



SPARCC update

SAFE PLACE AND RAPE CRISIS CENTER

Saving Lives Today and Tomorrow

SUMMER 2009

SPARCC Celebrates 30th Anniversary

Safe Place and Rape Crisis Center (SPARCC) is celebrating 30 years of providing free and confidential services to victims of domestic violence and sexual assault in our community. It began in 1979, when a handful of dedicated volunteers established a hotline in one of the volunteer's homes. The group quickly realized a great need in our community for services and the first outreach office was opened in 1980, with a shelter following just one year later. Over the years, SPARCC has expanded its programs to include crisis intervention for survivors, support services for children, a transitional housing program, and prevention education. In 1992, SPARCC opened a satellite office in South County, and in 1994, the DeSoto County satellite program was established. In 1993, thanks to the generous support of our community and several grants, SPARCC built a state-of-the-art emergency shelter with eight bedrooms, and later began a transitional housing program that now serves four families for up to 12 months. In 2000, SPARCC's Sarasota Outreach Office moved to its current spacious facility on Main Street in Sarasota. This building was expanded in 2006 to accommodate the growing needs of the organization. SPARCC now operates with 20 full-time and 8 part-time staff (eight of whom are bilingual or bicultural), who are supported by thousands of



SPARCC celebrates 30 years with a special presentation during the Second Hand Rose Fashion Show in February.

hours of volunteer assistance each year.

Since our doors opened, SPARCC has helped thousands of survivors heal from the trauma they have experienced. SPARCC has also conducted violence prevention presentations to more than 60,000 children ages 5-18 in local schools. Each year, SPARCC offers a wide range of no-cost services to those experiencing crisis locally, including legal services, advocacy, court and hospital accompaniment, individual crisis counseling, support groups, children's programming, information and referrals, and basic needs assistance.

Unfortunately, domestic violence and sexual assault remain widespread problems in our community and our society as a whole. Although we have come a long way in addressing these types of violence, we still have a long way to go. Our children deserve to grow up in a safe place and our families deserve to be healthy and happy. We truly believe a violence-free future is attainable, but until that becomes a reality, we will work tirelessly to end the cycle of violence that is passed down through generations.

Thank you to everyone who has made it possible for us to serve those in need for the past 30 years. Together, we are saving lives today and tomorrow ...

SPARCC 24-HOUR CRISIS HOTLINE (941) 365-1976

Florida Domestic Violence Hotline (800) 500-1119 | Florida Sexual Violence Hotline (888) 956-7273

SPARCC Board of Directors

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MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear SPARCC Supporters,

I am often asked “How is SPARCC weathering the economy”? The answer is difficult, because we have nothing in recent memory to compare the current economic conditions. As you will read in another article in this newsletter, the demand for our services is up significantly. However, the sources of revenue are down – not a good situation. So, how is SPARCC addressing this disparity?

Like most people, we’re tightening our belts and looking for ways to save money on our expenses. I think everyone at SPARCC is much more cost conscious and focused on the priority of using our precious funding to provide direct services. Every staff member is required to receive at least 24 hours of continuing education each year. In the past, we often sent staff out of town to conferences and seminars. Now, we provide essentially all of our training in-house, swapping training sessions with other local non profits and using more webinars. Our printing and postage expenses have been greatly reduced – we rely much more on electronic newsletters and have foregone the costly annual report, using an in-house produced one page summary of services provided in the past year, with a few graphs. We only have our building cleaned once a week, with everyone pitching in to take out the garbage and cleaning up the kitchen each day. And everyone wears multiple hats, such as sharing the receptionist/hotline duties.

While many of the revenue sources are decreasing, SPARCC has fared better than many social services agencies, due to dedicated funding sources, such the Domestic Violence Trust Fund (“DVTF”) and the Rape Crisis Program Trust Fund (“RCPTF”), set up by the Florida legislature to fund the state certified centers providing services to victims. Each of these Trust Funds benefits from fees charged to perpetrators of designated crimes. In addition, the DVTF receives a portion of the marriage license and divorce fees. And, SPARCC benefits from being a member of coalitions that leverage the clout and messaging opportunities of all of the domestic violence and rape crisis centers in the state. However, SPARCC must still raise more than half of its funding in the local community.

Maintaining accountability to you, our valued supporters, is very important to us. The Board of Directors and staff are dedicated to being good stewards of your donations and using them to run an efficient organization, while staying focused on delivering the highest quality services to our clients. If you are interested in touring our facilities or learning more about our programs, please contact me. I would be happy to meet with you at your convenience.

With much appreciation for your support,

Olivia Thomas

Families Seeking Shelter in Higher Numbers



time for the abuser to be at home, increasing opportunities for control and abuse. Additionally, financial insecurity often makes victims reluctant to leave an abusive situation. Layoffs may contribute to a belief that if the victim leaves, she might not find a means of support, and family and friends might be less able to help her. "We are worried that more women are feeling like they have to stick it out and stay in dangerous situations because they feel like they have limited options," said Jeanie Ocasio-McLain, SPARCC Director of Advocacy. She also says that added financial stress can cause abuse to escalate to physical violence when it may not have ever gotten to that point before. "We often see people who did not even realize they were in unhealthy relationships until their partners actually hit them; they had been broken down emotionally and made to believe they didn't deserve any better. It's important for people to realize that emotional abuse is very serious. Bruises and broken bones heal, but emotional wounds take much longer to go away and can be even more painful."

SPARCC's shelter numbers have been on the rise over the past several months and it is expected there will be an overall increase as high as 30% for the 2008-2009 fiscal year. In addition to more families coming into shelter, many of these women and children are also staying longer. It has become more difficult to find jobs, and the foreclosure problem has made it a struggle for many victims to find new homes. As all social service organizations struggle to meet the needs of these families and many others facing hardships, reduced funding creates a strain on the system. While the need for services is increasing, resources to serve clients remain the same or are being reduced.

Foreclosures, money woes, and layoff threats can all serve as triggers in relationships where an unequal balance of power already exists. While a bad economy does not create or cause domestic violence, it certainly adds to the stress within a family and can put domestic violence victims at an even higher risk of lethality. When batterers are laid off from work, there is more



ACALLFORACTION

Please donate your used cell phones to help victims of domestic and sexual violence. Phones should include chargers and be cleared of all personal numbers and information.

Donations accepted at SPARCC's Outreach Office, 2139 Main St, Sarasota, Monday-Friday 8:30-5:00



**SAVE
THESE
DATES**



October 3, 2009
Stepping Out Against
Domestic Violence Walk

February 1, 2010
Scramble for SPARCC Golf Tournament

February 18th, 2010
Second Hand Rose Fashion Show

April 24, 2010
SPARCC Prince & Princess Ball

May 6, 2010
SPARCCle on the Links Golf Tournament

SPARCC STRENGTHENS PARTNERSHIP WITH SARASOTA POLICE DEPARTMENT



Tanjee Lane, SPARCC's new InVEST Advocate

SPARCC recently was awarded a grant to launch a new program called InVEST. InVEST stands for Intimate Violence Enhanced Services Team. This grant will provide for SPARCC to hire a full time Advocate to work with a full time Investigator from the Sarasota Police Department

to review all law enforcement reports, conduct danger assessments to determine cases with the highest chances of mortality and provide intensive services to those victims. The Advocate will be focused on victim safety and services while the Investigator will be focused on accountability on the part of the batterer. The team will follow cases through prosecution. This team will also conduct community trainings, participate in the Fatality Review meetings, and perform other related activities. The program begins July 1, 2009 and is funded for 18 months. It is our hope that this will be a successful partnership and that we will be able to secure funding to continue the program. SPARCC is receiving funding for InVEST through the Federal Victims of Crime Act (VOCA), administered through the Florida Office of the Attorney General.

SPARCC Auxiliary Celebrates Successful Year



2007-2009 Auxiliary President Carol Chiarella presents proceeds from Auxiliary fundraising efforts of Executive Director Olivia Thomas

The SPARCC Auxiliary celebrated another successful year of fundraising at their annual luncheon at Mattison's Forty-One on May 6. The Auxiliary raised a grand total of \$96,628 through their 2008-09 events and projects! These funds are used to support SPARCC's programs and services. The new Auxiliary Board was also installed at the luncheon, and outgoing members and chairs were thanked for their hard work over the past two years. SPARCC would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to all of the outgoing Auxiliary board members, committee chairs, and all of the Auxiliary members that volunteered their time over the past year to raise such significant funds in support of our mission.

SPARCC Launches New Website

SPARCC has recently launched a new website which features expanded resources and facts for both clients and the community. The website (www.sparcc.net) has extensive information for victims of domestic and sexual violence, including a Spanish section, court and legal resources, warning signs, and a downloadable safety plan, to name a few. There is also information on how the community can get involved with SPARCC including agency wish lists, volunteer opportunities and an online donation option. The web site even includes a section on the growing problem of dating violence and links to SPARCC's social media pages as a resource for teens who may be facing an abusive relationship and are unsure of where to turn. "We wanted to put enough information out there to be helpful to someone who may not be ready to make that call or come in to see an advocate just yet," said Jessica Hays, Director of Community Awareness. "The website has something for everyone, whether you need help for yourself or a loved one, you want to expand your knowledge and awareness on the issue, or if you would like to get involved in prevention efforts or as a volunteer."



The Unsung Hero of SPARCC's Court Advocacy Program



**Linda Berliner & Director of Advocacy,
Jeanie Ocasio-McLain**

SPARCC has been extremely fortunate to have had Linda Berliner as a volunteer for the past five years. Linda is a former domestic violence advocate from New York who now winters in Sarasota. In 2004, Linda made a special trip from New York to Sarasota, specifically to attend the SPARCC's state mandated training for volunteers. The training requires 60 hours of core competency classes on domestic and sexual violence. Upon completing the training program, volunteers are registered with the state of Florida for privileged communications and can work directly with victims and their confidential records. Completing the training requires dedication and a strong commitment from volunteers. From October through May, Linda volunteers 1-2 days per week as a court advocate for SPARCC victims. As an advocate, Linda assists victims with protective injunctions, accompanying them to court hearings and helping them navigate the legal system. Linda donates her time and often stays into the evening completing paperwork to make sure the job gets done and SPARCC's clients are taken care of. Linda demonstrates compassion and understanding in her work.

We recently received a letter from one of the many women Linda has helped and her words speak to the type of volunteer that Linda is. "Linda did a wonderful job standing with me in court. I never in my life have seen someone go so far above and beyond her job duties. I felt that she truly cared and was genuinely concerned for my welfare. She spoke up for me, and was my rock and strength. I will always remember Linda for her smile and loving personality. Her concern let me know that I would get through this difficult time in my life."

Linda provides crucial volunteer hours for SPARCC and provides excellent service to the clients she works with. Each year, Linda makes a difference in the lives of many Sarasota County residents who are facing the horrors of domestic violence. Linda does all of this without ever asking for anything in return; she gives quietly of her time and talents, and this truly makes her one of SPARCC's unsung heroes!

CLIENTS FIND NEW BEGINNINGS IN TRANSITIONAL HOUSING PROGRAM

Transitional housing program graduate Lela was physically and emotionally abused by her husband for many years. She has two children, who she credits with ultimately giving her the strength to put an end to the abusive relationship. Lela did not see the abusive side of her husband until after they were married and says that at first, it wasn't a constant. "There would be an incident and then everything would be okay for awhile. It would lull me into a false sense of security," she said. "Over time, I became more and more isolated, my family told me I needed to stick it out - I didn't have anywhere to turn and I was embarrassed that this was happening to me. To cope, I learned how to avoid problems. If I bought the wrong things at the grocery store my husband would blow up, so I just stopped going to the store altogether. When the kids asked to do things I would make excuses and pretty soon, I realized that we were completely isolated. My friends had all given up trying to contact me and I felt all alone." When Lela decided to leave, she knew there was no looking back, however, she had few resources and two children to provide for. Lela called SPARCC and it was



quickly determined that she was a perfect candidate for the transitional housing program. Within just 6 months of being in the program, Lela had paid off a significant amount of debt and had several thousand dollars in savings. After completing the program, Lela and her children are now thriving. She was recently approved for a mortgage and will be a proud first-time homeowner in the very near future. Her children are happy and doing well in school. "Lela embodies what the transitional housing program is all about," says her advocate. "She set high goals for herself and has exceeded those goals - she has shown that you can make it through a bad situation and come out strong, confident and successful!"

SPARCC's transitional housing program assists those fleeing violent homes secure permanent housing and integrate into the community. Program participants receive assistance and referral services while pursuing educational and vocational goals that would enable them to become financially self-sufficient.

Scramble for SPARCC Golf Tournament



SPARCC's event season started off this year with the 15th Annual **Scramble for SPARCC Golf Tournament**. This year's tournament was held at Laurel Oak Country Club and was planned by an amazing team of ladies – Pat Luber, Cerita Purmort, Florence Jensen, Judy McMillian, Pat Ryan, Louise Neher and Mary Ann Robinson. Over the past 15 years, this event has raised more than \$300,000 for SPARCC. Thank you to all who participated in this wonderful event!

Second Hand Rose Fashion Show



Event Chair Mary Kenealy-Barbetta (center), with Fashion Co-chairs Sandy Strom (l) & Deborah Bill (r).

SPARCC Showcases Sarasota was the theme of this year's **Second Hand Rose Fashion Show and Luncheon**, held February 12, at the Ritz-Carlton. A

crowd of 450 enjoyed a fabulous show featuring fashions from SPARCC's Treasure Chest, and a luncheon emceed by the always entertaining Les McCurdy and Ken Sons. Highlights of the afternoon included a special presentation to commemorate SPARCC's 30th Anniversary (a surprise planned by event Chair Mary Kenealy-Barbetta) and a special performance by Circus Sarasota. Thank you to the team from Cutting Loose Salon and Melody's Skin & Body Therapy who did hair and makeup, and special thanks to all of the models.



Models prepare to take to the runway at SPARCC's annual Fashion Show & Luncheon

SPARCC would also like to thank event chair Mary Kenealy-Barbetta, the Fashion Show Committee, and all of the amazing volunteers in the Treasure Chest boutique that worked together to make the show a success.



Tana Sandefur, Jennifer Saslaw, Chuck the Clown, and Susan Lanier.

Prince and Princess Ball



Princesses Abigail gets her caricature drawn.

The Second Annual SPARCC **Prince and Princess Ball** was held on Saturday, April 25, at the Girl Scouts Conference Center in Sarasota. Families dressed in their finest Prince & Princess attire enjoyed child friendly appetizers such as sliders and mini grilled cheese sandwiches, and fun activities

that included face painting, crafts, caricature artists,



Two little princesses wait to have their faces painted.

EVENTS

dancing, and a silent auction. The event chair was Robyn LaPorta, who worked hard with her dedicated committee to make this event a success. We thank them all for their time and enthusiasm for this wonderful event.



*Donna Johns and
Event Chair Robyn LaPorta*



*Prince Ethan takes a break
from the dance floor.*

Sparccle On The Links



*Tournament Chair Phyllis Smith &
Edith Mueller*

SPARCC's annual mixed golf tournament, **Sparccle On The Links**, was held May 1 at Plantation Golf & Country Club in Venice. The sell-out event raised more than \$14,000 to benefit SPARCC! Golfers enjoyed a beautiful afternoon on the course, followed by a silent auction, dinner, and awards in the clubhouse. Many thanks to all of the sponsors, participants, and especially to Tournament Chair Phyllis Smith and her hard working committee.



*Golfers prepare to tee off at the
6th Annual Sparccle on the Links Golf Tournament*

Hoe Down at Hi Hat Ranch

To wrap up the season, SPARCC celebrated its 30th Anniversary in old-Florida style with the **Hoe Down at Hi Hat Ranch**. Nearly 250 guests donned their finest western wear and enjoyed an evening of barbecue, bluegrass, and fun. Molly Schechter and Emily Walsh Parry were the co-chairs of the event, and the guest of honor was Sheriff Tom Knight. Many long-time SPARCC supporters were in attendance including: Derek Wilson Billib, Scottie Brown, Louise Bruderle, Jean Gay, Mary Ann Robinson, Tana Sandefur, and Jennifer Saslaw, to name a few. We also extend our thanks to our major sponsors for the event: Verizon, The Observer, Gold Coast Eagle Distributing, Mary Ann Robinson, and the Turner Family.

A big thank you to all who attended and supported our events this Spring, we could not fulfill our mission without all of you!



*Hoe Down Co-Chairs
Molly Schechter &
Emily Walsh Parry*



*Executive Director Olivia
Thomas & Guest of Honor,
Sheriff Tom Knight*



*SPARCC Board President Lisa
Walsh and her husband Matt*



Connie Holcomb, Gloria & Al Webel, and Jennifer Saslaw



TREASURE CHEST

SARASOTA'S FINEST RESALE SHOP

Furniture – Collectibles | Antiques – Art – Jewelry | Designer Dresses & Clothing

ACCEPTING QUALITY
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1426 Fruitville Road, Sarasota
Open Monday thru Saturday 10:00 am – 4:00 pm

941-953-7800

PROCEEDS BENEFIT SPARCC

SERVICES DIRECTORY

Sarasota Outreach & Administration

2139 Main Street
Sarasota, FL 34237
Administration: (941) 365-0208
Hotline: (941) 365-1976

Venice Outreach Office

1531 Tamiami Trail South, Suite 702-A
Venice, FL 34285
Phone: (941) 492-3752

Arcadia Outreach Office

107 West Oak Street, Suite #202
Arcadia, FL 34266
Phone: (877) 365-1976

SHELTER - Confidential Location

SPARCC's Treasure Chest

1426 Fruitville Road, Sarasota, FL 34236
10:00 am - 4:00 pm Monday - Saturday
Phone: (941) 953-7800

SPARCC's mission is to provide services to victims of domestic and sexual violence, and to promote a violence free community through awareness and education.



Safe Place and Rape Crisis Center

2139 Main Street
Sarasota, Florida 34237

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