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Volume VIII, Issue 1

May, 2008

Project Safe Provides:

- 24-hour Emergency Shelter
- 24-hour Hotline
- Community Support Groups
- Legal and Social Service Advocacy
- Information and Referral
- Volunteer Training
- Community Education
- Follow Up Services
- Service Coordination among Agencies
- Transitional Housing
- Emergency Financial Assistance

All services are confidential and free of charge

706-543-3331

**Project Safe
Hotline**

Every 15 seconds. . .

- 50% of all American women are likely to be abused by partners in their lifetime.
- In homes where partner abuse occurs, children are 1500 times more likely to be abused.
- A married woman is 5 times more likely to be attacked by her partner than by a total stranger.
- Every 15 seconds a woman is beaten by her partner or ex-partner
- Arresting a batterer significantly reduces the chances he will repeat his offense.

From the Director

I had the nightmare again, and I don't know why. It's not even my on-call week, but I woke up in a panic convinced that I'd slept through the pager. I groped in the dark, frantically feeling everything on my nightstand—grabbing at the remote, the alarm clock, my cell, even knocking over a stack of grisly murder mysteries (don't ask me why but they have a powerful soporific effect on me) before realizing that it wasn't my turn to carry the pager. The relief was palpable.

Everyone at Project Safe has pager-panic stories: losing sleep, freakishly checking and rechecking batteries, fishing it out of the toilet and drying it under a lamp. We have pager-panic because we take seriously our responsibility to each other and to battered women and children. Because we're the only place with an open door at 3:00am. Because we're literally the last hope for many people, and we don't want to let them down. As one woman wrote recently, "I'd be dead if it wasn't for Project Safe."

A little pager-panic is good for us. It means we still have energy to take action, still have faith that we can help, and still have conviction that fighting violence against women is worth the effort—even at 3:00am.

Joan Prittie

Groovy Nights is BACK!

Friday August 29th, once again the Classic Center will be transformed into an unbelievable trip through the decade that taste forgot. Disco balls and lava lamps, hanging beads and yellow smiley faces, 8-track tapes and Saturday Night Fever posters, silent auction, fabulous buffet, and great 70's music you hate to admit you love, will keep you dancing and partying all night.

Tickets are \$50 and this year will include an optional disco lesson with Dancing with the Athens Stars instructors Aaron Talbert and Natalie Cox. Tickets may be purchased online at www.project-safe.org. Mark your calendars, practice your disco moves, find that perfect outfit or accessory and get ready to have a blast!

Dancing with the Athens Stars Huge Success!

Nearly 700 people filled the Classic Center theater March 1st to cheer on their favorite couples in the first annual Dancing with Athens Stars. The event cleared over \$32,400 for Project Safe services. Dancers fed off the energy of the audience and turned in their best performances--from Chuck Horton and Kathy Cole's disco routine to Beth Gavrilles and Derrek Walter's beautiful closing waltz. Judges Steve Jones, Suzanne Yoculan and Mark Wheeler added insightful and often hilarious comments, while emcees Mary Whitehead and Neal Priest brought out fun stories from the dancers.

Judges awarded a tie for third place between Jason Winders and Tamara Tyre's tango and Liz Dalton and Run Putman's cha cha. Second place went to Kip Hicks and Natalie Cox's cha cha/rumba routine and the first place trophy went to Beth and Derrek. In audience voting, third place went to Beth and Derrek, second to Kip and Natalie, and first place to Doc Eldridge and Molly Myagui for their salsa dance.

Thanks again to our presenting sponsor, The Classic Center, and all the other sponsors who made the event possible: ABC Printing, Athens Banner Herald, Athens-Oconee Junior Women's Club, Athens Parent Magazine, bob(SALON), con cache salsa, Jenny Coleman and David Shipley, Dance FX, Dancer's Studio, Flagpole Magazine, Freedom of Movement, Georgia Neurological Surgery, Law Offices of John Lyndon, MYM Marketing & Public Relations, Pappy's Dry-wall Inc., Perno's Formal Wear, Regina M. Quick, P.C., Sky Dragon Designs, St. Mary's Emergency Physicians, St. Mary's Healthcare System, Tennis for Life, UGA Ballroom Performance Group, Derrek Walters Studio.

Thanks also to our instructors, production team and most importantly our brave stars. It's one thing to write a check or volunteer in a way that utilizes your talents and interests (Project Safe can certainly use both), but it's quite another to volunteer to do something that's as frightening and stressful as dancing in public! It's so heartening that people were willing to go far outside of their comfort zone to help us and the battered women and children we serve.

Go to our website at www.project-safe.org to watch the You Tube videos of the show. Our next newsletter should have the line up for "Dancing" 2009 March 1st at the Classic Center.



People Tell Us How We're Doing ²

When clients have substantially completed their services with Project Safe, we ask them to fill out a survey to help us evaluate our work. The survey has grown and changed over the last 8 years, and the current version combines information mandated by several of our grant funders with information we've been tracking for a long time. Here are the results from our outreach clients for the last six months based on the percentage of respondents who agree or strongly agree with the following statements.

- √ 99% have a better understanding of domestic violence and its effects on their lives.
- √ 99% have learned how to contact the sources of help available to them.
- √ 76% report that symptoms such as sleeplessness, nervousness, fear or anxiety are less severe since they became involved with Project Safe.
- √ 70% have achieved the goals they set for themselves.
- √ 90% are using the skills they learned to cope with their situation.
- √ 99% have more knowledge of the options available to them.
- √ 86% have a better understanding of how police, lawyers and courts work.
- √ 81% now have a better understanding of their rights as victims of crime.
- √ 99% know how to create and adapt a safety plan.
- √ 96% are better prepared to manage their own safety.
- √ 99% are satisfied with the services they received from Project Safe.
- √ 99% report that Project Safe has made safety measures such as emergency phone, lock changes or TPOs available to them.
- √ 96% report that Project Safe staff explained ways that their abuser can be held accountable.
- √ 87% feel their lives have improved since working with Project Safe.
- √ 99% have had counseling and support groups made available to them.

The next Volunteer Orientation
will be September 20, 2008

Become a Volunteer! E-mail:
projectvolunteer@yahoo.com to find
specific ways that you can help!

Can You Imagine?

Each year, we ask those who participate in our production of *The Vagina Monologues* to imagine a world where there is no violence against women and how their lives would be different in that world. Here are some of their responses.

◆ “As a mother of an 11-year-old girl, I could relax and not have to teach her the survival skills that have become necessary. No self-defense, not always looking over her shoulder, making sure doors are always locked. I could teach her to be more adventurous and to be more trusting of all people.”

◆ “I can imagine, but it’s hard because I feel violence against women stems from attitudes about women that are long standing and deep-seeded.”

◆ “Fortunately, I have never experienced violence first hand. I think if violence against women stopped I would feel safer personally and for my children, as well as all the other unfortunate children that have to witness violence daily. I think we all have the right to live safely and happily, and to realize that it is never acceptable to infringe upon the safety and happiness of others.”

Continued in Column 2=>

Dancing with the Stars performers Ron Putman and Liz Dalton.



Can You Imagine?

Continued from Column 1:

3

◆ “If violence against women stopped, I would not hear the many stories of domestic violence from the migrant families I work with.”

◆ “A world with no violence against women would be a world in which I would feel much more freedom. There would be no reason to be afraid to be a strong woman and no consequences in being exactly who I want to be.”

◆ “If violence against women stopped, I would not feel scared to walk by myself at night... On a more global level, women would be closer to obtaining an equal place in the world...I would know that rape would know longer be used as a weapon of war.”

Congratulations!!!

Joan Prittie won the Shining Star Award
for

Innovation in the work to end Domestic Violence

Dancing with the Stars performers Doc Eldridge and Molly Myagui.



Superheroes Wrap Up

By Laura Wilson

This past summer, as Project Safe began seeing more and more children in counseling, we noticed that individual counseling with these kids made minimal progress toward healing. Not unlike adult victims, children needed most importantly to hear from other children with similar experiences. Donna Thomsen, a non-resident Woman and Children's Advocate, and I decided to develop a 10-week therapeutic and support group program for children affected by domestic violence. Drawing information and resources from other agencies, we developed a curriculum specifically designed for children between the ages of 6-11 who have been primary or secondary victims of domestic violence. We also selected five outcomes that were achievable and created and administered a set of instruments to test the extent to which the children achieved our proposed goals. After conducting thorough screening interviews to assess the child's exposure to violence, willingness to participate in group, and the parent's commitment to getting their child to group, we had 10 wonderful children to be our first Superheroes! The Superhero theme is based on the premise that each child is a "Superhero" for surviving, for talking about what happened in their family, and for being brave by participating in group. And what would a Superhero be without a cape? Thanks to the Cotton Patch Quilt Guild, we even had special, hand-made capes to appropriately adorn each and every Superhero.

Another huge component of Superheroes is our great group of dedicated volunteers. Throughout the fall, we recruited and trained 12 volunteers who were committed to being available every Monday evening for the children. Each week of group, every child was paired with a volunteer. This volunteer serves as a role model and nightly guide and works 1:1 with that child for the entire evening. Each week the child is paired with a different volunteer to provide the children maximum exposure to many role models, and to ensure all volunteers have the opportunity to work with multiple children. At the beginning of each group, the volunteers greeted their assigned child, stayed with that child the entire evening, provided support, encouragement, and assisted the child in completing weekly assignments.

For an hour and a half each Monday, the group participated in child-friendly activities to assist the children in working through the trauma of domestic violence. We did everything from art, music, and dance to games, crafts, play and puppetry. Every activity was centered around a different theme, which focused on alleviating guilt, improving self-esteem, managing emotions, and developing skills related to safety, assertiveness, and abuse prevention.

If you had asked me about my hopes for Superheroes in September, I would've never expected the growth

Continued in Column 2 =>

Solicitor General Teams 4 with Executive Director

Every year Project Safe staff deliver hundreds of in-service trainings and educational presentations to classrooms, civic groups, churches and businesses. Recently, Project Safe Executive Director Joan Prittie and Clarke County Solicitor General C.R. Chisolm have teamed up for a presentation in the form of a dialog about domestic violence. The one-hour talk covers dynamics, community resources and appropriate responses to intimate partner violence from a prosecution and advocacy perspective.

"We both believe there needs to be more community education on this issue", says Prittie. "This is not only a way to do that, but also demonstrate how our organizations are collaborating to fight domestic violence." The pair have presented at several businesses and groups in the Athens area. To schedule a dialog, email Joan at jprittie@project-safe.org.



Dancing with the Stars performers Aaron Talbert and Natalie Greer Cox.

Super Heroes

Continued from Column 1:

and empowerment that we saw. As our first Superheroes group just wrapped up in mid-April, I am absolutely blown away by the amazing progress these kids have made toward their healing. One of our Superheroes who, prior to group, was afraid to play outside and sometimes ever leave his mom's side has now gained a new sense of confidence and is eager to join his friends in the fun. Another child, whose mother reported a wide range of problems in school, is now showing improvement in his grades, higher self-esteem, and even loved Superheroes so much that he slept with his cape on! We have talked to many moms whose children were once afraid to talk about what happened in their families and are now using their new Superheroes vocabulary to openly express their feelings, thoughts, and stories. I am so excited about the success of our group and I hope that Superheroes can only continue to help children affected by domestic violence along their path toward healing.

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December 2007 – April 2008

We thank the following for their generous contributions to our work, and apologize for any omissions from this list.

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Continued on Page 6=>

Dancing with the Stars performers Dustin Whitlock and Barbara Taylor.



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Dancing with the Stars performers Pete McCommons
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Continued on Page 7, Column 1=>



Dancing with the Stars performers Gonzalo Myagui and Paige Carmichael.



Dancing with the Stars performers Dexter Weaver and Emily Padgett.

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Continued on Page 8=>

What Do the Children Think? **7**

(Compiled from worksheets completed by Superheroes support group participants)

Here's what kids thought while the abuse was still happening in their homes...

One third thought their mom would be killed.

One third thought nobody would believe violence was happening.

One third thought bad things would happen if they told anyone what was really happening at home.

Over half thought the abuser would admit what he did.

Over half thought the abuser would change.

Nearly half thought the abuser would hurt them.

Over half thought nobody could do anything to help their family.

Most thought the abuser would lie about what happened, and thought the abuser should have to go to jail

Here's what kids thought after the abuse stopped...

Over half think the abuser will come back and hurt their mom again.

A third are worried the abuser will stop seeing them.

Nearly half don't feel safe away from their mom.

A third are afraid to sleep alone in their bed.

Nearly half have trouble sleeping and can't concentrate on schoolwork.

Over half are angry about what happened, still think about the abuse, and say that lots of things remind them of the abuse.

Most like to be alone more than they used to, and say that they'd just like to forget about what happened.

All say that their family got help.

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visit
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Dancing with the Stars performers Aaron Talbert and Wilma.



Dancing with the Stars performers Chuck Horton and Kathy Cole.

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Continued on Page 9, Column 1=>



Dancing with the Stars performer Kip Hicks.

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Continued on Page 10, Column 1=>

Dancing with the Stars performers Derrek Walters and Beth Gavrilles.



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“Alice” helps domestic violence advocates assist a client more efficiently. (See Article on Page 11)

Project Safe also receives monetary support from the Athens-Clarke County Government, Georgia Department of Human Resources, Criminal Justice Coordinating Council, Georgia Coalition Against Domestic Violence, United Way of Northeast Georgia and Macy’s Fund of Federated Department Stores.

Hooray for the Super Heroes Program!!!



Dancing with the Stars performers Bill Overend and Barbara Putman.

Alice Helps on the Hotline

In 2006, Project Safe became one of the first domestic violence shelters in Georgia to utilize “Alice” a client tracking program created just for domestic violence and sexual assault organizations. Prior to Alice, like most dv organizations, Project Safe used a paper system for hotline calls, storing the records in binders alphabetically by year. Callers who became clients, either in the shelter or outreach office, received case numbers and files and their information was easily tracked. Caller data however, languished in binders in a closet.

Because domestic violence is a pattern of behavior—a crime of repetition often punctuated by periods of good times—it’s not unusual for victims to reach out for assistance more than once. During a crisis, someone may call for help repeatedly in the same week or month. Or someone may call once and then not call back for months or years until something new happens. Since Project Safe receives over a thousand hotline calls a year and has so many

Continued in Column 2=>

Alice Helps on the Hotline

Continued from Column 1:

advocates answering the hotline, it would be impossible for us to know every caller’s story. Alice enables advocates to quickly look up a caller’s history, including abuser information, services received, children’s needs and lethality factors. So when a caller says, “I spoke to someone named Tangela yesterday, is she here?” Alexis can answer, “Tangela’s not here today but I can help you. I understand you were worried about your abuser getting out of jail. Have you heard anything yet?”

In addition to alleviating callers’ anxiety by providing advocates with important information, Alice also stores outcome and survey data for all Project Safe’s clients. This enables us to track our performance more quickly and accurately than ever before. Project Safe can then modify or add services as needed to better assist the battered women and children we serve.



Vagina Monologues 2008 cast members.

Project Safe *Services for Battered Women*
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Athens, GA 30604

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.....
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