



Diakonos, Inc.
Fifth Street Ministries
 PO Box 5217
 Statesville, North Carolina 28687
 704-872-4045
 diakonos@bellsouth.net
 www.fifthstreetministries.com

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<p><i>Diakonos Staff</i></p>	<p>Patti West, Program Director <i>pattihwest@bellsouth.net</i></p>	<p><i>Newsletter Staff</i></p>
<p>Gary West, Executive Director <i>garydwest@bellsouth.net</i></p>	<p>Michele Knapp, Finance Officer <i>micheleknapp@bellsouth.net</i></p>	<p>Patti West - Editor Michele Knapp ...and a whole host of volunteers - Circulation For change of address or to be taken off the mailing list, contact Michele at 704-872-4045.</p>

the westside

As noted in other parts of this newsletter, October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month. For a long time now, we have tried to address this horrific reality in various ways. We are very grateful for our shelter, My Sister's House, a place of refuge and security for women and children fleeing abuse and sexual assault and for the longstanding community support of this endeavor. At My Sister's House there is not only a safe place to stay but also the services of professionally trained counselors and a court advocate. We have tried to use speaking engagements and printed materials, such as this newsletter, to raise awareness, provide information, and challenge people to learn of this matter and do what they can to expose it for what it is – a crime – and work to extricate it from the fabric of our society. And progress has been made. Laws have been changed or tightened up. Many others have joined to take a stand. The media has provided more and more exposure which greatly helps confront the issue.

But evil does not easily retreat. Yes, I chose that word on purpose. Violence of any kind toward family members and/or significant others is evil. We are dealing with something here that, if it is to be exposed and removed, must employ the strongest terms possible.

We still hear stories that would make a cold-hearted person shudder. The perpetrators of violence may try to justify their behaviors in different ways, but the end result is a cruel, calculating attempt to control the life of someone else. Slavery is gone but there are still too many males who see women and children as their property rights. A judge once said that any man who abuses a woman is a coward. I believe that. I have even said that to some abusers and to watch their reaction is interesting. The only thing worse than being unable to control "their woman" is for a man to be called a coward.

And one of the really sad aspects of all this is that some folk who should be at the forefront of dealing with this crime actually are assisting its reality. I'm primarily talking about religious leaders and people of faith. They often know of the situation and think that it is just a private matter that ought to be worked out at home. They may know the man and view him as a "good ole boy" who just wants his family to do right..... (read that as OBEY HIM). And more times than I care to remember, a woman has told us that her preacher told her to go back home and pray for him and submit to him and everything will be all right. So she follows that recommendation, because it has come from a man of God. Yes, it does always seem to come from a MAN of God. She goes back home and tries. And sooner or later, he once again beats the hell out of her. And it starts all over.

It does not help that some people of faith still interpret the Bible, or other sacred writings, to say that, in essence, women and children are second class citizens. They must always submit to the man. When they don't, according to this interpretation, life falls apart. The interpreter will state firmly that such is what the Bible teaches, without giving any consideration to a wider context. They interpret literally. Interestingly enough, literalism always breaks down. There are other things in the Bible that are clearly stated, but they are not taken literally. An excuse, any excuse, can be found for ignoring it. We treat sacred materials like a cafeteria line, picking and choosing what we want to take literally. Why not ask such an interpreter, for instance, "Where do you keep your slaves? In the house or out back somewhere?" When they resist the notion of slavery, point out to them that there are numerous thoughts on the subject in the Bible. Are those thoughts taken literally?

No, I still stand by what I said years ago. Anyone, preacher or otherwise, who has the persuasive skills to just send someone back into a den of danger and tell her to pray ought to be arrested and charged with aiding and abetting a crime when the abuse occurs.

We've got to deal with this problem. It won't go away on its own.

Gary West

Miss Mary's Kitchen List

Green Veggies—big cans	Sugar
Onions	Coffee
Cabbage	Creamer
Fresh veggies of all sorts	Self-rising cornmeal
Fruit	Self-rising flour
Margarine	Foil and plastic wrap
Powdered Milk	Ziploc bags
Dried beans/peas	Dawn dishwashing liquid
Instant potatoes	Bleach
Cooking oil	Pine cleaner
Spray cooking oil	Plastic forks
Eggs	Plastic spoons
Tea bags	

Rob's Needs list for the Shelters

Trash bags—all sizes up to 55 gallon	Brooms
8 oz. styrofoam cups	Mops
3 oz. bathroom cups	Towels/washcloths
Pine cleaner	<u>Things to pass on to guests when they move into their own homes, such as:</u>
Bleach	Beds
Scrubbing bubbles	Dressers
Toothbrushes/toothpaste	Couches
Shampoo	Chairs
Conditioner	Tables
Deodorant	Lamps
Men's jeans	Linens
Men's work boots	Curtains
New to us van/car	
New vacuum cleaner	
Washers/dryers	

~ Nurse Peggy's Needs ~

For the Children:

Benadryl liquid
Tylenol liquid
Benadryl quick dissolve strips
Infant pain relief drops
Children's Ibuprofen

For the Adults:

Tylenol PM
Pepto-Bismol
Antibiotic ointment
Anti-diarrheal tablets
Enteric coated aspirin -325mg.
Visine eye drops

Special Need at My Sister's House

My Sister's House continues to provide a very valuable service to some of our most fragile citizens—women and children who are fleeing abusive situations. Lives have literally been saved, and through our specially designed program, skills have been taught that empower these victims to become survivors.

One of the best avenues for a successful outcome is through the groups we offer—weekly support group and parenting classes. Parenting classes are held each Monday evening and support group is held on Tuesday evening. There is a tremendous need for outside groups to provide a meal as well as babysitting on these two nights between 6 and 8pm.

Meals do not have to be extravagant—hot dogs, spaghetti, sub sandwiches, cookies, raw veggies, fruit...whatever would work for your group. We would provide plates, cups and napkins. Groups begin at 6pm and babysitting duties would begin at that point. By 7pm the women are out of their sessions and supper could be served. We encourage you to share the meal with the women and children, and spend some time talking with them. A little contact with the outside "real" world could mean a lot to them.

If you are interested in working with us on providing this valuable support of our program, please call Linda or LaTonya at 704-872-3403. If your group would be willing to provide this valuable service once a month (like the first Monday of each month—or whatever is available,) or once a quarter that would be most helpful! We look forward to speaking with you. We need you! The women and children need you!



CAPITAL CAMPAIGN UPDATE

CAMPAIGN GOAL:	\$4.5 MILLION
DONATIONS/PLEDGES TO DATE	\$3,948,048
<u>WE STILL NEED</u>	<u>\$551,952</u>

Before long we will be in this new building - a dream that many, many of you have helped make a reality. As the time draws near, we know that the next few months will be a time of developing a whole new process of how things are done. Many hours of work have already gone into that planning and we anticipate many more...but it's such an exciting endeavor! Our building will be nice, secure, and will eliminate the time spent worrying about whether our guests are warm in the winter—or protecting them from the scorching heat in the summer. No longer will we have to spend an entire morning cleaning up the mess of a newly collapsed ceiling or trying to fix the troubles of an insufficient plumbing system. Our time and our resources can be focused more on assisting our guests develop skills that can enable them never to face homelessness again. How grateful we are to have you on this journey with us, and to know that you are with us for the long-haul. It will take all of us to continue providing hope for tomorrow for our brothers and sisters in need, but together we can do anything! Thanks for being with us!

Hope for Tomorrow ~ Fifth Street Ministries Capital Campaign Pledge

To provide funds for the construction and furnishing of a new Fifth Street Ministries Shelter facility in Iredell County, I/we, _____ wish to join with the Fifth Street Board of Directors in reaching their campaign goal.

Name:	
Address:	
City/State:	
Phone:	
Signature:	Date:

Option 1: The total contribution I/we pledge is \$ _____, to be paid over five years in total annual contributions of:

\$ _____	2008	Payments will be made (please check one):
\$ _____	2009	
\$ _____	2010	
\$ _____	2011	
\$ _____	2012	

Monthly (*Bank draft is available*)
 Quarterly
 Semi-annually Annually

Option 2: I do not wish to make a pledge.
Enclosed is my gift of \$ _____ for the campaign.

If you would like to pay the above amount by credit card please enter the information below.

Credit Card #: _____ Expiration Date: _____

Date you would like funds withdrawn from your account: _____

If this pledge of commitment is given as a commemorative gift, please indicate such by giving their name:

All donations are tax deductible.

Capital funds received in excess of those needed for construction, equipment, furnishings and startup costs will be used for maintenance and upkeep of the facility as well as operation of programs.

This gift given in honor of	Name and address:
This gift given in memory of	Name and address of whom acknowledgement is to be sent:

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PREVENTION

It's never too early

Much emphasis is put on the healing of victims of domestic violence as well as justice for them within the judicial system. What a great day it would be if never another person was hurt by another family member, and that would eliminate all together the need for the seeking of justice within the court system. What if domestic violence was no more? What if, through education and mentoring and role models, violence within the family just went away? Sounds like an overwhelming challenge, but we never know until we try!

Influences from television, movies, internet, and friends are potent. Influences from family are probably the strongest and are passed down from generation to generation because we are conditioned from the time of birth as to what is "normal," whether it is nor not. Genetics plays a large part as well, but behavior can be modified, and should be when that behavior impedes the well-being of someone else. Violence against another person crosses a line, regardless of who that person is, but when it is directed at another family member, another level of unacceptability is acquired.

It's never too soon to talk to your child or grandchildren about violence. Teach them appropriate ways to express anger. Teach how to walk it out, talk it out or take time out. Spend time with your child or grandchildren, modeling appropriate behavior towards the opposite sex. Listen to what is being said and how they talk about their friends. Are any of their friends being hurt by a parent or a significant other? Are they hurting anyone else? When you pick up a red flag from their conversation, deal with it directly.

As much as anything else, it would make a tremendous difference if simple respect was shown for those with whom we come in contact. Much of what ails our society would be rectified if we simply showed respect for gender, respect for decisions—even if you don't agree, respect for beliefs, and a general respect for that person as a human being. Being a respectful driver, consumer, friend, employee/employer, parent/child, grandparent/grandchild, coach/player, teacher/student, or neighbor can make all the difference in the world. What if we consciously taught our children what it means to respect another human being? First, we must examine our own "respect skills." Are we honestly being an appropriate role model?

We can all use a little help. Just for fun, today make a little extra effort to do something respectful and kind for a family member. Give a compliment, help with a chore without being asked, keep a judgmental comment to yourself, initiate a conversation about your feelings regarding violence in families. You may be surprised at the response you get.

To a large degree, violence is a learned behavior. We may not be able to completely stop the crime of one person harming another....but we can try. I dare you to begin the process of examining your own actions and beliefs...and to make changes where changes are needed! If violence in families were to become extinct, who's to say that violence on our streets and elsewhere would not be curtailed?

Patti West





Diakonos, Inc.

My Sister's House...a place to find safe sanctuary and healing

We live in a progressive society - right? We've developed a level of sophistication that causes us to look back on our parent's generation and longer, with a smug smile and a feeling of pride that we have somehow become smarter and more polished than they were way back when. We've broken out of traditions that could be construed as unhealthy and oppressive and have made strides towards the development of a society that is accepting of diversity. Well, that's true in some situations, but unfortunately we are still stuck to a large degree where domestic violence is an issue.

Over the past two decades, progress has been made in North Carolina with laws protecting victims of domestic violence. There are a few glitches, to be sure, but advocates and legislators work hard to sort through the varied aspects of protection and prosecution for domestic violence related crimes. Regardless, still too many victims suffer daily at the hands of their abuser. During fiscal year 2006-2007, there were 119,348 calls made to domestic violence crisis lines. Almost 15,000 adults and children received shelter services, with 239 of those individuals receiving assistance from our program, My Sister's House. Clearly domestic violence is still an issue in our state and in our county.

Who are the abusers who perpetrate this crime? They are typically someone with a Jekyll/Hyde personality. At first, the abuser most often is charming, attentive and enchanting. This is the person with whom the victim falls in love. While most often this is the face that remains most prominent in the public eye, as time goes on, the face changes behind closed doors and a living hell becomes the norm. Victims begin examination and re-examination of themselves to try and determine how they are to blame (after being told this frequently) and the process of selling their soul begins, desperate to make the relationship work, and do return to that idyllic time when the abuser was so attentive. Domestic violence is a cycle, a typically never-ending cycle until there is some intervention, and all too often irreversible damage has been done.

October is Domestic Violence Awareness month and on Wednesday, October 15 in the yard of the Iredell County Hall of Justice, several gathered for an awareness rally and service of remembrance

for the 81 domestic related homicides that have occurred in North Carolina thus far during 2008. It was a beautiful day, much too beautiful for the somber subject that was being talked about, but a perfect day for a survivor, Teresa, to tell about her struggles and her successes as she broke free from the bonds and restraints that held her hostage and smothered her spirit. It was an uplifting testimony to hear of her survival, healing, and the reclaiming of her soul, being empowered by the support and encouragement she felt from other survivors and staff at My Sister's House. What a witness she is to the reality that there is hope and there is a every reason to take that first step, the hardest step, to move beyond a life of pain and hurt.

There is no doubt—domestic violence hurts. It hurts victims, it hurts the secondary victims—the children in ways that alter their life forever. And it hurts every part of our community. Our children go to school with other children who are living in situations of domestic violence and their learned behavior affects the classroom setting. Victims in the workplace cost billions each year in time lost at work due to injury or fear as well as healthcare costs. Law enforcement is affected for quite literally they put their life on the line as they respond to domestic related calls because no one knows when a situation will turn deadly. The ripple effect is broad and no one is untouched. Domestic violence doesn't just occur in poverty laden neighborhoods. It is as prevalent where the houses are big and grandiose as it is in the sub-standard, absent-landlord environments.

Domestic violence is everyone's problem, and as so plainly put by our District Attorney-elect, Sarah Kirkman when she spoke at the Awareness Rally, when you hear the testimony of a child painfully describing how he saw his mother's murdered body on the kitchen floor of their home, or the testimony of the police officer who carried a smaller child past that same kitchen, shielding the eyes of the child so he would never have to remember that gruesome scene, it does something to you inside, and the reality of it becomes hard and cold. No child should ever have to witness that kind of scene. Domestic violence hurts...all of us.

Patti West

...do justice...love mercy...

