

Home Free

A program for battered women and their children.



Letter From the Director

Dear Friends,

As many of the children staying at our shelter begin a new school year, I am reminded of the power of new beginnings. We witness many new beginnings at Home Free as battered women explore alternatives to living with an abusive partner. We see first-hand the difference respect, empathy, and support can make in the lives of women and children who have experienced battering.

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month, which provides an opportunity for another new beginning as we refocus our efforts on ensuring that our community offers battered women safety, justice, and empowerment.

Awareness begins with ourselves, and only then can we work towards peace and justice in our community. Home Free provides many opportunities to learn and engage. I invite you to join us this October as we work towards a fu-



ture in which violence against women and children is no longer a reality.

Sincerely,

Mary Monteon,
Program Director

Honoring Thirty Years of Domestic Violence Awareness



October 2017 marks the 30th anniversary of Domestic Violence Awareness Month. Led by the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Domestic Violence Awareness Month began in 1987 as a way to bring advocates from across the nation together around three core themes: recognizing and mourning those who have died as a result of domestic violence; celebrating and supporting survivors of domestic violence;

and connecting diverse professionals working to end violence against women. 1987 also saw the initiation of the first national domestic violence toll-free hotline. The United States Congress officially designated October as National Domestic Violence Awareness Month in 1989 and has renewed that legislation every year since.

Home Free is joining other domestic violence prevention and intervention programs across the country to recognize Domestic Violence Awareness Month this October. On October 18th, Home Free invites you to participate in our *I Wish You Knew* campaign. This online campaign encourages survivors,

advocates, and other concerned community members to raise awareness about domestic violence by sharing their stories. Find out how you can participate on our website!

Home Free will also honor Domestic Violence Awareness Month by participating in special services at Mount Olivet Lutheran Church. Every Sunday in October, services will highlight the importance of ending violence against women and recognize those working towards that goal.

Together, we can ensure that our community is a safe haven for battered women and their children. Please join us this October!

Our mission is to provide battered women and their children with safety, support, and information so they have an opportunity to explore alternatives to living with a violent partner.

Summer Celebration 2017

Goats and snakes and kangaroos - oh my! Over 100 residents, children, staff, and friends of Home Free attended our annual Summer Celebration on July 21st. A petting zoo with cuddly, slimy, and feathery animals was the highlight of the event. Children also had the opportunity to visit with Plymouth Police, explore a squad car, and learn about police equipment. In addition, a North Memorial Hospital ambulance crew introduced



children to the inner workings of an ambulance and basic medical equipment. Face painting was provided by long-time friend of Home Free Stephanie Adam, who delighted kids and moms alike with her creative designs. Special thanks to Coborns Deliveries, who donated water for the event, and the Plymouth Fire Department, who were scheduled to visit but were unable to attend due to a call. Thank you to all the fabulous

volunteers and supporters who make this beloved event possible!

United Way Update

Although Home Free and other domestic violence organizations no longer receive funding through grants from the Greater Twin Cities United Way, we are still able to receive funds through United Way donor-designated contributions. If your workplace sponsors a United Way or other employee-giving campaign, please consider designating Home Free as a recipient. **We rely on your support to keep our doors open for battered women and their children - thank you!**

Legislative Update

Even when the Minnesota Legislature is not debating a “domestic violence” bill, their decisions can still have an enormous impact on battered women and their children. The Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women (MCBW), of which Home Free is a member, is an association of 87 programs that provide crucial core public safety and crime victim services in Minnesota. The role of the coalition in the legislative process is to inform legislators about the impact of policies on the lives of battered women and their children and to monitor the legislative decisions that affect their member programs.

This year, MCBW is monitoring several areas of legislation, all of which have the potential to affect the lives of battered women and their children:

- Housing, child care, transportation, taxes, wages, and healthcare - these basic tenants of financial stability directly impact a battered woman’s ability to live independently.
- Criminal justice and family court - many victims struggle to find justice.
- Primary and post-secondary education - children who witness domestic violence need trauma-informed education in schools.
- Public benefits - 50% of public benefits recipients have experienced sexual and domestic violence-related trauma.

For more information, visit www.mcbw.org.

Remembering Eileen Moran



The Home Free family mourns the loss of Eileen Moran, one of the founding mothers of Home Free Shelter and a passionate advocate for battered women. Eileen passed away on August 3, 2017 at age 82. Having helped start

Home Free Shelter in 1972, Eileen continued to be one of our greatest supporters throughout her life. As a member of the advisory committee, she provided invaluable insight and wisdom to the organization. She also served on Missions Inc. Programs’ Board of Directors, including a term as board president. Her leadership helped us fulfill our mission to enable people struggling to meet fundamental human needs to obtain safety and healing and to pursue justice in their lives.

In addition to her many roles at Home Free, Eileen also served as the Director of Human Services for Scott County. During her time there, she spearheaded

a unique collaborative approach to serving clients that eventually became part of Senator Paul Wellstone’s platform. Eileen was also a fierce advocate for people with disabilities, and worked to establish community residences for persons with developmental disabilities.

We are so grateful for Eileen’s steadfast friendship and support, and we will miss her dearly. Our sympathy and love go out to her family, friends, and the many community members who benefited from her years of service.

In Loving Memory

Why She Stayed:

Understanding the Complex Barriers to Leaving an Abusive Relationship

For those who have never experienced battering, it can be difficult to imagine why someone would stay in an abusive relationship. It is comforting to believe that we would never allow that to happen to ourselves and that stopping abuse against us is within our power. Whether consciously or unconsciously, many people believe that battered women could easily leave an abusive relationship if they really wanted to.¹ However, the reality is much more complex, and much more dangerous if misunderstood.

Leaving an abusive relationship is never as easy as just walking out the door. There are innumerable factors that contribute to a battered woman's decision to leave or remain in an abusive relationship. Both research and practical experience indicate that one of the primary reasons women stay in abusive relationships is a lack of independent financial resources. This situation is the result of both individual and societal-level factors. Income disparities between men and women, especially women of color, exacerbate the financial power many abusers use to control their victim. In addition, abusers may interfere, directly or indirectly, with a woman's ability to earn income. Finally, the stigma associated with using government assistance is a powerful motivator to stay in a relationship that is abusive but provides financial stability. Leaving an abusive partner often entails a great deal of financial hardship that affects both the victim and her children. As one Home Free advocate put it, **"Asking a woman to leave is like asking her to jump off a cliff. She doesn't know where she'll land."**

When a battered woman has children with her abuser, she may experience additional pressure to stay and hardships in leaving. While minimizing harm to children often becomes a motivating factor for terminating the relationship *eventually*, fear for the safety and wellbeing of her children may initially motivate a battered woman to stay.² If the abuse has been directed exclusively at the mother, she may feel that she would be denying her children a positive relationship with their father if she takes them away from him. Furthermore, children may blame their mother for estranging them from their father if she leaves. Many mothers tolerate abuse for the sake of their children.

Battered immigrant women face additional challenges to leaving abusive relationships. For many, one or both partners' immigration status is dependent on their marriage. Social isolation can be an even greater barrier for battered immigrant women because of their physical distance from their families and communities of origin. Additional challenges such as limited English proficiency or lack of knowledge

about resources available in the United States may make immigrant women especially vulnerable to battering. Finally, cultural and family expectations may create pressure for a woman to remain in the relationship. For example, a woman who recently immigrated to the United States began working with the Home Free Immigrant and Refugee advocate after experiencing domestic violence. While she initially wished to leave her husband, intense pressure from her family and religious community to preserve her marriage eventually caused her to return to live with her husband, despite continuing abuse. Many religious and cultural traditions stigmatize divorce and whether explicitly or implicitly, encourage women to preserve their marriages at any cost.

These are just a few of the potential reasons women might stay in abusive relationships. Other reasons include belief that the abuser will change, shared history or financial assets, lack of alternative housing options, and emotional attachment. **As counterintuitive as it may seem to those on the outside, one of the biggest reasons women choose to remain in an abusive relationship is that they believe it is safer than leaving – and they may be right.** Research indicates that one of the most dangerous times for women in an abusive relationship is when they leave.³ Ending an abusive relationship does not necessarily guarantee an end to the violence. By staying with the abuser, victims may be attempting to mitigate the risk of violence to themselves or their children by monitoring and influencing the abuser's behavior.

Domestic violence is never the fault of the victim – no matter how long she stays in the relationship or how many times she returns to the abuser. In order to confront and prevent domestic violence as a community, we need to support all victims, not just those who leave the relationship. We also must work to eliminate social and systemic barriers that make it impossible, impractical, or dangerous for women to leave abusive relationships, such as lack of housing options, income disparities, and harmful gender role expectations. By increasing our understanding of why women choose to stay in abusive relationships, we can improve our community's ability to treat all victims of domestic violence with respect, empathy, and support.

For information on how you can schedule an informational presentation from a Home Free advocate, contact Kari Hitchcock at 763-559-9008.

1. Yamawaki et al. (2012). Perceptions of Domestic Violence. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*.

2. Meyer (2012). Why Women Stay. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Criminology*.

3. National Coalition Against Domestic Violence. Understanding Why Women Stay.



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HOME FREE

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Can You Help?



Women and children at Home Free shelter rely on in-kind donations for personal items and clothing. New items are most appreciated.

Our current needs are:

- * Toothbrushes
- * Full-size deodorant
- * Full-size bar soap
- * Full-size hair conditioner
- * Notebooks
- * Folders
- * Markers and pens



Please contact Kari Hitchcock at 763-559-9008 or khitchcock@missionsinc.org to donate.



Thank You!

@homefreemn

Missions Inc. enables people struggling to meet fundamental human needs, to obtain safety and healing and to pursue justice in their lives.