



# Safe Haven Shelter for Battered Women

## Annual Report 2008

### Shelter Program

### Family Justice Center/ Legal Advocacy Program



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## Shelter Program

Provides safe emergency shelter, advocacy, information and referral for women and their children who are experiencing domestic violence. The shelter serves seven counties in Northeastern Minnesota; St. Louis, Carlton, Lake, Cook, Itasca, Aitkin and Koochiching.

In FY 2008 286 unduplicated women and 245 children resided at the shelter. The average length of stay was 19.9 days for families without children and 25.6 days for families with children.

### Impact:

- 100% of women leaving the shelter receive a 911 phone and 98% exit with a personal safety plan
- 75% of those completing an exit survey indicate that they learned new ways to be safe (includes red flags of abuse).
- 85% would recommend our program to a friend experiencing abuse.

## Children's Program

Working to provide a sense of normalcy and stability allows mother and child an opportunity to reconnect. Services offered include childcare, tutoring, recreational activities, special events, and Just Kids Dental Services.

### Impact:

- Every child who stays at the shelter at least 10 days receives one-on-one time with one of our two child advocates and an assessment is made of their needs including a developmental assessment.
- Depending on their age and comprehension advocates work with children who are in the shelter 10 days or longer has the opportunity to make a safety plans for themselves.

Every parent/child staying at least 10 days receives a one-on-one consultation about needs of the child. In FY2008 139 children received tutoring at the shelter.

## Support Groups

We have two once a week groups for women in the community. One is a healing circle group that is open at all times to any victim who chooses to attend. The other weekly group is a 28 week curriculum closed group open to new women every 7 weeks. Women residing in the shelter go to various weekly and daily groups.

In 2008 Safe Haven Shelter facilitated 125 groups for 269 unduplicated community women.

### Impact:

- 80% of women attending support groups learned new life skills
- 75% of women attending support groups reach independence and do not get re-involved with an abuser
- As one woman stated, "For two hours I am surrounded by people who really understand what I am going through."

# Programs & Services

## Legal Advocacy

Legal Advocates help victims obtain Orders for Protection and Harassment Orders in civil court which order abusers to stay away from victims because of physical abuse or imminent fear of harm. Advocates also work with police, probation and other agencies to prosecute abusers.

In FY 2008, 916 unduplicated women were helped by Legal Advocates. We assisted with 219 Orders for Protection and 50 Harassment Orders. On criminal matters, we were in court with victims or on their behalf 210 times. 500 women received an individualized safety plan and written information about safety planning was made available to all others.

### Impact:

- 85% of victims who chose to have input into the criminal justice system felt safer as a result.
- 80% of women who receive Orders for Protection or Harassment Orders were able to stay in their own homes instead of having to move elsewhere for their own safety.
- 98% of women with safety plans know of more resources to keep them safe.

## Community Education

The focus of this department is to build individual and community awareness about domestic violence in order to grow a healthy relationship community where domestic violence is not tolerated and healthy relationships are the norm.

### Impact:

- Most participants express a greater understanding of the difference between a healthy and an unhealthy relationship.
- The vast majority of participants are given information about how to help someone in an abusive relationship.

In 2008, Safe Haven Shelter made 91 presentations to the community with 2387 in attendance. Our major focus for this year was the medical community.

## Volunteer Services

The Volunteer Services Department encourages and coordinates opportunities for women, men, young adults and children to contribute time, talent and treasure to the needs of battered women and their children. Such services include: Homework Help, Altrusa Reading Time, Saturday crafts, Art Therapy, childcare, crocheting group, office assistance.

198 individuals and community group volunteers provided 9,088 hours of service to Safe Haven Shelter for Battered Women in 2008. Each volunteer undergoes from 4 to a 8 hours initial training on domestic violence and the basic precepts of the organization.

### Impact:

- 75% of volunteers are students who gain an understanding of domestic violence dynamics they will carry with them into future careers and their personal lives.
- Women and children feel validated by the community through people and events who come into the Shelter to provide services.

# Impact

## Story of hope and success

I grew up in an upper class family plagued with alcoholism. My mom worked evenings and she was often not home when my father would come home intoxicated. We walked on eggshells as children. It was lonely, and I longed for attention.

In 1979 I was married and had three children. I said yes because I didn't think I would ever be asked by anyone else because I was overweight, I felt unattractive. Our marriage was full of alcoholism and abuse. Whenever we were together during the holidays or celebrations, he would publicly humiliate me. Just like in my childhood, our fun family times would turn to chaos after he drank. When I confronted him he would become violent. I remember a time during a family barbeque when he pushed me to the ground. With my three children standing above me watching in horror, he kicked me repeatedly with his boots. We divorced after 15 years of marriage.

My most recent relationship seemed wonderful. We had everything in common, we laughed, traveled, and I was in heaven. About 3 months into our relationship, he said he

lost his job and needed help with his bills. Of course I said yes, I didn't believe that I could say no. I had 30 years of service as a Cardiac RN at the Mayo Clinic, when he convinced me to cash out my retirement and move in with him. I wanted to be loved so badly that I was willing to do anything. I gave him my retirement to manage, I became isolated from my children, and I even gave up my dog when he said he was too big. Just like in my childhood, I felt that same anguish all over again. Eventually, the money ran out and the stress became greater. Every day for the next six months, he would pull my hair, throw me

down, grab my neck and bang my head against the wall. After the assaults, he would say he was sorry and it wouldn't happen again, and then he would shower me with attention.

The last assault I endured happened when he threw me in the corner and stood over me swinging a baseball bat. As I huddled in fear, all I could envision was my children growing up without their mother. When I was able to get free, I left with the only the clothes on my back and wandered for three days without food or shelter. I found my way to Safe Haven Shelter and I thought I had hit rock bottom. Little did I know that I had actually reached the top. Safe Haven Shelter allowed me to feel. That was an incredible thing for me. My whole life I was forced to keep my feelings and opinions to myself. At the shelter, I found my voice and learned who I was. They encouraged my independence from unhealthy relationships and helped me to trust in my own decisions.

**"I found my way to Safe Haven Shelter and I thought I had hit rock bottom. Little did I know that I had actually reached the top."**

My mother passed away during my stay at the shelter. I can't tell you how much they supported me through this incredibly painful

process.

Safe Haven Shelter opens doors. They helped me find a job, and I was able to get my car back. The first place I drove was to Brighton Beach where I sat in a chair and watched the lake, celebrating my new independence. It was so empowering to realize that I can be at peace by myself. When I came into Safe Haven Shelter, I was a shell with no spirit. Today, I live alone in a peaceful home, I have a job that I love, and I am grateful.

# Leadership Message

From the Director,

This has been a landmark year for Safe Haven Shelter. We not only served a record number of women and children but we successfully completed our fundraising efforts and the second half of the year was spent constructing the Lake Superior Regional Family Justice Center.

We launched several new efforts along the way. Primary prevention work created a tremendous amount of opportunity including a presentation by Safe Haven Shelter's Community Education Coordinator, Ed Heisler, at the World Conference of Women's Shelters in Edmonton, Canada, membership on committees focused on preventing domestic and sexual violence, and statewide work with advocacy organizations and male allies. Ed is also doing a research project on men who work in the movement to end violence against women. A great deal of interest has been generated by the project. The research will inform work to organize men around the prevention of sexual and domestic violence.

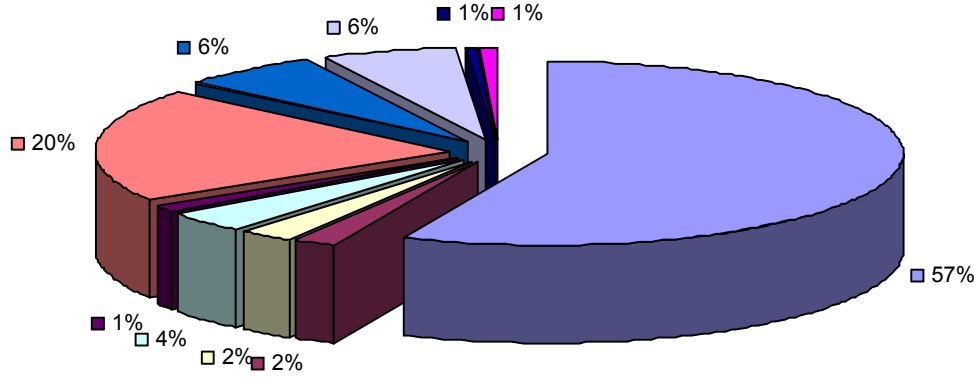
We were also fortunate to be included in the Pathways Program through the Ordean Foundation. This program allows us to help twelve women achieve their self-defined goals through a contract/incentive program. Women start the program when they come into the shelter but continue with it once they leave for their new homes. Oftentimes, this incentive is just what is needed to help women stay on track after they depart from the shelter.

We recognize our work and service is accomplished through partnerships with individuals, organizations and the entire community. Working together we can accomplish so much more than we can as individuals. We appreciate the generous support of our donors, friends and colleagues. As we look ahead to what we can accomplish in 2009 we know that these relationships will play a key role in our work at the Family Justice Center as well as other collaboratives.

Sincerely,

Susan Utech  
Executive Director

**2007-2008 Income, \$1,946,408**



**2007-2008 Expenses \$1,458,022**

