

When Domestic Violence Hits Home

Kathy J. Weinman Shelter for Victims of Domestic Violence offers abused women chance to lead abuse-free lives

by Linda Jarrett

May 15, 2015

Maybe it started with a mild shove. The next time it was a slap. Then it was a fist to the face – so begins the vicious cycle of domestic violence.

According to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, one in three women becomes a victim of some form of physical violence by an intimate partner within their lifetime.

The Kathy J. Weinman Shelter for Victims of Domestic Violence sees the results of these actions and has taken steps to help as many women as they can to start new, abuse-free lives.

The Friends of the Kathy J. Weinman Shelter for Victims of Domestic Violence, the financial arm of the shelter, has made it their mission to raise awareness and support for the shelter – the only one of its kind in St. Louis County.

The shelter started in 1992 as a result of the collaboration between County Executive Buzz Westfall and Weinman, who donated the land for the shelter.

"Buzz Westfall made a campaign promise to open a shelter for domestic violence victims in the county," said Denise Scott, president of the board of Friends of Kathy J. Weinman shelter.

The shelter provides 39 beds for women and children who have left abusive situations. It provides a safe, confidential place to stay for 90 days. It also offers case management, children and adult therapy, educational and legal services, as well as finding safe housing, either transitional or permanent.

"The Friends are the support system for the shelter," said Scott, a Warson Woods resident. "While the shelter receives funding from St. Louis County municipal and general revenue funds, as well as grants, these revenues do not cover the total cost of operating the shelter on a daily basis.

"That is where we come in," she said. "We are a 501c3 organization and are able to raise funds while the shelter is not able to do that."

"The shelter serves St. Louis County, St. Louis city and surrounding counties," Scott said. "Last year, we had people from eight other states. If there is room, we take them. If not, the shelter directs them to another facility."

When the women move on to a home or transitional housing, they have nothing, and the Friends take care of that need.

"These women left their homes with only their children," Scott said. "They essentially left their lives behind and are starting over with nothing but the clothes on their backs.

"We have a warehouse full of donated furniture," she said. "Within the last year, 13 or 14 ladies have moved



Friends of the Kathy J. Weinman Shelter for Victims of Domestic Violence works to raise awareness and support for the shelter. Pictured are Board Member Tina Appelhans and Board President Denise Scott.
photo by Ursula Ruhl

into housing of their own and had nothing, so we have couches, tables, lamps and other furniture where they can come down and choose what they want, and we will move it for them."

The Friends give the shelter at least \$750 a month for the women to cover bus passes so they can get to doctors' appointments, job interviews or school.

"We also donated a van many years ago that the staff uses to drive the clients to appointments and for general shelter needs (pick up donations for example)," Scott said. "The van truly needs to be replaced as we move forward and is on our wish list."

The Friends are also starting a day care program.

"They (the women) need help in taking care of their children," Scott said. "Even if it's looking for a job or needing legal advice, these women need time alone to be able to work through their issues."

Other needs that the Friends have provided to the shelter are a PA system, security system and small refrigerators for each room.

Board Member Tina Appelhans said that the building is so large, "with people at one end and people at the other, they didn't know what was going on in case of an emergency, like an evacuation."

While the security problems have been minimal, there have been occasions where the security and PA systems proved invaluable.

"Refrigerators may seem like a small thing to us, but to these women, having their own place to put milk, children's snacks or medications give them a measure of control in a life where they feel control is gone," Appelhans said.

They have also renovated a playground at the shelter, and the University of Missouri-St. Louis and Missouri Botanical Gardens helped beautify the grounds and plant a vegetable garden last year.

"The women can cook and enjoy vegetables and walk through the flower garden," Scott said. "It's a release for the people who are there, and something else for them to get their mind off their situation."

To donate, call 807-402-8797 or visit www.friendsofweinman.org.

Race For The Cheese

On June 6, 7 p.m., Friends of the Kathy J. Weinman Shelter for Victims of Domestic Violence, in collaboration with the Wildwood Area Lions Club and CYC sports, will hold its first "Race For the Cheese" Charity Mouse Races at the Cardinal Rigali Center, 20 Archbishop May Drive in Shrewsbury.

The mice races consist of six mice running to the finish line. There are also "State Races" where bets are placed on states which are on a roulette wheel. One mouse is set loose on the wheel, and whatever state he or she stays on is the winner.