

Safe Sanctuary

BY EMILY WILSON

After nearly a decade of involvement with The Shelter for Abused Women & Children, Naples residents John and Georgia DallePezze have witnessed firsthand the heartbreaking aftermath of domestic violence. "Hearing children speak about the safety of their mothers is very emotional," Georgia says. "But it also makes us feel good and proud that we were able to help."

The charity offers emergency shelter and transitional housing for women and children who have been affected by domestic violence. It also provides outreach services, training and education throughout Collier County.

Georgia first became involved with the Shelter in 2005, when she joined the Shelter Guild, a group of about 50 women advocates. The following year, Georgia served as President of the Guild. She also launched the Monarch Society to honor the Shelter's major donors, and she recently completed a six-year term on the board of trustees. John has been a supporter of the Gentlemen Against Domestic Violence for several years, which hosts an annual event to raise awareness among men.

Throughout the years, the DallePezzes have contributed several hundred thousand dollars to the Shelter, funds that have helped support the Shelter from the Storm Luncheon, the Monarch Society, the annual Gentlemen Against Domestic Violence event and the Mending Broken Hearts with Hope Luncheon.

"Our emphasis overall has been in underwriting programs so that other individuals who may not be in the same position we are in can then implement the programs," Georgia says. "Another part of our role is to educate and inform others who also might have the means to give."

In addition to the immediate safety the Shelter provides women and children, the organization's ultimate goal is to prevail over domestic violence. "We know that when you empower women, you empower families," Georgia says. "And when you empower families, you empower the next generation." «



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