

The Value of a Real Conversation

by Julie Komenos

These days, we have a whole new vocabulary to describe how we relate to one another: texting, blogging, face booking, tweeting — all done on our smartphones, iPads, or other gadgets. While these new forms and modes of communication help people stay connected, nothing replaces the impact of face-to-face conversation.

Each day when I come to work at Abby's House, I am greeted by the women who live here, who sit in front of the building, talking or relaxing. Our conversation might be a simple ex-

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HIGHLIGHTS

Recent Events

HipHipHerRace

On Saturday, October 15, more than 200 people turned out to participate in the 2nd Annual HipHipHerRace, a benefit 5K race held in West Boylston. Runners and walkers alike enjoyed the beautiful course, which looped around the reservoir and through the autumn foliage. The race also featured prizes for overall and age category winners, raffle prizes, free food and massages, and was great fun for all.

The race wasn't just about raising money for and awareness about Abby's House. Just like last year, we heard stories from participants about their own struggles with domestic violence and what this race meant to them. One young woman disclosed that she had been molested as a girl and after sev-

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WOMEN'S STORIES

A Gift for All Seasons

As the Holiday season approaches, Abby's staff is hard at work preparing for the outpouring of gifts the holidays bring. We are also preparing to deal with emotions many guests and residents experience at this time. Some are dealing with difficult emotions due to loss of relatives, housing, or relationships; others are wondering how they will survive the winter months without a stable place to live or worrying if they can properly feed and clothe their children.

"I was hungry, homeless, and miserable when I knocked on Abby's House door for the first time and even though I was a total stranger, you did not treat me like one. You welcomed me, gave me food, a place to sleep, and you did whatever you could to alleviate the pain that filled my heart."

— Margaret, Abby's House resident

We counteract those negative emotions with the generosity of our donors and volunteers. A warm hug can bring a smile, a new comforter or pair of gloves keeps them safe and warm, a beautiful basket of soaps and sweet smelling perfumes remind them that they are special and deserving of beau-

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Fun!

More photos of recent events inside!



Upcoming Events

Shelter “Paint-over” Press Conference

Friday, November 18, 10:00 am

Location: Abby’s House Shelter, 21-23 Crown Street, Worcester.

This event will feature remarks from Worcester Mayor Joseph O’Brien, and representatives from Abby’s House, Benjamin Moore, and the Painters & Decorating Contractors of America.

A Holiday Open House

Thursday, December 8, 4 - 6 pm

Location: Abby’s House Shelter, 21-23 Crown Street, Worcester.

Come celebrate the holidays and our newly-refurbished shelter! Spread the cheer even further by bringing a gift card or item from our holiday needs list (below). RSVP by Wednesday, December 7 to Marj Ropp: 508.756.5486 x 21 or marj@abbyshouse.org.

Thrift Shop Vintage Parlour!

Come check out vintage clothing, hats, shoes, purses & jewelry — all at fabulous prices!

November 10 & 21;

December 6 & 22;

January 3 & 18;

February 6 & 16;

or by appointment – call

Jodi Salerno at 508-756-5486.

Necessities

Please contact Julie Komenos at (508) 756-5486 ext. 17 prior to organizing a food or clothing drive, and to coordinate the drop-off of donations. Please visit our website for a complete list of our needs.

HOLIDAY WISHLIST 2011

- Towel sets
- Scarfs for women
- Gloves for women
- Travel mugs for coffee
- Compact umbrellas
- Twin size sheets

GIFT CARDS

- Walmart
- Target
- CVS
- Dunkin Donuts
- Friendly’s
- Burger King
- Walgreens
- Price Rite
- Price Chopper
- Stop & Shop
- Bus passes
- Gas cards

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change of greetings about the weather, or something deeper than that, but what matters is that we start each day with real conversation, by making a real connection. When I enter the building and make my way to my office, I look forward to talking with my co-workers face-to-face. It starts my day on a positive note, and provides me with something intangible but incredibly valuable. By connecting face-to-face, we are taking the time and making the investment in one another and our relationships, showing one another that we care about how the other person is doing, and in the process, building a community that is based on hospitality and genuine concern for one another.

When we greet women at the door and welcome them in, it is the beginning of a relationship.

For 35 years, Abby’s House has greeted women and children with warm hospitality, offering services, support and a listening ear to those who turn to us for help. The women who come to our door may have exhausted their resources, but they are strong, resourceful and resilient. Some of them may be working, others may be going to school, looking for work, or need additional education or training, but they all need a little help to take that next step. What they need most from us is to be accepted and treated with respect, and to belong, regardless of their past history or what brought them to our door. What they need most is for us to engage in conversation with them about how they got here and how they can regain their footing on the path to independence.

Technology certainly has its place — just today, one of our residents got a job that she applied for on-line. Women who need our help can visit our website and learn more about our services, print a housing application, or locate a phone number for the staff person that can help them. Once they’re living with us, they use computers and cell phones to make appointments, do research, look for and apply for jobs, send and receive emails,

play games, watch videos, and stay connected with family and friends. All of this helps them realize their goals. Technology also helps Abby’s stay in touch with our friends and fans—if you haven’t already done so, check out our website, our Facebook page, and/or sign up to receive e-news alerts!

But technology will never replace what’s always worked at Abby’s. When we greet women at the door and welcome them in, it is the beginning of a relationship. By offering “old fashioned” hospitality with a smile and a hug, we help the women feel comfortable, understood and cared for; it builds trust and community. Relationships take time, but our commitment to using a personal approach is what has made the difference for the 11,500 women and children who have turned to Abby’s for help. By walking with them, side by side, in relationship, we have helped them move on with their lives and regain their independence. Thank you to our founders, board and other volunteers, who help us continue extending the hospitality, warmth and sense of community that is the bedrock of our success. ✨

BUDGET REPORT FY11

Current Progress

As of September 30th, Abby’s has raised \$746,806 toward its \$1.2m budget. Please make your donation today so we can reach our fiscal year goal!





HIPHIPHERRACE: *What a great turnout! Thanks everyone!*

RECENT EVENTS from Page 1

eral years of intense therapy, decided to run in her first-ever race to express her new-found strength. She said, “I just needed to prove to myself – and the world, I guess – that what happened to me isn’t going to stop me from living my life any more.”

The race was founded by a team of three area business women: Margaret Dix from O’Brien & Gibbons Insurance Center (Worcester), Susan Lauring from the Three Rivers Building (West Boylston) and Sue Manero of Susan Manero & Associates Insurance Services (West Boylston). According to Sue Manero, “Since Abby’s is such a grass roots community based organization, we thought a 5K Race would be a great way to create additional visibility, with the hopes that participants will get more deeply involved. A 5K Race is a great way to gather a diverse group of people together not only to do something healthy and active, but also learn more about what kind of challenges others in their community face.”

Invaluable support was also provided by volunteer Alison Tran, a Clark University student who spear-headed outreach on local college campuses and Anne Marie Hurley, who helped coordinate sponsorship and volunteer efforts. Once again, volunteers have made a world of difference at Abby’s!

The race brought in approximately \$10,000; \$3,000 of which was provided by our sponsors: Noar’s Oil, Pioneer Oil, Physical Therapy Innovations, Camosse Masonry Supply, Charter Communications, Millbury Savings Bank, Annette

Rafferty, and Reliant Medical Group Foundation (formerly Fallon Clinic). Many other individuals and companies helped make the race a success—for a complete list, please see the HipHipHerRace page on our website! Race profits will help Abby’s House provide shelter, housing and advocacy to the hundreds of homeless women and children who turn to us for help each year. Thanks to everyone who helped make this year’s HipHipHerRace a huge success! We look forward to another great race next year!

Goddess Fair

Women of all ages attended the first ever Goddess Fair on Thursday, September 15. The fun-filled event was attended by nearly 200 women and featured hors d’oeuvres, desserts, wine, coffee, Reiki, massage, reflexology, aromatherapy, chakra readings, angel cards, tarot cards, astrology readings, hair weaving, and henna painting. The evening concluded with a reading by medium Heather Clockedile. The \$2,500 raised will help support the shelter at Abby’s House. Thanks to Kristine Binette, Marilyn Talley and the rest of the crew at the Millbury Health Care Center for hosting this successful event!

Sock Hop

On Saturday, September 17, MaryAnn Rollins, a long-time friend of Abby’s House, hosted a Sock Hop at Union Station. People of all ages turned out for a night of music, dancing, food and fun. The event raised more than \$2,000 for Abby’s. A big thank you to everyone for making this happen! ★



GODDESS FAIR: *Long-standing fans of Abby’s House were in attendance!*



GODDESS FAIR: *We were fortunate to make lots of new friends as well!*



SOCK HOP: *Annette Rafferty and MaryAnn Rollins welcome guests to the Sock Hop at Union Station.*



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Recent Grants

All Grants were received between 7/1 – 9/31/11

- Agnes M. Lindsay
- Fletcher Foundation
- Greater Worcester Community Foundation (GWCF)
- Wynne Chase Fund @ GWCF
- C. Jean & Myles McDonough Fund @ GWCF
- Lillian Pratt Fund @ GWCF
- Hoche-Scofield Foundation
- Tapper Charitable Foundation
- Webster Five Savings Foundation
- Trustmark
- Avidia Bank
- Bank of America

Social Networking Matters

We're not just updating our status; *we're building a network of people who can help.*

We use social networking to send out calls for action. When we need help — extra baked goods, winter coats for the kids in our shelter, or volunteers to help cook a meal (when we're short-handed) — can we turn to you? Join our Facebook community and help us make a difference.

facebook

facebook.com/abbyshouse1

GO GREEN

We are developing an E-Newsletter version of "Bright Spot". To receive the latest information about Abby's House, please contact Alexandra Kartheiser, Communications Coordinator at alex@abbyshouse.org or call 508.756.5486 ext. 35. YOU CAN ALSO SIGN UP ONLINE AT WWW.ABBYSHOUSE.ORG!

This coupon good for

20% OFF

your entire clothing purchase at the **ABBY'S HOUSE VINTAGE PARLOUR.**

COUPON EXPIRES: FEB 18, 2012

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tiful things, and a supermarket gift card eases the anxiety of an upcoming shopping trip.

We are also inspired by our residents and shelter guests when they stop to say "thanks" or detail their week's search for a job, or tell you how well their kids are doing at Elm Park School. Sometimes they'll simply describe the new energy and confidence they feel—these are the "gifts" that last a life time—a sense they belong, they matter, and they're worthy.

"I now have self esteem for the 1st time in my life. I joined AA meetings. The change did a whole lot of good for me. I missed my friends and family but not those who have deeply hurt me. I learned to stand up for myself. I learned not to let people walk all over me. My attitude towards life changed me. I am a new and different person."

– Anonymous

At one time or another, everyone needs to be nurtured and empowered; it helps one recognize

self-worth. A gift is more than a thing—a gift is the demonstration of mutual respect and admiration. We want to express our deep appreciation for helping Abby's keep the doors open. Again and again, our supporters demonstrate an understanding of what the women at Abby's House endure. Be it by making a donation or volunteering, donor support enables us to help these women regain solid footing on the path to independence; it's a precious, priceless gift that lasts a lifetime. Thank you. ✨