

HouseLine

House of Ruth Maryland Changing Attitudes. Saving Lives.

Spring 2017

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**House of Ruth
Maryland**



An Entire Community

Inga was born in a country that finds violence against women and girls socially acceptable, particularly in the confines of marriage. A country where forced marriage is quite common and girls as young as 12 can be legally offered into marriage. A country where rape is legal within a marriage. As a young woman Inga escaped her homeland, leaving behind an abusive husband and a culture that devalues women, and found herself in Maryland.

Inga is a survivor, because of her drive and our entire community.

Her journey to the United States was not without incident, as she fell victim to a human trafficking ring. Through working with the Intercultural Counseling Connection, a Baltimore-based referral and training program for refugees, and Asylee Womens Enterprise, a Baltimore-based program that works with refugees to connect to the community, she was able to escape her traffickers and found herself at House of Ruth Maryland seeking help to process the extreme violence she had suffered during her arranged marriage.

Inga's persistence was immediately clear and as she worked with her counselor, they identified that the Safe Homes program at House of Ruth Maryland was a perfect fit. The Safe Homes program works with victims to find safe housing and provides step-down rental assistance to get them established. "Having enough money for a security deposit and first month's rent can be an unreasonable expectation for a victim who is often struggling just to meet the day to day basics of life", said Janice Miller, Director of Programs and Clinical Services at House of Ruth Maryland. **Continued on page 2**

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“They often need a little help to get started and then they are able to maintain their new housing on their own,” she said.

Since 2009, the Safe Homes project at House of Ruth Maryland has helped approximately 350 women find and maintain their own residence in Baltimore. “We’ve been fortunate to establish great relationships with several apartment complexes and landlords throughout Baltimore to help victims start fresh,” said Miller. “The program has been wildly successful and we know that approximately 84% of victims who go through the Safe Homes project maintain their own residence.”

Inga’s perseverance didn’t end with just establishing her own residence. She went to school and graduated with a certification in a professional field and is now employed and enjoying her newfound safety and freedom. She continues to work with her counselor at House of Ruth Maryland and recently was asked if she’d like to participate in the Adopt A Family project around the holidays. Initially, she deferred, wanting someone else to be “adopted”. After many assurances that others would also be adopted, she agreed to participate. What was on Inga’s wishlist? Shoes. She needed comfortable shoes for her new job. A very generous donor made that wish a reality.

“It truly takes our entire community to make these success stories,” said Miller. “Without the help of other community organizations, local businesses, workforce development programs, social groups, donors, volunteers and so many others, these victims may not be able to enjoy the freedom and safety they now have in their lives.”

The client’s name and certain details of her story have been changed to protect her identity. To learn more about the Safe Homes Project, please contact Janice Miller, Director of Clinical Services and Programs at janice@hruthmd.org.

Letter from Executive Director

Dear Friends,

Did you know that on average, a victim will leave her abuser 5-7 times before she leaves for good? The first time she leaves, family and friends are generally relieved, happy for her and ready to be supportive. Then she goes back. The second time, they likely continue to stand by her and are sure this time it’s for real. Then she goes back. The third time, her circle begins to be skeptical of her intent and aren’t as enthusiastic about helping, judging her for what they perceive to be poor decisions and lack of strength. Then she goes back. After the 4th and 5th time what little support she has left has now become frustrated and perhaps angry with her, and they give up trying to do anything else to assist. Victims find themselves alone, and back with their abuser.

Why do women go back? It’s complicated. When a victim is leaving, the abuser rallies all methods of control to prevent it. There could be children involved, financial entanglement or dependency, a cultural belief system around her role, threats to her safety and the safety of her family. Fear is a mighty tool, and an abuser could use her immigration status to terrorize her with stories of what will happen if she seeks help. While victims of intimate partner violence receive special protections under current law to protect them against deportation, language barriers and unfamiliarity with our systems too often keep that information away from the people who desperately need it.

House of Ruth Maryland stands ready to help – whether she’s leaving for the first time or the tenth time. We are there when all other resources have been exhausted, and she has nowhere else to turn. In order to continue this work and further our impact, funding for our services through federal legislation like the Victims of Crime Act and the Violence Against Women Act are critical. Last year, House of Ruth Maryland provided services nearly 3,000 women with the money received directly from these funds. Without those financial sources we would have had to turn all of them away.

As House of Ruth Maryland reaches our 40th year of helping victims of violence rebuild their lives safely and free of fear, we are facing our own anxieties. Some of the protections that are in place today for victims of intimate partner violence are in jeopardy, as are vital financial resources that help to keep her safe. As we have throughout our entire history, we will strongly advocate for continuation of funding and the expansion of programs and services for victims of intimate partner violence. We are making sure our staff members and our communities are educated on immigration policies, what they mean for victims, what their rights are and how they can be protected.

Ultimately, we all play a part in how our future will unfold. We ask for your continued support – through your financial donations, your volunteer work and through being a voice for these issues in your own circles. We can’t let funding for our programs suffer and we can’t let the most vulnerable among us go without the help they need.

To learn more about how you can get involved with House of Ruth Maryland, please visit our website. There is information about advocating for our legislative agenda, volunteer opportunities, several ways to provide financial support, and information about the issue of intimate partner violence and our programs and services. We are grateful for all you do. Together, we help victims of abuse to be safe.

Sincerely,



Sandi Timmins
Executive Director



Sandi Timmins

Changing the Systems

House of Ruth Maryland's mission is, in part, "to end violence against women... by confronting the attitudes, behaviors and systems that perpetuate it". One way we work to confront the systems is through our advocacy work with the Maryland General Assembly. Each year, we suggest legislation, present testimony, and work with state legislators to enact legislation that protects abused women and their children.

This year, we are fortunate to once again have the support of the lobbying firm Harris, Jones and Malone in our legislative efforts.

The following list is legislation that we are supporting this year:

HB 294/SB 224 – Public Safety – Regulated Firearms – Definition of Convicted of a Disqualifying Crime – This bill is a recommendation from the Governor's Family Violence Council workgroup on firearm removal implementation. It would clarify existing law so that a defendant who receives probation before judgment for a domestically related 2nd degree assault would be disqualified from possessing a firearm.

HB 293/SB 274 – Family Law – Divorce – Domestic Violence Order – This bill would repeal a provision of the law that states that a protective order is inadmissible as evidence in a divorce proceeding.

HB 972/SB 811 – Civil Cases – Maryland Legal Services Corporation Fund – Surcharges – Repeal of Termination Date – In 2010, the Maryland General Assembly passed a bill that raised the cost to file a civil case in court with the additional money going to fund legal services for the poor, including the House of Ruth Maryland Legal Clinic. That law had a sunset provision. In 2013, the General Assembly reset the sunset provision for 5 years. This year, we are asking the General Assembly to remove the sunset provision.

HB 1291/SB 856 – Maryland Legal Services Corporation Abandon Property Fund – In addition to the filing fee surcharge described above, MLSC also receives an allotment from Maryland's abandon property fund. This bill requests an increase to \$3 million from this fund.

SB 219 – Criminal Procedure – Pretrial Release – Victim Protection – This bill would create a mechanism for certain victims to be notified when the court sets pre-trial conditions for a defendant. Currently, the court commissioners have no way of notifying the victim of the outcome of the initial appearance hearing. Using this proposed mechanism, victims would receive notification of whether the defendant is held or released and, most importantly, what, if any, special conditions of release exist, including any stay away order. This will allow the victim to take protective measures such as leaving the home, asking someone to stay with them, going to a shelter, etc.

HB 508/SB 368 – Child Custody – Legal Decision Making and Parenting Time – Four years ago, we supported a bill to establish the Commission on Child Custody Decision Making. The bill passed and the Commission studied many custody, visitation and access issues. The Commission ultimately drafted a proposed custody statute to both codify existing case law and suggest changes in how we handle these cases. This bill encompasses those changes.

If you would like up-to-date information on the status of this legislation and to learn about other legislation we're monitoring, visit www.hruth.org/get-involved/2017-legislative-priorities.

If you're interested in joining to fight to enact legislation that protects women or for more information on our legislative agenda, please contact Dorothy Lennig at dlennig@hruthmd.org.



Mary Louise Mussoline and Katy Friedman in August 2013.

A Sad Goodbye

As House of Ruth Maryland nears its 40th year this summer, we lost one of our early pioneers, Mary Louise Mussoline on February 4, 2017. On learning of her death, Marcella Schuyler, the first president of House of Ruth, responded, "She was such a good person. The world has lost a star." Indeed.

Mary Louise contributed significantly to a young House of Ruth in its early years. As Executive Director from 1978 to 1981, she brought development skills, especially as a fundraiser. Moreover, she provided a management structure and maximized the use of volunteers that allowed for continued growth of the agency. Her considerable personal attributes – enthusiasm for the mission, respect for others, and sense of humor – enhanced her leadership. Invariably, House of Ruth Maryland would not be where it is today without her leadership and her dedication to helping victims of intimate partner violence.

We extend our condolences to her family and remain forever grateful for her contribution to House of Ruth Maryland.

Special thanks to Kathleen O'Ferrall Friedman for contributing to this article. To learn more about the history of House of Ruth Maryland, you can purchase a copy of "That It May Be Well With You", which chronicles the early years of House of Ruth Maryland. Contact our Development office at info@hruthmd.org to order your copy.

Special Thanks

- To **Linda Cameron** and **CCS Fundraising** for organizing a donation drive to provide holiday essentials for our clients.
- To **Toni Borcz**, formerly of Saks Jandel, for donating luxury clothing from a private donor to Ruth's Closet.
- To **Linda Goldberg** for upcycling old wool and cashmere sweaters into warm, colorful mittens and old broken jewelry into new fashion jewelry for sale at Ruth's Closet.
- To Barbara Bianco, owner of Lingerie Lingerie in the Shops at Kenilworth, for organizing a bra donation drive and for donating new bras, socks and underwear for our clients.
- To **Richard Swartz**, owner of Mano Swartz Furs, and **Julien Polillo**, Store Manager at Mano Swartz, for encouraging their customers to donate furs to Ruth's Closet, for identifying and appraising used furs for resale at Ruth's Closet, and for selling Ruth's Closet furs at their annual vault sale.
- To **Julie Lair of Lyndon's** in Wichita, KS, for donating over \$20,000 of new clothing and accessories to Ruth's Closet and **Ann Garner** for referring clients such as Julie Lair of Lyndon's to Ruth's Closet for donating their excess end-of-season merchandise.
- To **Tezhra Tucker** for organizing an annual donation drive for her birthday to provide underwear and socks for clients.
- To the **Young Lawyers' Division** of the **Bar Association of Baltimore City**, for inviting our families to their annual Holiday Party at the Maryland Science Center!
- To **Freeland Electric LLC**, for donating TEN fresh turkeys and Thanksgiving baskets to our clients – complete with recipes and all the fixings for a holiday dinner!
- To **Michele's Granola**, for providing our families with Thanksgiving baskets
- To the **Ravens Playmakers**, for hosting a winter-themed arts, crafts, and snacks night at our emergency shelter for children and families.
- To **YOU Salon**, for choosing HRM as the beneficiary of their Merry Mix holiday event – a huge success!
- To **volunteers from Thread**, who spent an evening with our residents, making science experiments and pipe cleaner inventions!
- To the **residents of Village Crossroads**, for choosing HRM as their "Spring Project", collecting clothing, accessories, and other items from our Wish List!
- To the **Baltimore City Fire Department**, for hosting their annual night in the emergency shelter – children learn about fire safety, receive toys for the holiday, and get to experience the fire truck and spray the hose!
- To the **volunteers of Help Portrait**, who donate their talents of makeup, hair, and photography to give our families professional portraits just in time for the holidays!
- To **Lura Fleece** and **Renee Carls**, who organize "Shop for Mom" each year – an evening when the children in our emergency shelter can choose gifts, learn to wrap them, and make cards so that they have something to give to their mothers on Christmas!

In Memory Of:

Each year, 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 and they honor the memory of those we love and the things that were most important to them. We would like to recognize the following individuals who have been honored with a memorial tribute between August 1, 2016 and January 31, 2017. We thank the generous donors who make it possible for us to recognize their loved ones.

Louise Allen Armstrong

Geraldine "Gerry" Aronin

Steve Ashby

Ruth Bissar

Bertha Caplan

Benjamin H. Daniels

Leora Davalos

Claire Dratch

Phyllis Finkel

Marjorie Harvey

Joan Hoblitzell

Kenya Houston

Bertha Kavalsky

Margaret McKnew

Margaret Moss

Maura Murray

Ruth Nowery

Clara Quinn Phillips

Theresa Ronahouse

Sheryl Suissa

Joanna Von Briesen

Julius Zulver

On the Horizon

House of Ruth Maryland's Training Institute was recently awarded more than \$500,000 in grant funding from the Governor's Office of Crime Control & Prevention, to lead projects over the next two years that will offer a comprehensive series of technical assistance opportunities and organize efforts for Maryland intimate partner violence (IPV) service providers to inform advocacy across the state.

House of Ruth Maryland will be partnering with other service providers on three statewide initiatives to strengthen our voice as IPV service providers and to inform state leaders about effective programming and quality training needs so that victims in Maryland receive the best services possible.

Measuring Success

House of Ruth Maryland and the Mid-Shore Council on Family Violence will train 13 comprehensive IPV programs on the Measuring Success Outcomes Model. Providers will be assisted in selecting outcome measurement tools that fit the services they provide, and will receive technical assistance to streamline data collection from victims and create a user friendly reporting process. With access to meaningful data, IPV providers will be able to identify trends in service needs; make programmatic adjustments; and have confidence that those changes will better serve victims of IPV crimes.

Regional Training & Strategic Planning Initiative

House of Ruth Maryland will be training victim advocates from COMAR-regulated service providers through our "Comprehensive Intimate Partner Violence" training and "Working with Perpetrators of Intimate Partner Violence" training in four regions across the state. As part of the training, House of Ruth Maryland Training staff will lead regional teams to create a county-specific strategic action plan, which will be summarized and submitted to the Governor's Office of Crime Control & Prevention.

Pathways to Professional Development

House of Ruth Maryland will conduct a field assessment that includes a literature review, surveys, and interviews with coalition representatives and service providers in Maryland and across the country. These sessions will serve to create a summary of recommended core competencies for service providers and creative strategies for obtaining professional development for advocates will be developed and shared to support victim advocates and their allies in the field. Identifying collective training opportunities and strategies for professional development, as well as training interests of advocates across Maryland, is critical to providing the highest standard of services to victims of intimate partner violence.

To learn more about the Training Institute at House of Ruth Maryland, contact Sean Smith, Training Institute Manager, at ssmith@hruthmd.org.

Regrets:

In our last edition, we acknowledged many of our generous donors and we regret the following omission: **Guardians (\$5,000-\$9,999) Ms. Susan Katzenberg.** Ms. Katzenberg has been a dedicated supporter of House of Ruth Maryland for many years and we truly regret the error. We thank Ms. Katzenberg and our many donors for their dedicated support.

2017 Upcoming Events:

April 27

Spring Luncheon

June 8

Redressed

June 12

BIC Golf Outing

July 13

Crabaret

September 7

Clearing House Sidewalk Sale

Late fall

Man Up

For more information about these events and other upcoming events, visit our Events Calendar: www.hruth.org/event-calendar.

Lunch Time Shopping Spree

Linda Goldberg, Human Resources Director at WPM Real Estate Management and a long-time House of Ruth Maryland supporter came to Ruth's Closet with an idea - could WPM Real Estate Management host a shopping spree for some of their employees? We thought it was a great idea and WPM had an even better idea - they purchased \$25 gift certificates for 60 employees to come have lunch and do a little shopping.

"It was very nice of the company to provide the gift certificates for its employees and it was a great opportunity for us to connect with members of the community who didn't know we were here," said Breanna Gregory, Ruth's Closet Store Manager. "We're excited that WPM is hosting another event in March for another group of employees!"

To learn more about how you can host a shopping spree at Ruth's Closet, please contact Breanna Gregory, Store Manager at Ruth's Closet at 410-581-9780.



**House of Ruth
Maryland**

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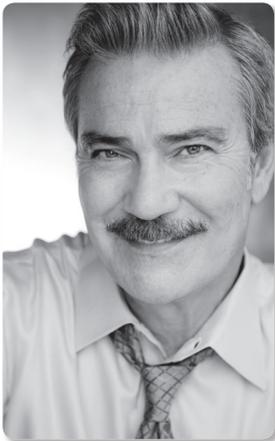
Design and Production

Debbie Saag

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

SAVE THE DATE: APRIL 27, 2017

Annual Spring Luncheon



Victor Rivas Rivers

Join us for **House of Ruth Maryland's 16th Annual Spring Luncheon** featuring special guest Victor Rivas Rivers. A veteran film star, best-selling author, renowned advocate for violence prevention, and the first Cuban-born football player to land a tryout with the Miami Dolphins, Victor Rivas Rivers has achieved extraordinary success in numerous arenas. But given his violent upbringing, few of those achievements were ever likely. If not for a handful of individuals who were willing to take a stand on his behalf, Rivers doubts he would be alive today. Reserve your table or tickets now to hear his compelling story of triumph over trauma.

Thursday, April 27, 2017

11 AM – 1:30 PM • Hilton Baltimore Hotel
401 West Pratt Street • Baltimore, Maryland 21201

Co-Chairs: Vicki Deyesu & Greta Engle

Ticket price \$150 • Table price \$1,500 • Corporate Sponsorships Available

Purchase tickets online today at www.hruth.org/spl or to reserve your table contact Kate Gugerty at 410-554-8448 or email kgugerty@hruthmd.org.

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