics staff and student athletes**, for joining us this fall to organize donations and re-mulch our playground areas!
- To **Help Portrait volunteers**, who spend a Saturday in December each year getting our families ready for photos with hair and makeup, and for their professional photographers who provide quality portraits to our families just in time for the holidays each year!
- To **Niles & Barton**, who hosted a Tequila Tasting at Johnny Sanchez's to support the House of Ruth Maryland!
- To **Dr. Cole Reilly and his students in the Education Department at Towson University**, who plan fun and educational activities for our families and children in the emergency shelter each semester.
- To **Vashonda Arrington**, wife of Baltimore Ravens Cornerback Kyle Arrington, for donating new designer handbags and toiletries to the every women in our shelter. The Arrington's are Maryland natives and also asked other Ravens wives to donate as well, making it a very special time for clients.



Andi and Dan Worthington delivering the gifts for their adopted family. This is their first year participating in Adopt a Family!

Starting Over with a Helping Hand

Many of the individuals we serve find themselves “starting over” when they transition out of a violent relationship, and often that means they have very little and may have left everything behind. While our clients deal with these issues every day of the year, it can be especially disheartening around the holidays. Our Adopt a Family program matches families up with community donors, and in 2015 served 397 families – an amazing 1,251 individual wish lists! Donors volunteer to make sure that “their” family gets the holiday gifts they’ve asked for. Donors from the community are families, individuals, businesses, schools, and faith groups from across Maryland (and even as far as Wisconsin!) The families who are adopted are those who are in our emergency shelter, or enrolled in service coordination, counseling, legal assistance, or other service programs at the House of Ruth Maryland.

While they may not sound like typical “volunteers,” our donors and staff are just that – they donate their time and energy to make sure that the families we serve will have a happy holiday season. While the donors buy gifts, staff who work in direct services spend countless hours in the fall helping clients to put together their wish lists. Once the gifts arrive, staff volunteer their time to help get these gifts where they need to go: calling clients for pick-up, transporting gifts to local offices, dropping off to clients’ homes, and making sure that everyone has what they need before the holidays. It is truly a team effort!

The House of Ruth Maryland is lucky to have the volunteer support of Park Moving and Storage each year too. The company donates a 20’ storage container to the Adopt a Family program, making it possible to “adopt” 150 families who receive services from the House of Ruth Maryland in Prince George’s County or Montgomery County. In addition to allowing us to use the container for temporary storage, they also transport it to our offices in Brentwood – our very own Santa’s sleigh!

The hope and encouragement the Adopt a Family program brings to our clients is immeasurable. When our staff deliver the donations to the families we work with, they are able to see firsthand how much these gifts mean to them. One staff person shared that: “Upon receiving her items yesterday, my client tearfully stated that this confirmed for her that there is kindness and compassion still left in the world.”

To learn more about the Adopt A Family program or donation needs throughout the year, contact Faith Savill, Community Relations Specialist, at fsavill@hruthmd.org or visit our website www.hruth.org.

We Remember

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 August 1, 2015 and January 31, 2016. We thank the generous donors who make it possible for us to recognize their loved ones.

Augustine Amorighoye

Beverly and Robert Auslander

John Bodnar

Dixon Evander

Margaret Finn

Catherine Galiszewski

Paul Geisenkotter

Teresa Holtzhauser

Carol Rutherford

Mona Schneckenburger

Catherine Witt

Rose Rita Wurmser

Regrets

In our last edition, we acknowledged many of our generous donors and we regret the following omissions:

Guardians (\$5,000-\$9,999)

Ms. Susan Katzenberg,

and Mentors (\$1,000-\$2,499)

Mr. and Mrs. Robert Schaefer.

We sincerely regret the error and extend our appreciation to all of our donors for their continued support.



A Special Birthday Celebration

As we thank our volunteers and supporters in this edition, we wanted to share this story with you. One of our longtime volunteers, Gwen Gray, talked with many of her friends about House of Ruth Maryland and one of her friends decided to help. The following story was submitted by Ms. Gray's friend and House of Ruth Maryland supporter Tezhra O. Tucker.

"When I was 44, I used to think how blessed I was and how much I had and how so many people helped me when things were rough, so I decided that I wanted to do something to give back. The first thing I thought about was the House of Ruth Maryland and all the things they do for women and children. I decided to throw myself a birthday party because I had never had one as an adult. But I knew it could never be just a plain ole party and that it had to be elegant and in lieu of birthday gifts, I asked guests to bring me a pack of ladies underwear, a pack of sports bras, and a pack of lady footies so that I could donate to the House of Ruth Maryland. I sent out about 50 invitations, and to my surprise, 42 people RSVP'ed, so I purchased 2 laundry bags for the gifts so that when the party was over I would turn them in to the House of Ruth Maryland.

The night of the party came and everything was set but what happened next was crazy, more than 75 people showed for my party! When the night was over, we had five laundry bags full of undergarments. Wow, I could not have asked for a better birthday and we all gave back.

The following year, near Christmas, I started receiving emails and phone calls about my January birthday party. At first I was shocked because I told the first caller that I was not having a birthday party this year and the caller said then what am I to do with the underwear I just got on sale. After I finished laughing, I told the caller, to be on the lookout for their invite to my party. I could hear them smile over the phone.

Each year as my birthday nears, I am presented with ladies undergarments for the House of Ruth Maryland. I am not sure how this became my legacy yet it is a legacy I am extremely proud and hold it near and dear to my heart. My oldest son told me 3 years ago, 'Mommy, don't worry, if anything ever happens to you, we will make sure that the women at the House of Ruth Maryland get their drawers'...lol. It was just that simple and I am proud to be part of and serve my community."

To learn more about how you can get involved at the House of Ruth Maryland, contact Faith Savill, Community Relations Specialist, at volunteers@hruthmd.org.

One Last Time

As December 2015 ended, some of our favorite local retailers began a new adventure! Jones and Jones in the Village of Cross Keys and The Bead at the Shops at Kenilworth both closed their doors but not before making one last impact on the community. Both stores supported the House of Ruth Maryland in the past and they made one last donation – merchandise, retail fixtures and store supplies – to Ruth's Closet.

We can never thank Florence Sokol and Karen Ciurca of Jones & Jones, and Idy Harris and Anne Liner of the Bead enough for leaving their lasting mark on Ruth's Closet.

If you'd like to learn more about Ruth's Closet, the House of Ruth Maryland's resale boutique please contact Jen Talbert at jtalbert@hruthmd.org.

2016 Upcoming Events:

April 20, 2016

Spring Luncheon

June 18, 2016

High Heels for Hope

July 14, 2016

Crabaret

September 7, 2016

Clearing House Sidewalk Sale

Fall 2016

Man Up Fundraiser



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MARYLAND

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If you receive multiple mailings or need to update your address, please call our Development Office at 410-554-8443.

“This is for all the women who were told they were nothing ... don’t let them tear you down or destroy your heart. You are somebody, don’t let them tell you any different”

– Lily Rose Lee fka Michelle Knight



*with Lily Rose Lee,
fka Michelle Knight*



and Melissa Moore

Join us at our **15th Annual Spring Luncheon** for a conversation with Lily Rose Lee, kidnap survivor, and Melissa Moore, daughter of the “Happy Face Killer”

Wednesday, April 20, 2016

11:00 AM – 1:30 PM

Hilton Baltimore Hotel

401 West Pratt Street • Baltimore, MD 21201

Co-Chairs: Vicki Deyesu and Greta Engle

To purchase tickets, contact Lenora Henry, Associate Director of Development, at **lhenry@hruthmd.org** or by phone at **410-554-8448**.

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