

“Each time a person stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, they send forth a tiny ripple of hope....These ripples build a current which can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance.”

~~Robert F. Kennedy

September 2012
Volume 2, Issue 1

Christos House peline

FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK...

A Chat with Sherry

I hope that everyone had an enjoyable, though very hot and dry, summer. The school buses are back running their routes and we are back to school time schedules. We have three staff members in Master's programs as well as five completing their Bachelor's. I'm proud that I have a staff that so values education.

Education comes in many forms—some go to State University, some go online, and some go to the University of Hard Knocks. No matter the source of education we always learn something that can help us later in life.

In this newsletter many of the staff have explained why they are so dedicated to this work. Many ask why I do what I do and the answer is not a simple one. The truth is I have never been hit in my life. I didn't even realize I had been in a Domestic Violence relationship for 22 years until I came to work for Christos House nine years ago. I became passionate about helping women come out of the shadows and then five years ago my niece was beaten so severely that my brother didn't recognize his own daughter at the hospital. I have to ask why are we as a society so afraid of speaking out against Domestic Violence. My voice will always be raised and saying NO MORE...because I care.

In Peace,

Sherry Fohey
Director of Operations

If you would like to receive our newsletter via email instead or know of someone who would also be interested in what's happening with Christos House, please send us a message via our website at www.christoshouse.com providing us with a name and email address.



You think you're just a drop in the ocean...
...but look at the ripple effect
one drop can make!

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We Are...

While many things have changed in our 30 years of operation, the one thing that hasn't changed is our intent to help victims of domestic and sexual violence escape the abuse.

Since our inception, Christos House has expanded our mission to serve victims of sexual violence as well as domestic violence. In those thirty years our services have also expanded to further assist survivors.

Our mission: *to provide a safe place for victims of domestic and sexual violence to escape the abuse and make positive change in a supportive atmosphere.*

Our Services:

Shelter/Safe house

Crisis Line

Victim Advocacy

Educational Services

Counseling

Referrals

Life Skills Classes

Emergency Shelter

Court Advocacy

Sexual Assault Advocacy

Outreach Services

Prevention Program

Resale Shops

Christos House is located in South-west Missouri and serves eight counties including: Carter, Douglas, Howell, Oregon, Ozark, Shannon, Texas and Wright. All services are confidential and provided at no cost.

OCTOBER IS BIG!

Everyone knows that October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month...what many do not know—yet—is that it is also Domestic Violence Awareness Month. Now, we are not out to compete with Breast Cancer Awareness. We believe fully that we need to fight for the cure and raise awareness for that as well. We do, however, want to raise awareness about a disease that EVERY SINGLE PERSON is holding the antidote for in their hands. The epidemic of domestic violence is not caused by genetics, bacteria, or infection. It is caused and perpetuated BY people TO people. So, every one of us holds the antidote in our hands...we are fighting to convince every one to administer that antidote. Statistics show us 1 in 3, 1 in 4, 1 in 5 women are victims of domestic violence. Since many cases go unreported we cannot even begin to pin the number down. But, we can say that one is too many. We can say that men and children are often the hidden victims of domestic violence: men due to social stigma hesitate to report and children are many times the witnesses and victims as well. We ask you...with the numbers so high...the human sacrifice so high...is there something—anything—that you can do to join us in the movement to end violence in homes? Something simple such as educating yourself and your family and friends about what domestic violence is or learning what resources are out there for victims will help push us in the right direction. We will even provide you opportunities in October to do something...

From October 1st through October 20th, we will be displaying our Clothesline Project in the Gallery of the West Plains Civic Center. Survivors and loved ones of survivors decorate t-shirts as a visual display of their feelings and thoughts during or after the abuse endured. We are also sponsoring an art contest for students in elementary through university grades for schools in our service area. Entries can be in any medium and are due in by October 10th. The themes are as follows: Elementary-Hands Are Not For Hitting; Middle School-Love Is Not Abuse; High School-Out of the Darkness; and University-Bring Violence to Light. There are cash prizes for the grand prize winners in each category and winning entries will be displayed with the Clothesline Project.

October 19th at the West Plains Civic Center, we will be showing the documentaries “Power and Control: Domestic Violence in America” and “A New Kind of Strength: The Men’s Movement to End Domestic Violence” with a panel discussion and candlelight vigil to the courthouse following. During the discussion, the floor will be open for questions to one or all of our panel members. The candlelight vigil pays tribute to those who have lost their lives to domestic violence and honor the survivors.

October 20th at the West Plains Civic Center, we will have a banquet in honor of survivors and those still struggling in abusive and controlling relationships. A meal will be served and you will hear from a survivor or two. Christos House will also be honoring individuals within our community who have been instrumental in helping us achieve our mission in helping victims in some way and have supported us in our work.

“Never be afraid to raise your voice for honesty and truth and compassion against injustice and lying and greed. If people all over the world would do this, it would change the earth.”

~~William Faulkner

PAYING IT FORWARD

My name is Melissa Littleshield and I am the Sexual Assault Advocate with Christos House. I started working with Christos House two years ago. I work with survivors of sexual violence. I have support groups, parenting classes, counseling, community resources as well as hospital and court advocacy. My goal is to empower survivors and encourage them to move forward and rebuild their lives. I stayed in this field for personal reasons. I'm a survivor myself, and if not for the national coalitions and Christos House I don't know that I would have survived or made the changes in my life that needed to be made. In short, this is my way of “Paying It Forward”.

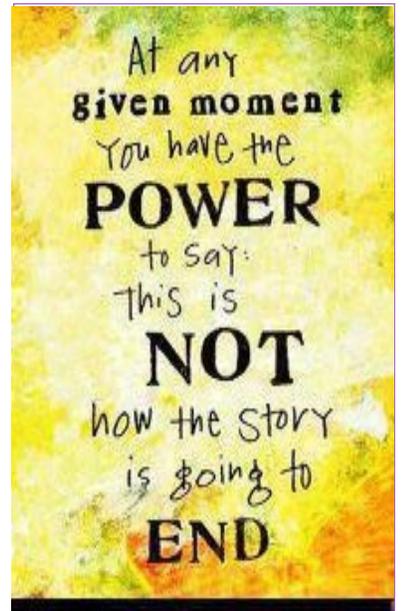
—Melissa Littleshield, Sexual Assault Advocate

MY STORY...

Six years ago, if you seen me you wouldn't have recognized me. I had the unworthiness, shattered look in my eyes that only can be from domestic violence. I was scared and lived only for someone else. This had been the norm for me all my life. I never knew what love truly felt like. It only existed in fairy tales, and romance novels, and movies. To me, love was a one-sided relationship and I was the one giving. It was my fault. How could someone like me—ugly, dumb, and selfish—deserve better than this life?

I walked on egg shells and glass our entire relationship, never wanting to set his rage free. I knew the triggers, I knew the look. I avoided it at all costs but sometimes it was never enough. When his rage was released God was the only one that saved me. The pain, the blood, and the blame were all mine. I tried to leave but didn't know how. I had no money, no friends, and no family that I was close to. He had made sure of that. He loved me so much that he wanted to take care of all the money and wanted me all to himself. As his wife, I should have wanted that as well. My only job was to please him in every way he desired, to keep his house clean, and to have his baby.

I couldn't imagine getting pregnant with this man's child. I was looking for a way out, not a tie that would bind me him forever. When that pink line turned to a plus sign I wanted to die. What would I do? How could this innocent baby survive inside me if he took my food away or "taught me a lesson" again? I had to leave...but how? Maybe he would be nicer to me if he found out I was having his baby.



“Those who have the privilege to know have the duty to act.”

~Albert Einstein

I decided to tell him. He was so excited...until we found out the baby was going to be a little girl. This, of course, was my fault. He accused me of cheating. He beat me and took all the food out of the house that night and left me there. He came home after work the next evening and demanded I stay out of his sight. I slept in the hall closet.

The next day when he left for work, I called my dad. I explained I had no money and nowhere to go but I had to leave. My dad drove two hours and came and got me. I was dropped off at my mom's house with only my clothes. My mom took me to a low income apartment where I filled out the application. She helped me with the deposit and the electric. I was approved and didn't owe any rent. They even paid my utilities. It felt strange to have my own home—strange, but also scary.

That first night, my night terrors would wake me every other hour. I would jump up and check if the doors and windows were locked. I kept all the blinds shut during the day and only answered my door to my mom. I slept with a baseball bat on the floor next to my bed and a knife under my pillow. As time went on, I began to be less cautious. I still had the night terrors and slept with my bat and knife—but I would venture out during the day. I began to talk to people—just say “hi” here and there. I was always watching over my shoulder. While shopping with my mom a few days later I saw an ad for domestic violence hanging on the door. I tore the number from the bottom of the page and stuffed it in my pocket. I called the number later that day and got directions to the Christos House Outreach in Alton.

The next day, I met the woman that completely changed my life and turned my world around. Sherry Fohey greeted me with the brightest smile I've ever seen. She didn't just talk to me, she listened to me. She never judged and she never blamed me for staying with him too long. She congratulated me for taking the huge step in my life and admired my strength. She asked if I enjoyed reading and gave me the book “The Nature and Dynamics of Domestic Violence”. She said she would always be available if I ever needed to talk and handed me her card.

Sherry became my first real friend, advisor, and advocate. She was there when I had to face him in court. We celebrated when me and my daughter's restraining orders were granted. She was always reminding me of how strong I truly am. But what she doesn't realize is...it was because of her that I became strong. As years went by, my life started to piece back together. I found my strength, my worth, my peace, and true love—the kind that only exists in fairy tales, romance novels, and movies. Today, I have three children and a loving husband. Not only am I living a life free from domestic violence, but I also work at the Christos House Shelter as a Case Manager. It seems the new Director of Operations believes I am strong enough.
—Tasha Collins, Case Manager

UPCOMING EVENTS

Look for us in the West Plains Homecoming Parade on September 14th and the Willow Springs Homecoming Parade on September 28th!

October 6th our presence will be at the Walnut Festival and Oz Fest! Come chat with us!

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month! We will be in the community raising awareness in various ways so keep your eyes and ears open!

We will be displaying the Clothesline Project at the West Plains Civic Center for the second year.

October 19th we will be sharing two compelling documentaries with the community with a panel discussion and candlelight vigil following.

October 20th we will be holding a banquet celebrating 30 years of survivors with good food and powerful stories as well as honoring individuals within our communities.

If you would like to help with any activities or would like to learn more about volunteer opportunities, please contact Kelli Neel at 800-611-5853. As always, stay tuned to your local radio stations and newspapers for upcoming events and information!

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AJ Clinton—Advocate

Harley Crownover—Advocate

Jessica Martin—Advocate

Jewelina Owens—Advocate

www.christoshouse.com

EMPOWERMENT DRIVES

The work I am engaged in today began back in the 80's in Nebraska. I was a field staff member of the Nebraska Farm Crisis Network and worked with farm families experiencing the greatest crisis in U.S. agricultural history. I learned about what was a new term to me: "empowerment." People I worked with empowered me as a young farm wife living in an unempowered life and in turn I empowered the clients. I came to understand how important that was as each person becoming autonomous was able to eventually transform their own situations. I see myself as one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread. Each woman I work with is a reminder of myself when I first discovered "empowerment" and the transformation that ensued. I love this work for the fact that I get to pay it forward for the ones who helped me each time I see the light come on in my clients' eyes with a knowing that they have everything they need to make it up and out of the abuse and they are no longer alone. It is not about me, it's about them and my support over time as they move through the different stages of self-discovery and growth. Christos House provides an extensive support program in which the miracle of "empowerment" can happen. I am very happy and challenged to be a part of this work.

—Rita Foster, Outreach Advocate

"Do not let your fire go out, spark by irreplaceable spark, in the hopeless swamps of the approximate, the not-quite, the not-yet, the not-at-all. The world you desired can be won. It exists, it is real, it is possible, it is yours." --Ayn Rand

WE DO IT BECAUSE...

"Christos House made the difference in my time of need, I am here for just such a time as this—to be the difference in the time of need for others." —Kelli, Counselor

"It's obvious..." —AJ, Evening Advocate

"I strive to be the shoulder that children can lean on. I show each and every child love, their worth and value. I also show them the importance of consistency."

—Leah, Child Advocate

"The reason that I am in this field of work is because I have survived...And I love knowing that when we work together as a team here at Christos, we can help others survive and better their lives." —Harley, Overnight Advocate

"I truly believe we as individuals and society as a whole can end violence and I want my daughter to grow up in a world where violence is nonexistent."

—Sunshine, Prevention Specialist

"It is my turn to strengthen someone else. I look into the eyes of a small child who is homeless and scared and sees their momma scared, bruised, and crying. The rug has been pulled out from under them and they are unsure of what is around the next corner—this is a huge reason why I work for Christos House and do what I do. If I can touch one person's life and make a difference in the smallest way, God has blessed me. I can only hope that I have blessed that family." —Jan, Outreach Advocate

"I want to help the women and children find their voices so that when they leave here they have the strength and courage to speak up for themselves." —Jewelina, Advocate

"I did not choose to work in the field of domestic violence or sexual assault. It was not something I even knew was an available option for a career. However, life's journey and my own experiences brought me to this work. Working here allows me to help others that are in difficult situations. It is an honor to work with Christos House and it allows me the opportunity to support change for your mothers, daughters, sisters, and your friends from the abuse cycle." —Jessica, Advocate

I'M STILL HERE...

When I was in the last half of my senior year in high school, I was introduced to a man who was very charming. We started dating and, after graduation, I moved in with him. I had bought myself a cell phone as a graduation present and when he found out, he took it from me and told me that I didn't need a phone—he did. When I bought another phone for myself, he said it was okay because I would be able to know where I was at. He eventually got a job an hour away and convinced me to work there too which led to us moving to that town...taking me an hour away from my family, friends, and everything I knew.

Shortly after the move, I was dragged to bars and after-parties for “networking” and to be a designated driver. I learned how to play Texas Hold'em so he wouldn't lose all of our money playing drunk. I failed a semester in college as a result of all the all-nighters, work, and course load. I was belittled and humiliated in public...treated like a sex object and worthless. My co-workers noticed how he treated me and began stepping in at times to protect me...which sometimes made things worse when it was only me and him. I moved all of my stuff out and stayed with a co-worker for a week because I was tired of being treated like a piece of dirt emotionally and mentally...I went back because he convinced me things would change. They did—for about a week or two.

The first time I was actually scared in the relationship we were relaxing in our living room watching a movie. He got up and walked over to me like he was going to kiss me...and instead wrapped his hand around my throat and began choking me. The look in his eyes was determined and cold. He let go and before I could ask what was going on he did it again. For roughly an hour or two, he followed me around the house as I tried to get away from him and choked me when he got ahold of me. A friend of his showed up...I sometimes wonder if that's the only reason he stopped. The friend knew something was wrong but never said anything. My partner told me the next day that he was “role playing” and I shouldn't be so worked up about it.



*“Beyond this place of wrath and tears, Looms but the Horror of the shade, And yet the menace of the years,
Finds, and shall find, me unafraid. It matters not how strait the gate, How charged with punishments the scroll. I am
the master of my fate; I am the captain of my soul.” —William Henley*

The humiliation in public, name-calling, harassment, and isolation became worse...as well as the physical and sexual abuse. He cut me, threatened to harm me, threatened to harm my friends and family. When I would try to leave, he would take the spark plugs out of my car or threaten to slash my tires. He told me if I ever tried fighting back that I'd better pray I killed him or I'd pay. He also told me if I ever told the police that I'd better pray they responded before he reached me. What scared me the most was that I knew what he was capable of and how cold he was. After three years of being in the relationship, I didn't know who I was anymore. I didn't talk to anyone because he had isolated, embarrassed, shamed, and scared me so much I felt like a zombie...his zombie. So I joined the Air Force to escape...got hurt there and returned to the relationship because it's what I knew and I felt like a failure...like I deserved it all.

My phone records, emails, and all other contacts were monitored. I wasn't able to get away from him. The day I finally escaped...he almost killed me. Every moment of that day is etched into my memory...and that was six years ago. He was on the phone and drunk...I saw the look in his eyes and tried to run. He grabbed my hair and yanked me into the kitchen. From six o'clock in the morning until two o'clock in the afternoon I was thrown into the water heater, washer and dryer, kitchen table and chairs, counters, and refrigerator. He never hit me. Not once. But I was kicked, spit on, and choked repeatedly to the point of passing out. He almost raped me telling me that it was the only way he would “forgive” me for being so horrible to him. I prayed for death. I begged him to stop. I was allowed to use my phone to call my college to say I wouldn't be in classes...managed to sneak in a couple calls to my mom and a friend with no answer from both. Why didn't I call the police? I knew that if I did they would be responding to a homicide instead of a domestic disturbance.

He finally allowed me to take a nap—which I did for exactly fifteen minutes. When I woke to find him passed out in another chair I grabbed what was necessary and got in my car and never looked back.

Genesis 50:20 says “You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.” This is why this is my career. I have the opportunity to share the information I have with our youth in order to prevent your son, daughter, grandchild, kids you love, and my daughter from EVER experiencing even a portion of what I survived. This is why prevention programs should be in schools. I was never given any information about warning signs, resources, or even what a healthy relationship looked like...and I graduated in 2003 from a small town high school. My name is Amber. I am one of the Prevention Specialists with Christos House. I am a Graduate student. I am a mother. I am a survivor. Power-Based Partner Violence is an epidemic in our communities...it DOES happen. It does not have to.



SO, WHAT'S YOUR GREEN DOT?

“I do this work because I believe with everything in me that current rates of power-based personal violence are not inevitable. I do this work because if I didn't believe this could change—I would be accepting some truths about humanity that I am just not willing to accept. I am not willing to let this world dull my senses to this issue. I am not willing to be swallowed by the apathy around me. I am not willing to pretend it is not horrifying that thousands of women, children, and men will be victims of sexual violence, partner violence, stalking, and abuse every single day. I am defiant against a culture that tries to lull my soul into quiet complacency as our daughters and our sons—our wives and our sisters—face violence and the threat of violence every single day. For whatever reasons—I have chosen to define my humanity by my connection to this issue. If my soul is not broken—if I am not daily horrified by yet another story—if 1 in 3 women being brutalized on my campus, in my country, in my frickin' world does not keep me awake at night and shock my sensibilities...what will? What else is there? I am here because the day I am not here—is the day this insanity has beaten me. Even as a victim myself—even

as my soul bleeds for my beautiful daughter—I am here in defiant resistance to the premise that these staggering rates of violence are inevitable. I don't know all the answers. I have no ulterior motives. Green Dot is my best guess thus far. I am trying each day to do this work with integrity and with humility. I fall short daily. But I will get back up every single time and come back at this. I may be an imperfect vessel for this movement—but I am a persistent one—and I will keep trying until something works.” —Dr. Dorothy Edwards

Dr. Edwards is the creator of the Green Dot Prevention Strategy. The story of Green Dot is one thread of many burgeoning around the country, fueled by the same impatient insistence—“this violence has got to stop.” Even as we must work to address these long-term, chronic cultural conditions, we must simultaneously address the urgent reality that in any given moment, another rape, another hit, another violation is being committed. The extraordinary human cost of this violence demands that we develop and implement violence prevention strategies that are aimed, first and foremost, at the violent incident that will happen in the next moment. A green dot is a single choice in one moment that makes this community safer. No one has to do everything. Everyone has to do something. What's your green dot?

Christos House was founded in 1982 by a group of concerned citizens who recognized the need to provide services for victims of domestic violence. It is a 36-bed facility. The shelter is staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

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