

Preventing Domestic Violence Saves Lives in the Home and Community



Brooke was physically, emotionally, and financially bankrupt when she arrived at The Shelter for Abused Women & Children in Naples with a garbage bag of clothes and her two dogs.

At 20, she had been abused her entire life, first by her mother and then by her boyfriend, Jeff. Although he did not work, Jeff took over their finances and withheld money to control and punish Brooke. She lived in constant fear. If she came home late from work, she was threatened or physically abused. Sometimes Jeff would show up at her workplace and harass her in front of her coworkers.

Socially isolated, Brooke's only source of happiness was spending time with her dogs. When Jeff began to abuse them, she took a coworker's advice and came to The Shelter because it had a kennel. She arrived bruised, broken, and ashamed.

Brooke's story is not unique. Last year in Collier County, there were more than 1,500 9-1-1 calls regarding domestic violence. Chances are very likely you know at least one of these victims because domestic violence crosses all ethnic, economic, and geographic boundaries, from Port Royal to Immokalee.

At The Shelter, Brooke had time to focus on herself and heal. She received counseling and came to understand the abuse she suffered was not her fault. She also took part in The Shelter's economic empowerment classes, applied for a credit card, and opened a savings account. She found the self-confidence to eventually enroll in technical college and move into her own apartment.

October is National Domestic Violence Awareness Month. Statistics show that one in three women will experience domestic violence in her lifetime. Abuse can be physical, emotional, sexual, financial, and almost always a combination. The batterer may deny or deflect blame onto others and use intimidation, coercion, and threats to control their victim(s). Many, like Brooke, suffer in silence, unsure where to turn for help.

In addition to emergency refuge, The Shelter provides counseling, outreach

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**—Linda Oberhaus, CEO
The Shelter for Abused Women & Children**

services, legal and court assistance, financial education, prevention programs, community education classes, and more. Our two-year transitional living program features nine three-bedroom, two-bath cottages that provide survivors with affordable housing as they work toward financial independence.

Although The Shelter probably is best known for providing protection, it is only one leg of its three-pronged mission – to prevent, to protect, to prevail.

Prevention is the key to social change. It begins at home, at school, and in the workplace. In partnership with Collier County Public Schools, The Shelter presents age-appropriate programming designed to prevent domestic violence before it even begins. Young children receive the message that “Hands are for helping, not for hurting.” Teens learn to recognize unhealthy relationships and early signs of domestic violence. Through the Raising Gentlemen program, young men and boys challenge traditional male stereotypes of aggression and control. The Shelter’s community and professional education programs provide employers, medical personnel, and first responders with the tools needed to recognize and provide assistance when they suspect abuse.

Brooke’s life might have been different had she learned the warning signs of an unhealthy relationship. Perhaps her employer or physician might have intervened had they known the signs of abuse and how to offer her assistance. Jeff’s life might have been impacted by a Raising Gentlemen advocate. We will never know.

What we do know is that the failure to recognize and report domestic violence puts the entire community at risk, because violence in the home does not stop at the front door. It seeps out into our workplaces, schools, social circles, and places of worship. We see the tragic results in the headlines every day.

In addition to the devastating cost these crimes have on victims, the financial cost to the community is substantial. In 2021, costs associated with domestic violence in Collier County exceeded \$30 million in law enforcement, court costs, medical care, social services, lost wages, and job productivity.

We cannot remain silent upon experiencing, witnessing, or hearing about incidents of domestic violence. We must take a stand to help victims and, ultimately, put an end to domestic violence in Collier County.

Assistance is a phone call away. If you or someone you know is impacted by domestic violence, call The Shelter’s crisis line at 239-775-1101. To learn how you can help end domestic violence in our community, check www.naplesshelter.org. ☀

National Domestic Violence Awareness Month
SPEAK UP TO END THE CYCLE OF HURT.

STOP DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

You're just a call away from getting the help you need.

VOLUNTEERS ARE READY TO CHAT 24 HOURS A DAY.

CALL THE NATIONAL HOTLINE:
1-800-799-7233
OR
NAPLES SHELTER FOR ABUSED WOMEN & CHILDREN
24 HOUR CRISIS LINE:
TEL: (239) 775-1101
FIND MORE RESOURCES AND INFORMATION AT
NEAFAMILY.COM

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