



Spruce Run News

"Working for Peace at Home"

Fall 2003

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Hotline 1-800-863-9909

Witnesses to Violence:

Children and Domestic Abuse

By: Dorothy Chocensky and Lyn Carter

There's no denying that witnessing domestic abuse is not good for children. It can result in increased aggressiveness and antisocial behavior; fearfulness; reduced social skills; mental health problems such as anxiety and depression; lack of empathy; low self-esteem; and reduced cognitive and motor abilities. Child witnesses may begin to see violence as a legitimate means of problem-solving. They also may be inadvertently injured while attempting to protect their mothers.

Furthermore, in one-third to one-half of all families where a woman is being abused, the perpetrator is abusing the children as well. And when the two are combined—when a child is both a victim and a witness—the consequences tend to be most severe.

It would be easy to assume that all children who witness domestic violence are damaged by it. In reality, there is a wide range of responses, and these may be mitigated by such factors as having relationships with supportive, nonabusive adults; the passage of time; a particular child's degree of resiliency; and his or her perception of the abuse.

The continuum from *witnessing* abuse to *being* abused varies from case to case. Consider this scenario: A mother is assaulted by her partner. The children, who were in the house during the incident, were not physically harmed. Did child abuse occur?

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Welfare, Wedlock, Women, and Children

By: Francine Stark

Congress is debating the reauthorization of federal welfare assistance. By the end of September, the Senate and House will have come to some agreement about the shape of TANF (Temporary Assistance to Need Families) for the next six years. This is an issue of great concern to advocates working with battered women and their children.

Not all battered women are poor, and not all poor women are battered, but when the Maine Center for Economic Policy surveyed current and former Maine welfare recipients, it found that nearly one in five had experienced abuse from a spouse or partner within the last four years. About half of those who had experienced abuse said that TANF made it possible for them to leave their abusive partners.

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“Witness,” continued.

The answers to these questions depend on numerous, intertwined factors, and on one’s perspective. Therefore, collaboration among service providers is crucial. Equally important is mindfulness that the complexities of a battered woman’s life can never be fully assessed from the outside; she is the one living that life, and usually she is the one who can best determine what is most likely to help the family be safe.

Some guiding questions are: Was the incident part of an ongoing pattern of violence and control? Were the children aware of what was happening? Did the abuse of their mother leave the children in a no-win, no-safety situation? Will visitation with their father, without their mother to protect them, be dangerous? How do others perceive the mother’s efforts at protection? In light of her partner’s behavior, can she keep her children and herself safe in the future? What community resources are available to help her?

Under Maine law, children are not considered to be maltreated simply because they have witnessed domestic violence. Both law and practice vary from place to place, however. In New York, for example, a group of mothers recently won a class action suit against the Administration for Children’s Services, which was removing children from their homes and charging their battered mothers with failure to protect them from witnessing abuse. The judge found that, “As a matter of policy and practice, ACS does not merely fail to advance the best interests of children by these unnecessary separations—they harm children.” (More information on this case is available at www.lansnerkubitschek.com/whatsnew-03.htm.)

Broadening the legal definition of child maltreatment to include the witnessing of abuse would have dramatic consequences. It would overwhelm an already stressed child protective system, and, as in the New York case, infringe upon the rights of non-offending parents. It also would raise larger issues, such as our failure, as a society, to protect children from the violence they witness *outside* of their homes, in the media and in the world at large. At the same time, large numbers of American children live in poverty. Can we protect them from that?

From a child’s point of view, it is not the definition that matters, but the outcome. As Sandy Davidson of the Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women said during a recent phone conference, “Children don’t know about all these systems.... They know it doesn’t feel good, and they want it to stop.”

“Welfare,” continued.

Clearly, it is important that policy makers debating welfare policy take into account that at least 20% of welfare recipients are working to escape violence, survive abuse, and create better lives.

Several of the proposed changes to welfare policy would have profoundly negative consequences for battered women and their children. One proposed change would increase the hours recipients are required to work from 30 to 40 hours a week, without increasing the amount of childcare assistance to cover those additional hours, and would sanction the whole family if the adult(s) fail to comply with work requirements. Another reduces funds for education and training while adding funds to encourage marriage. All this while not increasing the actual cash benefit one cent, leaving families barely able to get by on meager monthly support – less than \$350 for a single parent and one child.

For poor women (and for those women who will become instantly poor as a result of leaving their economically secure abusive partners) welfare is both life saving and cruel. The monthly cash benefit, though meager, is essential. Opportunities for education and job readiness are invaluable. Yet, burdensome work requirements and an institutionalized “promotion” of marriage weigh heavily on survivors whose children need their time and attention more than ever, who are struggling to put their safety before their hopes and dreams – their hope that their child’s father will treat them well and stop hurting them, and their dream of having the family they started out to build.

Welfare should be about supporting the well-being of people who, for a variety of reasons, need some help, sometimes for a little while and sometimes for a long time. TANF and AFDC before it are presumably about assuring that children do not suffer the consequences of their parents’ poverty.

Battered women need more than shelter. They deserve respectful, adequate assistance to live safely. Our welfare policies show poor women whether we really mean it when we say, “you should leave your abusive husband.”

For detailed information about welfare in Maine and the changes currently under debate in Washington, contact the Maine Equal Justice Project at www.mejp.org or 626-7058 or the Maine Center for Economic Policy at www.mecep.org or 622-7381.

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month



Race to End Domestic Abuse

Join us **October 4, 2002** for our 4rd annual family walk and 5K run. The race starts at the **Bangor Auditorium at 9:00am** and registration begins at **8:00am**.

There will be a continental breakfast and other activities following the race.

Entry fee for adult runners and walkers is **\$12** or a **minimum of \$25** in pledges. Kids under 14 may run and walk for free. All participants receive a T-shirt!

Please call 945-5102 for more information and for a pledge form.



Wear a Purple Ribbon

During the month of October, wear a purple ribbon

- * To remember that people are abused every day
- * To celebrate the hope, strength, and courage of survival
- * To take a stand as a community against domestic abuse

Purple ribbons are free. Call Spruce Run at 945-5102 if you are interested in wearing a ribbon.

Spruce Run Youth Advocacy Program in High Gear



Spruce Run's school based advocacy program is gearing up for a very busy fall and winter. We are currently booking classroom presentations in high schools and middle schools throughout Penobscot County. We have recently taken delivery of a newly designed brochure for teens, and a **Maine Women's Fund** grant will allow us to bring the highly acclaimed production **You the Man**, which deals with the issues of sexual assault and dating violence, to four area high schools this year.

Prevention Education

School based advocates **Amanda Cost** and **Sue Hamlett** are working in collaboration with area schools to bring prevention programming to youth in Penobscot County. The themes of presentations for **middle school** students include:



- * **Communication skills:** how to communicate effectively with the people in our lives, including parents, friends, and teachers
- * **Introduction to gender stereotypes:** what are they and how are we affected by them
- * **Labeling:** what happens when we reduce people to a label and treat them accordingly and how can we celebrate our differences
- * **Healthy Relationships:** what does a healthy relationship look and feel like; How can we have healthier relationships with all the important people in our lives: parents, friends, boy/girlfriend

High school presentations focus on:

- * **Dating abuse/Power and Control:** what is dating abuse, how does it happen, why does it happen
- * **“What Can I Do About It?”:** what to do if you are dating an abusive partner, if you are worried about a friend, or if you are a bystander
- * **Gender Stereotypes:** how are gender roles defined and enforced by our culture
- * **Healthy Relationships:** what do you bring to a relationship, what do you need and want, healthy ways to deal with conflict

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Spruce Run's Transitional Housing Program

By: Sherry Lane

One of the cornerstones of Spruce Run's services is our Transitional Housing program. Consisting of seven apartments, this program offers women and children a place to live for up to two years and the opportunity to utilize Spruce Run services and support as they build lives free from abuse. Women meet weekly with a Spruce Run worker who supports them in forming both long and short term goals and finding the resources within the community to achieve them. We also facilitate connections among women in order to create and foster a sense of community. This is achieved through group activities and monthly community meetings. Children have the opportunity to build healthy friendships and to live and play while feeling safe at home and in their community.

Sally and Ruben's Story

(From an interview with Sally, 9/03)

When Sally was pregnant with her son, she saw a poster in her doctor's office which posed questions about abuse and it frightened her to realize she could answer "yes" to each one. Later, she made an anonymous hotline call, during which her husband pulled the phone cord from the wall.

A short time later, after her husband twice tried to strangle her and threatened to kill her, Sally called the hotline again. Arrangements were made for Sally to come to shelter. After enduring years of abuse, Sally had a safe place to be and to make plans. She and Ruben, her two-year-old son, have been residents of Transitional Housing since January, 2002.

Sally has noticed many changes in herself and her son since entering the Transitional Housing program. When they lived with Sally's husband, Ruben was fussy and had several ear infections. He was very clingy and did not like to play independently. He would cry or stare at the TV while his father was abusing Sally. He did not sleep well at night and Sally was concerned for his well being.

Today Sally reports that Ruben is a happy, healthy two-year old full of exuberance. He goes to daycare while she works and is much more relaxed and content. His health problems have greatly diminished and Sally believes he feels safe and free to play and be a kid. Ruben has no court ordered visitation with his father.

Sally has found that after spending her married life at home, she enjoys the sense of empowerment she gets from working and providing for herself and her son. She likes the independence to choose her friends as well as what clothes she wears.

These were areas that created tension in her marriage and isolated her from her friends and family. Sally is more confident in herself and her abilities. She now holds her own opinion in just as high regard as anyone else's.

Specific areas of the program that Sally says have been helpful are the 12-week domestic abuse education group that all Transitional Housing residents are asked to complete. Sally credits the group with helping her to establish and enforce boundaries in her life and to start thinking about what qualities she wants in a future partner. Education group also assisted Sally in dealing with the feelings she had about what happened to her. In the course of the group, Sally met friends and broadened her already expanding sense of community.

Sally finds her weekly meetings with the Transitional Housing staff to be valuable. These meetings help her keep on track toward her goals and to feel less isolated. Sally finds rules of the program to be beneficial to both herself and the community. The rules help guide her choices and help her focus her energy on the positive changes she is making in her life.

Healing from abuse doesn't happen overnight; Sally is taking it one day at a time. She is looking forward to the Second Stage Education group that begins in the fall. Ruben's second birthday is fast approaching and Sally is busy making plans for a party. Welcoming family and friends into her home for a fun, stress-free celebration is a treat Sally has worked hard for. She knows her efforts will continue to pay off and that she and Ruben can look forward to many celebrations in the future.

Annual SCAN Conference Addresses Children and Violence

On May 1, 2002, several Spruce Run staff members, along with members of our community, attended and presented at the annual SCAN (Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect) conference at the Bangor Civic Center. The conference featured keynote **Jackson Katz**, who is widely recognized for his work in the field of gender violence prevention education with men and boys.

The morning offered four workshops, with topics ranging from "Taking it to the Streets" to "Domestic Violence, Children and the Law," which was presented by Spruce Run staff members **Francine Stark** and **Karla Bosse**. The afternoon featured a presentation of "**You the Man**," a one-man show addressing unhealthy relationships, dating violence and sexual assault (*see related article, page 4*).

The day ended with break-out sessions that gave participants an opportunity to discuss how we can collaborate our efforts to address violence in our communities.

Changes at Spruce Run

*With reluctance we said goodbye this summer to **Jan Blake** who served Spruce Run as our*

Spruce Run Staff

Janice Archer, *Shelter Services Coordinator*

Sue Bradford, *Program Planning & Integration Coordinator*

Lyn Carter,

Dorothy Chocenseky, *Resource Development Coordinator*

Amanda Cost, *School-Based Advocacy Coordinator*

Sheila Daigle, *Office Coordinator*

Maureen Flagg, *Volunteer Coordinator*

Sue Hamlett, *Community Education Coordinator*

Rebecca Hobbs, *Administrative Coordinator*

Sherry Lane, *Transitional Services Coordinator*

Tina Roberts,

Francine Stark, *Community Response Coordinator*

Johnnie Walker, *Transitional Housing Coordinator*

Erica Watson, *Hotline Coordinator*

COME WORK FOR PEACE AT HOME!

Volunteers are vital in our work to end domestic abuse. They give their time, energy, and skills to ensure that people in crisis will find an informed, empathetic listener at any hour of the day or night. They maintain mailing lists, sort donations, work on special projects, and serve on committees. They are the key to creating a community that is free of domestic abuse.

No prior experience is required to be a Spruce Run volunteer!



Hotline and Children's Volunteers

Spruce Run is looking for volunteers to answer our hotline or work with children at our Resource Center and at Shelter. Our 43-hour Hotline Training will prepare you to support people affected by domestic abuse on our 24-hour hotline.

Hotline volunteers complete shifts from home nights and weekends or at the Spruce Run Resource Center weekdays.

Our Children's Worker 30-hour training will prepare you to support children affected by domestic abuse. Children's Worker Volunteers work with children in activity groups, one-on-one and in shelter. Both trainings will be offered in mid-January. Please call 945-5102 for more information.



Spruce Run Steering Committee

We are always looking for more people interested in serving on our Steering Committee. The Steering Committee acts as our organizational board, making decisions in conjunction with the staff. They are involved in making decisions about things that have agency-wide impact, such as our annual budget, changes to personnel policies, and the distribution of work among staff positions.

For more information about joining the Steering Committee, contact Maureen at 945-5102.



Meet a Spruce Run Volunteer!

Michele has been a member of our Steering Committee for two years and is a Professor in the Psychology Department at the University of Maine. She lives in Glenburn with her husband and they are expecting their first baby in January!

How did you become interested in joining the Spruce Run Steering Committee?

I had always wanted to be involved in some kind of community service related to women's issues. When I moved to this area in the fall of 1999, I met with Ann Schonberger, who is a member of the Steering Committee and mentioned it to me. It was total good luck!

What is it like being a Steering Committee member?

For me, if I give my time and energy to something, I want to make it count. I feel the Steering Committee is a great way to do this because of the impact we have on the organization. For me, it is the best way possible I can think of to volunteer my time for this cause.

What do you like best about being on the Steering Committee?

It has been great to meet so many interesting people! I have enjoyed learning how the organization works and how to make decisions by consensus. It is such a switch from my daily work life, and sometimes it is a relief!

Was it a challenge at first?

Yes. I had no idea what it was about at first, and it was a learning process. My personal challenge, I think, was to restrain from talking too much during meetings! But I have grown to really like working by consensus, and it has been a wonderful thing to learn.

What would you say to someone who may be thinking about joining our Steering Committee?

I truly believe that if you don't give back to your community, then you are just taking from it, and that's not good. We shouldn't take these services for granted. We should contribute to solving this problem. It really gives me peace of mind. And most of all, it's fun!



Shelter Wishlist

Laundry Detergent (liquid)
Toilet Paper
White bath towels
Adult pain relievers (Advil, Tylenol)
Hairdryers
New women's underwear
Pre-paid phone cards
Bra's (new)
Diapers (larger sizes)
Tampons—regular size
Sweat pants (women's L, XL, XXL)
Cleaning supplies
Pots and pans (assorted sizes)
Lysol disinfectant spray
Dryer sheets
Small alarm clocks
Dishwasher detergent
Toothpaste
Paper towels
Dish/kitchen towels
Dental floss
Twin size comforters
Standard size pillows
Dish liquid
Pens
Stamps

Overstocked with: bars of soap

"Youth Advocacy," continued.

Youth Brochure

Spruce Run unveils our new glossy youth brochure this fall. This brochure is written specifically to reach young people and includes information such as

- Warning signs of dating abuse
- The Equality Wheel, which describes characteristics of a healthy relationship
- What to Do
- Calling Spruce Run

The eye-catching design was donated by the **Mediaworks** program at **Training Development Corporation** and the printing of the brochure was funded by the **Eastern Maine Medical Center Auxiliary**. Many thanks go to our community partners in this project.



You the Man

Written by Maine playwright **Cathy Plourde**, **You the Man** is a one-man show addressing unhealthy relationships, dating violence and sexual assault. This show is currently touring high schools and colleges throughout the United States.

Thanks to a grant from the **Maine Women's Fund**, Spruce Run is able to bring this production to four area high schools during the 2002-2003 school year. Presentations have already been scheduled at Central High School and Nokomis Regional High School.

Cathy Plourde describes **You the Man** as "a catalyst. One actor takes the stage with a small assortment of props, and 45 minutes later the conversations begin." The actor alternates among six male roles, each man trying to figure out how to listen and respond to women's voices. A student says, "It made me reflect on myself, and think that maybe my relationship isn't as great as I thought it was, and I should do something about it."



Giving Thanks

By: Jacki

Last spring my boys and I attended the Dessert Gala which is a fund raiser for Spruce Run. As I sat there I wished there was a way to thank all the people who had come. I was not there as a contributor, but rather as a recipient of their generosity. I really appreciated all the things that Spruce Run had done for me, and I wished there was a way for me to tell those people behind all my support and help, that I saw their hearts for people like me, and appreciated it.

It is hard to really get free from the effects of abuse, and I really needed actual people who would listen, reassure, or confirm the decisions I was making and the new way I was trying to think. It might have been an actual hug, or a person on the end of the hotline, or even new toothbrushes or school supplies for my children. It sounds so simple, but if no one had been there to lend a hand, those basic things that make living more than existing would have been missing for me.

So, to all of you who contributed to the Dessert Party, and also to so many other fund raisers, thank you very much. Thank you for not being so busy in your own world to forget to reach out to me in mine. I saw it and felt loved.

Frequently Asked Questions About Spruce Run Groups!

Is group right for me?

Women who attend Spruce Run's support and education groups come from all walks and stages of life. Some are in a relationship and beginning to explore if what they are experiencing is abuse; others may be struggling with emotional, financial and legal issues after months or years of separation from an abusive partner.

Women choose to participate in groups for many reasons:

- To understand themselves better and to feel understood
- To understand their experiences in a new way
- To learn more about domestic abuse and its effects on themselves and their children
- To hear how others in similar situations have coped, survived and healed
- To hear and share information about community resources
- To hear and explore ways of being safer—physically, financially and emotionally
- To get or regain a sense of what a healthy relationship looks and feels like
- To find hope for the future
- To experience the powerful support of other women which breaks down isolation and victim-blaming
- To give back after benefiting from the group support

What's the difference between Support group and Education group?

Support Groups focus on the here and now. Women share what is going on right now in their lives (or just listen) and gain support, validation and perspective from each other.

Educations Groups

Connections and Change: Domestic Abuse Education I follows a curriculum including topics like:

- The patterns of abuse
- Why does abuse happen?
- Gender stereotypes
- Survival skills
- Anger
- Healthy Relationships

After completing *Connections and Change*, women can choose to attend *Beyond Surviving: Domestic Abuse Education II*, which focuses on building or rebuilding a whole and healthy life and includes topics like:

- Healthy Relationships
- Parenting in the aftermath of domestic abuse
- Spirituality
- Sexuality
- Personal Economics



Spruce Run Education Groups 2002-2003

The Basics about Power and Control

Sept. 17, 24, & Oct. 1, 2002

NEW! Three introductory or refresher sessions preparing women to join our newest group, "Beyond Surviving: Domestic Abuse Education II." (EVENINGS)

Beyond Surviving: Domestic Abuse Education II

Oct. 8 thru Dec. 10, 2002

NEW! An in depth look at the issues affecting survivors including; healthy relationships, effective communication, dealing with anger, parenting, and economic concerns. (EVENINGS)

Personal Economic Planning

Jan. 6 thru Jan. 30, 2003

Four weekly sessions examining economic values, budgeting, goal-setting, & planning for women affected by domestic abuse. (DAYS)

Connections & Change: Domestic Abuse Education I

Feb. 4 thru Apr. 8, 2003

This is our usual education group including 10 weekly sessions on types of abuse, connections between gender roles and abuse, women & anger, freedom. (DAYS)

Beyond Surviving: Domestic Abuse Education II

Apr. 15 thru June 17, 2003 (DAYS)

Connections & Change: Domestic Abuse Education I

June 2 thru June 26, 2003

An accelerated format – twice a week – a total of 8 sessions. (EVENINGS)

Connections & Change: Domestic Abuse Education I

Oct. 7 thru Dec. 9, 2003

Daytime & evening Support Groups are also available.
Children's groups or childcare arranged for all groups.
All services are free & confidential.

Call for more information 800-863-9909 or 945-5102

