



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HIGH-RISK TEAM STARTED IN CANTON TOWNSHIP

FIRST STEP RECEIVED A GRANT FROM THE MCGREGOR FUND TO PILOT A DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HIGH RISK TEAM (DVHRT) IN CANTON TOWNSHIP, MI.



The First Step DVHRT consists of dispatchers, police officers, survivor advocates, prosecutors, probation officers and batter intervention services providers who are working together to identify the most dangerous cases of domestic violence in Canton Township and implement critical interventions designed to keep cases from escalation, to hold batterers accountable and to surround the victims with support, services and options to keep the family safe.

This project is hybrid of two nationally-recognized, evidence-based programs (the Jeanne Geiger Crisis Center in Massachusetts and the LAP (Legality Assessment Protocol from the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence). It utilizes a danger assessment tool developed by Dr. Jacquelyn C. Campbell. Jill Popovich, First Step Survivor Advocate assigned to this project said "Dr. Campbell's research identified specific risk factors that indicate a likelihood that violence

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FIRST STEP ARK – A SAFE HAVEN FOR PETS

DID YOU KNOW THAT PETS OFTEN BECOME PAWNS IN THE BATTLE OF POWER AND CONTROL THAT MARKS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE?

Research has shown that 62-76% of animal cruelty in the home occurs in front of children and that children often intervene to protect their mothers and pets from being battered.

Families facing domestic violence often have pets that experience abuse as well. In a 2010 survey of callers to First Step's 24-hour help

line, 50% of victims seeking shelter said their family pet had been abused or threatened; 25% indicated that concern for their pet's safety prevented them from leaving the abusive situation in fear that their animals would be injured or worse.

To alleviate this barrier for families, the First Step ARK (Animals Receiving Kindness) program will provide an on-site safe haven for pets. This service will enable our clients to leave their abusive environment and begin the healing process with the loving support of their pets close by and with the peace of mind that comes from knowing that their animal companions are safe.

We need your help to make the ARK a reality. Our goal is to construct four dog kennels with a fenced run area; three cat cabins; a quarantine room



for new arrivals and an inside play area for families to interact with their pets. Your support will help us build the ARK and help provide veterinary care, food, insurance, supplies and the maintenance needed to run the program. We hope you will consider making a financial contribution to support this program and help us ensure that No Pet is Left Behind!

For more information about this program, please contact Theresa Bizoe at 734-656-0730 or tbizoe@firststep-mi.org.



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Count me in!

New First Step Board Member

THE MISSION OF FIRST STEP IS TO ELIMINATE BOTH DOMESTIC AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND TO PROVIDE COMPREHENSIVE SERVICES TO INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES IMPACTED BY THESE CRIMES

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HIGH-RISK TEAM CONTINUED



Lieutenant Wilsher and First Step Survivor Advocates, Barb G. and Jeni H. Work on Safety Protocol.

will escalate in severity such as history of strangulation attempts, forced sex, and the victim's belief that the batterer is capable of killing her/him. The key is identifying those cases that are likely to escalate. Teaching everyone from police officers, to dispatchers, to prosecutors to recognize these risk factors and to give them the tools to provide resources and intervention on the spot is the goal," said Popovich. "We want to build a safety net around the victim."

Officers who respond to a domestic violence call will ask a series of 11 specific questions to assess the victim's danger (see questions to the right). They will also provide a safety audit of the victim's home. A First Step survivor advocate can be called to the scene or to a nearby safe place such as a hospital or police department or connect via phone 24 hours/7 days a week to provide support and to help create an emotional and physical safety plan. The lethality and safety information gathered on the scene is then provided to prosecutors and judges and is used in the arraignment process and other issues of the court.

Deputy Chief Newsome, Canton Township Police Department said "Initiating the DVHRT program in Canton is a perfect fit for our community and our commitment to reducing crime. Officers have received training and have immediate resources available to them on scene, where often times the victims are the most vulnerable. The DVHRT team gives officers, advocates, court officials, and victims the safety net necessary to solicit help from the police and fosters a safe environment as they navigate the judicial processes. Having First Step here at the Canton Police Department has fostered trust between victims of crimes and our police agency, offering proof of our commitment to aid them through the entire judicial process."

First Step is working to replicate versions of this model in other cities.

For more information about the DVHRT in Canton, contact Jill Popovich at jjpopovich@firststep-mi.org or call 734-713-0683.

2015 FIRST STEP TRUNK OR TREAT EVENT!



New Beginnings Exchange Club hosted the fifth annual Trunk or Treat for the families at First Step.



LETHALITY-SCREENING QUESTIONS

1. Has the person ever used a weapon against the victim or threatened the victim with a weapon?
2. Has the person threatened to kill the victim or children of the victim?
3. Does the victim think the person will try to kill the victim?
4. Does the person have a gun or can he/she get one easily?
5. Has the person ever tried to choke the victim?
6. Is the person violently or constantly jealous or does the person control most of the daily activities of the victim?
7. Has the victim left or separated from the person after living together or being married?
8. Is the person unemployed?
9. Has the person ever tried to kill himself or herself?
10. Does the victim have a child that the person knows is not his or her own child?
11. Does the person follow or spy on the victim or leave the victim threatening messages?

Several risk factors have been associated with increased risk of homicides (murders) of women and men in violent relationships. We cannot predict what will happen in every case, but positive answers to the questions above may indicate a danger of homicide in situations of abuse. To talk with an advocate about your risk factors and safety plan, please contact First Step at 734-722-6800.

FIRST STEP VISION:
PEACEFUL FAMILIES,
SAFE COMMUNITIES

FIRST STEP BEGINS SUPPORT GROUP FOR MALE SURVIVORS



1 IN 6 MEN HAVE EXPERIENCED ABUSIVE SEXUAL EXPERIENCES BEFORE THE AGE OF 18.

U.S. CENTER FOR DISEASE CONTROL

However alarming that statistic may be, male survivors often do not seek help for fear of how society will view their victimization. Male survivors struggle to disclose their experiences in a world that reveres the strong, heterosexual, athletic, uber-masculine man's man. Unfortunately, these things are sometimes questioned when a man has been a victim of sexual abuse. Male survivors face unique barriers in finding an agency that feels comfortable and inclusive for men. This is why First Step strives to create an environment that is accepting in all areas beginning with our 24-hour Help Line, our office spaces, and the range of services we offer survivors.

First Step has always had individual counseling services for male survivors of abuse, but this summer First Step Sexual Assault Advocates, Julie F. and Hillary B. were able to create a survivor support group to bring men together in a safe space to share their experiences with one another. Topics covered in the 7-week session were the socialization of men and masculinity, disclosure, self-worth,

guilt and shame, anger, grief and loss, sex and intimacy. The group concluded with a session on healing and a party to celebrate the clients' success and potential to move on from the trauma of sexual abuse.

Based on the client feedback surveys and comments that advocates received, the men thoroughly enjoyed the experience and expressed relief in knowing that they were not alone in their feelings and reactions.

First Step plans to offer support groups to male survivors this fall. Male survivors are affected greatly by the trauma of sexual violence and it is important that agencies like First Step work to incorporate gender inclusive services so we can reduce the stigma that men feel in reaching out to get help and create more opportunities for them to feel supported and understood.

For more information or to join the First Step Men's Group, please call the First Step 24-hour help line at 734-722-6800.

RETREAT FOR SURVIVORS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT

First Step held a retreat for survivors of sexual assault on September 28, 2015. The event featured outdoor activities at Victory Ranch in Northville Township including yoga, a picnic, horseback riding and a celebration of the friendship progress made by group members.



FIRST STEP OPENS HEALING GARDEN AND PLAYScape



FIRST STEP OPENED ITS HEALING GARDEN AND PLAYScape AREA ON JULY 18, 2015

This space was only possible due to the dedication of hundreds of donors, volunteers and staff members who worked diligently to make this dream a reality. Special thanks to project manager and designer Jonathan Dreyfuss for manifesting this space with your creativity, vision and hard work. Also, special thanks to lead donor Beth Beson and the many other dedicated individuals, service clubs, volunteers and businesses that contributed time and talent to this project.



Carla O'Malley tries out the elliptical machine



Bridgewater Interiors volunteers work to improve shelter



Carla O'Malley and Patrick Smithbauer



Danielle Maj and Rene LaFave



In memory of Mike O'Malley

A Garden Party Fundraiser was held on September 11 on the playground to dedicate the fitness area in memory of former First Step volunteer Mike O'Malley. The event raised nearly \$62,000 to help First Step's Mission. Thank you to Carla O'Malley, event chair, and all her friends and family who came out to help the cause and remember Mike.

A Message from a First Step Survivor

To the Ladies at First Step,

I was once a resident of the shelter a little over a year ago and I wanted to send you a message of hope and strength. There is a wonderful life ahead for each and every one of you. You WILL make it through these hard times.

I remember the day I finally left my abuser. I had no idea at the time I would never return to him. The only thing I knew for certain was that I had to get away, at least for a little while. I fled with my two year old, and was also 8 months pregnant. I was unsure of the future and in so much pain.

I sat in my car in a parking lot and started calling shelters. Every single shelter in Wayne and Macomb counties were full. After several hours on the phone, I was connected with First Step. By some miracle they had an opening and I took it.

That was the beginning of my journey. When I arrived at First Step, I was completely broken inside. I had no idea who I was or what I liked. I realized that everything I liked, was what my abuser liked. I had no individual identity and I felt lost being by myself. However, I was surrounded by other women who were in pain too. Our common pain was healing. I knew I wasn't alone.

I haven't had a game plan for my life, but I can tell you that life has a way of working itself out. It's been 15 months since I've left my abuser and life has never been better. I've allowed myself to finally heal from all the pain he's inflicted. I've learned to love myself. The best thing I have is peace. I don't have to wake up and worry that I'm going to be abused if my partner is in a bad mood. I have control of my life.

Today I work and I'm in college full time and it is hard, but everything is working out. I'm achieving dreams that I could never have done if I stayed with my abuser. I'm not rich. I get public assistance and pay for school through student loans, but I've used the resources that First Step has given me.

Ladies, YOU ARE WORTH IT. I know you may feel scared now, but know that it gets better. I wanted to enclose a letter with the apples and watermelon [I donated] because when I stayed at the shelter, a woman had asked, "What happens to the ladies that leave? Does anyone make it?" It got me thinking. It made me question if I would go back to my abuser and I never knew for a long time. It took me 8 months to finally realize I would never be with that man again. All I knew, was that I wouldn't be with him for that day. I took it day by day.

I wanted to let you know that there is hope. That you can rebuild your lives. It might feel like you are in the hardest spot, but know you're actually in the best place. If you're at First Step, you've taken a step that many women never do. You recognize that your relationship isn't healthy and had the courage to leave. Try to take comfort in knowing that you've started your journey and please don't blame yourself or what happened to you. I did that for a long time and thankfully today I know it wasn't my fault.

I wish each and every one of you the best in life. YOU ARE HEROES! YOU ARE INSPIRING!

Much love and Prayers,

Melissa W.

"We must be willing to let go of the life we have planned so as to have the life that is waiting for us."
- Joseph Campbell

WOULD YOU LIKE TO SUPPORT FIRST STEP FOR THE HOLIDAYS?

Here's how you can help

ADOPT-A-FAMILY FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Donate Gift Cards and help First Step families move toward independence. Gift cards from Kroger, Meijer, Walmart, Visa & MasterCard will allow clients to shop for their own children for the holidays. Companies, churches & large groups are welcome to participate and are encouraged to adopt more than one family, if possible. Your gift will support our Residential & Transitional Housing Programs. Download the AAF forms at www.firststep-mi.org or contact us below.

CONTRIBUTE ITEMS FROM FIRST STEP'S HOLIDAY WISH LIST

Help supplement the basic needs of First Step families by donating from our Wish List. These items are used to support our clients and offset operating expenses throughout the year. **New Items Only Please!**

- * **GIFT CARDS:** Meijer • Kroger • Walmart • Visa/MasterCard • Gas Cards
Restaurants • Drug Stores
- * **PERSONAL NEEDS ITEMS FOR WOMEN, MEN, TEENS & CHILDREN:**
Pajamas • House Shoes • Sweatpants • Sweatshirts • Underwear • Bras
Socks • Hair Conditioner • Razors • Shaving Cream • Body Wash &
Lotion • Deodorant • Diapers (sizes 4, 5, 6) • Pull-Ups • Baby Wipes
Children's Toothpaste & Toothbrushes
- * **CHILDREN'S PROGRAM:** Gift Cards to Arts & Craft Stores • Basketballs
Soccer Balls & Goal • Small Legos • Tablets/iPods • Remote Control
Cars • Headphones • Individual Snacks • Cold & Allergy Medicine
Musical Instruments (hand-held) • New Car Seats/Toddler Seats
- * **FOR THE SHELTER & OFFICES:** Bath Towels • Wash Cloths • Mops
Twin Sheet Sets • Kleenex • Laundry Detergent • Clorox Wipes
Hand Soap • Dish Soap • Can Openers • Paper Towel • Toilet Paper

Download our complete Wish List at www.firststep-mi.org.

PROVIDE FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Cash donations of any amount are always the most efficient way to support the free services offered by First Step to families affected by violence.

Contact Jacinta for more information on
First Step's 2015 Holiday Program
734.722.1772 • jlee@firststep-mi.org

Karen Wilson Smithbauer Center • 4400 S. Venoy, Wayne, MI 48184

THANK YOU FOR MAKING A DIFFERENCE!

firststep-mi.org



COUNT ME IN!

I would like to help FIRST STEP, Western & Downriver Wayne County's only comprehensive Domestic & Sexual Assault program.

I wish to support First Step with a donation of \$_____

Credit Cards: VISA / MC (circle one)

Account#: _____

Exp. ____/____ 3 Digit Security Code: _____

Signature: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

(Checks payable to First Step)

Please fill out this form completely and mail to:
First Step, 44567 Pinetree Drive,
Plymouth, MI 48170

DONATE ONLINE!

Visit <http://bit.ly/firststep-mi>

or scan this code with your
smartphone. To scan the code, you'll need a
free app like QR Scanner or ShopSavvy.



MEET NEW FIRST STEP BOARD MEMBER



JAY BONNELL

Controller for Beaumont Hospital
Wayne, Michigan



ABOUT FIRST STEP

First Step is an agency in Wayne County, Michigan that provides comprehensive services to support victims of domestic and sexual violence.

First Step offers temporary emergency housing, counseling, advocacy, transitional housing, assault response, 24-hour help line services, children's services, training and education to survivors and to the community.

WE ARE ON THE WEB!

See us at: firststep-mi.org



Help work to make your community violence-free by becoming involved with First Step; volunteer, donate, and stand up against violence in your community.

Call 734.416.1111 for more information.



First Step
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Plymouth, MI 48170

First Step
Karen Wilson Smithbauer Center
4400 South Venoy Road
Wayne, MI 48184

Phone
734.416.1111

24-Hour Help Line
734.722.6800

Toll Free Help Line
888.453.5900

Fax
734.416.5555

Online
firststep-mi.org
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For information about the newsletter or to unsubscribe, contact Theresa Bizoe 734.656.0730, tbizoe@firststep-mi.org



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