

HouseLine

House Of Ruth Maryland Changing Attitudes. Saving Lives.

October 2010

Inside

2 Letter From The Executive Director
Acknowledged?

3 Coincidence?
Special Thanks To Help From Above

4 A Final Showing And A Sad Good Bye
Upcoming Events

5 You Love Me, You Love Me Not
Safe Homes

6 The 8th Annual Crabaret Goes Salsa



Caught On Tape

His voice is one of pure rage. Telling her "she deserved it," his rants are so explosive that, at times, he can hardly speak and instead pants like a crazed animal. "I'll put you in a ****\$^^ rose garden you **\$## You understand that? Because I'm capable of it."

For anyone who has listened to the Mel Gibson tapes on radaronline.com, it's a chilling glimpse into what it's like to walk in a victim's shoes. Although this particular tape features an award-winning actor and director, someone known and once revered by millions – it's a situation that's all too familiar in homes across Maryland. While most victims don't have the opportunity to record the daily horrors they live with, they can relate to the very real fear that comes from being on the receiving end.

"When I heard that tape, it all came back to me. It's been almost 30 years but suddenly I could see myself cowering in a corner just hoping that whatever had set him off would pass and I'd still be alive when it did," explained one former victim.

"If you think it's scary listening to a tape like that, just imagine what it's like to live with that person," said Lisa Nitsch, Program Director for Gateway and the Teen Initiative at the House Of Ruth Maryland. "You don't know from one minute to the next what is going to make them go ballistic, and worst of all, you know it's hopeless to try to reason with them."

In the tapes, Oksana Grigorieva accuses Mel Gibson of hitting her while their baby was in her arms and begs him to consider medication. *Continued on page 2*

Administrative Office:
(410) 889-0840

24-Hour Hotline:
(410) 889-RUTH

Legal Services:
(410) 554-8463
(888) 880-7884

Línea en Español:
(410) 554-8480

Maryland Relay: 711

FAX: (410) 889-9347

Website: www.hruth.org



HOUSE OF RUTH
MARYLAND

Caught On Tape, Continued from page 1.

Replying with a string of unprintable obscenities laced with invectives on why she deserved it, Mel answers, "No one will believe you." "That's the kill shot," explains our survivor, "You are brain-washed into believing that he holds the ultimate power and if you do speak out, no one is going to believe you, or care."

"The stakes almost always ratchet up when a victim leaves – the abuser is losing control and they fight tooth and nail to regain it. Threatening phone calls, texts and shadowing the victim so she knows, she's not safe from him anywhere," says Elyn Loy, Director of Training and Clinical Services at the House Of Ruth Maryland. "Ironically, most savvy abusers know better than to risk having their threats recorded. Instead they'll just call and breathe into the phone. That can send a victim into a tailspin almost as effectively as rants and verbal threats."

The attorneys and counselors at the House Of Ruth Maryland often tell clients – no matter how strong the urge might be to delete those messages, don't do it. Although threatening phone messages, emails and texts alone rarely result in charges being filed, they can provide evidence if the case goes to court. Time will tell whether that happens or not in Mel Gibson's case, but in the meantime, those tapes stand as a very disturbing glimpse into what victims have to live with on a daily basis.

Have you been properly acknowledged?

Many of our supporters have chosen to include the House Of Ruth Maryland in their estate planning, yet because we're not aware of their generosity, we haven't been able to properly acknowledge them. If you've arranged to make a planned gift to the House Of Ruth Maryland, please let Cheri Parlaman know by calling (410) 554-8446 or email cparlaman@hruthmd.org so you can be properly honored and thanked for a very meaningful and appreciated gesture.

Letter from Executive Director

During the week of May 3, 2010, two young women were brutally murdered. One was a 22-year old star athlete, just weeks away from her college graduation. The other was a 26-year old prison worker who was five months pregnant. Although their paths never crossed and their lives were headed in different directions, they shared one very frightening common bond. They each found themselves involved with an abusive, violent man.

In the weeks following the two murders, much was written about who and what was to blame for the tragic and senseless loss of these young lives.

In Yeardley Love's case, many used it as a platform to condemn the culture of sports today, while others said alcohol was at fault. One so-called expert even went so far as to say, on a national morning TV show, that "young girls need to slow down before they get involved with someone" implying that this would have never happened if only the victim had changed her ways.

While the death of Betsy Sue Riggin and her five-month old fetus did not garner as much media coverage, one newspaper did use it as a rallying cry against the criminal justice system after it was revealed that an arrest warrant issued for Miss Riggin's killer had been sent by mail to a wrong mailbox where it languished at the very time the life was being choked out of her.

For those of us who work at the House Of Ruth Maryland, there is one clear lesson to be learned from the week of May 3, 2010. Today, after all the efforts to the contrary, many people, including the media, are still woefully uneducated on the issue of domestic violence. Neither of these young women was killed because of alcohol or drugs. Neither died because of a propensity toward a certain sport, and certainly not because they broke an imaginary timeframe and started dating too soon. Instead, they were victims of men who subscribed to the mindset that says, *I own you, I control you and, if you buck that, you could end up dead.* Whether that's a mindset learned at home, learned on the streets, learned on the field or just gleaned from how society operates is up for debate. What isn't up for debate is that that mindset is still alive and well, while two more young women aren't.

Recently a former Baltimore county prosecutor, now a lobbyist, tried to explain why our legislature was sometimes adverse to passing laws that could better protect victims. His comment, "It's our job to educate them on why this is so important." That is a job that the House Of Ruth Maryland has been doing fulltime for more than 30 years, and we need your help to continue the fight. Please join our mailing list, support our efforts, volunteer your time, and help us put an end to violence against women and the attitudes that perpetuate it before we find ourselves discussing who and what is to blame for the loss of yet another young life.

Sincerely,



Sandi Timmins
Executive Director



Sandi Timmins

Coincidence?

When Bill Mitchell wants to hear his daughter's voice, he does what many fathers do. He reaches for his cell phone. However, the number he dials isn't Kristin's, but instead his voicemail because the messages that reside there are the last ones that he will ever receive from his daughter. In 2005, three weeks after graduating from college, Bill's daughter, Kristin, was brutally murdered by her estranged boyfriend. In the weeks and months following her death, he would often play the message back so he could hear her voice one more time.

He still can't explain why, but three months after her death, he listened to her messages like he had done so many times before. On this particular day, while listening to one of her calls, he punched in the #5 – a code that allows a person to hear the date, the time and the caller's name. Instead of hearing Kristin's voice, he heard a man's voice say, "Kevin Williams." Had it always said that and he just never noticed? The question kept nagging at him as he listened over and over again. A few days later, he summoned up the courage to hit "redial" and this time, left a message of his own. "My name is Bill Mitchell and I found your name on my daughter's phone message. Are you a friend of hers?"

That afternoon, while driving back from the formal arraignment of his daughter's killer, Bill's cell phone rang. He glanced down and saw it was Kristin's number. With his heart in his throat, he answered to discover Kevin Williams on the other end of the line. "He said he didn't know me or Kristin, but felt he needed to return my call. One thing led to another and suddenly the pieces starting falling into place."

Kevin explained he was a jeweler in Baltimore, and then Bill realized why Kevin's name seemed so familiar. It had to do with a locket - a very special locket, recently given to Bill's wife, Michele, by her best friend. It contained photos of Michele and Kristin, and a lock of Kristin's hair. But there was still one question that remained to be answered. How could Kevin Williams be calling from Kristin's phone number?

The answer had to do with the delivery of that locket. When it was completed, Kevin asked his clients if they could meet him at a small shopping center on Route 40. What Kevin hadn't mentioned was that he had recently ended a yearlong relationship, and had been receiving threats from his ex girlfriend. While delivering the locket, he planned to visit the Verizon store and have his cell phone number changed. The number he was given that day, totally by chance, happened to be the one previously owned by Kristin.

Was it a coincidence? Bill Mitchell often wonders whether it was -- or was it Kristin guiding him in ways he never imagined. Today, Kevin has become a key member of the Mitchell family referring to his dear friend as "Brother Bill."

This article was adapted from a first person account by Bill Mitchell, along with his wife, Michele, of the Kristin Mitchell Foundation. The House Of Ruth Maryland has joined forces with the Mitchells to advocate for dating violence education in Maryland schools.

Special Thanks To:

- Verizon for the "Shower for the Shelter" donations
- Jan Kehrl for hosting a "Chari" Tea Party for her special birthday and raising over \$1,000
- Marie Savoie for her efforts in coordinating AAI's Women's Network and their clothing drive to support Ruth's Closet
- Whole Foods Market at Harbor East for making the House Of Ruth Maryland one of their "Nickels for Nonprofits" organizations
- The Johns Hopkins Hospital Pharmacy Department's "Big Give" for selecting us as their sponsored charity
- The Allstate Foundation for their grant supporting Ruth's Closet
- General Manager David Noyes and the Real Maryland FC for helping one child victim have a night out to follow his passion
- Mark & Susan Kline, owners of HiYa Karate Martial Arts and Fitness Center in Mount Airy for offering a free women's self defense class in return for a donation to the House Of Ruth Maryland



Help From Above

For most of us, road works are an unwanted, but necessary inconvenience. However, for a number of victims of domestic violence, they recently created a major safety risk. After bus service was diverted because of road repairs that were scheduled to take up to two years, it meant that House Of Ruth shelter residents and clients faced a walk of over a mile to the next closest stop. While no one debates the need for more walking in our lives, this particular route was questionable for women and children who are in hiding and an unnecessary danger for anyone at night. Thanks to the swift action of **Governor O'Malley** and **Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake**, the decision was reversed and although the road works still continue, the House Of Ruth's bus stop is safely back in operation again.



A Final Showing And A Sad Good Bye

In June of 2008, the House Of Ruth Maryland premiered a photographic exhibit chronicling Maryland's fight against domestic violence entitled, *A Line in the Sand*. Since that time, the exhibit has traveled throughout Maryland and, at each venue, one of the most talked about photographs was a haunting shot of Marie Shifflett and her granddaughter seated next to an empty chair. Their story is one that many longtime House Of Ruth supporters will remember.

In 1989, Marie's daughter, Venus Ann Shifflett, was shot to death by her estranged husband while holding their nine-month old baby in her arms. That horrific murder launched Marie into life as mother, father, and protector of her two young granddaughters. It also began her career as the worst-nightmare-come-true for her daughter's estranged husband and killer. For 21 years, Marie fought to keep him behind bars and this past December had the satisfaction of once again seeing his parole denied. However, in August, Marie lost a different battle, a long and courageous one with cancer.

On October 5, *A Line in the Sand* will open at Sinai Hospital for its final showing – we hope you'll join us in bidding farewell to a powerful exhibit and a woman who not only drew a line in the sand, but dedicated her life to protecting it.

A Line in the Sand will be in the main atrium at Sinai Hospital from October 5 through November 12, 2010. For more information, visit hruth.org.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

For more information on any of these events, please contact Jana Mauro at (410) 554-8448 or email: jmauro@hruthmd.org.

An Evening at Meli Patisserie & Bistro:

Join us Sunday, October 3, for an evening of food, wine and dancing to the Latin beat of the Swinging Swami's. Tickets are \$75 until September 17 (\$90 after that date) and can be ordered by calling 410-554-8443 or online at hruth.org.

Adopt-A-Family Registration Begins:

Tuesday, October 12, 2010

Baltimore Running Festival at M&T

Bank Stadium: The House Of Ruth Maryland will be supporting the Baltimore Running Festival on October 14 & 15 and we need your help! Please volunteer with us to help with packet pick-up and registration. Free, on-site parking will be available.

Advocate Through Art Exhibit:

Enoch Pratt Library will be hosting House Of Ruth's Advocate Through Art Exhibit from September 18 to October 31. The artworks, conceived and made by survivors of abuse address the issues and warning signs connected with abusive relationships. The exhibition highlights what individuals can do to break the cycle of violence by giving voice to what is all-too-often a silenced issue.

Opening Reception of Spruce, A Trunk Show & Sale Of Designer Home

Accessories: Join us on Wednesday, October 27 from 6pm to 9 pm at Kirk Designs, 6 East Eager Street for the first opportunity to purchase from a select line of designer-blessed home accessories. Ten percent of the proceeds from the evening will benefit the House Of Ruth Maryland.



You Love Me, You Love Me Not

"You love me when you let me be myself."

"You love me not when you post lies about me on Facebook."

"You love me when you tell me I'm smart."

"You love me not when you threaten me if you don't get your way."

Those are just a few of the answers that Maryland teens videotaped and submitted to the House Of Ruth's new Teen Web site that launches in October. The site, youlovemeyoulovenot.com, is designed to educate young people on what constitutes a healthy relationship and reduce the risk of finding themselves in an abusive or violent relationship. Funded by a grant from the Verizon Foundation and COVERGIRL, the site provides warning signs, information on protecting oneself online, allows teens to take a "Rate Your Relationship" quiz and provides information on safety planning. All of it served up in a way that speaks to a generation that considers emails too slow and phones with cords something from the dark ages.

Utilizing nearly 15 years experience working directly with young people in both public and private schools, the new site will allow the House Of Ruth to take its message to a larger audience. One in three teens report knowing a friend who has been physically hurt by his or her partner through violent actions including hitting, punching, kicking, slapping and/or choking – yet 80% of parents say it's a subject they've never discussed with their kids. Most schools don't teach it and very few youth serving professionals have been trained on the topic of domestic and dating violence. With our new site and expanded Teen Initiative, the House Of Ruth Maryland hopes to change that phenomenon. We believe the more public the conversation the more chance we have of turning the tide on what has become a very pervasive problem among our young people.

To view the site, visit www.youlovemeyoulovenot.com. If you would like to learn more about the House Of Ruth's Teen Initiative, call Lisa Nitsch at 410-554-8453 or email: lisanitsch@hruthmd.org.

Safe Homes Strong Communities

Linda had been held at knifepoint, choked, bruised and berated. She brought her children to shelter without friends, family, or hope. Her job salary was too low for her to find affordable housing and support her children. Tearfully, she told a staff member that moving back in with her abusive husband was her only choice. Then came worse news: Linda's job performance had suffered so much from the stress that she was about to lose her job.

To help clients like Linda, the House Of Ruth Maryland unveiled a program in fall 2009 called Safe Homes Strong Communities. This program is funded by a two year grant from the Office on Violence Against Women and the Recovery Act, and is designed to help employed victims of domestic violence locate, secure, and maintain transitional-to-permanent housing in the community through case management, financial retention services, resource assistance, and domestic violence services. Partnering with Adelante Familia, Marian House and St. Ambrose Housing Aid Center, the program aims to help 100 victims over a 2-year period relocate and maintain safe and affordable housing, as well as build a community support network and strengthen their overall independence without compromising their employment.

Linda is no longer the defeated woman who came to shelter one year ago. Her case manager helped her find a safe apartment, meet regularly with her financial planner, and enroll herself and her children in counseling. She even went from being threatened with a pink slip to being recognized as "Employee of the Month" for three consecutive months. Most importantly, however, being in a stable living situation has enabled Linda and her children to heal as a family.

For more information about Safe Homes Strong Communities, contact Janet Holmanahart at jholmanahart@hruthmd.org or call (410) 889-0840.



HOUSE OF RUTH
MARYLAND

2201 Argonne Drive, Baltimore, MD 21218

Non-Profit
Organization U.S.
Postage
PAID
Baltimore, MD
Permit No. 7280

Return Service Requested

HouseLine

Director of Development

Cheri Parlaman

Writer

Sande Riesett

Design and Production

Debbie Saag

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

Crabaret Goes Salsa

For the eighth year running, it was hot and steamy for Crabaret, but close to 600 people didn't let the temperatures stop them. They wandered through the BMA's Sculpture Garden and Gertrude's sampling wines and dining on crab cooked every which way, compliments of the Chesapeake's own Chef John Shields. This year's theme, Crabaret with a Side of Salsa, featured Mambo Combo and there was, indeed, a lot of rumbaing going on. Thank you to all our sponsors, attendees and volunteers who helped make this year's event – hot, hot, hot in more ways than one.

