

# HouseLine

House Of Ruth Maryland Changing Attitudes. Saving Lives.

June 2010

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HOUSE OF RUTH  
MARYLAND



## What Happens Next?

It's usually a crisis of some sort that tips the scales and motivates a woman to pick up the phone and call the House Of Ruth Maryland. It could be a beating, a threat more frightening than usual, fear that her children are now at risk or all of the above. The House Of Ruth's first priority is always safety for the victim and her children. However, safety in the form of emergency shelter, a short-term motel stay or a protective order may stop the hemorrhaging, but it doesn't begin to address the long-term issues that most victims face.

That realization led the House Of Ruth to undergo a complete reorganization over the past two years. One of those changes was to consolidate the agency's case managers

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and community advocates into a single Client Service Department in order to offer victims a dedicated person who knows their individual circumstances and needs, and can help guide them through the process of rebuilding their lives. And that process encompasses everything from obtaining counseling to finding permanent housing, accessing childcare to helping with job placement. In other words, anything that can help a woman get back on her feet falls under the job heading of the Client Service Department.

*"It's a job that requires a lot of creativity in how to direct victims, how to best use any funds that are available and how to establish new connections and resources,"* explains Valina Rogers, House Of Ruth Client Services Program Manager.

*"You have to be able to meet the client where they are in the process and provide a sense of stability as she navigates her way through this experience."*

Valina's staff of six, including one Americorps member, work on 15 to 20 cases at one time – Risk Level One clients either living in the community or the House Of Ruth Shelter. Tomika Press, one of the Client Service Coordinators says, *"The number one issue most victims face is finding affordable housing. It's very frustrating how few options are out there."* Another barrier to overcome is a lack of education. If a victim doesn't have a high school diploma, it makes the transition to self-sufficiency all the more difficult. *"That's why the first thing I do,"* says Tomika, *"is to encourage women to get their GED and help them get the funding to follow through on it. These women have a whole life ahead of them and I want them to aspire to more than just Section 8 housing."*

***The House Of Ruth's Client Service Department is paid for out of general operating expenses, an area that is increasingly difficult to fund. If you'd like to make an unrestricted gift to the House Of Ruth Maryland, contact the Development Department by calling 410-554-8443 or email skenney@hruthmd.org.***

# Letter from Executive Director

Dear Friends,

On April 8, the House Of Ruth Maryland received the National Crime Victim Service Award from the U.S. Attorney General, Eric Holder. This award is recognition of the quality of service provided by our staff that works tirelessly to help victims and their children find safety and rebuild their lives. It was especially gratifying knowing that the initial nomination came from one of our partner organizations. While it's a great honor to know that our work is respected by our peers and by the U.S. Department of Justice, we're also well aware that an award, no matter how prestigious, doesn't fund services or the people to provide them.

Over the course of the last year, we have increased our capacity to serve clients by offering Client Service Coordinators to help victims in our shelter and in the community access the necessary resources to build independent lives. We've taken Adelante Familia, the only domestic violence program that's both language and culturally sensitive to Spanish-speaking victims, into our fold. We've launched an online effort to educate teens on the dangers of dating violence and taken steps to support that program in an even bigger way with feet on the ground. At the same time, we've stepped up and offered refuge and services to victims whose own local programs in counties across the state have either drastically reduced their offerings or closed their doors altogether.

All of that costs money and that is something we are continually working to raise. Government funding plays a part in our ability to serve more than 15,000 victims and their families each year, but we also depend heavily on foundations, corporations and individuals to help. While some might think of it as making a donation, we see it as making an investment—an investment in building a strong community where women and children can live safe, healthy and independent lives.

Since April 8, we have received numerous calls and emails congratulating us on our award. Those sentiments are very much appreciated and we thank all those who expressed them. But the award is really just a reminder of our continuing need to serve thousands of battered women and children.

They need our support more than ever and, in order to continue providing it, we need yours.



Sandi Timmins  
Executive Director



Sandi Timmins

## Repeat Business

In addition to their normal caseload, the Client Service Coordinators at the House Of Ruth Maryland also handle repeat business. Tomika Press has been at the House Of Ruth for eight months and, already, has seen 10 of her clients return. *"If something changes in their circumstances, they call us and we follow up on their behalf. We have relationships with each of our clients and they know we're here if they need us."*

One especially poignant return was a young client who had used House Of Ruth services when she first escaped to Maryland six months ago. Abused by her boyfriend and turned away by her family, the girl had searched the Internet, found the House Of Ruth and fled with her baby in her arms. Now living on her own, supporting herself and her baby and enrolled in a work-study program at a local college, she had been contacted by her parents because they wanted to claim her on their income taxes after not being available at one of her lowest points in life. *"I think she just needed reassurance that she was doing the right thing by moving on with her life, and I was glad to be there for her."* said Tomika. *"She's doing great and it's on days like that, you go home feeling really good about what you've been able to contribute."*

## I Strongly Disagree

The exercise was meant to be a stage-setter—a quick illustration of the nuances and complexities of domestic violence before the group dove into the business at hand. To that end, Ellyn Loy, House Of Ruth's Clinical Director, had given each of the 28 participants a set of four cards labeled: Agree, Strongly Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree. As she read out statements, everyone was asked to raise the card that best indicated how they felt. *"Any mother who stays in a violent relationship is a bad mother."* Twenty-eight hands immediately shot up, but only one was holding a card that read Strongly Disagree. All eyes turned to the person holding it, who happened to be one of only two men present that day. When asked to explain why he had answered that way, the man said, *"I grew up with domestic violence and I don't think it's always that simple for women to just leave."*

At the House Of Ruth Maryland, we often quote statistics that say that children who grow up in abusive households are more apt to become abusers themselves. However, there are also the exceptions that grow up to become dutiful husbands, fathers and passionate advocates on behalf of other victims. The man holding the sign that read Strongly Disagree is one of those exceptions and, that day, he was attending a retreat for the Board of Directors at the House Of Ruth Maryland.

Until that moment, neither his fellow board members nor staff knew the reason behind his commitment to the House Of Ruth; they just knew it was obviously there. Later, he shared a little more of his history in private. His father came from Korea to attend M.I.T. in the late 1950's. Alone and trying to adapt to a new culture, he entered into an arranged marriage. His bride arrived in 1962--straight off the plane and into a life with a man she had never met, a language she couldn't speak and a world where there was no one to confide in. The board member believes it was a recipe for disaster. *"For reasons still unknown to me, the fights got increasingly physical, but even without the hitting, the constant tension was always there,"* he confided.

Children learn to cope in different ways. He quickly admits that his way was to avoid coming home – if there was an activity or an after school program, he signed up for it, anything to avoid the minefield waiting at home. He can't remember exactly how old he was, but he does remember that one day he had had enough. *"There came a point when the dynamic shifted. We were taller and bigger than my father, and there were three of us."* Overnight, the children became the parents and it became clear that violence would no longer be accepted. *"I've lived through it,"* he said, *"and it's never black and white. There are grievances on both sides, but people have a choice in the way they resolve those grievances."* I asked him if it got better or worse when he and his brothers moved out. *"Worse, much worse. They no longer had us as a common bond or as mediators. My mother was actually contemplating divorce when she was diagnosed with breast cancer. Ironically, that was the turning point. My father took amazing care of her until the very end."*

In addition to his board duties and a job that has commuting around the world, the man in this story has his own family now – a wife and 5-year old twin sons. *"Because of my experience, I think I'm a different kind of father. I'm very sensitive to my boys getting too physical, and both my wife and I make it a point to never raise our voices in front of our kids."* Knowing that a number of organizations had courted him as a board member, I asked what made him finally decide on the House Of Ruth. *"For me, it was thinking about my mother. How alone she must have felt with no one to turn to and even her family telling her, you've got to stay. When I think about that, it just tears at my heart."*

## U.S. Attorney General Honors House Of Ruth With National Award

On April 8, 2011, Deena Hausner and Jana Mauro from the House Of Ruth Maryland traveled to Washington, D.C. to be on hand as Attorney General Eric Holder honored ten organizations and/or individuals for outstanding service to crime victims. *"We commend these individuals and service providers who, when faced with emerging challenges, seek out new ways to protect our communities, and to more effectively assist and empower crime victims,"* said Attorney General Holder. He then awarded the National Crime Victim Service Award to the House Of Ruth Maryland in recognition of its extraordinary efforts in direct services to crime victims. *"It was a very moving ceremony,"* said Deena, *"and so gratifying to receive this prestigious honor for the House Of Ruth's efforts on behalf of domestic violence victims."*



## A Few Wins In Annapolis For Victims, Children And Pets

The 2011 General Assembly ended on April 12, 2011 with some nice victories and a few bills that were never voted on. We thank everyone who called and wrote their legislators and, with your help, look forward to returning next year with an even stronger legislative agenda.

- Peace orders can now be extended for an additional six months after notice to the respondent and a hearing for good cause shown
- Increased penalties for a second or subsequent violation of a peace order to imprisonment for up to one year or a fine not exceeding \$2500 or both
- Judges presiding over temporary or final protective order hearings are authorized to award temporary possession of a pet to ensure its safety
- Increased penalties for a second or subsequent violation of the harassment law
- Insurers are prohibited from using information about an individual's status as a crime victim to take certain actions relating to a homeowner's insurance policy or denying payment to an innocent co-insured person
- A new crime of misdemeanor child neglect was created, prohibiting anyone who has permanent or temporary care or custody of a minor to neglect that minor

## Five Years Of Giving Back

Every Tuesday, like clockwork, Jessica Melincavage leaves her fulltime job at T. Rowe Price and heads to her volunteer job at the House Of Ruth Maryland. Once there, she handles intakes for Gateway, House Of Ruth's 22-week intervention program for abusers. *"I interview applicants to get an understanding of their background, find out what charges are against them and what they hope to gain from the program,"* explained Jessica. It's a far cry from her job as Retirement Plan Coordinator at T. Rowe, but does allow her to make use of her background in psychology and criminal justice. *"Sometimes the men can be a little confrontational, they don't always want to admit that it's their fault that they're here."*

For Jessica, it's become such an integral part of her life that she recently hit the five-year mark as a House Of Ruth volunteer. *"I had been volunteering for a couple years before I realized that T. Rowe had a matching program,"* said Jessica, *"I feel bad that I didn't know it sooner, but it's gratifying to know now that for every hour I volunteer, they will match it with a financial donation."*

Neither Jessica's family or friends are surprised by her decision to make volunteering a regular part of her life, but they are often shocked to learn the role she plays. *"People know the House Of Ruth helps victims, but they don't always know about the work we do with abusers. Over the course of the 22 weeks, you can see the change that comes over the men in the program – they really want to learn how to make things better in their own lives, and for their kids. Some of them even graduate and then come back as volunteers – that, to me, is a huge success. Being a part of it, even in a small way, makes me feel like I'm really doing something positive."*

**To see if your company offers a matching gift program for straight donations or volunteer hours, check with your human resources or payroll department. To find out more about the process or to get our Employer Identification number for verification purposes, call 410-554-8443 or email [skenny@hruthmd.org](mailto:skenny@hruthmd.org).**

On May 10,  
when 700 people  
sat down to lunch  
with Joe Ehrmann,  
50 took a stand.



The House Of Ruth Maryland salutes the more than 50 individuals and organizations whose sponsorship or support as a table host made this year's Spring Luncheon possible. We're grateful to have partners who are willing to take a stand against domestic violence and help protect Maryland's women and children.

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Betsy Pritchard



HOUSE OF RUTH  
MARYLAND

**A Full Freezer Thanks To PFG-Carroll County Foods**

Each year, PFG-Carroll County Foods, a leading broadline foodservice supplier to the Mid-Atlantic region, holds its annual food show at Martin's West. If you're a restaurant, hospitality operator or institutional foodservice company, you're already aware of the show, but what no one knows is that all the food eventually goes to the House Of Ruth Maryland Shelter. It takes a huge amount of special care on the part of Martin's West and great commitment by PFG-Carroll County Foods to ensure that nothing goes to waste. This year, they donated enough meat, seafood, cheese, pasta, rice, produce and everything else to fill a 14-foot truck and all of the Shelter's walk-in freezers.

Our sincere thanks to PFG-Carroll County Foods and Martin's West for their generosity and for making good nutrition a part of our shelter residents' lives.

**Special Thanks To:**

- Wanda Bell-Farrell for collecting donations in lieu of birthday presents
- Captain Larry's for hosting a Snuggie themed Bar Crawl to benefit HRM
- The Barn in Carney for hosting a BBQ competition to benefit HRM
- The Pink Event for donating a portion of proceeds from their expo
- UB School of Law Student Association for organizing a 5K to benefit the Legal Clinic
- The MAC for donating the proceeds from their Half Marathon and 2 Person Relay
- Dr. Akua Zenzele for hosting free holistic wellness clinics for our clients
- Project C Dance Collective's Dance Company for organizing a benefit concert for HRM
- *Through the Looking Glass* at Maryland Academy of Couture Arts, a premier fashion event supporting HRM
- Respira Medical for dedicating two days of service and sprucing up our grounds
- Enterprise-Rent-A-Car for their donation of time, talent and treasure to Ruth's Closet
- Members of the Z'havah group of the B'nai Israel Sisterhood for hosting a dessert fundraiser

***In the last edition, we incorrectly listed The Sons Academy, Inc. as the Baltimore Freedom Academy. We regret the error.***



HOUSE OF RUTH  
MARYLAND

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# HouseLine

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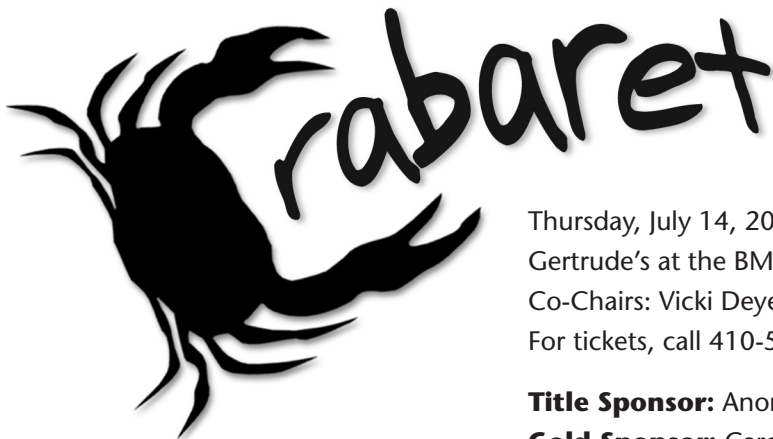
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*If you receive multiple mailings or need to update your address, please call our Development Office at 410-554-8443.*

This year's Crabaret will be sautéed, simmered, stir-fried and topped with *calypso*.



Thursday, July 14, 2011 • 6:30 – 10PM

Gertrude's at the BMA • Music by Mambo Combo

Co-Chairs: Vicki Deyesu and Dr. Jack Kardos

For tickets, call 410-554-8446 or visit [hruth.org](http://hruth.org)

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