

## Misusing the Law: why legal representation changes lives

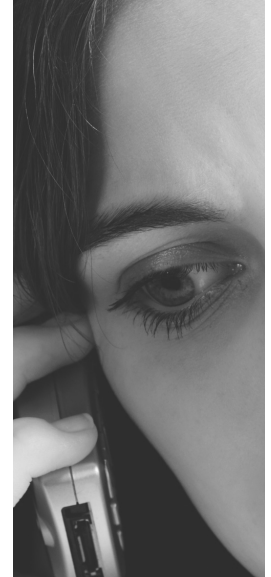
**Domestic abuse is a pattern** of controlling behavior found most often in intimate-partner relationships. It can include physical, sexual, emotional, verbal, and financial abuse. People who are abusive sometimes misuse institutions to help them gain and maintain control over their partners. One such institution is the court system. Since 2008, Spruce Run has provided legal representation to victims of abuse to assist them in their quest to seek protection through the court system and to mitigate the effects of manipulation of that system. Since Spruce Run began providing legal representation to victims of domestic abuse, over 150 people have been helped by this vital service. Cindy is one of those people.

Cindy met Nick\* in a college class and they were married a few months later. Nick's controlling behavior began even before they said their marriage vows and got more extreme over time. Throughout their 22-year marriage, Nick

told Cindy how to part her hair and wear her belt, and who to associate with. Nick was financially and sexually abusive to Cindy. Anytime she contradicted him, he would scream at her and berate her. Then there was the physical abuse. Cindy always fought back when Nick assaulted her, but he was much stronger and she sustained many injuries. Nick was also verbally, emotionally, and physically abusive to their children, giving the youngest a black eye.

In early summer 2010, Cindy and Nick went to see a marriage counselor that Cindy hoped would help her escape. At their second session together their counselor asked to speak with them separately. She gave Cindy the number to Spruce Run and said, "I can keep him busy for 30 minutes. You call them."

That first call with a Spruce Run hotline worker led to a walk-in



appointment and then to assistance from Suzanne Barrett, Spruce Run's attorney, and a plan to get Cindy and the children free.

Because Nick constantly stalked Cindy both in person and by phone—he called her several times an hour—it was very difficult for Cindy to meet with anyone. Suzanne came to her workplace on three separate occasions, one time filling out divorce papers in the office bathroom to hide from Nick. Cindy always left her paperwork with Suzanne because Nick routinely searched through all of her things.

After an assault, Cindy worked with Suzanne to get a temporary Protection from Abuse order (PFA). Next, Cindy filed divorce papers. In retaliation, Nick filed a PFA against Cindy followed by multiple motions. Each motion filed required a response from Suzanne.



## Homefront

**Birth** Henry Michael Walters was born to Joy and Nick Walters on January 20<sup>th</sup>. Joy is taking time off from her school-based prevention and public awareness work at Spruce Run to get to know her son. Welcome to the world, Henry!

**Collaboration** We are excited to be working with Addverb Productions, Hermon High School, and Rape Response Services on a research and evaluation project regarding the impact of the *You The Man* play by Cathy Plourde on high school students' attitudes about dating abuse. This three-year project begins this April.

**My Body, My Voice** Premiered at our Annual Meeting last October, the *My Body, My Voice* reader's theater—written in collaboration with Mabel Wadsworth Women's Health Center—has been getting amazing reception around the state. If you would like more information about the readers' theater, please call 945-5102.

**DV in the Workplace** The University of Maine System has implemented a new Violence in the Workplace policy, which they developed in consultation with Spruce Run. Sally Dobres, Associate Director of Human Resources, reports, "We were very pleased with the expertise and support provided by Spruce Run.... The employee and supervisor training they conducted was effective." For more information about how your business can address domestic abuse in the workplace, check out our website at [sprucerun.net](http://sprucerun.net).

## 'Misusing' Continued...

During this time, Nick continued to stalk Cindy. He beat Cindy's dog to death. A month later, he was arrested for violating Cindy's PFA against him and his criminal hearing was set for early winter. Two weeks before his criminal hearing and the final PFA hearing, Nick emailed one of their children saying he was leaving the state.

Suzanne successfully argued to get the PFA against Cindy dropped. Also with Suzanne's assistance, Cindy was granted a divorce. Suzanne used Nick's killing of Cindy's dog and other facts to argue for a final PFA not only on behalf of herself but also on behalf of their minor child. Nick continues to appeal the divorce from out of state. As of this writing, Suzanne has assisted Cindy with six separate legal issues. She also connected Cindy with counseling for her children, and connected her with other Spruce Run help, like our holiday assistance

program.

Suzanne says that Cindy's case is far from unique. Countless family matters, civil matters, motions and appeals filed by abusers, and abusers' contempt of court ordered agreements keep victims in emotional and financial limbo, sometimes for years. An attorney that understands the safety risks inherent in leaving an abusive person and that provides free services is key to the safety of families like Cindy's.

Cindy reflects, "I would never have been able to escape him without Spruce Run. One thing that kept me with him over the years was a lack of money, I couldn't afford a lawyer, but it was also a lack of a support system. With Spruce Run I had support every step of the way."

\*Cindy and Nick are pseudonyms

by: Kati McCarthy



Healthy Relationships bulletin board at Hermon High School

# February was TDVAPM

**The School-Based Program** provided support for several school and youth organizations observing Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Month (TDVAPM) this past February. **Hermon High School** students created bulletin boards and facilitated a purple ribbon awareness activity. **Brewer High School** Jobs for Maine's Graduates (JMG) students planned a school-wide campaign that included a bulletin board, a tabling session, and bathroom stall signs.

Additionally, **Nokomis High School** JMG students organized a "Wear Purple" day and sold purple tie-dyed shirts to encourage full school participation. They also made healthy relationship ribbons to post in the cafeteria. Elsewhere, **Penobscot Job Corps** culinary students made purple-themed desserts and the student body participated in an interactive tabling activity, answering questions about healthy and unhealthy relationships to get prizes. Health Club members at

**Central High School** did a lunch-time awareness table, wore purple, and created a hallway display. Finally, February 9<sup>th</sup> was the first Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence "DV Day" at the statehouse. Members of Spruce Run's school-based team met with legislators, passed out information regarding our prevention work and were present for the Governor's TDVAPM proclamation signing.



Advocates from throughout the state witness Governor LePage sign the TDVAPM proclamation.

## Improvements at Shelter

**There have been** some exciting improvements at our shelter recently.

Through a grant from Maine Housing, we had a complete energy audit. A local company weatherized and insulated the full building, including the basement. Through this process, we have also been granted a new boiler heating system. Hooray!

In addition to this exciting work, some individuals in our community have been generous to our shelter residents. Anonymous donors bought the shelter a new Wii system over the holidays. Joshua Peppard contacted us with an offer to make wooden toys for us. We informed him that we were missing the kitchen set that had been a longtime fixture in our

shelter playroom but had become broken down with use over the years. He tackled this large and labor intensive project and our brand new, beautiful wooden kitchen set arrived the middle of February.

We are also looking forward to our

annual shelter spring cleaning. We will once again be assisted by students participating in Unity College's alternative spring break. We are so thankful for all the support from our community in keeping our shelter a safe place to live and grow.

## You can help!

**Night Out for a Good Cause** Our revamped Spring Gala is coming right up. This is our major fundraising event for the year, so please come out and have a wonderful time while supporting wonderful work. See the enclosed flier for more information.

**Linens for Shelter** Because of the heavy usage our linens at shelter get we are always in need of new towels, blankets, pillows, pillow cases and sheets. We have twin and full-sized beds, as well as cribs. Donations of linens can be dropped off at our Resource Center at the corner of State and Essex Streets in Bangor.

# Remembering Erin Woolley

**Five years ago** I met Erin at a Spruce Run hotline training. Erin was a feminist and she loved pink and made no apologies for either thing. Erin wanted to make a difference in our world. She decided to use the year between graduation from the University of Maine and law school to work at Spruce Run. Throughout the next year Erin and I worked side by side. Erin's energy and drive showed in her work and I was in awe of her. Her vibe was fabulous! Erin saw that by the end of the week people were exhausted and so to make Fridays something to look forward to she created "French-fry-Friday," a little treat at the end of the week. At the end of Erin's employment at Spruce Run we had a going away party for her. We presented Erin with the traditional Spruce Run parting

gift, a hat with custom decorations, and then the group started to chant "Speech, speech, speech." Prepared as usual, Erin stood up and told us how the last year impacted her life and her plans for Law School; she ended, "I know that I will always have a place here, at Spruce Run." Over the next couple of years Erin would stop in the Resource Center when she came home on breaks, many times with French-fries in hand, and tell us about the work she continued to do to end violence against women. In 2009 Erin was diagnosed with Hodgkins lymphoma. Spruce Run-ers knew that Erin would give cancer a hard fight. Erin kept us informed about everything that she was doing: fighting with cancer, working at school, working to forward women's rights. Even though Erin was tired from

her constant battle with cancer her energy and attitude was the same, upbeat and loud! In the winter of 2010 Erin dedicated her full attention to ridding her body of cancer and underwent a stem cell transplant. Erin kept going until March 16, 2010, when she died from Hodgkins lymphoma. This March we all will have gone a year in the world without Erin walking beside us, talking to us and laughing with us. I cannot say, however, that we have gone a year without Erin. Erin asked that memorial donations be made to Spruce Run to continue her life's work to end violence against women and \$1,436 was donated in Erin's honor. Erin's energy stays with us in all the work that we do here, especially when we have a French-fry-Friday.

By: Catherine Kurr

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Change attitudes.  
Save lives.  
End abuse.  
spruce run