

Monarch Milestones

WINTER 2007

The Triage Nurse met me at the ER desk and took me into a large room over to a corner unit that was completely curtained off. When I pulled back the curtain to approach the bed, I found a beautiful young woman in her mid 20's, curled up in a tight fetal position, her head swathed in bandages.

You might immediately think that yes, this is what I would expect to be represented as the face of domestic violence. But you know, it isn't always. Sometimes we do look after women who have been injured. But often, even with physically injured women, the damage done inside to a woman's soul and spirit is even more horrific than the sight I beheld that day in the hospital. Bruises fade, broken bones heal, but damage inside can debilitate a woman for a very long time.

When the young woman saw me out of the corner of the one swollen eye that was visible, she literally grabbed me and hung on as though I was a life preserver in a storm. You see, I knew this gal. She had left Monarch Place 10 days earlier. She had spent a month with us. She had become

part of our Monarch family. We had grieved with her, supported her, helped her find a new place and a new job in a new community. And she walked out the door with hope shining in her eyes and her determination evident in every step.

You might wonder if she was a "typical" abuse victim. Was she? Or is there such a thing? She was not a loser. She came from a very good family. She was financially secure. She had a university degree and a stable career. She was Caucasian. You know, in reality, there are no borders to protect a woman from being vulnerable to domestic violence. Economic status, academic achievement, childhood stability, religious affiliation, cultural background. None of these protected this gal. She could have been my daughter. She could have been your daughter. She was someone's daughter, she was someone's sister, she was someone's friend, she was someone's co-worker, she was loved. And yet she was as vulnerable as any woman today. The statistics demonstrate that one in four women will experience abuse at the hands of an intimate partner at some time in their life. One in four. Experiencing abuse at the hands of someone

they most love and trust.

As I held that gal in the hospital bed I heard the heart wrenching news that this young woman might not only lose her eyesight but possibly one of her eyes as well. It would be only time that would tell. She needed to be kept in a dark room and in bed for 3-5 days. We could do that. We were prepared. We knew what to do.

Would you have known what to do and how to respond? Did you know that in the immediate days after a woman has left an abusive relationship she is in the most danger of being harmed or killed? Substantially more at risk than at any other time. Every time there is an article regarding the murder of a woman at the hands of her intimate partner, there are corresponding comments garnered from family and friends "We're shocked", "We never thought something like this would happen", "He seemed like such a great guy", "We had no idea", "I don't know what I could have done". What you would say?

What happened to this young woman? What tore

her hopes and dreams apart and left her seriously injured? Somehow, her partner (CEO of a successful company) had tracked her down. Somehow he had gained entry to her new place and was waiting for her with a weapon when she came home from work. And somehow, she was able to elude his grasp and run out onto the sidewalk, bleeding and broken. Just as a transit bus was going by. And that driver saw her, stopped the bus, opened the door, and she literally fell inside. He closed the door and took her straight to the hospital. I truly believe she might not be alive today if it wasn't for someone who knew what he could do and responded accordingly.

Martin Luther King Jr once declared, "Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter".

And if that young woman stood in front of you today, she would look at you out of 2 very beautiful brown eyes, 2 fully seeing brown eyes, and say, "Don't be silent. Keep on. We need you. We can't do it without you. Thank you."



MONARCH PLACE TRANSITION HOUSE

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Offering shelter and support
to women and children

OUR MISSION STATEMENT...

*To provide women and children in need
the opportunity to gain strength
and to live according to their true worth*

OUR PROGRAMS.... REPRESENTING 9 YEARS OF SERVICE TO THE COMMUNITY...

Monarch Place Transition House is a fully staffed 12 bed emergency 1st stage shelter for women and children fleeing violence in their homes. (served 1351 women and 810 children)

Chrysalis Place Second Stage House is an 11 bed residence offering a one year subsidized residential program designed to support women through an intensive recovery and healing process with the goal of creating safe independent living. (served 53 women and 31 children)

W.I.S.H.E.S (Women in Safe, Healthy, Empowering Support) is a curriculum-based community support group facilitating the journey to wholeness and healthy living. (served 264 women)

W.I.N.G.S. Multicultural Services provides specialized support and advocacy services to multicultural women living in the New Westminster area. (served 55 women)

W.I.N.G.S. Outreach Services supports women to find affordable housing, be connected to supportive community resources when they relocate, and navigate any necessary legal or court processes. (served 237 women and 206 children)

Our organization is primarily funded by The Ministry Of Community Services, BC Housing, and Services Canada.

A recent resident
commented,
“I feel I have been
rescued from
a stormy sea.
You took me in,
offered support
and a chance
for me to
get it all together.”

If we had one more day....

Several years ago, there was a domestic violence review panel established in Washington State to review the homicides that had occurred over the past year. In that report, the names of each woman was listed along with the date of her death. One of the moms phoned into the review panel to let them know that they had listed the wrong date of her daughter's death. It was actually a day earlier than what was down on paper. The mother's comment was: “Oh, if I had had one more day, maybe I could have done something and she would still be alive.”

We do not have one more day for those who have been killed by domestic violence abusers. The 54 women in BC who lost their lives last year can receive no help from us now. But we do have one more day for all the domestic violence survivors in our families, among our friends, co-

workers, neighbours, and our communities. The question, then, is this: **What will we do today?**

For us, it's been a busy year! Thank you to all who have supported us financially over this past year and those who have provided tangible items that have met the needs of the women we serve. What does your support mean? It places you at the foot of the bed of that young woman in the hospital. Being part of the caring, supportive fabric so essential to her recovery. It places you at the door of a community support group and behind the healing work that takes place in women's lives. It places you in the forefront of the movement to declare that violence against women and children is unacceptable in our society today. And it places you firmly in my mind with gratitude and thankfulness for all that you mean to us.

Sincerely,

Lorrie Wasyliw, Executive Director

