



## Spring/ Summer 2009 Newsletter

24-hour  
Free Confidential Hotline  
1-800-642-3150

*Laurel House is dedicated  
to the vision of ending  
domestic violence in each  
life, home, and  
community.*

The mission of Laurel House is to provide safe haven for abused women and their children, to raise public awareness about domestic violence and to advocate for social change against domestic violence

Our Mailing Address is:  
PO Box 764  
Norristown, PA 19404

Administrative Office  
Number: 610-277-1860

[www.laurel-house.org](http://www.laurel-house.org)



Laurel House is a not-for-profit, tax-exempt, charitable organization as defined under the Internal Revenue Service code section 501(c)3.

Tax exemption entity ID 23-2172743.



Designated Donor #: 2972

### Laurel House Launches New Community Safe Haven Program

Laurel House is reaching out and connecting with survivors of abuse through a newly-created program that is unique to most other domestic violence organizations in the United States.

Known as the Community Safe Haven Program, this new project was developed and created by Laurel House to provide support and resources to people following their 30 day stay at Laurel House's shelter.

Although many former residents keep in touch with staff and volunteers on an informal basis, the Community Safe Haven Program goes a step further. When a woman leaves the shelter, she has the opportunity to be paired with a volunteer mentor who provides support and referrals to community resources as she continues her journey of becoming self-sufficient and regaining independence.

#### *Making a Difference*

Penny Satell Berman, a former member of Laurel House's board and current co-chair of the agency's Advisory Board, is "happy to be making a difference" as a Community Safe Haven program volunteer. "I really feel that this program is a wonderful and much-needed addition to Laurel House," she added.

"It's giving me a chance to help more directly," said Penny, who is currently matched with Margaret (name changed for confidentiality purposes), a mother of four young children who is attending college. The two meet once a week for approximately an hour or two for conversation. Penny has even helped Margaret apply for scholarship assistance and write essays for her classes.

**"We try to give women back  
their lives and end the  
isolation from others that is  
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and emotionally  
abusive relationships."**



#### **'We Will Be There'**

"There's a tendency to fall back on unhealthy relationships when you're unsure of your next step and unaware of the community resources that can help you reach your goals," explained Shari Abramowitz, manager of the Community Safe Haven Program. "We try to give women back their lives and end the isolation from others that is too often part of physically and emotionally abusive relationships."

While a woman is living in the shelter, Shari or a volunteer introduces the program; additional contacts are made shortly after the resident leaves.

"Our goal is to communicate the heart of what we try to do for everyone who seeks safe haven at Laurel House," said Shari. "We are there for them and we *will be there* through every step of the process."

*Additional volunteers are needed as mentors. Volunteers commit to meet with program participants for one or two hours per week, not to exceed six hours per month. For information about volunteering, call Tina Reynolds at (610) 277-1860, ext. 105 or email her at [treynolds@laurel-house.org](mailto:treynolds@laurel-house.org). To make a gift to Laurel House in support of the Community Safe Haven Program, call Melissa at (610) 277-1860, ext. 102 or email her at [mfirman@laurel-house.org](mailto:mfirman@laurel-house.org)*



## From The Executive Director

If there were any doubts that domestic violence is still a predominant issue or that safe havens like Laurel House are still needed, consider what happened on September 17, 2008.

That day, Laurel House and 78% of all domestic violence programs throughout the United States participated in the National Census of Domestic Violence Services. The Census documents the number of people who seek services within a 24-hour period and the types of services requested, among others. The report arrived on my desk a few weeks ago and I wanted to share the numbers with you.

On September 17, 2008 the 1,553 participating local domestic violence programs:

assisted 60,799 adults and children through shelter, transitional housing, and advocacy;

answered 20,658 hotline calls (that's over 14 calls every minute!);

trained 30,210 attendees at 1,455 community education sessions.

They're shocking numbers, but the saddest statistic was this one:

16,458 children under age 18 spent the night of September 17, 2008 in a domestic violence shelter or transitional housing program.

That's more than the approximately 11,000 children who are born every day across America.

For a variety of reasons, not every domestic violence program elected to participate in the Census project – which means that these staggering numbers are actually higher. At Laurel House, each day we're making a difference in the lives of the families seeking shelter and counseling. In these challenging economic times, we're seeing unprecedented need among the families at our door. As these numbers indicate, they – and we – are not alone.

I hope you'll take a moment and read about some of the ways that your support of Laurel House – through your donations (of any amount) or your time as a volunteer - helps to provide the much needed services for families in crisis. We know we have much more to do, and as the Census numbers show, many more people to help.

Thank you for your continued support that allows us to do so.

Beth E. Sturman, Executive Director

## Founding Mothers' Luncheon

Laurel House celebrated its Founding Mothers, as well as their children, during a special luncheon held in their honor. Stories and memories about the earliest days of Laurel House were shared and captured for a special DVD.



Founding Mother Lillian Orr arrives at the event.

## Marian's Attic 2009 Fashion Show



Marie Kiel struts her stuff on the runway at the 2009 Marian's Attic Fashion Show at the Crowne Plaza in King of Prussia on March 18, 2009. For the second year in a row, the event attracted more than 250 people, a sold out crowd. All proceeds benefited Laurel House.



## Allstate Foundation Awards Laurel House \$20,000 for Self-Sufficiency Project

Thanks to a \$20,000 grant from the Allstate Foundation, Laurel House is strengthening its efforts to help women enter and succeed in the workplace.

The Allstate project pairs a program participant with a professional mentor to help women gain the skills and confidence needed to secure employment leading to greater self-sufficiency and independence.

A task force of 14 people has started planning the program's parameters and structure. Included on the task force are former residents of Laurel House's transitional housing program, industry volunteers and Laurel House staff members. This spring, the task force plans to work with individuals to develop a personal career plan. Financial education is also expected to be a main focus and objective of the project.

Among those serving on the task force is Christina Tibbs. A mother of four, Christina arrived at Laurel House's shelter several years ago with limited financial resources and without a high school diploma. After staying at the shelter and subsequently being accepted into transitional housing, Christina began the long process of becoming independent, obtaining her GED followed by her college degree. Currently pursuing her MBA while working full-time, Christina became involved with this project because she "is passionate about reaching back to help another woman to know she too can move forward."

"We're excited about this project and very grateful to the Allstate Foundation for recognizing the importance of giving women opportunities to obtain the skills needed to achieve in the workplace," said Beth Sturman, Executive Director of Laurel House. "We feel that having the one-on-one mentoring component will be a big contributor to the success of the program. It's incredible to see how energized and motivated our task force is to work with the women at Laurel House to provide them with this much-needed support."

For more information on ways to become involved with this project, contact Beth Sturman at 610-277-1860, ext. 113 or at [bsturman@laurel-house.org](mailto:bsturman@laurel-house.org).



Laurel House's Domestic Abuse Response Team (DART) for Law Enforcement program received a \$20,000 grant from Verizon Foundation. Pictured from left to right are Beth Sturman, Executive Director of Laurel House; Tina Reynolds, DART for Law Enforcement Liaison; Daniel J. Reavy, Director of External Affairs for Verizon; and Melissa Firman, Director of Development and PR for Laurel House.



## Farewell, Patrice

As this newsletter goes to press, Laurel House is saying farewell to Deputy Director Patrice Nelson, who has been named the Executive Director for Urban Ministries in Durham, NC. During her three plus years at Laurel House, Patrice has interacted with community groups, donors and supporters in various capacities. She strengthened the volunteer program, spoke frequently to corporations, worked closely with communities of faith on service projects, and supervised the managers of Laurel House's direct service programs. She leaves big shoes to fill. We wish Patrice well as she begins this new chapter of her life among friends and family in North Carolina.

## Meet the Laurel House 2009 Gala Honorees

### MERCK

Through their corporate giving program, Merck employees have supported Laurel House's programs in the North Penn community and beyond for more than a decade. The Merck Partnership for Giving campaign has resulted in more than \$40,000 in charitable contributions each year to Laurel House. For many years, Merck has also proudly supported Laurel House's annual walk-a-thon (now known as the DASH Against Domestic Violence) as the primary Event Sponsor.

### The Reporter

Newspapers share the important stories happening within a community and in the North Penn area, that voice belongs to *The Reporter*. It's a voice that Laurel House is grateful to have as a partner in telling the stories of people affected by domestic violence – for when stories stay hidden, so does the issue of domestic abuse. *The Reporter* raises awareness of domestic violence in the North Penn community by publishing articles about Laurel House's services for victims and survivors, as well as strong opinion and editorial pieces advocating for societal change against domestic abuse. For the 2008 DASH Against Domestic Violence, *The Reporter* was the event's first Media Sponsor and donated valuable ad space that helped to attract a record-breaking crowd.

### Verizon

Verizon's commitment to ending domestic violence is shown throughout their entire organization with programs and projects that employees become personally involved in. Verizon Wireless was among the first foundations funding Laurel House's Domestic Abuse Response Team for Law Enforcement, a program which continues to receive generous support from the Verizon Foundation. For several years, three separate Verizon locations in Montgomery County participate in "Shower for the Shelter," a partnership with the National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV) that connects local Verizon offices to domestic violence programs in their community. Each spring, "Shower for the Shelter" provides people living in local shelters with essential items they need during their stay.

### Verizon Telephone Pioneers of America

A group of Verizon retirees, known as the Telephone Pioneers of America (or, TelecomPioneers), adopted Laurel House several years ago. The group's Liberty Bell Chapter, consisting of retired members, coordinates food drives for Laurel House's shelter throughout the year and makes generous financial contributions in support of Laurel House's hotline and shelter operations. Over the past several years, the Verizon TelecomPioneers have raised a valuable funds for Laurel House. This spring, the TelecomPioneers were awarded \$10,000 which they plan to donate to Laurel House to support technology needs. Founded in 1911, the Telephone Pioneers of America is the world's largest industry-related volunteer organization with 620,000 members who are current employees and retirees.

### Kelly Whalen

As a graphic designer, Kelly Whalen has created distinctive communications for Laurel House's annual Gala. For the last few years, Kelly's work has resulted in colorful direct mail pieces that always stand out from the crowd and set a unique tone for the Gala. Kelly's pro-bono design services also allows Laurel House to direct even more of the proceeds from the Gala to support the services and programs for families affected by domestic violence. Kelly and her husband Tom proudly support Laurel House by attending the Gala as well as through their personal philanthropy.

## Special Thank You to Our 2009 Laurel House Gala Sponsors!

### Hot Rodders

Anonymous  
Burns, White & Hickton, LLC,  
Attorneys at Law  
Tammy and Andrew Reid  
Verizon

### Cool Cats

Joyce and Allan Goldberg  
Shelly Koffler and Tony Ferretti  
Malvern Federal Savings Bank  
Michael and Ellen Michelson

### Rock 'n Rollers

ICS Corporation  
Barbara and John Jordan  
Philadelphia Eagles  
Etta and Ivan Szeftel

### Greasers

Jackie Allen/BJNB Foundation  
Cumberland Advisors  
Sue DePaul/ DePaul Insurance  
Firstrust  
Sonja and Brian Haggert  
Carol and Jim Hunsicker  
Mimi and Jim Mahoney  
Shara and Jason Rizzo  
Pat and Jerry Younce

### *Fabulous Fifties*



*April 18, 2009*

## *Sarah and Steve's Story: A Gift from Their Hearts*

When planning a wedding, many couples often register for the many necessary items to set up their new home.

For their September 2008 nuptials, Sarah Daniels and Steve Dickhoff skipped the bridal registry altogether. Instead, they registered for Laurel House.

“When we first discussed the idea, we both knew immediately it was the right thing to do,” said Steve.

On an elegant card enclosed with their wedding invitations, Sarah and Steve requested guests to consider a donation to Laurel House instead of giving any gifts to the couple. Their decision to forego all wedding gifts was one they fulfilled, even with Steve being laid off in the months prior to the wedding.

“Once you’re part of Laurel House, they never let you go,” Sarah explained. “They’re always there for you, no matter what you need.”

Laurel House was there for Sarah many times after she separated from her first husband, who was abusive. For several years, Sarah called Laurel House’s hotline whenever she needed to talk with a counselor about the domestic violence occurring in her home.

“Laurel House and the counselors on the hotline were lifelines for me,” says Sarah, a mother of three children. “I had nowhere else to turn, and every time I called, someone was there for me, to listen and to help.”

Eventually, Sarah sought counseling through Laurel House’s community counseling program, available free to anyone in Montgomery County who is either in an abusive relationship or struggling with issues from a previous abusive relationship. When a weekly support group for survivors was formed, Sarah was one of the first participants. She continues to be an integral part of the group today.

“Sarah is such a source of strength for so many of our women,” said Minna Davis, Director of Counseling and Supportive Services at Laurel House and coordinator of the weekly support group.



“A counselor can tell someone ‘*you will get through this,*’ but it becomes incredibly more powerful to hear ‘*you will get through this*’ from someone who has walked in your shoes.”

Sarah and Steven’s generous spirit – and that of their friends and family – resulted in more than \$1,100 raised for Laurel House to continue providing services such as the hotline, counseling, and support groups.

Laurel House welcomes the opportunity to work with couples wishing to make a charitable donation in lieu of favors or in some other connection to their wedding celebration. To learn more, visit [www.laurel-house.org](http://www.laurel-house.org) or call (610) 277-1860 for more information on this or Laurel House’s community counseling program. To reach Laurel House’s 24-hour confidential hotline, call

(800) 642-3150.

*“As a **mother**, all I wanted to do was keep my family safe. The people at **Laurel House** gave me the **strength and courage** to do that and so much more.”*

*“Michelle” ~ a former resident of Laurel House’s shelter and transitional housing programs*

Maybe she’s your mother or grandmother. The sister who turned into your best friend. Or the “cool aunt” who knew exactly the right advice to give.

You know who she is, and how special she still is in your life.

This Mother’s Day, your gift in your mother’s name – or anyone else you wish to honor – will provide shelter and supportive services for the more than 200 women and 200 children who are helped each year through Laurel House’s shelter and transitional housing programs.

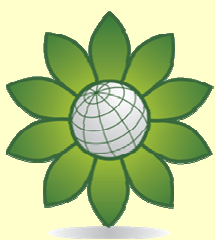
**To make a Mother’s Day gift in memory of or in honor of someone, contact Melissa at 610-277-1880, ext. 102 or email her at [mfirman@laurel-house.org](mailto:mfirman@laurel-house.org).**



# Mark Your Calendar!

To save postage and paper,  
we've made the Laurel House  
News available in an  
e-version.

If you'd like to receive your  
next copy electronically,  
contact Melissa at  
[mfirman@laurel-house.org](mailto:mfirman@laurel-house.org).



Design and Layout by Patty Mark

For more information on any of the events listed, please call  
(610) 277-1860 or visit [www.laurel-house.org/Events.php](http://www.laurel-house.org/Events.php)



## May

Friday, May 29<sup>th</sup>, 7:00 – 10:00 p.m.  
“Strike Out Domestic Violence” Bowling Fundraiser  
Facenda-Whitaker Lanes, East Norriton, PA

## October – Domestic Violence Awareness Month

Wednesday, October 7<sup>th</sup> - 5:30 – 8:00 p.m.  
Saks Preview Party for Breaking the Silence

Sunday, October 25<sup>th</sup>, 8:00 a.m. – 12 noon  
5K Dash Against Domestic Violence Walk/Run  
Pavilion at Upper Gwynedd Township Building  
Sunneytown Pike & Parkside Place, West Point, PA



## November

Tuesday, November 3<sup>rd</sup>  
*Breaking the Silence* Luncheon  
Water Works Restaurant  
“Best of Saks”

PO Box 764  
Norritown, PA 19404  
[www.laurel-house.org](http://www.laurel-house.org)

