

GUEST COMMENTARY

Take a stand for Domestic Violence Awareness Month

BY LINDA OBERHAUS, CEO

The Shelter for Abused Women & Children

It was 2 a.m. Jennifer awoke to Jay's demand that she make him a sandwich. When she told him she was tired, he threw her to the floor and began punching her.

Nearby in his crib, their 3-month-old son awoke to the screams and began to cry. Jennifer struggled free, grabbed the baby and ran outside. A neighbor heard her cries and called 911. Jay grabbed Jennifer by the hair and dragged her back into the house. He threw her on the couch and told her if she ever ran from him again, he would kill her. He had Jennifer pinned against the wall when sheriff's deputies arrived. Jay was arrested and officers told Jennifer about The Shelter for Abused Women & Children. She arrived hours later.

Although the names are changed, Jennifer's story is true. She is one of thousands of survivors served by the shelter since it began in 1989, and among the one in four American women who suffer physical violence at the hands of spouses, intimate partners or family members during her lifetime.

During October's National Domestic Violence Awareness Month, the shelter is calling on you to take a stand for countless victims and survivors like Jennifer and her son.

Although the shelter is probably best known for protection, it is but one leg of our three-pronged mission to prevent, protect and prevail over domestic vio-

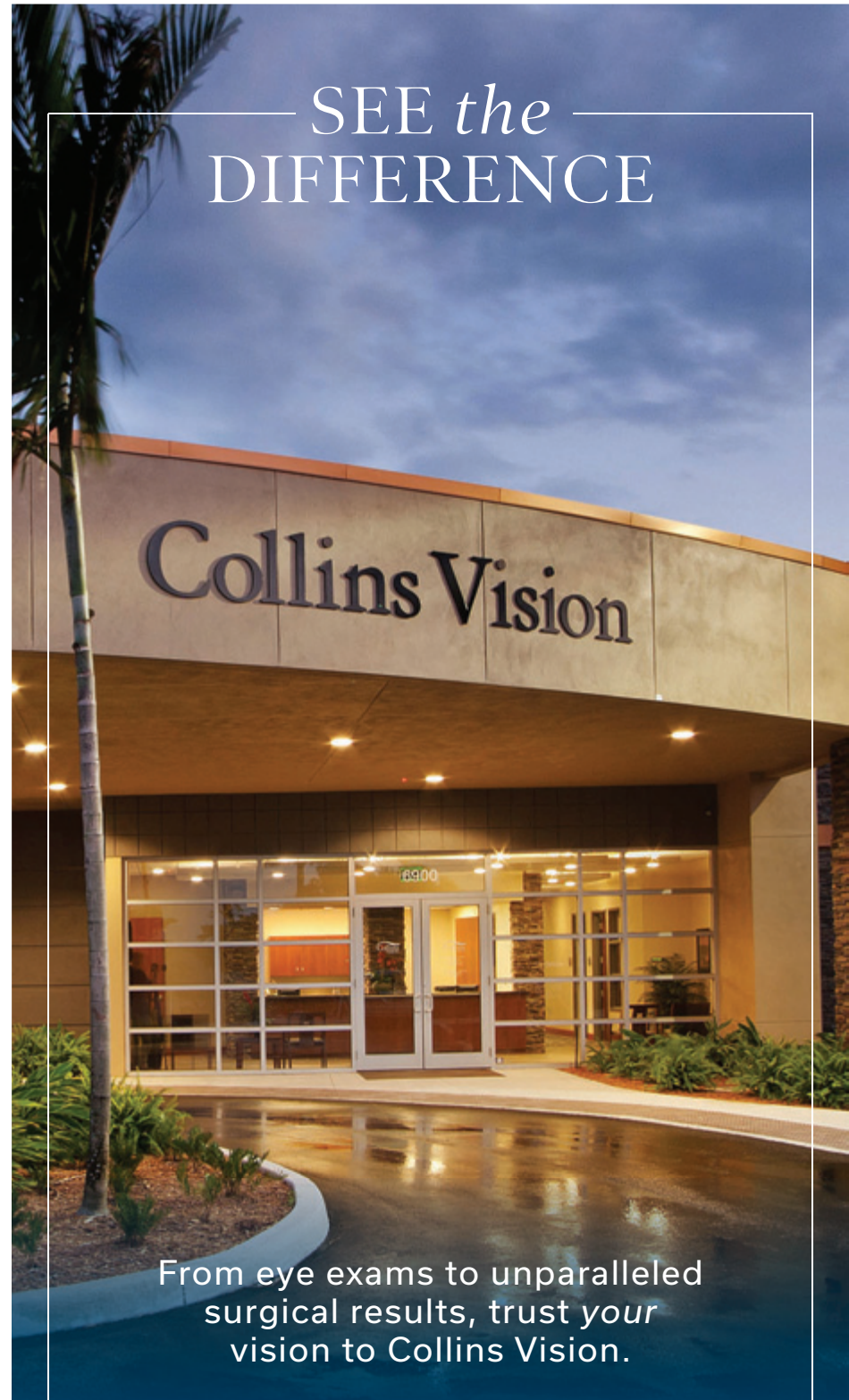
lence and human trafficking.

The shelter's prevention programs help young people recognize the signs of unhealthy relationships and learn what they can do to keep themselves safe. Our community education programs provide employers, medical personnel, and first responders with the tools needed to recognize and provide assistance when they suspect abuse.

Last year in Collier County, there were 1,611 calls to 911 regarding domestic violence. According to the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, the reported domestic violence offenses in Collier County included three murders, 41 rapes and 265 aggravated assaults. Chances are very likely you know at least one of these victims, because domestic violence crosses all ethnic, economic, and geographic boundaries. We cannot remain silent. We must take a stand to help victims and, ultimately, put an end to domestic violence and human trafficking in Collier County.

If you or someone you know is impacted by domestic violence, call the shelter's crisis line at 239-775-1101. If you want to learn how you can take a stand, call 239-775-3862 or go online to naplesshelter.org. ■

— Linda Oberhaus has served as CEO of The Shelter for Abused Women & Children since 2007. She previously served as the executive director for The Spring of Tampa Bay, a certified domestic violence center in Tampa.



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