

Happenings

NEWSLETTER

Making Plans and Taking Action

As a medical professional, Lydia* knew all about Harbor House and the services we provide to domestic abuse victims. At her previous job, they would refer survivors to Harbor House. With a good career and her children grown and gone, Lydia never thought she would need to make that call herself.

Lydia's second husband convinced her to quit her job to work on the family business with him. What seemed like a good idea in the beginning quickly turned sour. He kept her out of the loop as he was fleecing clients and draining her 401(k).

In addition to the extreme financial abuse, Lydia also endured physical attacks. When she ended up in the hospital because her husband hit and drugged her, Lydia knew it was time to reach out to Harbor House.

The first step was to begin safety planning as soon as she was released from the hospital. Lydia did not need shelter, so she met with an outreach advocate to ensure she would be safe as she transitioned out of the relationship.

Next, outreach staff connected her with our Economic Justice program, which is made possible through support from The Allstate Foundation. With the help of the Economic

Empowerment Coordinator, Lydia made a financial safety plan, got help with job readiness, and secured a new position. Victim compensation funds helped with first month's rent and deposits. Lydia also worked with the coordinator to purchase a vehicle, improve her credit score, and create a household budget.

Through her work with the Economic Empowerment Coordinator, Lydia



discovered her soon-to-be ex-husband had opened numerous accounts in her name. She is working to clean up that mess and make a fresh start.

Free from financial and physical abuse, Lydia is making every effort to build a new life for herself.

Lydia's story demonstrates the kind of work survivors are putting in with advocates every day at Harbor House. All services at Harbor House are free to survivors and their children and are completely confidential. If you or someone you know is being abused, reach out to an advocate on our 24/7 crisis hotline at 407-886-2856. Whether you need safe emergency shelter, assistance with safety planning, help navigating the legal system, or just need someone to talk to, Harbor House is here for you.

**Name changed to protect identity.*

Purple Door Honors Champions

Harbor House has been opening our door to domestic abuse victims and their children since 1976. Each October Harbor House hosts the Purple Door Luncheon as we observe Domestic Violence Awareness Month. Hundreds of civic and business leaders attend to show their support for survivors in our community and to learn about the free, confidential help that is available through Harbor House and our partners.

The Purple Door Luncheon includes an inspiring story from a survivor and a special awards presentation for champions working to end violence in our community and on a national level.

The 2019 honorees are:

Champion of Justice Pat Schroeder, Former Congresswoman

Legendary Congresswoman Pat Schroeder began her 24-year service in the U.S. House of Representatives as a young working mother of two small children. Equipped with a Harvard Law degree and an iron will, she became one of the strongest voices for women and children that Washington, DC has ever seen. During her tenure, she introduced many bills that protect women and children to this day – The Violence Against Women Act, The Women's Health Equity Act, The National Child Protection Act, and many more.

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Message from the CEO, Michelle Sperzel

"It's a long hard road...but if I could survive the abuse. I can survive the recovery"

~2018 Harbor House Survivor

Hope. It's a simple word that conveys so much meaning. It defines present and future. It inspires and empowers a person to dream, wish, and power through situations. When someone calls the crisis line, speaks to her advocate, or wakes up in the shelter, hope is something that she may feel or embody.

The past few months the team and I have been talking more about hope, resilience, and healing. As we finalize our new strategic plan (see our new mission and vision statements), we are talking about what role we play in moving survivors from crisis support to helping them work through trauma. We are exploring what it means to be trauma-informed in new and innovative ways. Over the next several months and years, you will see how we are partnering with adult and child survivors on their journey. Teaching youth about healthy relationships, safety, and finances are at the core of who we are, and we will continue this

important work, but we need to help the whole person. Helping heal from trauma is essential. That thought alone inspired our new awareness campaign – I AM.

We already have several trauma healing programs that help survivors living in shelter. The unconditional love survivors receive from their pets is so valuable, and our Paws for Peace Kennel helps provide it. We've added mindfulness support groups that focus on topics such as preparing for sleep and healing breathing. We started working with an on-site mental health therapist for adult and child survivors in shelter and outreach. We will expand our mindfulness activities to include weekly trauma healing yoga classes in the shelter through our partnership with Kula for Karma. If we receive additional funding, we will further grow these programs to include classes for youth in shelter and survivors using our court and outreach services next spring. We are even

working with volunteers to build a walking meditation path and garden at the emergency shelter.

We were all very excited for Harbor House to host our first Camp HOPE this July. My favorite activity every night was campfire. We ask the children, "Where did you see hope today?" The answers were simple and powerful reminders of why we do the work we do. One boy answered, "I saw hope when Jose was scared to jump in the water from the waterslide, but he did it anyway." Or "I saw hope when Jen fell off the bike but she got on again." Because of you and our programs, we are helping adults and children get back up again, face fears, and find hope.

I am very excited about what fall and winter will bring. I am full of hope about the future of Harbor House and what we are accomplishing together in Orange County.

Michelle

Board of Directors Welcomes New Members

As Harbor House kicked off our new fiscal year on July 1, we welcomed two new members to our Board of Directors. The board provides governance and oversight to insure Harbor House is always working to advance our mission.

Danielle Vizcaino is the Vice President of Operations for The Assistance Fund, an independent charitable patient assistance foundation that helps patients and families facing high medical out-of-pocket costs. She is looking forward to contributing to the Harbor House board with her expertise in strategic planning, operations, communications, and technology. She holds a bachelor's



degree in Molecular and Microbiology from the University of Central Florida as well as MBA and MPA degrees from the University of North Florida.

Anthony Watts, Sr. is the Deputy Chief of Administrative Services for the



Orange County Corrections Department. He comes to the Harbor House board with more than 30 years of combined experience in corrections, law enforcement, military, and court law enforcement operations. In addition to his extensive corrections and law enforcement background, Deputy Chief Watts also brings knowledge of financial management and control, communications, public policy, and program planning and evaluation to the table. He has a bachelor's in Public Administration from Upper Iowa University and earned an MPA from the University of Central Florida.

Harbor House Brings Camp HOPE to Florida



Harbor House was selected as Florida's first agency to host Camp HOPE, a

weeklong sleepaway camp for children whose lives have been touched by trauma and violence. This evidence-based program was developed in San Diego in 2003 and has since spread across the country, changing the futures of campers.

Harbor House partnered with Camp Winona, a YMCA camp in DeLeon Springs, as the site of Camp HOPE Florida. We had 30 campers show up that first day. Among the campers were kids who had been in foster care, witnessed domestic violence, had been abused themselves, or had an incarcerated parent. Most had never

spent time in the great outdoors and were understandably anxious to be left in a camp setting for a week. Fortunately, it did not take long for the children to start bonding with one another and their counselors and enjoying camp life.

Cam* was especially apprehensive in the beginning. He walked behind the group and kept to himself. When his counselor approached him to see what was going on, Cam said, "I don't like myself. I'm not as cool as the other kids." It turned out he was self-conscious about everything from his clothes and shoes to his haircut. He felt worthless. The staff was able to get Cam some new sneakers and swim trunks to give him a quick confidence boost. With extra encouragement from his counselor and the staff, Cam started engaging with the group more. By the end of camp, he had befriended two

other boys. The three could be seen together laughing and playing all day and were heard making plans to meet up once they were back home.

Transformations like Cam's are not uncommon at Camp HOPE. Big and small victories were celebrated every day. Many of the campers were scared of Wet Willy, a huge waterslide that empties into the lake. By the end of the week, every single camper had conquered the slide with boisterous cheers from everyone.

Campers and their parents will reunite with counselors and Harbor House staff throughout the year to reinforce the feelings of hope they gained at camp.

**Name changed to protect identity.*



Purple Door Honors Champions

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Champion of Advocacy **Kevin Sherin, MD, MPH, MBA -** **Medical Director, Clínica Mi** **Salud**

Throughout his career, Kevin Sherin has worked tirelessly to improve access to healthcare for those less fortunate. This includes developing the H.I.T.S. tool used by hospitals around the world to assess if a patient has experienced domestic violence.

Champion of Community **WKMG 6**

WKMG 6 is a passionate partner in bringing awareness to domestic violence, utilizing its power of TV news. In addition to sponsoring numerous Harbor House events, they have donated countless hours of time and talent to the organization and held numerous community needs drives in support of survivors.

Champion of Equality **George Diaz, Author & Former** **Orlando Sentinel Columnist**

George Diaz has penned numerous articles about domestic violence in sports. He's a long-time advocate in the fight to end domestic violence for survivors from all walks of life. He was also honorary co-chair of Harbor House's Paws for Peace Walk with his boxer, Addie, in memory of his beloved Marvin, in whose name Marvin's Fund was established to pay for veterinary services at Harbor House's on-site kennel.

Champion of Courage **Michelle Latham, Assistant State** **Attorney**

As head of the domestic violence division for the Orange-Osceola State Attorney's Office, Michelle Latham risks her life every day defending the rights of domestic violence survivors and keeping them safe. She

implemented a therapy dog program in the offices, in which her German Shepherd, Justice, offers comfort to survivors and their families. She has trained hundreds of law enforcement officers and served on the Harbor House Board of Directors.

Harbor House Legacy Leader **Ruffin Rhodes, AIA, LEED AP** **BD+C – Principal/Director of** **Operations, Rhodes + Brito** **Architects**

Ruffin Rhodes has certainly left his legacy with Harbor House with the Morgan & Morgan Home – A Safe Haven for Families, Paws for Peace Kennel, and the Dr. Phillips Children's Center. He oversaw the design and build of all three buildings and continues to share his insight with the continued development of the temporary emergency campus. Ruffin served on the Harbor House Board of Directors for six years.

Gifts of Hope Make the Holidays Brighter

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. 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 survivors 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 that special item for mom.

Gift Shop for Teenagers

While we receive a lot of toys for young children, 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 or contact us at 407-605-3719 and we will match you with a Harbor House family.

No time for Shopping?

Give any amount and know your gift will keep giving throughout the year. Visit www.harborhousefl.com/give-help to give the gift of hope today!

Gift of Hope donations will be accepted at our Central Outreach office between 9am and 4pm weekdays. The office is located at 708 E. Colonial Drive, Suite 201 in Orlando. 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 Danielle at 407-605-3719.

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

Walk a Mile in Her Shoes



Calling all men! Strap on your high heels for the 8th Annual Walk a Mile in Her Shoes on Thursday, February 6, 2020. 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 at www.harborhousefl.com.

Paws for Peace Walk



Tails are wagging in anticipation of the 10th Annual Paws for Peace Walk—that's 70 in dog years! Make plans to join us at Blue Jacket Park on Saturday, April 18, 2020.

The Paws for Peace Walk raises the funds to keep the on-site kennel at our emergency shelter running. No one wants to leave a family member behind, especially not with an abuser. Your support at Paws for Peace helps keep family member, even the furry ones, safe and together.

Get more information and register at www.harborhousefl.com/paws.

Stay in the Know



Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence