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**LINDA  
OBERHAUS**  
*Expanding  
Shelter's  
Wings*

**AVOID MAKEUP  
MELTDOWNS**

**6 MISTAKES  
AT THE GYM**

**STAND UP FOR  
SAFE SCHOOLS**

**\* PLUS!  
TENACIOUS  
TEENS**



Linda Oberhaus, CEO of the Shelter for Abused Women and Children, devotes her life to providing a space – a home – that is safe for all.



# Expanding Shelter's Wings

SMALL BUT MIGHTY PROTECTOR, LINDA OBERHAUS, STANDS UP FOR WOMEN AND CHILDREN

**T**here are things that Linda Oberhaus wishes she could un-see, un-hear and un-read.

As the chief executive officer for the Shelter for Abused Women & Children, Oberhaus burrows into the dark depths of human cruelty while staying on top of social issues to provide the best services to people who have experienced trauma from domestic violence and human trafficking.

But even after 25 years in the human services field, Oberhaus is still surprised by the brutality human beings inflict upon one another.

From the time she was a teenager answering phones at a crisis hotline and visiting rape victims in the local hospital to her recent election to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence board of directors, Oberhaus has been fighting the good fight to restore hope and healing to thousands of women and children.

Oberhaus came to Naples in 2007 from the domestic violence center in Tampa, where she served as executive director after earning her bachelor's and master's degrees in social work from the University of South Florida. Oberhaus has led the 60-bed Naples shelter with seven transitional cottages to a 4-star nonprofit rating while assembling an influential, relevant board of directors.

"We have a phenomenal board, I have to brag," Oberhaus says.

Community members include Collier County Sheriff Kevin Rambosk, Naples Chief of Police and Fire Tom Weschler, Marco Island Police Chief Al Schettino, Naples Mayor Bill Barnett, State Attorney Stephen B. Russell of the 20th Circuit, Superintendent of Collier County Public Schools Kamela Patton, NCH Director of Emergency Services Elisabeth Novakovich, and experts in banking and finance.

The board members represent agencies that are aligned in serving The Shelter's mission to prevent, protect and prevail over violence.

Because victims predominantly find The Shelter through the emergency room or law



**STORY BY KAREN HANLON :: HAIR BY FRANCESCA IANNOTTA, SALON & SPA BOTANICA**  
**MAKEUP BY MARIA BABINA :: SHOT ON LOCATION NAPLES BOTANICAL GARDEN**  
**PHOTOGRAPHY BY HEATHER DONLAN :: HEATHERDONLAN.COM**



enforcement, part of police protocol is to carry and distribute Shelter cards. Oberhaus is an auxiliary deputy with the Collier County Sheriff's Office and discovered that officers are spending 29 percent of their on-duty police time responding to domestic violence calls.

Collaborating with law enforcement agencies, Oberhaus created a map to pinpoint the origin of the nearly 1,800 domestic disturbance calls, leading to written reports in 2017. The calls from every area of the county proved one thing: domestic violence is an epidemic not limited to a particular area, economic class or race.

### SPEAKING UP

Oberhaus says women are finding their power through the #MeToo movement.

"Sara" was a bubbly 20-year-old Naples native, and a 4.0 college student who grew up in a close-knit, conservative Catholic household. She was also a human trafficking victim.

After hearing Oberhaus speak at a community event, Sara approached her with a terrible secret. She had escaped from her "Romeo pimp" (a man who lured her by initially treating her like a girlfriend), and she was struggling emotionally.

"Linda saved my life. She is the one who helped me realize that I was a survivor."

Oberhaus and The Shelter helped Sara petition for the expungement of her seven felony convictions for non-violent acts committed while she was a victim of human trafficking.

"People will say, 'but you had a choice.' And I did have a choice," admits Sara. "My choice on that particular day was: go to work and not know who I was going to sleep with or how many times, or, I could go with him and commit a crime. What would you do in that predicament?"

Sara is just like you and me says Oberhaus.

So, she showed up to court.

"In some cases, I show up to make sure the family knows that they matter and that The Shelter cares. I think it is important for the legal system and the judiciary to know that The Shelter is attentive to what is happening."

Oberhaus grew up in a large family in a small city outside of Boston. As the youngest of nine children, she remembers watching a PBS special with her siblings about runaway kids who ended up being trafficked. She never forgot the desperation of those children.

"That show planted a seed that this is happening in our country," says Oberhaus, who didn't know at the time what was happening to the girls. "I just knew that I needed to be extra safe. Somehow I knew that my gender required that of me."

As a child, she also witnessed the effects of an abusive relationship. Her mother was a victim of domestic violence.

"It's not a highlight of what I put out there. But I am not ashamed of it. The reality is that we don't choose what families we are born into," says Oberhaus.

Her brother eventually stood up to her father (as is often the case when boys grow up) and demanded that he leave.

Above left: Following a military exercise at the Collier County Sheriff's Office hanger, Linda Oberhaus flew with the aviation unit as an auxiliary deputy sheriff, patrolling from the air.

Above: Linda Oberhaus' siblings pictured here in 1972: Terry, Dennis, James, Dawna, Linda, Marie, William with twins (in back) Cindy and Sandy

## Save the Dates for Upcoming Shelter Events

Visit [NaplesShelter.org](http://NaplesShelter.org) for updates and details.

**Purple Party**  
Oct. 12, 2018

**Gentle'men Against  
Domestic Violence  
Tailgate Event**  
Jan. 17, 2019

**Mending Broken Hearts  
with Hope Luncheon**  
Feb. 18, 2019

**Two-day Hope  
Designer Boutique**  
Feb. 17-18, 2019

The family relocated — without her father — to Florida, and the move changed her life. She remembers the moment when she discovered a shelter in Tampa.

“I felt a sense of peace and comfort just knowing that if Mom ever needed this or if, God forbid, I ever needed this, we had a safe place,” says Oberhaus.

#### WHY WOULD SHE STAY?

Often times, people outside of an abusive relationship will ask, “Why would she stay?”

That question never occurred to Oberhaus. She knew her mother would

who, when and where they perpetrate their violence, and it is usually against their partner, then the pets and then the children.

At that point, women are much more likely to leave, and leaving is almost always the trigger for when the violence escalates to domestic violence homicide, says Oberhaus. She encourages victims to call The Shelter. An advocate will help form a plan to leave safely, with essential documents intact, and will be with her every step of the way toward healing and self-sufficiency.

The intensity of Oberhaus’s work calls for a balance of mind, body and

The Shelter’s motto reflects that same life balance: “Happy, healthy and whole.”

“We are proud to be a Blue Zones organization and try to keep our environment as healthy as possible,” says Oberhaus, who observes a vegan diet.

Her staff voted to replace break room junk food with nuts, granola bars, fruit and flavored water. A healing arts advocate leads voluntary guided meditation twice a day for residents and staff.

Symbols of light and transformation have replaced pictures of battered women with black eyes in most of the common areas. The focus is on healing, recovery and the metamorphosis that takes place within each woman.

As a survivor, Sara admits that the “darkness is something you live with and hold onto.” It took meeting the right person to find help. “And there was Linda, holding the flashlight, letting me know there was light at the end of the tunnel.”

“The thing is, they find their own light,” says Oberhaus. “We can see that they are beautiful, capable and intelligent, but they can’t see that. Their light has been dimmed by the oppression and the violence that they have had perpetrated against them.” Empowered with basic necessities, services and counseling, “they are really just rediscovering themselves, and that is when they begin to shine.”

If you or someone you know is in need of help, call 239-775-1101. ☘

**“And there was Linda, holding the flashlight, letting me know there was light at the end of the tunnel.”** ~ “Sara,” human trafficking victim

not jeopardize splitting up her children. At 19, Oberhaus confronted her father with an entirely different question.

“I said to him, ‘I really want to know why it is that you hit my mother. Why would you hurt her?’ I wanted that answered more than any other question.”

Many years later, Oberhaus obtained the truth.

“It’s about power and control,” says Oberhaus, leveling any notion that abusers are “out of control.”

She points out that abusers do not hit their bosses or grocery store clerks when they are angry. They decide

spirit. She wakes up every morning at 4:37 a.m. to hit the gym (“the extra seven minutes feel like a gift.”). She tries to commit to one skill-builder per year, such as postgraduate courses at the Harvard Business School, Harvard Kennedy School and the FBI Citizens Academy. She graduated from Leadership Hillsborough, Collier and Florida classes.

Oberhaus is “happily divorced” and has two grown children, Christopher and Brooke. She is in a 7-year relationship with Judge Janeice Martin, and the best part of her evening is when they sit and talk about their days.

### RISE Campaign

The Shelter launched the RISE campaign to build and endow a new emergency shelter in Immokalee. Respond, Inspire, Support and Empower (RISE) will help fund the Shelly Stayer Shelter for Victims of Human Trafficking & Domestic Violence.

Plans for the 32-bed, 15,000-square-foot shelter are divided into three separate pods to separate the long-term therapeutic care of the human trafficking victims from the domestic

violence victims. A third area is designated for continued outreach services.

The Shelter will break ground when the fundraising efforts reach \$10.8 million. \$5.8 million in capital is required to build the Immokalee center. The remaining \$5 million will cover half of the \$10 million needed to establish an endowment.

For more information on the RISE campaign, go to [NaplesShelter.org/Immokalee](http://NaplesShelter.org/Immokalee).