



The Advocate

A NEWSLETTER OF CATHOLIC CHARITIES OF SCHOHARIE COUNTY

Fall 2009

A Message from the Executive Director Timothy Mulligan

- One out of four women has experienced violence at the hand of an intimate partner.
- In New York State, homicides in domestic violence related incidents rose 7% in 2008.

Each time our Board of Directors meets and we discuss Domestic Violence, there is a common reaction. There is the “good” feeling because we are providing services, advocating for clients, and providing a safe dwelling for family members victimized by domestic violence. But there is also a sadness that so many people suffer and so many homes are in crisis when an abuser strikes.

October is Domestic Violence Awareness month and a time for all of us to call to mind this societal plague. Our culture tolerates domestic violence and even turns a blind eye toward it. October is a reminder that we must serve victims and their families but also raise awareness.



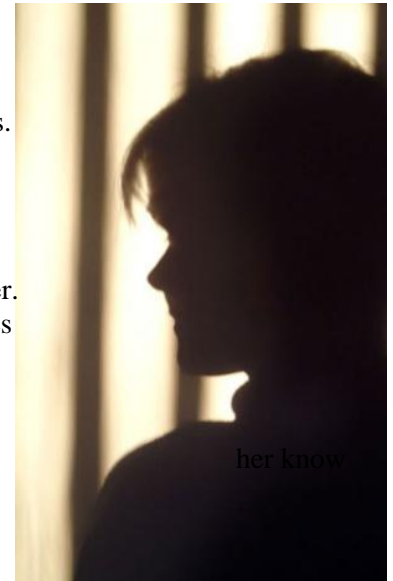
This month, our Domestic Violence staff is turning Schoharie County purple with ribbons, flags, banners, newspaper inserts, and magnets on county vehicles. Around the state and country, purple lights will illuminate Niagara Falls, the Empire State Building, and prominent buildings and bridges. Our hope is to make each of us think. Physical, sexual, psychological and emotional abuse is never acceptable.

I am proud of the outstanding work our Domestic Violence staff performs at Catholic Charities. When a client reaches out to us for safety, we help her (sometimes him) to make a plan for safety and to choose life. This can be a difficult challenge for someone struggling to see new possibilities. The advocates are mindful of a balance between compassion and care on the one hand and yet nudging clients to take charge of their lives to make healthy and responsible choices and take responsibility for those choices.

Domestic Violence services are at the center of our agency’s mission. Our goal is to empower victims of domestic violence so that they no longer *define* themselves as “victims” but rather see their future as one full of hope and promise.

Domestic Violence

It is 1a.m. when a phone rings. The phone is picked up by a Catholic Charities hotline operator. The operator hears a distressed woman who has just been beaten by her partner. This has happened many times in the past and it is clear that the woman and her children are in danger. The operator counsels the woman and lets her know her options. “You don’t have to live like this,” she tells her. “We can help.”



The Domestic Violence program at Catholic Charities is a life saver for many. Advocate Colleen Affinito says it well. “Ideally, we provide safety, listen to their story as it unfolds, help them to prioritize their goals and walk with them...as they become stronger and more confident.” Of course the challenge is always to let the client find her own voice and make her own decisions. Gale Kruglak works with the women and families in the domestic violence shelter. She says “It’s easy for us to tell them what they should do but being patient, respecting them and letting them make their own decisions with our support is what is really needed.” When it comes to the legal system, we have two advocates. Barbara Russell and Meg Cooke accompany many of our clients through the terrifying maze of the court system where clients face their abusers in criminal and custody cases. Barb and Meg know the incredible challenges that face these women. They stand by to offer support, care and years of experience.

Elene Berard Johnstone is a crime victim advocate and hotline operator. “There are several struggles,” Elene says, “that
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Diocese of Albany

2009

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Domestic Violence

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clients face: money, housing, unemployment. However, a deeper struggle is fear. They are afraid of the unknown. Many clients are starting over without much and sometimes without any support.”

The Domestic Violence staff at Catholic Charities is here to help clients negotiate the fears and begin to stand, to walk and finally to run. Sue Rumph, manager of the safe dwelling has seen the slow transformations. Many women leave with “some new piece of the puzzle.”

What do our staff receive in return? Meg expresses the sentiment of all. “It is the satisfaction of being there for someone else. We do what our mission statement says. Like Jesus, we wash the feet of others.”

Gifts that Keep Giving

In December, 2008, Catholic Charities of Schoharie County learned of the passing of a long time supporter, Josephine Ottman. In her bequest, Josephine chose to continue her support of Catholic Charities through a legacy gift of \$95,836.00

Josephine chose to provide for those charities and interests that were so close to her heart. Her gift will continue to serve the most vulnerable in the community for many, many years.

Consider leaving a legacy gift to Catholic Charities that will ensure that the poor and most vulnerable are never forgotten. If you would like assistance or would like to specify a legacy gift we can ensure that your interests are supported into the future.



Fenimore Asset Management
Thanks to Fenimore Asset Management for their generous contribution of \$5,000. Fenimore Asset Management has been a great friend and tremendous supporter of Catholic Charities. Thank you!

Wal-Mart Community Foundation
Thanks to Wal Mart Community Foundation for their support of \$1,000 for emergency assistance. Wal-Mart has continued to support our programs that help the poor and vulnerable in Schoharie County. Thank you!

Kinship Caregivers

What is the Kinship Caregiver Program? While grandparents and other relatives raising their kin exhibit many positive characteristics, these "kinship caregivers" also may face a number of challenges in accessing health, education, financial, and legal services for the children in their care. The Kinship Caregiver Program is designed to support organizations like Catholic Charities in delivering a wide range of services that address the multiple needs of caregivers and the children in their care including counseling, legal information, support groups, parenting skills, and education.

Catholic Charities of Schoharie County will be partnering with two other Catholic Charities agencies: Catholic Charities of Columbia/Greene Counties and Catholic Charities Caregivers. The grant will include two advocates who will work with kinship caregivers in the three counties. The advocates will provide programming and support in five areas: access to benefits and services including TANF and Medicaid, support in resolving personal and family crises, improving household stability, promoting school engagement for children, and supporting healthy relationships.

Schoharie County has one of the highest per capita needs for kinship caregivers in New York. We are pleased to begin this new program and offer support and care for many seniors who find themselves facing the demands of parenting again.

Benefit Concert to support *Spirit of Hope*
Kim and Reggie Harris and Magpie

November 7 7:30 pm

Middleburgh Methodist Church

Tickets \$12 for adults \$25 for a family

Bring gently used boots and new socks for collection

Spirit of Hope is an endeavor to seek solutions to homelessness in Schoharie County



Stimulus Grant to Prevent Homelessness

Catholic Charities of Schoharie County and Catholic Charities of Fulton/Montgomery Counties are collaborating with Legal Aid Society of Northeastern New York to offer help to individuals and families through the Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program (HPRP). The grant offers assistance to low income individuals and families who are at risk of homelessness through rent and utility arrear payments, security deposits, and short and medium term rent assistance. Clients must meet certain income eligibility requirements to participate. Legal Aid Society will provide a full time attorney who will further assist clients with legal matters and supportive services. Catholic Charities can now offer more significant support to individuals and families in need.

2009 PARTNERSHIP DRIVE

To help my neighbors who are facing difficult times,
 I am making a donation of \$_____.



Name:

Address:

() _____



The 2009 Partnership Drive is quickly coming to an end. Please help to push us over our goal. Our Goal is 100 partners. Become a partner today!



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services@catholiccharitiesofschoharieco.org



**Staff Retreat Day September 15, 2009
At Landis Arboretum**

With the theme of "Healing Touch," Sr. Rita Jean Dubrey led our staff retreat day. Our staff reflected on the power with each one of us to heal others and to receive healing. The beauty of Landis Arboretum provided a perfect setting for a day of renewal and refreshment.

