

Winter 2008

Eliminating domestic violence one family at a time

BETHANY HOUSE GAZETTE

of Northern Virginia, Inc.



More than meets the eye: *Client working to make it better*

Three sippy cups. A bowl of half-eaten baby food. One child with pigtails standing up in her play pen. Another child sitting in his high chair. The third child playing with her two siblings. One mother thoughtfully trying to answer questions with the sound of her children in the background.

Meet Sophie, a 6-month client of Bethany House and a woman with great strength.

“Bethany House has allowed me to be myself,” Sophie said. “To raise my kids, not live a chaotic life and not be afraid of getting hit.”

Sophie points to the help she received from Bethany House to get her life back on track.

“I put everyone else first and I figured I’d get my GED after the kids grew up,” Sophie said. “Now I have a schedule with my kids so I have time for myself to study.”

Each night after Sophie puts her three children to bed, she studies for her GED test, which she hopes to take in the near future. She also uses this rare time to herself to practice her typing skills, read, and seek out help from the house manager if she has any questions during her studies.

“I want to get established to be independent,” Sophie said.

Indeed, she has goals for herself to become completely independent. Once she completes her GED, Sophie wants to get a degree in computer technology.

“It’s like this, 70% of me wants a computer technology degree,” Sophie said. “The other 30% of me wants a nursing degree.” She pauses, “I don’t want something that’ll take 6 years, and I have to take my children into consideration. I don’t like blood anyway. So after I finish my computer technology degree, I’m gonna get medical billing and programming under my belt.”

Continued on page 2

INSIDE TODAY’S GAZETTE

Continued story “More than meets the eye: Client working to make it better”	2
Word from Executive Director: Financial Donations Needed	2
Intern’s road toward making an impact	3
In-kind donations needed	3
What’s on the forecast	4
Peeking into the lives of our staff	4

Bethany House of Northern Virginia (BHNVA) is a non-profit, faith-based organization serving women and children who have experienced domestic violence.

Our CFC Code is 89071. Our United Way Code is 8268.

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Peeking into the lives of staff

Naomi Collins: mother, survivor, student



From her mahogany eyes, which sparkle when she talks about her future, to her gold hoop earrings, she radiates strength and vision. Naomi Collins, Development Associate for the last two and a half years, is a success story for survivors of domestic violence.

Naomi came to Bethany House as a client, after leaving an abusive marriage and being homeless for a year with three children.

“I never felt like a client,” Naomi said. Naomi and her kids were clients for six months, but within two weeks Naomi was volunteering at Bethany House’s office. She started out volunteering as an administrative assistant, was promoted to a paid position and recently took on a role in fundraising and community outreach.

Now Naomi reaches out to faith-based groups as well as the general community in an effort to heighten awareness of domestic violence and to raise funds for Bethany House. She also coordinates in-kind donations for clients and plans special events.

Her journey away from abuse to freedom was not easy. When Naomi began to question if she was in an abusive relationship, she went to share with her pastor’s wife one Sunday morning but received little help.

“Girl, I know what you mean,” the pastor’s wife said. “Are you going to come to our women’s tea?”

A few days later, Naomi packed her children into her car and left 17 years of marriage behind. She had married her childhood sweetheart and now, 26 years later, was looking for a fresh start.

Over the past few years, Naomi has learned to be more compassionate and patient with women who have gone through abuse. Raising three children by herself has been both “interesting and rewarding” for her.

“My kids have really matured,” Naomi said. “They still make mistakes and get in trouble, but they’ve gone through adversity and come out like shining gold.”

Currently, Naomi is working full-time, taking on-line classes for a degree in Organizational Leadership and Management while raising her three children solo.

She dreams of the day when she can start her own women’s ministry, write a Christian play to help women in their healing, and travel up and down the east coast speaking at women’s workshops on the healing process.

“I’ve always had a heart for hurting women,” Naomi said. She remembered a special workshop for clients she led recently .

“I helped the ladies discover their gifts and talents. I wanted to help them to cultivate a compass for their life—a guide for choosing jobs and ministries.”



BHNV wishes you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

WHAT’S ON THE FORECAST

If you want to get our quarterly newsletters via e-mail, please e-mail: jwassermann@bhnv.org. In the subject line put: e-newsletter.

DECEMBER

1-23 *The Christmas Shop*

Each Christmas season Bethany House opens a Christmas Shop where current and past clients can shop for brand new items for their families to enjoy during Christmas. Churches, civic groups, community clubs, and individuals, donate new items to our the store.

18 *Christmas Party*

Bethany House hosts an annual Christmas Party for clients, staff, and volunteers. It is a time to reconnect, eat a tasty meal, and enjoy the holiday season together.

FEBRUARY

14 *Valentine’s Day*

Bethany House gives Valentine’s Day gifts to our women. Items are donated by churches, civic groups, and individuals. To contribute, please contact Naomi Collins at **703-658-9500**.

Client keeps on working to make it better daily

continued from page 1

For as long as Sophie can remember, she has always loved computers. She likes how you can work from anywhere and do just about anything with computers.

Living at BHNH has opened the door for her to focus upon her own personal and career goals.

“Whatever your dream is, Bethany House helps you accomplish it,” Sophie said. “Whether it is research on something, bringing you places you need to go, or whatever.”

“There’s so much toil and strife out in the world,” said Florene Price, Family Assistant Program Manager, “Bethany House has a big heart to help others—with no respect to religion. All are welcome here.”

Florene added, “Most of our families come to us with only the clothes on their back. We provide a feeling of relief, safety, and peace in a Christian atmosphere.”

“There’s no stress to buy diapers or food. You don’t have to think about your needs,” Sophie jumped in. “I’m not a needy person, but I have learned to ask for what I need. It was hard at first. It was a pride thing, not wanting to ask.”

“I’m a strong person, but being here I don’t have to figure out how to survive,” Sophie said. “I can focus on other things.”

Sophie will continue to focus on her children, her education, becoming self-sufficient, and remaining abuse-free.

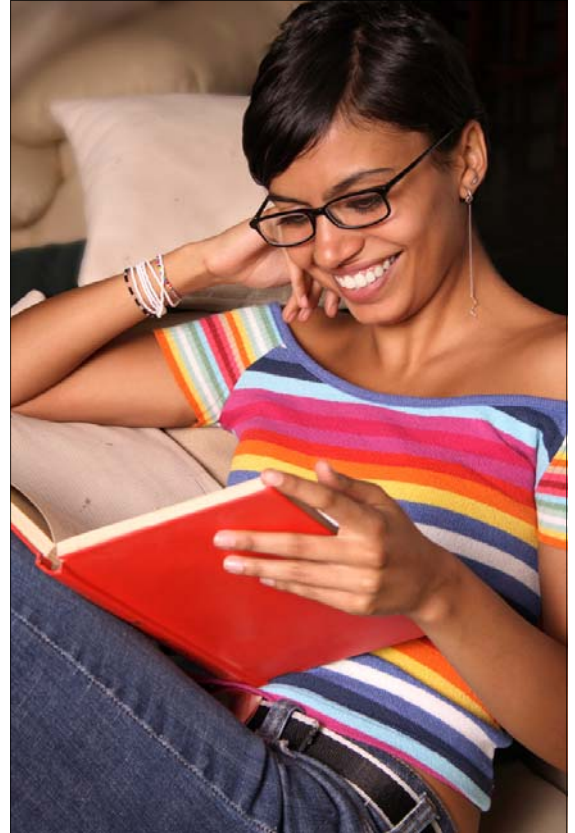


Photo Illustration

A WORD FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The transition from fall to winter is a busy time for us. There are a number of holidays to celebrate: Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year’s. We always try to make the holidays special for our families, but some years, it feels like we trip from one holiday to the next. I often have to remind myself to stop and breathe.

The move from fall to winter is busy for another reason, too. Domestic violence increases as the cold weather moves in, and our shelters become busier than ever. I think it is because the cold weather keeps people indoors, and when tempers rise, it is harder to simply walk away. No one wants to walk out into 30-degree weather. That means our phones start ringing as desperate women and children call looking for safe shelter and support.

Our doors are open to as many families as we can accommodate. Our families come to us with a great many needs, from safe shelter to food to diapers. We are so thankful for the support of our community in helping us provide for the needs of our families. Your support has allowed us to provide basic care and services to families in crisis for almost 30 years.

This year is looking like a tough one. Individuals and families are struggling to make ends meet, and the stock market is affecting the ability of many major grantors to award funds to non-profit agencies. The economy is hurting all of us, no doubt about it. We are doing our best to watch our expenses and cut back where we can, but I need you to know that we still need your help. I have included a donation envelope with this newsletter. If you can afford it, would you consider a donation to help us through the winter? Even a small amount will help our families.

Merry Christmas!

Cathy Hassinger



Cathy Hassinger, Bethany House Executive Director

Volunteer intern's road to making an impact



Photo Illustration

The road leading Jillian Jurek, counseling intern, to Bethany House of Northern Virginia began when she was a baby-sitter in middle school.

As time progressed, Jillian discovered how comfortable she was around children, and her interest in women's issues began to form. After earning her undergraduate degree in psychology and social work, Jillian was hired at the American Cancer Society to do fundraising, work with volunteers and do event planning. It was here Jillian discovered what she wanted to do next.

"I loved interacting with family members of patients," Jillian said. "It felt good to reach out to them and I thought counseling would be a good next step to help people with personal problems."

Jillian decided to pursue a Master's in Community Counseling at Marymount University located in Arlington, Virginia.

When it came time for Jillian to find an internship, she looked for one dealing with women, children and women's issues. She stumbled across Bethany House online, spoke with a former intern and, after interviewing, was asked to become an intern.

"Domestic violence wasn't even on my radar until Bethany House," Jillian said. "Domestic violence is a hidden issue I'd never been exposed to, but there is a tremendous need for help for domestic violence victims."

Over the past couple months, Jillian gained experience in counseling and answering crisis hotline calls, and she increased her understanding about domestic violence.

"I was really hoping to get some experience under my belt," Jillian said. "I've grown in my counseling skills as a result. I'd never worked on a hotline before, and after a few calls you become very comfortable."

Getting to interact with her clients was both rewarding and a time to learn.

"My clients have an ability to maintain a positive outlook to get where they need," Jillian said. "It was encouraging to watch their positive outlook on life."

Perhaps Jillian's most memorable experience was getting to walk through the entire process of receiving and working with one client in particular.

"It was awesome to watch one of my clients," Jillian said. "I followed her throughout her entire path from taking her hotline call to doing her intake interview to placing her in our shelter to counseling her to helping her get into transitional housing. It was really rewarding to watch her. She worked really hard."

While Jillian isn't entirely sure what her future holds, she would like to remain involved in supporting the fight against domestic violence. Whether it is financially giving or volunteering at a shelter in the future, she wants to stay connected to this important family issue.

IN-KIND DONATIONS NEEDED

We rely upon donations to meet the daily-living needs of our clients. The following are some items we need in our Client Pantry:

- 1) Laundry detergent
- 2) Household cleaning supplies
- 3) Shampoo & Conditioner
- 4) Soap
- 5) Lotion
- 6) Toilet paper
- 7) Paper towels
- 8) Gift certificates to places such as Target, Wal-Mart and grocery stores
- 8) Toothbrushes, toothpaste and floss
- 9) Any other toiletries

To donate to our Pantry, contact Naomi Collins at: **703-658-9500**.