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# HOPE

IS THE CURRENCY WE WORK WITH **Jane Doe Inc.** 



Stories of Hope  
from  
Survivors of sexual  
& domestic violence  
who received services &  
support from programs  
in Massachusetts

## The Women's Center

### *Special Thanks*

to the survivors who have shared their stories with us. Their strength and courage gives us all hope for a world without violence.

These stories portray the human dimension of the staggering data regarding the prevalence and pervasiveness of sexual and domestic violence:

**1 in 3 women and 1 in 5 men in**

**Massachusetts** have experienced sexual victimization other than rape in their lifetime;

**1 in 4 women and 1 in 7 men in**

**Massachusetts** have experienced rape, physical violence and/or stalking by an intimate partner in their lifetime.

These stories also represent the range of services needed and provided by the network of over sixty community-based sexual and domestic violence organizations throughout the Commonwealth. Thank you to the programs who helped us collect these stories.

As the state advocacy coalition against sexual and domestic violence in Massachusetts, Jane Doe Inc.'s work — from policy to prevention — is guided by the voices of survivors.

As you read these stories, we hope you will join us in saying NO MORE: together we can end sexual and domestic violence.

June 16, 2010

Dear Executive Director:

I want to express my gratitude to your organization for supporting me and my son Josias, during this difficult time in our lives.

The legal advocacy program was instrumental in assisting me in obtaining a restraining order that made sense.

Jacquie assisted by coaching me on what to ask for and writing the necessary motions myself. She located the attorney who will be working with me when I begin divorce proceedings.

Her expertise made this entire process so much easier. The moral support that I have received from all of your staff has truly been a blessing.

Sincerely ..

Thank you so much for helping me get into a program that was right for me and my baby. The staff and the girls in the house made me feel so comfortable and that I was actually part of a family for the first time in a long time. I just wanted you to know how much you're appreciated!!

Jennifer

Hi, My name is Michele. I want to tell you something about me. I have traveled down a long, hard road to get to the place I'm at right now. I've been in domestic violence. I was beaten and choked. I was raped by four guys and my ex-boyfriend, and I was separated from my children.

Then I discovered Our Sisters' Place and they specialize in domestic violence. When I went to the program I was hungry, confused, hurt, depressed and just wanted to die. I took a night and decided to try. They showed me things like red flags, proper diet. They listen and give you all the tools you need to make it. You, like me, use them. They work if you work it. I became a strong, vibrant woman and learned how to take care of me, because I am a Survivor, not a victim anymore!

## Wayside Valley Rape Crisis Program

Emily has turned her firsthand knowledge of the damage bullying and name-calling and rape into a platform to educate others and work to prevent these types of violence.

She was raped a year ago, by a 19-year-old friend of a cousin. Her assailant is now serving 2-1/2 years in prison. With a brother who is transgender and a mother who is a lesbian, she also understands how violence and bullying can undermine one's trust in other people and oneself and impact one's mental health and well-being.

Cullen said she waited two weeks before telling her mother about the rape. "I was with a friend and I was drinking. I couldn't even admit it to myself," she said.

Her advice other students trying to navigate through high school is to make the right decisions (she no longer drinks alcohol), have the right friends, and a support system. Wayside Youth and Family Support Network, based in Milford, began the Clothesline Project in 1999, and now has hundreds of T-shirts that are displayed at high schools and town commons throughout the Blackstone Valley. It is because of Wayside that she is comfortable talking about the experience. "The Clothesline Project really helped me," she said. "I want people to know that other people have gone through it."

A few of those messages: "We shouldn't have to teach how to cope with rape." "Don't be ashamed. It's in no way your fault. Just stay strong and follow your heart." "It's Because of YOU she is dead inside. Where did I go wrong." "I am strong & beautiful and you did not BREAK ME."

Instead of staying silent, Cullen is speaking out and encouraging others to do the same.



Tina's Story

Tina was paroled to Artemis II from Bristol County House of Correction. After her parole ended, she stayed in shelter and worked the program through March 2011. Tina used the skills she had learned in the program to obtain two jobs while living in shelter, reunified with all three of her children with help from the Department of Child & Family (DCF), and moved into her own apartment in the Family Preservation Program, a housing program she accessed through High Point Treatment Center. She is currently co-facilitating an Anger Management Group at PAACA. She continues to maintain her sobriety, volunteer in the community, and keeps in contact with us.

After leaving the program, she sent the following note to Artemis II: "I want to say that I admire the women on your staff and I am grateful for the opportunity to have had them in my life. You have given me a chance to grow as a woman and be a better mother for my children. I am living my dream today and it is because of this program and the staff that didn't give up on me. You are truly a blessing in my life. I will carry you with me each and every day. Thinking of you always, Tina."

## A New Day

I am a survivor of multiple rapes that happened in Cape Verde. I have a hard time coping with the fact that my life is not as I had planned it to be. I grew up in a house where my Dad wasn't present and a lot times I found the love I was desperately looking for in other male figures. Other men in the family took advantage of that. My innocence was taken away from me when I was eight years old and forced to have sexual intercourse with a close family member. After, another close family member started to touch me inappropriately and made me promise not to tell. I still won't tell anyone who he is. I try to block that painful memory and won't talk about when anyone asks.

I am positive my family knew what was going on but didn't do anything. My memories of my home country are tainted with pain and fear. I never wish to go back. I don't have a relationship with any of my family members there except my mom even though she couldn't keep me safe as a child. If I returned to Cape Verde I believe I would become a sex slave to my uncles and family because of the cultural and social structures in place there. I am grateful for A New Day and their help getting me my green card and appropriate papers to stay safely in United States.

I am an adult, male survivor of sexual assault after being drugged almost 4 years ago. If a man is sexually assaulted, it's usually caused by another male perpetrator; however my perpetrator is a woman. Being sexually assaulted has opened my eyes to what happens not only to **men**, but more importantly to **women**. I overcame the embarrassment, humiliation, degradation of what happened to me, along with the fears, anxiety, eating and sleeping disorders. I endured everything a woman may experience in the same situation. I was diagnosed with PTSD and with the help of counseling I overcame most of these unhealthy coping skills.

I spoke at A New Day's annual Flowers for Victims event in April of 2011 at Brockton City Hall and was pleased when it was well received by the audience. My **objective now** is to help other victims receive help rather than going through months and years with this unspoken trauma. Victims have told me if they knew earlier about programs to help, they would have contacted them sooner; I've learned that they didn't know where to go initially for support. With more funding to these agencies they would be able to provide the advertisements, response and prevention work that is needed to adequately address the issues of sexual assault.

We've all seen advertisements for other groups helping people **conquer** their problems. When was the last time you saw an ad to help and support sexually assaulted victims? I've never seen one. **This must change!**

## Elizabeth Stone House

*Rayna*

*I first came to the Elizabeth Stone House in April of 2005, beaten, battered and bruised. At the time, I didn't believe that I deserved better. I arrived at the Stone House straight from the hospital. I was five months pregnant and I didn't have anything but the clothes on my back. Where I came from, no one did anything for you without expecting something in return. Help always had a price.*

*My batterer wouldn't let me go to the doctor, even when I was pregnant. He said he would take care of me. He took care of me, but not in the way you might think. He made sure that I was stripped of my self esteem, my family, my son, my dignity and everything else he could take from me. At first, I did well in the Stone House programs, but eventually my batterer convinced me to come back to him. At this time, I was seven and a half months pregnant. I got involved with drugs and alcohol heavily and my children really suffered.*

*May 30, 2006 was the last time I allowed my batterer to abuse me. I stayed in the hospital over night and my whole life changed. That night I never looked back. No more beating, no more drugs, no more running the street, and no more hustling. I had a spiritual awakening. Again, I called the Elizabeth Stone House and asked for help. At first, I didn't have the courage to call because I was so embarrassed about leaving the first time. The Stone House still accepted me, even when I felt no one would ever accept me again. I've been living at the Elizabeth Stone House since 2006 and my life is truly wonderful. The Stone House helped me fight for my daughter and they helped me get a restraining order against my batterer. They allowed my son to come live with me and helped me get him through school. There was a time that I didn't think he was going to graduate but he graduated in June of 2008.*

*I'm able to use what I have learned at the Elizabeth Stone House to lead a healthy and safe life. My self esteem has sky-rocketed and I have a new smile. I left the Elizabeth Stone House at the end of 2008 to move into my own apartment. I have the skills to cope and I know I don't ever have to live like I did in the past.*

*The Stone House is where I learned how to make a house a home. Today I can call myself a survivor, not a victim..*

## Safe Passage

### *Liliana*

Liliana was born in Nicaragua. She met Timothy while visiting relatives in Connecticut. Two years later, they were married and Liliana moved to Connecticut to live with Timothy, who sponsored her application to become a permanent legal resident.



Not long after their wedding, Timothy began to abuse Liliana. Before long, Timothy was hitting Liliana almost every week. Liliana felt extremely isolated because she spoke no English, and because Timothy was very controlling and often would not let her see her family. Timothy also used Liliana's immigration status against her, threatening to withdraw his sponsorship if she told anyone about the abuse. Liliana thought that if Timothy withdrew her sponsorship, she would be deported immediately.

Liliana began calling Safe Passage's hotline while Timothy was at work. She spoke with a Spanish-speaking counselor about what she had been going through. Several months after Liliana first called the hotline, Timothy broke her arm. She called her counselor from the emergency room and said she needed to go into shelter.

While Liliana was in our shelter, Safe Passage's staff helped her obtain the resources she would need to live independently and stay safe. Liliana petitioned for permanent resident legal status with the help of Safe Passage's legal program. With the support of her counselor, Liliana became a student at a local college and obtained several scholarships. She continues to study English and recently began working as a reading specialist for Spanish-speaking children.

Liliana feels strongly that she can help other women who have been abused. She regularly refers women she meets to our counseling and legal programs, and is an active participant in our support group for Spanish-speaking survivors.

## The Network/La Red

### *Sheila*

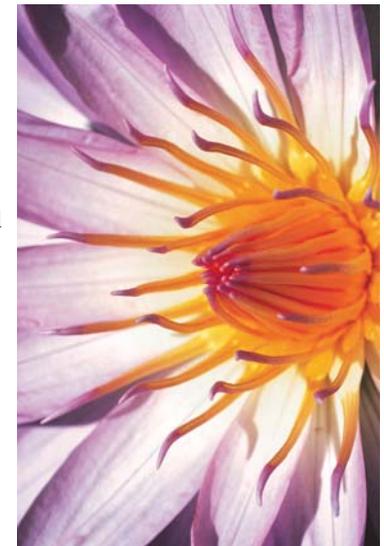
Sheila, a 50 year-old transgender woman of color was experiencing harassment and stalking from her abusive ex-partner. Sheila, a lesbian, who had been with her partner for 7 years, was in the relationship for 4 years before she started transitioning.

She called The Network/La Red seeking support around filing for a restraining order. During our initial conversations Sheila disclosed experiencing physical, emotional, sexual and identity abuse as well as harassment and stalking after breaking off the relationship.

She shared that "My partner had always been a bit jealous and controlling, but that got worse as I started to transition." Sheila left her partner after a fight in which her partner had strangled her.

TNLR helped Sheila connect to a LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer) Domestic Violence attorney who would help her with the restraining order process.

At the hearing, Sheila was denied the restraining order. The judge told her that she was too big to be afraid of anyone. Sheila has not been able to get an appeal approved and continues to experience harassment and stalking from her ex-partner.



## Everywoman's Center

As a male who had suffered abuse, I have been given a safe haven to get help without shame or embarrassment. I hope more financial support and state funding is given to EWC and other rape crisis centers in regard to helping more women and men who have suffered all forms of abuse, harassment, and abusive behavior from others, and are now able to receive free and confidential care by trained staff.

The abuse and humiliation I suffered no longer dictates who I am due to the crisis intervention, support, resources, advocacy, and counseling I received.

I am so grateful that I found a place like the Everywoman's Center to turn to for help so that people like myself can move forward and prosper in life and liberty. Thank You Sincerely.

I got involved with working to help rape survivors and help create a world free of rape culture after witnessing the devastating effects that it has had on people close to me. My ex-girlfriend would get flashbacks constantly. She relived her rape every night in her dreams and would wake up screaming and crying. At night dark places, shadows, and noises would scare her. She always felt the man who raped her was around, lurking, ready to attack her at any moment. Sometimes I would have to go to shadows and bushes and assure her that nobody was there.

There was never a moment where she was truly happy and felt safe. Imagine being a young teenager having to deal with this and not having access to counselors that could help you deal with the deep scars caused by sexual violence. Years later I still picture the look in her face as a bottle of alcohol sent her into a flashback. I will never be the same again.

Another one of my friends was raped in her room by a man much bigger and stronger than her. She still feels like she could have done more to stop it. She feels like she is to blame. Now she has fear of men. She would avoid them for months because she questioned their intentions. It took her a month to be able to sleep at night. Every time the topic was brought up she would have flashbacks. She questions whether she was asking for it even though nobody is ever asking to get raped. She was so lucky to be able to use a rape crisis center that could send a lady to sit with her at the hospital and be a witness to everything the nurse did. The lady signed her up for something to help rape victims where counseling would be covered.

## Community Teamwork, Inc.

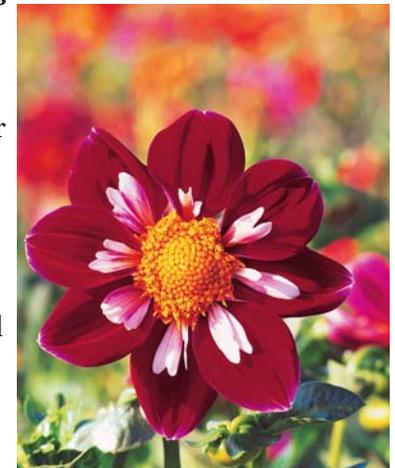
### *Maria*

Maria came to CTT's SSTAP program with her two children almost three years ago from Florida. While she was in Florida she endured horrific abuse at the hands of her husband and his friends. She tried several times to flee, but no matter where she went, she was eventually found. What her husband did not know was that while Maria was working, she opened a secret bank account. When she had enough money, she packed her two children into her car and came to Massachusetts to stay with friends. Eventually the situation turned hostile and abusive, and once again Maria was forced to flee.

For two weeks, she lived in her car with her two children. One day, she was sitting at a diner having coffee, when a kind woman commented on how well behaved her children were. There was an instant connection, and before she knew it, Maria found herself confiding to the woman that she and her children were living in their car. The woman referred her to Community Teamwork Inc. Unfortunately there were no openings, and Maria entered a DV shelter.

After much persistence, Maria was eventually admitted to the two-year transitional living program (SSTAP). While in the program, and with a little guidance from her case managers, Maria worked two jobs, paid down her debt, and began the process of rebuilding her life.

At the end of two years, Maria had enough money to leave SSTAP paying market rent, and to open her own business.



## Saheli:

When Ankita came to us she was in a high-risk situation. Her husband, currently in India and barred from returning to the U.S. due to fraudulent activity, had been abusing her since the beginning of their marriage. His abuse continued long distance. He cleaned out their bank accounts, harassed her via phone/email threatening to throw acid on her face, and perpetrated violence against her parents in India, beating her father and brother with a lead pipe and breaking their car.

Ankita was left with no money, an apartment in foreclosure, and 2 little babies to feed. Moreover, she was unable to earn money as her H4 visa had expired. Saheli advocates, in collaboration with DVSN, helped her access welfare; food stamps; free medical insurance; and low-cost, subsidized housing. Additionally, she received assistance in acquiring a long term Restraining Order to gain custody of her children.

Currently, she is living safely and peacefully in her shelter housing. She has received full, legal custody of her children in the past year. Eight months after applying for a U Visa with the help of a pro bono, immigration lawyer who sits on Saheli's Advisory Board, she finally received the Visa in December. The Visa is good for 4 years and allows her to live and work here legally while taking care of her children who are American Citizens. After three years she can apply for a Green card and then American Citizenship.

**Varsha** came to live in the US on an H4 visa with her husband, her child was born in the US. After 7 years of marriage, she was abandoned in Mumbai and left without a passport for herself and her child. Varsha, after many struggles, came back to her home in Massachusetts and found it locked. She called 911 and with the help of the local police, Varsha was put in touch with Saheli.

Saheli volunteers worked hard and found an Indian motel owner who gave her a place to stay. During this time, trained Saheli counselors provided Varsha a great deal of support and friendship. A well-known South Asian lawyer advised Varsha of her legal rights in the US, and helped her to document the abuse she experienced.

Within a few months, she helped Varsha obtain a special U visa and work permit reserved for women who can document domestic abuse. Women from Saheli helped Varsha continuously over one year through this long process - finding the right lawyer, providing transportation, purchasing a laptop, and supporting Varsha with kindness and friendship in a fast paced, busy and impersonal culture.

Today, we are happy to share with you the news that Varsha is working legally in the United States and on her way to a safe and secure life for herself and her child.

## YWCA of Greater Lawrence

**“Maria,”** age 28, and the mother of three, was an undocumented immigrant who came to Lawrence from Guatemala and was being physically abused by her partner. Because she feared deportation, she was reluctant to report the abuse. Through word of mouth, Maria learned about the YWCA of Greater Lawrence and its bilingual Court Advocates. A YWCA Advocate, one of two working full-time in offices in the building that houses the Lawrence District Court, helped Maria to obtain a U Visa, for undocumented aliens experiencing domestic abuse. Knowing she would not be deported gave Maria the courage to obtain a restraining order and file charges against her abuser. Her partner is now in jail. Maria is working – legally, obtained permanent housing and is working toward obtaining permanent residency status. She and her children no longer live in fear.



**“Ana,”** age 29, was an undocumented immigrant from the Dominican Republic who wound up working under the table at a Lawrence bar. She married and her husband petitioned for her permanent residency status. He became very physically abusive and the couple separated. At the same time, Ana was being sexually abused by her boss, who knew she would be reluctant to report the abuse for fear of deportation. After learning about the program during a community presentation, Ana made an appointment to see one of the YWCA of Greater Lawrence's bilingual court advocates. The advocate helped her to obtain a restraining order against her batterer, which gave her the courage to file charges against her spouse and her boss, a decision complicated by the fact that Ana was helping support her mother in the Dominican Republic and the publicity surrounding the sexual assault case. The District Attorney's Office was able to get the case transferred to Boston, and Ana now has a job that allows her to continue to support her mother. Now in possession of a temporary Visa, she is working toward permanent residency and feels safe for the first time in years.

## New Hope Inc.

### **New Hope SAFEPLAN Court Advocate:**

Some positive feedback that I've received from a client this week included a young father of two children. His ex-wife has some mental health and drug related issues. She has also become increasingly violent, and recently assaulted his new girlfriend.

The police had gotten involved because she was also plotting with her boyfriend to ambush and stab my client in his home. The police chased her and caught her holding a knife outside of my client's house, and she ended up getting arrested and charged. My client and his girlfriend had come to court to file a 209-A. I walked them through the process and answered all their questions and helped them during the hearing. After the judge gave him the 10 day order, he smiled and told me, "Thank you so much for all your help! You have no idea how much you were able to ease my mind through all of this!" His girlfriend also expressed her sincere thanks.



### **A Letter of Thanks:**

My name is XXXXXXXX. I recently worked with New Hope at one of the district courts. With the courteous and professional assistance of two New Hope employees here at the Court House, I was able to utilize your services and was able to not only get my doors locks replaced, but was able to successfully conduct myself in the Court Room with their support and guidance.

It was humbling to ask for their assistance yet their wealth of knowledge and understanding of how the Court Room works on a daily basis allowed me to work though my hearing with my head held high and confident with their coaching. Together, I believe I was able to pursue, in front of the Judge, the correct channels to gain the needed assistance I had gained from New Hope's assistance. Even with a four year college degree, the court room can be very intimidating and not being in this setting in the past can cause an individual to lose their confidence and be able to speak to the issues at hand.

I wanted to take the time to say thank you to both New Hope employees for their support and wanted to be sure your organization truly understands the gratitude and successes your program had for me personally. Others I am sure have benefited from your program and it is imperative that you are supported through whatever channels may be able to assist you. Thank you all for your support.

## Casa Myrna

### *Letter from a Teen Mother*

*My life was not easy growing up. Both my parents were addicted to drugs and I was not very close to my siblings. Since the age of 14, I have taken care of myself. I stole to keep clothes on my back and did unbelievable things to feed myself and eventually feed my mother's habits. I became a teen mom at the age of 18. When I was 7 months pregnant, my mother abandoned me. Sometimes I don't know whether to be happy or sad about this.*

*The man I was pregnant by was very possessive and our relationship was physically and verbally violent. After 2 1/2 years of violence, I finally decided enough was enough. I entered a domestic violence shelter with my son who was 1 1/2 years old at the time. For the first time in my life, I had positive people telling me I could achieve anything I put my heart into. Since entering Casa Myrna, I have received my high school equivalency and am beginning my first of many years of college to come. From the bottom of my heart, I do not think I would have made it this far without the staff at Casa Myrna reminding me all the time that I AM CAPABLE because no one else told me I was. Thank you Casa Myrna.*

### *Tina*

**Tina was a young community client with 3 children who sought help from Casa Myrna's Self-Sufficiency Specialist. Although Tina was finally safe from abuse, she had never worked because her abuser would not allow it. She wanted to support her children and save for her future, but she didn't know where to begin. Her search was also limited by her English skills. One day, Tina happened to mention that she knew how to do hair and the Specialist connected to her to an opening at a hair salon. She has been there for about a year and she loves every minute of it! A few months after she started, she called the Specialist and together they went to a bank to open an account for Tina. She has been saving money ever since, and she and her children are beginning to turn their lives around.**