

# HouseLine

House Of Ruth Maryland Changing Attitudes. Saving Lives.

December 2010

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HOUSE OF RUTH  
MARYLAND



## Badge Of Honor

*"When we walked in the apartment, I thought I smelled cigarette smoke. Before I closed the door, I checked each room. It wasn't until I turned the key in the lock that he jumped out of the hallway closet. 'I have your birthday present,' he said, 'I'm going to kill you today.'"*

For months, Ana had known it was coming – she just didn't know where or when. First the bolts on her car tires were loosened. Then there was that strange incident when she was carrying groceries into the apartment and her keys disappeared from the door. Each time she had gone to the police and each time they told her that without proof, nothing could be done. So Ana did what she could, she kept one eye out when she went to school and work, and went to court for yet another protective order.

*"He grabbed a crucifix and beat me over the head. My four-year old daughter was crying – 'Daddy please don't kill my Mommy.' I knew I was going to die, but I couldn't let it happen in front of my kids. I begged him to let me put a DVD on for the girls and then I'd go into the living room and he could finish the job. He agreed, but he laughed, 'That's not going to save your life.'"*

He had become obsessed with Ana when she was only 13 and he was 23. In spite of her family moving to get away from him, he followed and at age 18, Ana gave birth to their first child. That was when the abuse escalated.

*"I was too embarrassed to tell anybody. We were living in Boston and I had one baby and another on the way, and I just thought, this is the way it is going to be."*

A few years prior to the final attack, Ana left him for good. She moved to Maryland and enrolled in classes to earn her GED and worked full-time to support her daughters. She thought the worst was over until recently when he returned to the area and the threats and stalking began. *Continued on page 2*

### **Badge Of Honor, cont. from cover**

*"A neighbor heard me screaming and called the police. They were banging on the door, but he was holding a knife to my throat so I yelled that I was fine and for them to go away. My 4-year old is the one who unlocked the door and all I remember is seeing a policewoman standing there, holding a gun. That's when he tried to slash my throat."*

The policewoman who responded fired three shots that day. Two hit their mark, and the third hit Ana. In spite of a bullet wound and injuries that would later require 100 staples in her head and more than 50 stitches to her hands and face, Ana carried her two daughters downstairs to an uncle's apartment to make sure they were safe before the ambulance took her to the hospital.

Other than the faint scar across her jaw, it's hard to believe that someone so young has lived through so much pain. Ana is a petite, dark-haired bundle of energy, with an easy laugh and a gentle nature. When I ask if the scar is a constant reminder of that night, she is quick to answer. *"When you've lived through something like that and you see the light and you see your family again, a scar is nothing. Someone told me I should consider it my badge of honor. Now, I look in the mirror and see that scar and I know, it's made me stronger."*

Ana's attacker was ultimately convicted of attempted murder and because of the horrific nature of the attack, was sentenced to life in prison. Although she continues to receive veiled threats from his family in Guatemala, Ana has returned to full-time work, part-time school and her primary job of bringing up her two young daughters. The House Of Ruth Maryland's Legal Clinic represents Ana in her custody suit and is awed by her determination to use her voice to warn other young women about the dangers of domestic violence.

## Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Friends,

Gearing up for the holidays takes on a slightly different meaning when you work at the House Of Ruth Maryland. While there are all the joyous aspects, like planning special events for the kids at our shelter or preparing for the week of organized chaos as individuals and businesses deliver gifts for the families they've adopted, there are also some brutal realities to factor in. The holidays bring a certain degree of stress and, in many households across Maryland, that stress manifests itself in violence.

It's easy to forget that, especially when you see the grateful faces of the women who come to collect gifts that strangers' generosity has made possible. We all want to believe that those brightly wrapped packages will mark the start of a kinder, gentler life - one without abuse or fear. The reality is not so simple. These are families living in limbo...some in our shelter, others bunking with family and friends, none knowing what tomorrow will bring. While the spirit of the season and the heartfelt generosity of our donors mark a much-needed taste of normalcy, it is followed by a brutal dose of reality. Will the family have to move again to escape the stalking and threats? Will her job still be there after all the time she's taken off for counseling and court dates? Will the children be forced once again to visit a father who terrifies them?

Victims of domestic violence wrestle with such questions every day. Even more disturbing is the realization that for every family touched by our Adopt-A-Family Program, there will be another family just beginning its descent into life on the run.

Unfortunately, this is the time of year when our hotline is busiest. It's also the critical time each year when we raise the funds necessary to continue our programs and services.

I thank everyone for their generosity this holiday season and ask that you continue to keep our families in your thoughts long after the candles are extinguished and the trees and wreaths come down.

Sincerely,



Sandi Timmins  
Executive Director



Sandi Timmins



## Children As Pawns

She's bright, focused and works hard. Yet, each morning, she wakes up terrified that her teacher will give her homework. If so, it bodes poorly for what that night will bring. She knows the scenario by heart because it's one that's played out the same for 10 of her 16 years, and is now repeating itself with her younger siblings. She will be forced to do her homework with her father standing over her. If she writes something wrong, he will hit or beat her. As she stares at the assignment lying on the desk in front of her, her brain literally freezes from fear and the screaming and blows begin again. Although she's now living safely with her mother, sisters and brother, and away from her father, the panic attacks have not subsided. Something as simple as the onset of mid-term finals or an assignment not totally understood is enough to throw her into a downward spiral. It's as if her father is still standing over her, just waiting to strike. She is one of the uncounted victims of domestic violence and a pawn that is used in courtrooms across Maryland.

As a society, we believe that all children should have a relationship with their father, but at what point do we listen to how the child feels? The young girl mentioned above has court ordered visitation with a father who terrifies her. Yet, when she refuses to go, she's told she has no choice in the matter. When are we going to start listening to our youngest, most vulnerable victims? Do we really think that a man deemed so dangerous that he's forbidden to get within a certain radius of their mother will be a nurturing influence on his children?

"I don't care how young they are, children have real feelings," says Sue Brown, the Children's Therapist at the House Of Ruth Maryland. "A seven-year old may love her Daddy, but she's also seen the pain he can inflict and she's scared. If nothing else, let her work through the trauma before you throw her back in that situation."

As someone who sees day-in, day-out the toll domestic violence takes on children; this is Sue Brown's biggest frustration. "Eighty-five to ninety-five percent of the children I counsel have serious issues with their fathers. I spend most of our sessions helping them find ways to cope with having to visit someone they are deathly afraid of when what they really need is help dealing with the original trauma. The trauma plays out through the physical fear of test taking or the guilt that somehow, this is all their fault."

The problem is not one that can be solved overnight; it runs too deep and with too many layers for an easy fix. Until we, as a society, stop looking at children as property and instead start listening to their needs and feelings, we will continue to see the cycle of violence repeat itself from generation to generation.

## Last Man Standing

They usually appear as short blurbs in the online versions of newspapers. The YWCA has closed its shelter for women and children. Mattie B's shelter is no longer in operation. So and so has scaled back their program, and can no longer offer counseling for victims. Occasionally, one rates an actual mention in the paper itself, such as when the Family Crisis Center in Baltimore County announced they had only raised a third of their operating budget for the year. Since the fall of 2008, their names and locations have changed, but the gist is always the same. Due to reduced or non-existent funding, emergency shelter and services for victims of domestic violence continue to fall like dominos. At the House Of Ruth Maryland, we've seen the fallout and felt, firsthand, the impact. Calls to our hotline have continued to increase and the callers come from every corner of the state. During this season of giving, we ask that you continue to support the House Of Ruth and help us ensure that Maryland's women and children will always have somewhere to turn.



## 1000 Diapers And Counting

Anyone with babies or small children knows that diapers are usually a prominent feature on the weekly shopping list. Now, imagine what that list looks like when you run a shelter that houses 84 women and children at any given time. Well, the numbers are in. During a typical month in our shelter, we use 1,000 diapers, 100 boxes of baby wipes, 60 pairs of underwear, 50 toothbrushes, 48 sets of twin sized sheets, 30 bras, 25 sticks of deodorant, 15 hairbrushes, and one vacuum cleaner. Given those quantities, it's probably no surprise that we rely on donations to help us replenish our stock. If you'd like to donate any of these items or make a monetary donation to support these needs, visit [www.hruth.org](http://www.hruth.org) or call **(410) 889-0840**.

*“Our daughter didn’t know – like a lot of young women and men don’t know – that someone’s controlling behavior can be a crucial warning sign of dangerous, or even fatal, consequences.”*

Bill Mitchell, Kristin Mitchell Foundation

On October 7, Bill and Michele Mitchell took a day off work and put themselves through an emotional rollercoaster to tell the crowd at Sinai Hospital why that day’s press conference was so important. The press conference was called to unveil the final showing of *A Line in the Sand*, the House Of Ruth Maryland’s photographic exhibit, and to announce two new initiatives to educate teens on the dangers of dating violence. One was the launch of a teen website and the other is a partnership with the 200,000-member Alpha Chi Omega Sorority to take the House Of Ruth’s teen curriculum nationwide. “Our daughter, Kristin Mitchell, died at 21 years old when she was murdered by her boyfriend,” explained Mr. Mitchell. “Kristin didn’t know that dating violence isn’t just someone slapping or hitting you – or using abusive language. She didn’t realize that when you feel bothered by someone’s controlling behavior, it could be a warning sign of impending violence.”

Speaking to the group who had gathered that day, the Mitchell’s made it painfully clear why initiatives like this are so necessary. “If Kristin were alive and speaking with you today, she would ask for only one thing,” said Michele Mitchell: “to please do all you can to teach the difference between a healthy and unhealthy dating relationship – so that no other young woman will ever suffer the fate she so needlessly endured.”

## Bienvenido Adelante Familia

On November 1, Adelante Familia, a domestic violence program that offers services to Latino families in Baltimore City and County officially merged with the House Of Ruth Maryland. “Isolation is one tactic that abusers use to control their victims – a tactic made even easier when you’re talking about a community already isolated by linguistics and culture,” said Sandi Timmins, Executive Director of the House Of Ruth Maryland. “By bringing Adelante Familia into the fold of the House Of Ruth Maryland, we can strengthen our ability to reach more victims, provide them with the services they need and get one step closer to our vision that, one day, every woman will be safe in her own home.”

Under the House Of Ruth Maryland, all of the current staff and services of Adelante Familia will continue to operate from their main location on Eastern Avenue in East Baltimore, as well as its satellite sites in Baltimore County.



# No Time To Pack

In order to be accepted into the House Of Ruth Maryland's shelter, a woman must be deemed to be in a "risk level one" situation. Translated, that means she and her children are in imminent danger. For the women who find themselves in that position, there is no time to think, let alone pack. There is just a small window of opportunity that allows them to grab their kids and whatever they can hold in their arms, and run. Once at the shelter, they would be asked to mark their sizes on an index card so that staff could pull clothing for them from storage. Two months ago, that process changed. As part of a continuing effort to improve the shelter experience, the House Of Ruth did away with index cards and unveiled the Clothes Closet, an on-site shop staffed with volunteers where residents can pick out their own clothes, at no cost, and even request help from "personal shoppers."

The Clothes Closet also provides an opportunity for Mwenzake Project volunteers to get to know residents in a more relaxed and casual atmosphere. The Mwenzake Project (pronounced m-when-zah-key) is a volunteer-based program that enriches the shelter environment with opportunities for residents to interact in positive and helpful ways. It's been a win-win for all involved, as evidenced by the emotional goodbye recently shared between Lillian Augustus, a Mwenzake and Clothes Closet volunteer, and a resident we'll call "Jane." A few weeks prior, Lillian helped Jane pick out clothes for a job interview: Jane got the job and was now ready to move out. A chance meeting in the parking lot brought smiles to both women's faces and thank you's all around.

***These projects are just two of the ways that House Of Ruth Maryland volunteers touch the lives of our clients and help them move beyond the trauma in their lives. To find out more about the volunteer opportunities at the House Of Ruth Maryland, contact Kayla Newton by calling (401) 554-8449 or email [knewton@hruthmd.org](mailto:knewton@hruthmd.org).***



HOUSE OF RUTH  
MARYLAND

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# We Honor All Those Who Have Embraced Our Mission And Made It Their Own.

The House Of Ruth Maryland deeply appreciates the support of those who share our vision of dignity, respect and safety for women and children. We also appreciate those who donate and choose to remain anonymous. Thank you for your generosity and commitment.



*These gifts were made from July 1, 2009 through June 30, 2010. If you donate through the United Way and do not see your name listed, we may not have received notification of your gift before this went to print. Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of our list. Please call the Development Office at (410) 554-8443 with any changes, corrections or comments.*

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## **Corporations, Foundations and Community Groups**

### **Champions (\$25,000+)**

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Foundation, Inc.  
Combined Charity Campaign  
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The Associated: Jewish Community  
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The Osprey Foundation of Maryland  
The Rouse Company Foundation  
United Way of Central Maryland  
Verizon Foundation  
The Harry & Jeanette Weinberg  
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### **Protectors (\$10,000-\$24,999)**

Allegis Group, Inc.  
Baltimore Women's Giving  
Circle Fund  
Cecilia Young Willard Helping Fund  
Clearing House, Ltd.  
Constellation Energy  
Estate of Anna Patricia Houston  
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Helen Clay Frick Foundation  
Helen P. Denit Charitable Trust  
JP Morgan  
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Nelson Coleman Jewelers  
T. Rowe Price Foundation, Inc.  
The Allstate Foundation  
The Brenda Brown-Lipitz  
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The David and Barbara B. Hirschhorn  
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Capital Area  
WPW Foundation  
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### **Guardians (\$5,000-\$9,999)**

AEGON/Transamerica Foundation  
Avon Products Foundation, Inc.  
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of MD, Inc.  
COPE Incorporated  
Corporate Office Properties Trust  
Emmanuel Episcopal Church  
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Johns Hopkins Medicine  
Kali's Group, LLC t/a Meli  
Patisserie & Bistro  
The Kresge Foundation  
Law Offices of Peter T. Nicholl  
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Maryland Athletic Club  
McCormick & Company  
Northwest Hospital  
St. John Properties, Inc.  
Sylvan/Laureate Foundation Inc.  
The Lois & Irving Blum  
Foundation, Inc.  
The Columbus Foundation  
The Salmon Foundation  
The Sindler Family Foundation  
The Wine Source

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University of Maryland Baltimore  
Foundation, Inc.  
Venable, Baetjer & Howard  
Charitable Foundation  
Verizon Wireless HopeLine  
Whiteford, Taylor and Preston LLP

**Allies**  
**(\$2,500-\$4,999)**

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Armstrong Foundation  
Bank of America United  
Way Campaign  
Brodsky, Greenblatt, Renehan  
& Pearlstein, Chartered  
Catholic Health Initiatives  
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Clipper City Brewing Company  
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David S. Brown Enterprises, Ltd.  
Dorothy L. & Henry A. Rosenberg, Jr.  
Foundation  
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Wealth Management  
Ellin & Tucker, Chartered  
Ensign C. Markland Kelly People's  
Emergency Fund (through  
Baltimore Community Foundation)  
Father O'Neill Council No. 4011  
Knights of Columbus  
The Frank Family Foundation  
Hecht-Levi Foundation, Inc.  
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The Dickler Family Foundation  
The M&T Charitable Foundation  
Trinity Assembly Of God  
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**Mentors**  
**(\$1,000-\$2,499)**

A.E. Dott & Associates  
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Alpha Natural Resources  
America's Charities  
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Augsburg Lutheran Home  
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Baltimore, Inc.  
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United Way of Tampa Bay  
Wells Fargo Community  
Support Campaign

## **Sustainers (\$500-\$999)**

Adalman-Goodwin Foundation, Inc.  
Allstate Giving Campaign  
Arborvitae Fund  
Baltimore City Lodge No. 57  
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BD  
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Giving, Inc.  
Women's Independence Scholarship  
Program, Inc  
Women of the Bible, Alive!  
Zion Baptist Church, Inc.

## **FY 2010 Government Grantors (direct awards and subcontracts)**

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Baltimore City Police Department  
Maryland Administrative  
Office of the Courts  
Maryland Department of  
Health and Mental Hygiene

Maryland Department of  
Human Resources  
Maryland Governor's Office of  
Crime Control and Prevention  
Maryland Governor's Office  
on Service and Volunteerism  
Maryland State Department  
of Education  
National Institutes of  
Health/ University of Pittsburgh  
National Institutes of  
Justice/ University of Maryland,  
Baltimore County  
U. S. Department of Homeland  
Security/FEMA  
U.S. Department of Housing  
and Urban Development  
U.S Department of Justice,  
Victims of Crime Office  
U.S. Department of Justice,  
Violence Against Women Office

## **A Well Deserved Award**

**On December 6, the Maryland  
Legal Services Corporation  
bestowed its William L. Marbury  
Outstanding Advocate Award to  
Carole J. Alexander, former  
Executive Director of the House  
Of Ruth Maryland. Ms. Alexander  
was the House Of Ruth's longest  
serving director, transforming  
the domestic violence landscape  
with meaningful protections and  
services for victims in Maryland  
and creating the Marjorie Cook  
Legal Clinic at the House Of Ruth  
Maryland, which has been a  
national legal services model.**



HOUSE OF RUTH  
MARYLAND

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# HouseLine

**Development Director**

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.*

## Special Thanks To:

- The Goldseker Foundation for providing a grant to strengthen HRM's electronic data system
- State Highway Administration Stepping into Success Program for their ongoing wish list drive
- And Culture, Siquis and Astrachan Gunst Thomas Rubin for their help in launching the House Of Ruth Maryland's new teen website – YouLoveMeYouLoveMeNot.com
- The Baltimore Choral Arts Society for their Halloween performance with the children of our clients
- Jan Wittenbach, Lisa Hudson and Cara Derr of the Clearing House Ltd for their very successful Sidewalk Sale and to BB&T for sponsoring the Sidewalk Sale through their LightHouse Project program; \$12,000 was raised at the event
- Christopher & Banks at Towson Town Center for collecting donations from the House Of Ruth Maryland wish list
- Ruth Shaw, Jean Pool, J Jill and Carl's Salon for supporting the House Of Ruth Maryland during the Cross Keys Cares event
- Green Spring Station for hosting the B-more Bags Trunk Show during Baltimore Magazine's VIP Shop Crawl on December 2
- Jewish Women International's Library Initiative and the David and Barbara B. Hirschhorn Foundation for creating and funding the JWI Children's Library at the House Of Ruth Maryland
- Yoga Salutes Nonviolence for raising funds for and awareness of domestic violence through their event during Domestic Violence Awareness Month