Finding Their Voice

Janet* still asks why. Why did he do this to her? Why did the man she was married to try to kill her? She never knew which husband would come home to her; the one who bought her presents and told her he loved her, or the one who called her a bitch and beat her. The latter came home one night, accused her of having an affair with a neighbor then slit her throat with a box cutter.

When retiring Clinical Services Director, Ellyn Loy, was asked about the client who would always be with her, Janet’s story is the one that stuck out the most. “It’s so unfair”, Ellyn said, “It is not okay- all she wanted to know was why he did this to her - she just could not understand why someone she loved would hurt her so much. Now, disabled and with huge medical bills to pay Janet needs to feel that somewhere there is justice and the House of Ruth is helping her to do that.” Ellyn has dedicated the past 25 years of her life to helping victims of intimate partner violence, both at the House of Ruth Maryland and in the community.

“We have to be their voice,” is Ellyn’s takeaway message about the victims and survivors served by the House of Ruth Maryland, “abuse victims feel like they have no voice and are powerless against the abuser and the system.” Ellyn has always believed that HRM “lends” the victim its knowledge and power to make the playing field even, until the client begins to feel her own sense of power.

How important is that voice? Ellyn recalls a woman named Georgia’s*, response in a group counseling session to what seemed like an easy question: what is your favorite ice cream flavor? Georgia responded that she wasn’t sure; her abusive partner liked vanilla ice cream, so that’s all she ever ate. “She had completely lost any sense of self from the complete control and abuse she suffered at his hands”, said Ellyn. “We see that all the time here so we must work to help them find their own voice again.”

When reflecting on the past 25 years, Ellyn noted many changes she’s seen as the intimate partner violence movement continues to evolve so

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that victims do have a voice. “One thing that I’ve seen over the years is the change in support from the community. When I came in 1987, there were very few legal resources and the police weren’t very supportive of what we were doing. Now, we work closely with the police department, and we’ve worked hard to change the laws in Maryland to provide better protection for women.”

In addition to these systemic changes, Ellyn also noted the many programs and services that she has had a major part in creating to give victims their voice. Ellyn started a Teen Dating program at the House of Ruth, long before there was widespread awareness that teen dating violence was an issue. She spearheaded a project to work with victims who were disabled, so they were able to receive services. Most recently, she and her staff redesigned HRM’s clinical services to build a comprehensive trauma-focused program that provides services to the family as a unit and individually. She is especially proud of the work of “Strengthening Family Coping Resources” Program which brings moms and their kids together for 15 weeks in a structured dinner program designed to increase family communication and coping strategies and help families heal from trauma.

When asked how she would define a social movement, Ellyn said simply, “It’s about changing the world.” Whether it was bringing the voice of the victim to every meeting, making sure that needed services were available to victims or ensuring that each client receives the best service possible, Ellyn changed the world for thousands of women and children in Maryland. Now that she’s retired, Ellyn plans to continue her work with victims and survivors of intimate partner violence part-time, and enjoy more spare time with her grandchildren, husband, and city life. We at the House of Ruth Maryland will always appreciate her 25 years of fierce advocacy for victims.

*names have been changed to protect client confidentiality

Letter From Executive Director

Dear Friends,

As supporters of the House of Ruth Maryland, most of you know the appalling statistic that 1 in 4 women will be a victim of intimate partner violence at some point in her life. What’s equally frightening is that for those victims who are employed, almost a third will lose their job because of issues related to that violence. The loss of her job signals the loss of possible financial stability, the loss of the potential to support herself if she leaves her abuser, and ultimately the loss of her freedom.

How do we address this sensitive issue? Through the creation of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) in the Workplace Policies, employers have a protocol, a practice defined for dealing with situations where an abusive home affects the victim at work, and can both protect their employee’s chance for freedom by maintaining her employment, and also protect the safety of the workplace.

Recognizing that action begins with awareness, the House of Ruth Maryland and Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake will be co-hosting an Intimate Partner Violence in the Workplace Day on October 8, 2013. In the morning, we’re bringing Baltimore area business leaders together at City Hall to join Mayor Rawlings-Blake in a conversation about IPV in the Workplace. Maya Raghu, a leading attorney specializing in employment law and liability related to intimate partner violence, will share her knowledge of what employers need to do to meet the requirements of laws and regulations that speak to the issue. We’ll hear from local executives who have come face to face with IPV in the workplace and dealt with it head-on, creating a supportive and secure workplace for both the employee and their company.

Human Resource professionals are invited to attend a workshop in the afternoon designed to give them the tools they need to put policies in place in their business.

Maryland’s business leaders have a responsibility to take a stand against intimate partner violence. Companies throughout the state are encouraged to join us in our commitment to support victims and to protect the safety of our workplaces. To be part of the October 8th event, contact Cheri Parlaman at 410-554-8446.

Sandi Timmins
Executive Director
Support the House of Ruth Maryland Through Your Workplace Giving Campaign

It’s that time of year again and we ask that you consider making a donation to the House of Ruth Maryland through your workplace giving campaign. You can talk to your payroll department or if you are in one of the following campaigns, you can use the House of Ruth Maryland numbers listed below:

- United Way of Central Maryland: #143
- Maryland Charity & Combined Charity Campaign: #8143
- Combined Federal Campaign: #75849

To make your support go even farther, contact your Human Resources department to find out if your company provides a matching donation for employee donations or will provide a financial donation to match your volunteer hours.

For more information on matching gifts and workplace giving, please contact the Development Department at 410-554-8443.

One Great Thing 2013

Born of the idea that everyone has “one great thing” that they no longer need hanging in their closet, tucked in a chest of drawers or resting in a jewelry box, the House of Ruth Maryland’s 3rd Annual One Great Thing 2013 sales event at Ruth’s Closet is a “must attend” shopping extravaganza for women, featuring luxury coats and winter accessories at unbelievable prices donated by local boutiques and countless well-dressed ladies, many sporting designer labels! One Great Thing will raise funds for House of Ruth Maryland’s programs and services for victims of intimate partner violence.

Event Co-Chairs Betsy Nelson and Debbie Swartz invite you to join them on Thursday October 10 at the Preview Sale from 5:30-8:30 pm. Tickets are $20 each (available at Ruth’s Closet or online at www.hruth.org). Attendance will be limited. One Great Thing 2013 will continue through October 13, no ticket required.

To see some of the amazing items that will be available or to learn more, “like” Ruth’s Closet on Facebook. If you would like to donate to One Great Thing 2013, please contact Robin Blaustein at Ruth’s Closet (410-581-9780) or by e-mail to rblaustein@hruthmd.org.

Special Thanks To:

- Jessica Nadeau and Mondo Vino for their support of the House of Ruth Maryland
- Columbia Wegman’s for donating new toiletries for our clients to use
- Clearinghouse Ltd for supporting the House of Ruth Maryland with their annual sidewalk sale
- Baltimore’s Classic Five for hosting the 3rd Annual High Heels for Hope event, and to DSW Shoe Warehouse and Maroon PR for sponsoring and WJZ’s Jessica Kartalija for emceeing the event and raising almost $1,000 for the House of Ruth Maryland
- The Shimmy Mob for raising over $1400 through their fun events and fundraisers
- Maryland Athletic Club for hosting their annual half marathon to support the House of Ruth and for graciously providing space in their Timonium location for a special Ruth’s Closet sale
- Club Hippo for donating the proceeds from Wednesday night Bingo
- BB&T, for sending 25 volunteers to give our dining hall a makeover and complete heavy landscaping work
- St. Peter’s Lutheran Church & Christian Day School, for hosting a Pandora & Coach Bag Bingo to benefit the House of Ruth Maryland
- Tri-State Civil Liberties Association for inviting us to speak at their annual conference
- Artscentric for donating a portion of the proceeds of their production of “For Colored Girls...” to the House of Ruth Maryland
All Eyes On Client Safety

Earlier this year, Amy*, a shelter resident as attacked as she was returning to our shelter facility. Her estranged, abusive husband had followed her from work. As soon as she exited her car, he was right behind her, seemingly out of nowhere. She was taken by surprise, and as she desperately ran for the shelter’s front door, he attacked her.

As this incident demonstrates, security in and around the House of Ruth Maryland (HRM) shelter is vital for the protection of residents and staff. In 2006, we turned to Techmark Corporation, a local Baltimore company experienced in designing and building life safety systems to address the safety and security of our clients and staff.

The final design developed and installed by Techmark included 22 video surveillance cameras controlled and managed by a video management system. In addition to the camera control, Techmark was also able to integrate the software with the facility’s electronic door locks for a total comprehensive security solution.

The system’s primary purpose is to enhance the security and safety of the residents, staff and premises, and its value was made abundantly clear when Amy’s attack occurred. Staff saw what was happening and was able to secure her safety and prevent her estranged husband from coming in. Ultimately, the recorded video of the assault was used in prosecuting and convicting the abuser.

Business partners Terri Annis and Rebecca Heaton are owners of Techmark Corporation, the video management software at the heart of the system which provides HRM staff with complete situational awareness both inside and outside the facility. According to Ms. Annis, “The system provides complete control of every camera and also advanced motion detection so if an operator looks away momentarily and then looks back at the monitor, they immediately know if there was motion or whether someone was at the door in view of the camera.”

The gravity of the incident brought into focus the importance of the video surveillance system in keeping the residents and staff safe. Techmark has since installed six additional cameras, and collaborated with ONSSI to provide a complementary upgrade to House of Ruth Maryland’s system platform. As Ms. Annis says, “Knowing what House of Ruth Maryland manages to do and how far they will go to protect residents and staff, making sure they have the latest and best technology is the least we can do.”

*name has been changed to protect client confidentiality.

The House of Ruth Maryland relies on donations from companies to keep our costs low and the needs of our clients met. If your company is interested in donating services or products, please contact (410) 889-0840.
Extending Our Reach

In November of 2009, the House of Ruth Maryland began piloting a Lethality Assessment Program in the Northern and Northeastern districts. With this program in place, the police assess the risk for every victim of intimate partner violence where a crime has been committed, and the House of Ruth will try up to four times to get in contact with them after receiving the report. During the last week of July 2013, the House of Ruth Maryland completed the expansion of the Lethality Assessment Program so it is now citywide. As of June 30, we have had over 5,000 conversations with victims of intimate partner violence who may not have otherwise reached out to us for help.

This program would not have been possible without the generous support of the Baltimore City Police Department, Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake and many other city officials who worked to make this program a reality.

Another Sold-Out Crabaret

On July 11, while it rained in most of Baltimore, the sculpture garden at the Baltimore Museum of Art on the evening of Crabaret was sunny and picturesque, if just a little bit humid!

Over 500 guests came to enjoy crab and culinary creations by Gertrude’s Chef John Shields, beer and wine from Heavy Seas Beer and the Wine Source, and the upbeat rhythms of the Swingin’ Swamis. A sell-out crowd plus an array of outstanding live and silent auction items helped us reach our event goal by raising over $100,000 that will go directly towards helping victims of intimate partner violence at the House of Ruth Maryland.

Thank you to our sponsors, donors and guests for making this event one of our best.

And mark your calendars now for next year’s Crabaret – July 10, 2014.

Platinum Sponsor: Anonymous
Silver Sponsors: Vicki & Carmen Deyesu; Sylvan/Laureate Foundation; Whiteford, Taylor & Preston
Bronze Sponsors: Joyce Ann Burman & David Greif, II; DLA Piper US LLP; John & Nancy Erickson; Monica Hausner; Dr. Arthur & Bonnie Serpick; Vision Technology Services; The Warner Companies
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UPCOMING EVENTS:

October 5
Yoga Salutes NonViolence

October 8
Intimate Partner Violence Day in the Workplace, morning session hosted by Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake

October 10
One Great Thing Preview Event at Ruth’s Closet, sale continues through the 13th

October 28
Adopt A Family Sign Up Begins

December 7
B-More Bags Trunk Show at Ruth’s Closet

Young Professionals Group
meets the third Wednesday of every month at 6:30 pm

For more information on any of these upcoming events, contact the Development Department at 410-554-8443 or visit our website at www.hruth.org.
Save The Date!

The 2014 Spring Luncheon will be held on **Wednesday, April 23, 2014** at the Baltimore Marriott Waterfront Hotel, co-chaired by **Olwen Modell and Vicki Deyesu** and featuring keynote speaker **Judge Jeanine Pirro**, the host of “Justice with Judge Jeanine”. Judge Pirro began her career as an advocate for victims of intimate partner violence and will share insider’s information about the legal system as it pertains to victims of intimate partner violence, personal stories, and insight on the many obstacles victims may face. For information on early sponsorship opportunities, please contact Jana Stengel at **410-554-8448** or **jstengel@hruthmd.org**.