

# Happenings

## NEWSLETTER

### Meeting Survivor Needs

As we observe Domestic Violence Awareness Month in October, we wanted to show you how the programs at Harbor House interconnect to help survivors and their children break free



from abuse and build a new life on their own terms. The best way to demonstrate is with a real life example.

Amira\* came to Harbor House's office in the Orange County Courthouse back in the spring. She and her husband were originally from the Middle East and had been in the U.S. for a few years. Suffering from constant physical, emotional, and financial abuse since they first wed, Amira feared he would make good on his threats to kill her. She also worried about the effects on their young child. Our court advocates worked with Amira, and she was granted a temporary injunction right away. In addition to the violence at the hands of her husband, Amira's life had been threatened if she ever attempted to return to her home country. She had no support before she found Harbor House. Amira made a plan and was able to get herself and her son out of the house and came into our emergency shelter.

Amira's husband had always handled everything, never allowing her to sign any paperwork. Since moving into shelter, she obtained a driver's license and was referred to Catholic Charities

of Central Florida for work with an immigration attorney on her asylum application. She has a permit to work in the U.S. and began working part-time in food service this summer. Amira already had an

undergraduate degree and is pursuing her master's. She now has a full-time job in her chosen career field while attending school.

Amira is overcoming her fears as she gains independence. She secured a five-year injunction and worked closely with the Economic Empowerment Coordinator in shelter to learn about financial safety planning, how to budget, and seeking out services in the community. She used her new skills and confidence to save for and purchase her own car and is utilizing Legal Aid Society of the Orange County Bar Association to pursue a divorce from her abuser.

Throughout this process, Amira's son was well taken care of in our on-site childcare facility. He recently started pre-kindergarten and is doing great! Amira was excited to take her son to the doctor for a check up. Her husband had not allowed her to take the boy to a doctor, even when he was sick. She was not allowed to go either. Harbor House help Amira find housing beyond shelter, and she is thriving and will continue to work towards independence and a life free of abuse and control.

\*Name changed to protect identity.

### Domestic Violence Awareness Month

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month. According to a report by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, there were 8,360 domestic violence related offenses reported last year in Orange County. We know that many victims never report the abuse. Domestic violence thrives when we are silent. Here are some ways you can join with Harbor House this month to raise awareness and end violence.

#### WEAR PURPLE

Purple is the color for domestic violence awareness. Wear a purple awareness ribbon, purple shirt, or even dye your hair purple! Participate in Purple Tie Tuesday on October 23. When people ask about it, tell them you are raising awareness for domestic violence.

#### SHARE AWARENESS

Help Harbor House raise awareness by sharing our posts on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram with #DVAM.

#### GET INVOLVED

Volunteer! Harbor House has many opportunities for you to get involved - from direct service to survivors to special events to sorting donations to hosting a game night for our kids.

#### GIVE HELP

Your \$65 donation provides one safe night in the emergency shelter for a domestic violence survivor. Harbor House offered a safe place to stay for 898 women, children, and men last year. That translates to 36,055 bed nights.

## Message from the CEO, Michelle Sperzel

While we are positioned to raise awareness all year long, Domestic Violence Awareness Month is the time Harbor House sets aside to honor our partners and allies in the movement at our Purple Door Luncheon. We are stronger together. That is why we are asking you to help raise awareness about domestic violence this October.

Harbor House's activities are not the only domestic violence related items we have seen in the media lately. There have been several horrific crimes that have brought domestic violence back into the light as a community issue. The cases covered by the media remind us that violence is not something that just happens to the forgotten poor or the people we choose not to see. It happens in suburban homes, on college campuses, in Hollywood, and in Washington, DC.

We are in a time where society wants to and needs to rethink how we regard domestic violence and sexual assault survivors. Sometimes we fall into a culture of silence and blame that continues to oppress victims. This culture of silence is very pervasive. It leads people to make statements like:

"Domestic violence is not something to be discussed."

"If I was in her shoes, I would just leave."

"He abuses her because there is something mentally wrong with him."

"He was just a teenager when it happened."

"Why did she take so long to tell someone about this?"

I could go on and on with victim blaming statements, but then I would be adding to the issue rather being part of the solution. The only way to stop violence against women is to start breaking the silence. We need to continue educating people about warning signs of an abusive relationship. We need to continue speaking about dating violence, mental abuse, financial abuse, sexual abuse, and emotional abuse. We need to continue to think about the survivor's voice and perspective.

Harbor House received over 7,100 crisis calls last year. Many of the women and men calling are breaking their silence for the very first time when they reach out to us and speak to an advocate. Some of them have been too ashamed to tell their mother, father, sister, or friend what has been happening. Making the call isn't easy. Making a call to a stranger to talk

about your pain and your shame is incredibly difficult.

It is so very important that we continue to break down this culture of silence. I urge you to talk to your friends and family about domestic violence. If you are a mother or father, please talk to your teens about dating violence. Tell them why you are a supporter of Harbor House. You may never have been in an abusive situation yourself, but you never know when you'll meet someone who faces the horror of abuse daily. Without your words of acceptance and encouragement, they may not have the courage to seek help and get out.

The Edmund Burke quote, "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing." keeps coming to mind. We need some outrage to move forward and hold batterers accountable. We all need to keep talking about what we are doing to help survivors. We need to take action and provide lifesaving and life changing services. Finally, we all need to advocate for survivors and keep the conversations at the breakfast and dinner tables happening.

Thank you for trusting us to do this work and for making a difference in our community.

## Walk a Mile Returns in February

Calling all men! Strap on your high heels for the 7th Annual Walk a Mile in Her Shoes on Thursday, February 7, 2019.

Whatever your footwear, strut or stroll through downtown Orlando to raise awareness of domestic abuse and the resources available to survivors through Harbor House.

Though Walk a Mile in Her Shoes



carries a serious message, it's a lot of fun too. Men are invited to literally walk a mile in high heels to get a little taste of life as a woman while showing their support. Of course, women are invited

to walk too, and heels are encouraged but not required.

More details are coming soon. Check in at [www.harborhousefl.com](http://www.harborhousefl.com) for information.

## Purple Tie Tuesday



Show your commitment to helping end domestic violence by participating in Purple Tie Tuesday on October 23. This is a

simple call to action that anyone can do. Just wear a purple tie and tell people you're promoting healthy relationships and an end to violence. Ladies, you can sport a necktie too or wear a purple scarf. Take a picture of yourself and share on social media with #PurpleTieTuesday. It's that easy!

## Champions of Courage Honored at Purple Door

Since Harbor House of Central Florida was founded in 1976, we have sought to raise awareness and rally community support. One of the ways we do this is through an annual Purple Door signature event. Hundreds of business, civic, and service leaders gather each October to learn about the services Harbor House provides and what we can all do to end violence.

At the 2018 Purple Door Luncheon, presented by Massey Services, Inc., Harbor House will honor the following Champions of Courage who are working to end violence right here in our community and nationwide.

The **Champion of Advocacy** award goes to the **Honorable Teresa Jacobs, Orange County Mayor**. Throughout her eight years of elective service as the Mayor of Orange County, she has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to creating an environment in which children and families can thrive and succeed. She has focused on the epidemic of domestic and intimate partner violence, bringing attention and resources to this issue.

**Bank of America** was selected to receive the **Champion of Community** award. Bank of America is a passionate partner in the quest to end domestic violence. In addition to sponsoring numerous Harbor House events, they have donated countless hours of volunteer time and awarded Harbor House \$250,000 through their Neighborhood Builders® program, the largest national philanthropic investment initiative, which also provides leadership development for a CEO and an emerging leader amongst



other benefits.

Our **Champion of Courage** winner this year is the **Orlando Police Department**. As a law enforcement agency, OPD has worked hand-in-hand with Harbor House to combat domestic violence. Harbor House's Law Enforcement Hotline was initially launched as a partnership with them. The organizations have also partnered for the It Takes Courage awareness event and the InVEST/EVE program, where a position was created to solely focus on domestic violence.

**Heather Wilkie, Executive Director of Zebra Coalition**, will receive the **Champion of Equality** award. As former COO of Harbor House, she led the state-wide LGBTQ caucus for the Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence to enhance services for survivors of abuse. She continues to serve on domestic violence committees and leads LGBTQ trainings at Harbor House and state-wide with FCADV.

Our 2018 **Champion of Justice** is the **Honorable Alice Blackwell, Orange County Circuit Court Judge**. Judge Blackwell's leadership and passion for survivors of domestic violence drove her to establish a more effective, compassionate, and improved court

process. As the co-chair for the Orange County Domestic Violence and Child Abuse Commission she continues to recommend improvements to services for Orange County families impacted by domestic violence and child abuse.

The first ever **Harbor House Legacy Leader** award winner is **Beverly Paulk**. She has worked tirelessly, volunteering

measureless hours to protect the rights of women and children, especially survivors of domestic violence and those who have been sexually assaulted. Since the mid-1980's, her caring heart, business savvy, and life perspective have helped Harbor House grow into one of the most comprehensive and progressive domestic abuse centers in Florida.

Harbor House would like to thank all of our 2018 Purple Door Luncheon sponsors: Massey Services, Inc., Florida Hospital, Orange County Sheriff's Office, Orlando Police Department, Orlando Health, Redd Ash Technologies, Orlando Regional Realtor Association, SeaWorld, Rhodes + Brito Architects, Wells Fargo, Adewale Family Foundation and Orlando Body Movement and Therapy, Alexis Pugh, Bryan Bennett, Orange County Clerk of Courts, Licensing Solutions, Lincoln Salmon, Orlando Sentinel, OUC, Oxford Eyes, SunTrust Bank, Water Oak Advisors, News 6 WKMG, and Sweet Babs.

Monies raised at the Purple Door Luncheon support our mission to stop the cycle of domestic violence by ensuring that every family member has the resources they need both in shelter and beyond.

## Gifts of Hope

Harbor House works all year long to ensure an empowering atmosphere for the families we serve. We need your help to create a festive and safe holiday season. Here are a few ways you can help Harbor House ensure that the children and their parents experience a sense of belonging, hope, and empowerment.

Can you help us fill the holiday gift shop? Here are several ways you can help make the holidays special for the families at Harbor House.

### Gift Card Drive

Financial empowerment is important to us and to the survivors. Donating gift cards to retailers like Walmart, Target, Visa, and MasterCard allows the survivors we work with to give their families a holiday to remember in their own special way.

### Gift Shop for Mom

Help the children at Harbor House surprise their moms with a gift this year. Purchase women's pajamas (any size) or bath and body gift sets. By donating a gift, you can give our children the joy of shopping for the special item for mom.



### Gift Shop for Teenagers

While we receive a lot of toys for young children during this time, we want to make sure the teens in our shelter do not feel overlooked. Collect gifts for teens such as headphones, smartphone cases, cologne or perfume, and sports equipment.

### Adopt-a-Family

You and your family can embrace a family this holiday season and purchase specific items from a family's wish list. Visit [www.harborhousefl.com/giftsofhope](http://www.harborhousefl.com/giftsofhope) or contact us at 407-703-2890 and we will match you with a Harbor House family.

### Provide a Holiday Meal

With your help, Harbor House provides complete holiday meal baskets to the

families we serve. Our holiday meal drive feeds dozens of families at Thanksgiving and during the holiday season. Donations of non-perishable foods and gift cards for our families to purchase items that are unique to their holiday tradition are appreciated.

### No time for Shopping?

Give any amount to the Gifts of Hope and know your gift will keep giving throughout the year. Visit [www.harborhousefl.com/give-help](http://www.harborhousefl.com/give-help) to give the gift of hope today!

Donations will be accepted at our Central Outreach office between 9am and 4pm weekdays. We will also be open at that location on Saturdays (December 1, 8 and 15 only) from 9am to noon. The office is located at 708 E. Colonial Drive, Suite 201 in Orlando.

Thanksgiving food donations are needed by November 14. All other donations should be dropped off by December 17.

If you have questions or would like to make plans to host your own donation drive, please contact our Development Coordinator, Gabriele Harb, at 407-703-2890.

Thank you for sharing your abundance to help make the holidays brighter for the families at Harbor House.

## It Takes Courage



On a Saturday morning last month, dozens of volunteers and Orlando Police Department officers participated in It Takes Courage. The annual door hanging event puts information on recognizing the warning signs of domestic violence and how to access Harbor House's services into the hands of people who need it.

Thank you to Valencia College, the initial meeting place before everyone spread out across Orange County. The volunteers and officers distributed potentially lifesaving information to 5,026 households!

## Stay in the Know

