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REFUGE, EDUCATION, ADVOCACY, CHANGE

REACH

REPORT



WHAT'S TRAUMA GOT TO DO WITH IT?

'Traumatized' is a word that gets tossed around a lot. At one time we've all been 'traumatized' by a sports team's loss or a mortifying social experience. But what does it actually mean to be traumatized? What does it mean to be trauma-informed in our work with domestic violence survivors?

At its heart, a trauma-informed approach means to look at an individual in the context of their environment. In the case of domestic violence survivors, we are often working with people who have suffered physical, emotional, and psychological trauma that leaves scars both visible and invisible.

Trauma symptoms are among the less visible, and they might be the same things that kept a person alive during the worst of what happened to them. For example, someone suffering from a trauma might dissociate – detach from what is happening to them in the moment. This could be compared to being in a medical coma, which a doctor might induce because a patient's body needs a break. Similarly, when someone's mind can't process what is happening to them, the mind protects itself by turning itself off, 'checking out', in order to survive.

Coping skills like this are hard to simply shut off. If we are not trauma-informed in our approach with survivors, we only see their behaviors and choices in the here and now. A child in school might appear to not be paying attention, when in reality they are dissociating as a response to stress. Understanding someone's behaviors in the context *(cont. page 3)*



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Laura R. Van Zandt
Photo by David Barron

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As I write this letter, the newspapers are full of articles and columns about domestic and sexual violence. And community violence. And global violence. And economic injustice. Every day we read these articles and wonder what can be done about each issue. Where are the solutions to poverty, violence, oppression? I believe they start with each of us.

When we look at each issue as a distinct challenge, we miss something. At REACH, we recognize that trauma impacts everything. Children, adults, and communities that experience trauma are forever changed by what they see and hear and feel. Without a way to address and heal from trauma, it is destined to affect relationships, families, and communities in ways that perpetuate pain, fear and injustice.

We may feel a gathering momentum to change the systems that continually fail survivors of domestic violence. The proposed changes will make a difference. To *truly end* domestic and sexual violence we also need to change our social norms. We need to support young people in articulating their own values and boundaries. We need to hold perpetrators of violence accountable in ways that create real safety for survivors and communities. We need to allow an understanding of trauma to inform all of our work, whether in hospitals, shelters, courts, or schools.

It's not just about intervening in a moment to create safety. It must be about prevention strategies that interrupt cycles of violence. The community plays an important role because change happens in systems and in neighborhoods. As you read about Say Hi week, think about how you could bring your community closer to prevent domestic violence. As you read about our work with the Waltham Police Department and the Middlesex DA, think about how trauma-informed systems, collaborating to understand lethality risks, can do more to keep victims safe and hold perpetrators accountable. As you read about *Reach for the Stars*, think about how people come together to show support and learn about this work. As you read about the holiday party, think about how generosity of spirit conveys compassion and respect.

Lao Tzu helped us recognize that if there is to be peace in the world, there must be peace in the heart. Ghandi challenges us to be the change we wish to see in the world.

We say, together we will reach beyond domestic violence.

(continued from front page...)

of their experiences opens up possibilities for how we might help them moving forward.

Under stress, the temptation is always to refer back to a black and white way of looking at things. Being trauma-informed means living in the gray much of the time. It means being flexible, thoughtful, and remembering that domestic violence is often one of many traumas that a survivor may have faced. It means being aware of the importance of relationships to a traumatized individual – that they need that ongoing relationship, so we never consider someone's case 'closed'. It may be true that using a trauma-informed approach makes our advocates' caseloads larger and their work days more unpredictable. But, we believe, it makes all the difference.

“Understanding someone's behaviors in the context of their experiences opens up possibilities for how we might help them moving forward.”

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: CRIS PERRO



Meet Cris Perro, one of our volunteers, who helps out at our shelter and in other ways at REACH.

Tell us a little about yourself:

I grew up in Massachusetts and love all the seasons we experience, even the

winters! I follow the local sports teams, but my favorite sport is hockey. Go B's!

I've worked in Human Resources for most of my career. I've always been a person who likes to help others, and that quality helped me decide where I wanted to be of service as a volunteer.

Tell us about your work with REACH:

I volunteer at the shelter one night a week. While at the house, I've answered the hotline, done buddy shifts with new volunteers, interacted with survivors and their kids, and helped with the annual Spring cleaning. I've also helped out at other functions. Recently, I met with Peer Leaders from Waltham High and discussed interview skills for new members. I think I'm known best at the house and in the office for my baking skills.

What do you like most about volunteering with REACH?

I love REACH's goal to empower people who come to them due to domestic violence. I've learned so much about domestic violence and how strong the survivors are. They've been through tough times but still have courage and the willingness to better their lives. I've come to recognize how lucky I am to have the simple things in life like a job, a car, a roof over my head, and food whenever I want it. Every time I leave the shelter, I am reminded how important my family and friends are to my own welfare and how lucky we all are to have REACH and other shelters to help those who don't have that kind of support. I had no idea when I first started volunteering how fulfilling it would be.

What would you tell someone who is thinking about volunteering with REACH but not sure if they should get involved?

I would tell them to go for it! It's an amazing experience to give with no agenda and no expectations. Not only will REACH benefit from their efforts, but I believe they will get much more back from volunteering their time and efforts to such a great organization.

For more information about volunteering with REACH, contact deb@reachma.org.



Top Left: The Mood Swings Orchestra

Above: Emcee J.C. Monahan, Co-Author Chronicle

Left: Board Member Hon. Leila Kern (ret.) and Stewart Urist



Above: Wendy and Gerry Leone, former Middlesex District Attorney and Nixon Peabody Partner

Left: Robin Allen and Chuck Holland

SAVE THE DATE

Reach for the Stars Gala

Saturday, October 18, 2014

Renaissance Boston Waterfront Hotel

CO-CHAIRS

Sally Marrer and Stephen Langlois
Mary Ann and Peter Mattoon

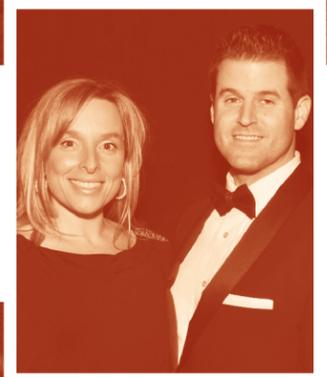
EMCEE

Susan Wornick

Contact courtney@reachma.org for more information.



Above: Brenda and Tony Helies with Board Member M'Baye NDiaye and Executive Director Laura R. VanZandt



Right: Kerri Pigott of Rockland Trust and guest Phillip Wojcik



Above: Liz and Peter Carpenter

Right: Live Auction Excitement

Below: Kristie Thomas and Gary Bailey



Right: Board Member Diane Suda with Chris Coley

Below: Event Co-Chairs Lisa Brown and Sylvia Whitman

Photos by David Barron and Dan McQuaid



REACH FOR THE STARS GALA

REACH held the 10th Annual *Reach for the Stars* Gala in October at The Castle at the Boston Park Plaza. Despite a last-minute venue change due to the federal government shutdown, and traffic caused by the baseball playoffs, we hosted 300 guests and raised more than \$300,000.

With J.C. Monahan from WCVB-TV as our emcee, we honored former Middlesex District Attorney Gerry Leone, now Partner at Nixon Peabody, who is a prominent leader and advocate for domestic violence survivors.

After Leone's remarks about breaking down the "Barriers Against Disclosure" that many survivors face, Mandy, a participant in REACH's Hope Project, shared her inspirational story with us:

"REACH taught me that the guilt I felt wasn't my fault. REACH gave me a safe place to go and a safe place to talk, where I found hope for a better life. Today I continue to use the tools that REACH gave me to protect myself and my children. I no longer live in fear. Today I have a voice."

Your support – as donors, volunteers, and advocates – makes it possible for Mandy and others to access the services REACH provides. Thank you for standing with us in our efforts to end domestic violence.

Please mark your calendars for this year's *Reach for the Stars* on Saturday, October 18 at the Renaissance Boston Waterfront Hotel. We hope to see you there!

SAY HI TO YOUR NEIGHBORS WEEK

From March 1-8 we held our 3rd Annual “Say Hi to Your Neighbors” Week in Waltham. Because survivors of domestic and sexual violence are more likely to share their experience with a family member, friend or neighbor before they ever call a hotline or the police, we organize events like Say Hi Week so neighbors can get to know one another in order to build stronger, healthier communities.

Just a few of the week's highlights:

- In A Pickle Restaurant, a local business, offered customers 50% off their bill if they sat down and had a meal with people they didn't know. It was fun to see people get to know each other over omelets and coffee.
- We held a “Meet the Social Media” event where people put faces with names they recognized from Facebook and Twitter and had conversations about things they're interested in and care about.



Left: The winning team of the scavenger hunt with Allison Reynolds-Berry (left) and Nicole Waxmonsky (right)

- On one of the coldest mornings of the year (so cold our milk froze!) we handed out hot coffee to commuters at the train station.
- More than 60 people, including some of our elected officials, came out for a scavenger hunt at the end of the week. The team that won was made up of three people who all signed up as individuals, got grouped together and ended up winning!

It never fails, when we are out in the community, people come up to us and tell us about their personal connection to domestic violence. We talked with people looking for support because they were in the middle of trying to leave their partner. We talked with a pastor looking for resources to give congregants experiencing abuse. Being out and about and just talking about the issue can remind people that resources are available.

You don't have to live in Waltham and it doesn't have to be a special week for you to make connections with your neighbors. Do you own a local business that could help bring community members together? Do you interact with people from your town on social media? Do you know how to make coffee? Small actions like this can make a big difference and let everyone know that domestic violence has no place in our communities.

REACH PARTICIPATES IN ARLINGTON COMMUNITY FORUM

In November, our community was devastated to learn about the homicides of Mei Kum Li and her twin sons, Colt and Cameron, in their Arlington home. We joined community members at the vigil days later. In her remarks, our Executive Director Laura Van Zandt noted that domestic violence thrives in isolation. By coming together that night, the community took a major step in breaking down that isolation, breaking the silence that often shrouds domestic violence, bringing it out of the shadows and into the light.

On Thursday, January 30, members of the Arlington community came together again, this time to learn more about domestic violence and how to help someone who may be in an abusive relationship. REACH joined representatives from First Step; Emerge; the Cambridge, Arlington, Belmont High-Risk Assessment and Response Team; the Middlesex District Attorney's Office; and the Arlington Police Department at Arlington Town Hall to

answer questions about domestic violence. More than 60 community members were in attendance, including people interested in volunteering, donating, and helping a friend or neighbor. The town of Arlington's community forum has been vital to continuing this crucial conversation.

If you'd like to organize a forum about domestic violence in your community, please contact Jessica Hollander at 781-891-0724 x105 or jessica@reachma.org.



Left: Arlington Police Department Chief Fred Ryan begins a panel discussion at a forum in Town Hall on domestic violence. Pictured at the table (left to right): Jessica Hollander, REACH; Elaine Shea, First Step; David Adams, Emerge; Capt. Richard Flynn, APD; Shawn MacMaster, Middlesex District Attorney's office.

SURVIVOR VOICES: WHEN HOLIDAY GIFTS ARE MORE THAN JUST PRESENTS

Our annual Holiday Gift Program is described here through the words of a survivor who once shared with us what gifts for the holidays meant to her.

I was urged by a REACH advocate to do a Holiday Gift list and I reluctantly fell for the line “do it for the children.” So despite my shame, I listed the gifts my daughter had circled in the Toy-R-U's catalog. I even wrote down hard-to-find specialty items for my child with complex medical needs, like therapy toys. And then I wrote my own list.

It felt frivolous and scary. Frivolous because I couldn't justify the purchase of slippers and toys or scented candles. Scary because I feared judgment by others. Would people judge me for my list? “Why does she want earrings, is she planning on getting into another abusive relationship? And why all these toys for her children? Has this woman ever provided for her kids?”

Despite these imaginary charges against me, my children and I did receive gifts. All of the items from our wish lists. *All of them.*

As I picked up the presents, I felt tightness in my chest, seeing the exact doll stroller my daughter asked for. I felt dizzy and hot, eyeing the impossible-to-find specialty toy for my son. Then I was handed wrapping paper and tape. *Tape:* I've needed tape for so long, to hang my children's treasured colorings and homework on the kitchen wall.

I understand now why I burst into tears when I picked up the gifts. They were chosen with thought and care, even though you didn't know me. Had you known I have gone most of my life not getting my needs met? Being denied because I hadn't asked or had failed to ask correctly, because I had used the wrong tone of voice, that it had been a stupid thing to ask for anyway.

Did you know I needed my faith restored in myself and others? Did you know I needed to be reassured that I mattered?

Among my gifts were running sneakers, the kind that propel you forward. When I put those sneakers on, I am propelled forward in life, moving with ease, held up by something bigger than myself.

The gifts we received far outweigh their monetary value. They gave me the sense that people *do* care, that I *am* important, that I *am* valued. Your gifts gave me the confidence to make a request, to speak up again.

REACH and your generosity gave me the ability to stop mumbling and looking at the floor and instead, to stand up straight and look people in the eye again.

The 2013 Holiday Gift Program provided gifts to 702 individuals. To learn more about how you can make a difference for a family affected by domestic violence, contact deb@reachma.org.

HIGH RISK ASSESSMENT: TEAMING UP TO PREVENT TRAGEDY

Have you ever seen a story about a domestic violence homicide on the news and felt that it sounds all too familiar? It's true, there are factors that indicate greater risk for domestic violence homicide and research has shown that we can assess the level of danger. Some of the risk factors include access to weapons, past threats or attempts at suicide, controlling a victim's daily activities, and attempted strangulation.

Throughout Massachusetts and the United States, law enforcement agencies, domestic violence organizations, and others are learning to identify factors that place someone at high risk for homicide. The Waltham Police Department recently worked with REACH and the Middlesex District Attorney's Office to provide training on risk factors for their entire force. Teams like the

Cambridge, Arlington, Belmont High-Risk Assessment and Response Team (CAB-HART), of which REACH is a member, emphasize collaboration and information-sharing between partner agencies so that communities can identify, monitor, and contain high risk offenders and deliver comprehensive services for families.

We are pleased to announce that, with funding from Community Health Network Area-17 (CHNA-17), REACH will develop and institute a high-risk response model in Waltham. This collaboration between REACH, the Waltham Police Department, and the Middlesex District Attorney's Office will strengthen our community's response to intimate partner violence.

If you are in an unhealthy relationship, support is available. Please call our 24-hour hotline at 800.899.4000.



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HELP US GO GREEN!

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- Heather R. Hernandez
Director of Residential Programs
- Jessica L. Hollander
Director of Prevention Programs
- Brianna S. Nadelberg
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- Hon. Lella R. Kern (ret.)
- Sandra T. King
- Sheriff Peter Koutoujian
- Joanne F. Segal
- Diane Suda
- David Weaver

SAVE THE DATE
REACH Annual Meeting
June 17, 2014 • 6pm
Massachusetts Medical Society
For more information, visit www.reachma.org

...That's the message encouraging adults to sit in this ball pit as a way to break down barriers, build connections and find commonalities that build friendships. Shown here at the 4th Annual Waltham Neighborhoods Fall Festival in October, it will be used at fairs throughout the summer to build community and prevent domestic violence. Thanks to Arlex Oil for donating their time and materials to build the ball pit. We also thank Downtown Waltham Partnership, The Nelson Companies, Park Lodge Hotel Group, and Waltham West Suburban Chamber of Commerce for their support.



"TAKE A SEAT AND MAKE A FRIEND!"