

THE MISSION of Every Woman's Place & Webster House Youth Services is to improve and enhance the lives of women, Youth and families in crisis in our community by providing and advocating for services which lead to their safety, their emotional and economic self-sufficiency, their productivity, and their ability to participate fully in our society.

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

April brings National Sexual Assault, Crime Victims Rights and Child Abuse awareness events and activities. Here at Every Woman's Place and Webster House Youth Services, these issues are often not mutually exclusive. Consider the case of a 15 year-old adolescent I will call Cassandra.

Cassandra came to Webster House as a runaway. She was sullen, tactilely and emotionally defensive, and vacillated between aggression and timidity. Cassandra, once a good student and seemingly happy youngster, was now failing in school, had a poor self image, and wanted nothing to do with her family of origin. She was at first reluctant to talk with Brenda, her counselor. Carefully, methodically, Brenda was able to build trust in Cassandra, and the story came out...at first, in small pieces. Eventually, the floodgates opened.

Cassandra related being sexually assaulted by her mother's boyfriend for the two years prior to her arrival at Webster House. She

was pregnant, she confided. She knew the baby to be that of her mother's boyfriend. She had believed the only way to cope was to run. Her mother did not know of the abuse or the pregnancy, and she felt as though her mother would blame her for the assaults. Her only solution, she believed, was to run.

Cassandra represents our efforts to ensure that sexual assault survivors, child abuse victims, and victims of crime receive the help that a caring, civilized society is obligated to provide. Brenda assisted Cassandra by meeting with her and her mother to explain the issue, contacting the police, meeting with them with an adoption agency, and accompanying Cassandra to court. Cassandra continued in counseling, as did her mother, and the two are now back living together. The baby was safely adopted out to a loving family. Cassandra is attending a new school, and is once again a good student. She has decided she wants to

go to college and become a social worker. Cassandra's perpetrator was sentenced to prison for his assault of Cassandra. Mom has moved beyond the guilt she originally felt, and is focused on supporting her daughter. Cassandra's story brings into clear focus the reason we exist...to improve and enhance the lives of women, youth, children and families in crisis in our community by providing and advocating for services that lead to their safety, self-sufficiency, productivity, and ability to participate fully in our society. This month, we honor all those who have been touched by sexual assault, crime and abuse. Thanks to all who support us, the Cassandra's of our community will have a place to turn, options to consider, workers and volunteers who care. For this opportunity to serve in such a meaningful way, we are forever grateful.

- Susan P. Johnson

VIOLA BRAY CHARITABLE GIFT

As the board chair for Every Woman's Place/Webster House Youth Services, Molly McCormick is familiar with the challenges faced by women, youth and children who require our services. Molly is the great-granddaughter of Viola Bray, whose trust has funded many services at the agency starting with the children's counselor position.

In 2001, Every Woman's Place realized children here would benefit from a new style of counseling or intervention referred to as Trauma and Loss in Children (TLC). The

service was geared toward young children who have experienced loss or trauma in their life. The initial idea was focused on children who lost a loved one in the September 11th disaster. Every Woman's Place saw similarities in children who have experienced loss to those who had been exposed to domestic violence. "We felt this process would work well with the children entering the shelter with their moms as well as those who use Safe Haven services for supervised visitation and safe custody exchange," commented Rachel Glavich, Director of Adult Services.

Today, the children's counselor position serves hundreds of children each year through this specialized intervention that now includes a focus on exposure to violence.

A special thanks goes out to Molly McCormick and the Viola Bray Charitable Trust for recognizing the needs of children who witness abuse in our community and funding such a necessary program. Today more than 10 staff are certified Trauma and Loss in Children counselors through the TLC Institute.

AWAWARENESS



From left to right: Susie Engle, GOOT volunteer; Lynn Foley, Provence Salon; and Angie Guerrero, GOOT volunteer at Wrap Yourself In Red.

VDAY MUSKEGON 2008

The week of February 11 was a week to honor women and girls in our community and to bring out awareness to STOP VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS. This week featured Men Taking a Stand against violence to women and girls with a full-page article in The Chronicle. Thanks to all the men who donated \$100 each to publicly show their support. Special thanks to Mary Husid who hosted WRAP YOURSELF IN RED on February 12, a fun event for women to ramp up for Valentine's Day and raising nearly \$1,300! Area salons and retailers joined in to offer services and sell fun "girly" gifts. The week was topped off with a performance of THE VAGINA MONOLOGUES produced by Patti Groessl and directed by Sheila Wahamaki. What a great way to end an incredible week dedicated to Ending Violence. Thanks to Patti and the cast of fabulous women and girls for raising more than \$10,000 to support our efforts.



STRENGTHENING FAMILIES GOES BILINGUAL

In recognition of Muskegon County's growing Hispanic population, Every Woman's Place/Webster House Youth Services is now offering the Strengthening Families program in Spanish. Curriculum, staff, and activities will be conducted in Spanish to compliment the needs of families who have English as a second language, have Spanish as their sole language, or families that include parents who speak primarily Spanish and children who are

bilingual. Additionally, the staff has utilized research based on Hispanic/Latino families to provide a program that respects their language and culture.

Strengthening Families is a program that strives to support families in building their strengths and in establishing routines, traditions and structure within the home that can be carried over into the community.

Orientation for the Spanish version of Strengthening Families will be held on April 23, 2008. Classes are planned on Wednesday evenings from 4:30 p.m. - 7:00 p.m. and will begin as soon as full enrollment is reached. Families may sign up for the program by coming to the agency during walk-in service hours or by calling Maribel Diaz at 759-7909 ext. 277. Families can also be referred by school personnel or a social agency within the community.

GET A RIBBON - SAVE A LIFE CAMPAIGN

April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month and Every Woman's Place/Webster House Youth Services is offering schools, businesses and individuals an opportunity to raise awareness of the sexual violence affecting all genders.

The *Get A Ribbon - Save A Life* campaign will be ongoing throughout April. The campaign allows individuals to pick up two teal ribbons, designated for Sexual Assault Awareness, along with business card-sized pamphlets at local businesses like: Sun, Wind, and Rain, Provence Salon and Every Woman's Place. More locations

will be signing on to help. When you pick up a ribbon packet, you will keep one teal ribbon and give another away. The ribbons are large and would be best suited for the antenna of your car or prominently displayed. The small pamphlets can be left in public places for anyone to find; a restaurant table for your waitress, a public restroom, dressing rooms, schools, libraries, laundromats and more. The pamphlets include information on sexual assault, what to do if you were recently assaulted or assaulted in the past, the rights of victims, and some common responses to a sexual assault.

On April 17 at 7:00 pm, Every Woman's Place will host a FREE public viewing of the film "North Country" at The Muskegon Museum of Art. Charlize Theron portrays Josey in North Country, the searing story of women who broke the gender barrier laboring in hazardous Minnesota iron mines... and broke legal ground with the nation's first class-action sexual-harassment lawsuit. Melissa Reid, MSW, Sexual Assault Therapist for Every Woman's Place will conduct an open discussion on sexual assault and how we can be supportive to those who have been raped or assaulted.

International studies show that one in three women will experience abuse by a significant other in their lifetime, while 40% of all murdered women are killed by their husbands or lovers. These statistics are staggering, but **Every Woman's Place** and **Webster House Youth Services** are here to strengthen families. Our programs range from domestic violence prevention to youth programs geared toward helping youth make positive decisions about their lives. Our goal is to keep families healthy and safe in the greater Muskegon County area.

MEN AND WOMEN TOUCHED BY DONATION

After 49 years in Muskegon, Jim VanderMolen decided that the end had come for Pete's Shoe Box. Instead of selling the inventory, Mr. VanderMolen generously donated it to Every Woman's Place/Webster House Youth Services.

Two trailer loads stuffed with 500-600 pairs of new shoes for men and women were delivered to the Donation Center on Peck Street. There were steel toe boots, dress shoes, tennis shoes and more. Although we are saddened that a true Muskegon legacy has closed, we are overjoyed to offer these shoes for free to women and men in need.

The donation has already touched many lives. "I stand on my feet for 8 hours a day, so having new shoes from Pete's is a real blessing," says a client of the Transitional Supportive Housing program. Because of the expense, buying new shoes is something she does for her kids and not for herself. "Thank you so much!"

GIRLS ON THE RUN

Hi Everyone! Spring is around the corner, bringing with it another season of Girls on the Run. Last year we had over 630 girls and we're hoping to add even more this year.

Girls on the Run is a nationwide program that recognizes that every girl is special, that every girl is strong, and that every girl is a winner. It teaches girls in grades 3 through 5 about health, friendship, body image, self-esteem, and community service while also being about running and fun.

This year our program begins the week of March 17 and ends the week of May 26 (no program during spring break). This year's 5K event will be held on Saturday, May 17th.



If you or someone you know may be interested, please call Melissa Reid at 759-7909 ext. 233.

Sponsorship opportunities are available for local businesses and individuals.

If you choose to support GOTR, your logo will be included on the back of all T-shirts provided to 550 participating girls. Girls wear the shirts to practice and to the grand finale 5K run on May 17 at Reeths Puffer High School. Also, sponsor information will be included on promotional print materials.

Shoe Sponsorship \$2,100

This sponsorship covers the cost for shoes for participating girls who are unable to pay. Fifty girls at \$42.00 per pair of shoes. (Note: shoes are discounted by local vendor to girls)

Education Sponsorship \$2,000

Funds will supply each girl and coach with printed curriculum materials needed to deliver the program.



FEATURED DONORS

Thank you Jill Neely! Jill sent a letter (re-printed in part below) to her friends and family and managed the remarkable feat of collecting over 500 pairs of underwear. Thank you for implementing the Panty Pantry! Our clients are very grateful for your generosity.

Excerpt of Letter from Jill:

Hello Friends & Family,

It's getting to be that time again. The snow is going to fly and its time to start counting our blessings.....

... The other night a young lady from Every Woman's Place spoke about their services and their needs. She talked about families entering the shelter without basic necessities and also about a program where rape victims get clothing to wear home from the hospital. Which of course then got me thinking about what I could do to help and how much I really like new panties. Anyway, the old hamster started turning and after talking to myself and a couple of really cool friends, I said "Why not have everyone I know give me a new pack of underwear? That way I will get a lot of shapes and sizes and be able to donate a bunch of them to Every Woman's Place." SO That's IT: Would you please buy new underwear in ANY SIZE for ANYBODY? Toddlers, preschoolers, grade schoolers, junior high and high schoolers, boys, girls, big mommas and little mommas - they all need new knickers!!!! Please call me to pick them up or drop them off to me at my home. Please fill the Panty Pantry, my goal is to reach 150 pairs or more!!!!

Congratulations on exceeding your goal and helping so many in need of knickers. Your story is an inspiration to us all.



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www.websterhouseyouthservices.org

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GROUPS

WOMEN

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE EDUCATION
GROUPS FOR WOMEN
Monday 3:30 pm - 4:30 pm
For referral, contact Jennifer

CHILDREN

CHILDREN'S DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
SUPPORT GROUP
Monday 5:30 pm - 6:30 pm
April 14th through May 12th
For referral, contact Amanda

FAMILIES

STRENGTHENING FAMILIES
Call for information.

DROP-IN CENTER FOR YOUTH STREET OUTREACH

Smith-Ryerson Park
Muskegon Recreation Center
550 Wood Street
Tuesdays and Thursdays 5:00 pm - 8:00 pm

S.W.A.T. (SIMPLE WAYS TO AVOID TROUBLE)

Call for referral.

231-759-7909

All groups and counseling are completely confidential and free of charge.