



Photos by Jesus Calo

From left: Kaydee Tuff, Naomi Goren and Jane DeMado sit on the special butterfly seat. The butterfly represents transformation and symbolizes overcoming one's obstacles.



A shared play area located between two of the seven transitional cottages that are available to families leaving emergency shelter.



Transitional cottages are sponsored by philanthropic benefactors, who name the cottages. Shown is Cottage Seven: The House that Love Built.

This Home is a Sanctuary

By Jesus Calo

All it takes is one person connecting the dots to make a difference, and seasonal resident Jane DeMado has done exactly that. As a member of the Noontime Rotary Club, she has attended many luncheons that bring speakers from various places to connect Marco Island beyond the bridge. Five years ago, one speaker spoke candidly about his experience with domestic violence and abuse. Having to leave in the middle of the night, as some victims do when fleeing from their abuser, his mother was unable to pack much other than the clothes they were wearing and a few valuables. DeMado knew there was something that had to be done about a lack of clothing and possessions when a victim's world is crumbling beneath their feet.

Shelter is among one of the basic human needs and there are victims all over the country that risk losing their sanctuary because of domestic violence. It is

happening nationwide and eradicating domestic abuse requires a collective response from every community, starting with our own. Collier County's Shelter for Abused Women and Children (The Shelter) provides a safe haven for victims of domestic violence and abuse. The Shelter empowers women and inspires hope for a peaceful future.

The Shelter's mission is leading the community to prevent, protect and prevail over domestic violence and social change. The vision is clear: having a community without domestic violence so that every home is a safe haven for the family it shelters. The Shelter originally opened in 1989, having only 20 beds, underwent new state-of-the-art, high-security renovations. The Shelter now offers 60 beds and has sheltered over 30 pets. The Shelter also has transitional home living areas that offer housing to participants bridging the gap between emergency shelter and independent living. The transitional housing is a two-year program that allows survivors to attend school, improve their job skills, continue



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Goren, Tuff, and DeMado load up the cart. Some items donated can be used for special gifts later during the holiday season.

counseling, take part in financial empowerment classes among other services available through The Shelter or partner agencies.

Collier County is one of the few counties in our state that has its own department in the Sheriff's branch to provide response to these types of cases. In 2016 alone, there were a total of over 1,500 domestic violence incidents and 470 individuals sheltered. Currently, domestic violence affects over 49 percent of our city and often these cases go unreported until it's too late. While the average length of stay can range around 41 days, the Shelter provides many specialized services for its participants for a long-term solution.

Growing up in a home with domestic violence, Executive Director Linda Oberhaus personally understands the impact that abuse has on children and families. It was in those early moments that Oberhaus developed a deep belief that every human being deserves to live a life free from violence and abuse. More than 2,000 people of all ages were empowered to find their moment of truth through outreach counseling and over 17,000 children in our community shared moments of thoughtful understanding through The Shelter's prevention programs.

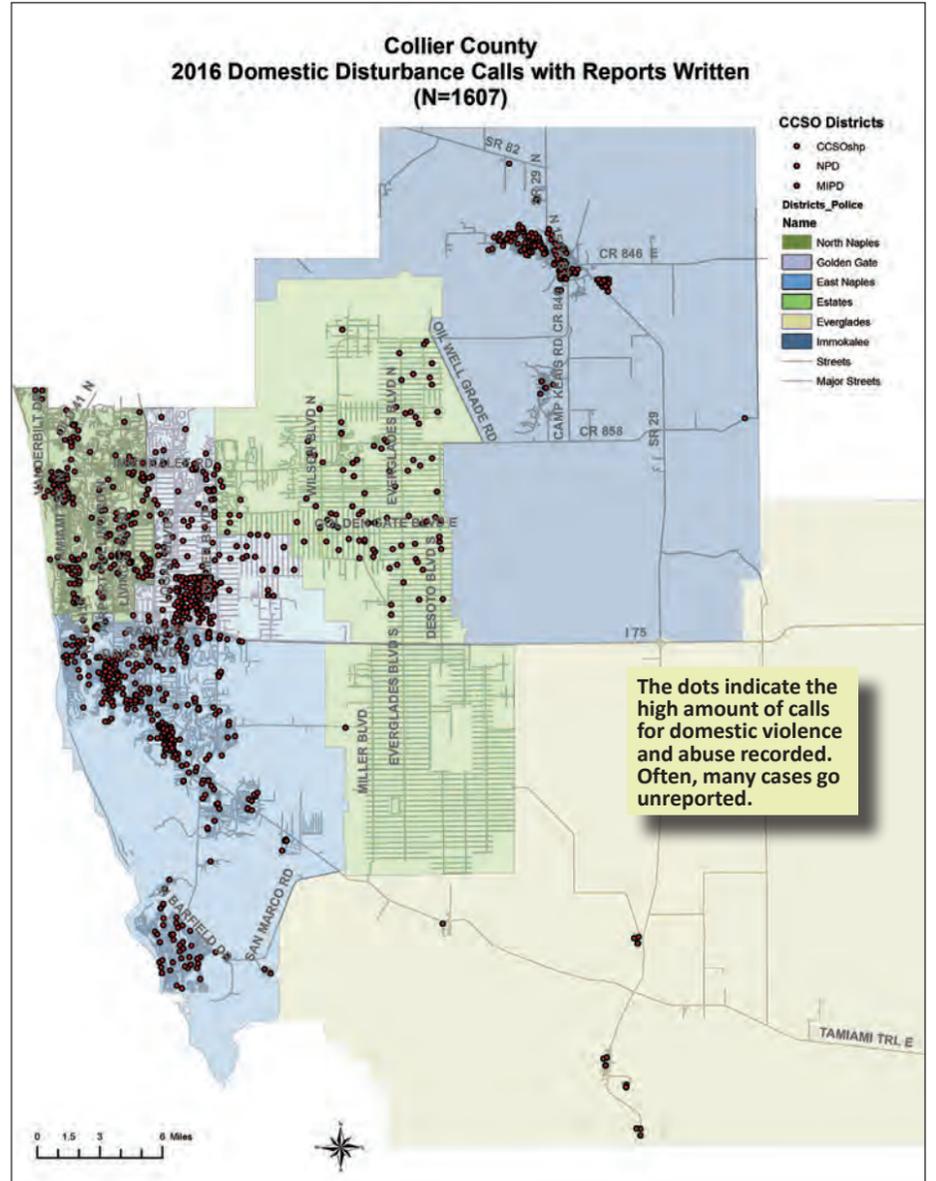
The government provides grants to The Shelter as funding flows through a steady stream of recipients. But the statistics show help comes from fundraising events and general donations, totaling 60 percent of the financial leverage to keep the facility running. The expenses of the facility ensure that over 83 percent of the funds go toward programs.

There is a list of ongoing essentials that are needed to provide for the occupants of The Shelter. DeMado has cultivated a list of donors contributing monthly when they have the inventory for it. She devotes her time during season to deliver clothes from the local shops to the Shelter, monthly. Options Thrift Shoppe stands because of generous donations of unused clothing and valuables. The response that DeMado has received from the local area and its vendors from when she started to now has been remarkable. DeMado plans to continue helping out the shelter any way she can.

The best defense is a good offense, and The Shelter is currently underway developing The Shelly Stayer Shelter to be built in Immokalee. While there are existing resources in that area, there is no physical shelter to provide emergency relief to victims of domestic violence. It is the generous



The Shelter Options Shoppe, located at 968 Second Avenue North in Naples, provides funding as well as clothing, furniture and household supplies for shelter participants.



trustees, loyal shelter supporters and local community members such as DeMado, that aid The Shelter's progress. A peaceful home for every family in Collier County is achievable with the right awareness.

For more information about The Shelter, visit www.naplesshelter.org. If you or someone you know is currently being affected by domestic abuse and violence, please contact the 24-hour crisis line at 239-775-1101.



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