

# The Advocate

Renewal House, Fall 2008

## Governor Paterson signs "911 Interference" bill into law

NYSCADV, May 2008

On May 7th, Governor Paterson signed into law Assembly Bill 614 (Paulin)/Senate Bill 2452 (Saland), legislation that makes "intentionally preventing a person from communicating certain requests for emergency assistance: a crime of criminal mischief in the 4th degree. The law makes it a crime when a person intentionally disables or removes telephonic or electronic equipment (such as a TTY) when such telephone or equipment is being used to seek emergency assistance: (a) from police, law enforcement, fire or emergency medical services personnel or; (b) in an attempt to protect himself, herself or a third party from imminent physical injury. An ownership interest in such communication equipment, on the part of the defendant, is not a defense. The law went into effect on July 6, 2008.

## NY site lets crime victims track parole hearings, comment

Associated Press, May 1, 2008

New York is now allowing crime victims to go online and track when the defendant who attacked or otherwise harmed them is coming up for parole. The state Division of Parole is putting the schedule of parole hearings by individual a click away for the general public. The upgraded Web site will also allow an easier, quicker way for victims to comment on whether a defendant deserves parole. The Web site is live! It's at <http://parole.state.ny.us/offender/index.asp>.

## NYS allows all survivors of domestic violence access to civil orders of protection

NYSCADV, June 2008

The NYS Legislature took a momentous step in extending equal protection of law to all victims of domestic violence. On June 24th, the Senate and Assembly unanimously passed legislation to expand access to orders of protection in Family and Integrated Domestic Violence Courts. The Governor signed on July 22nd, with the law effective immediately.

Unless victims were related by blood or marriage or have a child in common with their abuser, they could not get a civil order of protection in New York, leaving the criminal justice system as the only option—the only state for which this was true.

In addition to lifting this particular discrimination against victims in same-sex relationships and co-habitants living in a state that does not recognize common law marriage, the New York State Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NYSCADV) and its membership is greatly relieved that victims of teen dating violence will have access to these protections. Teen dating violence is an escalating problem in all our communities, but teens generally don't want to have their abusers arrested; they just want the violence to stop.

Civil orders of protection are important tools in an overall response to domestic violence and can play a key role in preventing further violence. The majority of offenders named in civil orders of protection abide by the restrictions in them, resulting in fewer incidents of violence, fewer injuries, and, as a

result, fewer demands on law enforcement and health care, among other systems. Expanding access to civil orders of protection is not only a matter of justice for victims, it will also expand these net savings for communities.

"This is an important milestone in New York's response to domestic violence. New York now recognizes the full spectrum of victims of domestic violence and commitment to providing the full range of legal options to all of them," said Jessica Vasquez, Executive Director at NYSCADV.

## Four-legged advocates

Associated Press

The dogs know exactly who to go to when brought to court. They go directly to the victim who needs comforting. A group in Winter Haven [Florida] is thought to be the first in the nation to use trained service dogs to accompany and support young victims through the criminal-justice process. A victim advocate and dog attend all court appearances and interviews with the child that involve law enforcement, with the hope that the dog can help the child feel safe and comforted. The Polk County Sheriff says the dogs work, getting young victims to open up and talk with police and in court.

### Harvest Walk—September 28th

We all look around our community and see and hear of individuals and families in need. They need help to meet their basic needs such as food, shelter, clothing, medicines and even gas money for medical trips. Responding to individuals and families in need of financial assistance is an important way to build a healthy community.

Help build your community by participating in this year's Harvest Walk.

The 2008 Harvest Walk will take place on Sunday, September 28th at the Dobisky Community Center in Ogdensburg. Registration will begin at 12:30 pm and the walk will begin at 1:00 pm. The Harvest Walk is a collaborative effort of the Ogdensburg Neighborhood Center, Renewal House, St. Mary's Cathedral, Notre Dame Parish., St. Raphael's Parish, Heuvelton, St. Phillip and James Parish, Lisbon, St. John's

Episcopal Church, the Salvation Army, United Way, Hammond Food Pantry, Catholic Charities and Seaway House.

For more information please call the Ogdensburg Neighborhood Center at 393-5561 or Catholic Charities at 393-2255.

### October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month

It's a time for collective action, a time when communities unite to mourn those who have died as a result of abuse, celebrate those who have survived, connect those who work to end violence, and raise public awareness about domestic violence.

This year, YES FM 96.7, Q-Country 102.9 and PAC 98.7 will assist Renewal House during the month of October to raise awareness about domestic violence in St. Lawrence County. You will hear real stories from victims in our community, facts about domestic violence, how to

become involved by volunteering or by donating monetarily. You may also contribute by donating items from our wish list.

Help domestic violence victims.

Stay tuned!

### 8K Walk/Run—October 5th

Renewal House and St. Lawrence University are joining together during Domestic Violence Awareness Month to host an 8K 'Stop the Violence' Walk/Run.

The walk/run will be held on Sunday, October 5th starting at 1:00 pm at the Alpha Phi Omega

(APO) house, 25 College Street in Canton and will wind through the campus and trails of St. Lawrence University. Registration will begin at 12:30 pm. The cost is \$10 per person with a student rate of \$5.

A free t-shirt will be given away to the first 50 participants.

For a registration form in advance, students may contact Katie Protos at [kprotos@stlawu.edu](mailto:kprotos@stlawu.edu) or 229-5122.

Community members may contact Ilene Burke at 379-9845 or at [renewalhouse@verizon.net](mailto:renewalhouse@verizon.net).

### Recognition Dinner—October 22nd

We invite the community to join us on Wednesday, October 22nd at the Gran-View Restaurant in Ogdensburg for our annual recognition dinner.

Cocktails will begin at 5:30 pm with dinner served at 6:30 pm. Our program entitled *The Power of Education* will begin at 7:30 pm. The cost of the dinner will be \$35 per person.

Choice of entrees are: Prime Rib, Chicken Kiev, Broiled Seafood Platter (shrimp, sea scallops and haddock), Vegetarian

(grilled confit portabella mushroom)

Please let us know your dinner choice when you reserve your seat.

This year we are recognizing those who have used their power to educate others on domestic violence prevention or who utilize their position to teach and to be supportive of victims; individuals who have, over the years, made a difference in the lives of others in our community.

They are:

Kelley Glasgow—Counselor at Banford Elementary School, Canton

Wendy Falvey—Teacher at Potsdam High School. Ms Falvey will also be our guest speaker.

SUNY Potsdam

Please RSVP by October 15th, by calling 379-9845.

If you are interested in reserving a table, please contact Ilene Burke for more information.

## Executive Director is National Award Recipient

A "Certificate of Sunshine" in recognition of outstanding contributions toward ending domestic violence and a donation of \$1,000 was given to Renewal House in honor of Ilene Burke, Executive Director.

Tessa Fields, on behalf of the staff at Renewal House, nominated Ilene for the Sunshine Peace Award, which was established to honor the vital role that workers in the domestic violence field play within our communities.

This national award recognizes

extraordinary individuals who make a difference; those who help to build communities that are intolerant of domestic violence and through whose work peoples' lives are changed for the better. Candidates are nominated and selected on excellence in administration of programs and in victim advocacy.

The following is taken from Tessa's letter of nomination submitted with the application/nomination form.

"It is with my highest honor that I nominate Ilene J Burke for the 2008 Sunshine Peace Award. Ilene

exhibits passion and dedication towards helping victims *Break Free* from domestic violence, and is truly consumed both personally and professionally with making *Domestic Violence Everyone's Business*. I have never seen someone so dedicated and passionate about something they believe in. I have worked with Ilene for over 5 years and she has taught me more than she will ever know. She has been an unbelievable supervisor, advocate, mentor and friend."

Congratulations Ilene!

## Verizon Hopeline

In April, Renewal House was awarded \$2,500 from the Verizon Wireless HopeLine Program to help fund domestic violence outreach and support programs.

The funds are being used for rental assistance to victims of domestic violence and their children who are obtaining or

maintaining a safe residence away from their abuser.

Victims leaving an abusive situation are oftentimes faced with economic hardship. Rental assistance will help Renewal House continue to provide victims and their children the option of living their lives free from violence. Because of

financial burdens, victims and their children are often faced with returning to an abusive household, which ultimately places them at risk for further physical and emotional harm.

This award will assist 10 families in St. Lawrence County with rental assistance.

## Stewart's Holiday Match

Renewal House received \$1,250 this year from the Stewart's Holiday Match. Funds will be used for rental assistance to victims and their children (18 years and younger).

It is only when the most basic needs of shelter and safety are met that victims can effectively focus on issues of empowerment and self healing.

Last year, Renewal House was able to assist 7 families, which included 17 children, with funds received from the Stewart's Holiday Match.

## Donate Now

Justgive.org offers a free online donation function to enable our donors to give online.

You can now make your donation to Renewal House by visiting our website at [www.slvrenewalhouse.org](http://www.slvrenewalhouse.org).

## Adopt a Family

If you are interested in adopting a family during the holiday season, please call our office at 379-9845 for more details.

## Wishlist

Personal care items - shampoo, conditioner, toothpaste, toothbrush, soap and deodorant

General supplies - cleaning products, laundry detergent, toilet paper, paper towels, tissues, light bulbs, batteries, trash bags

Bath and kitchen towels, bedding (twin), pillows and crib bedding

Kitchen items

Non-perishable foods for pantry

Adult and children's underwear,

socks, sweatshirts, sweatpants, pj's

Winter items such as hats, mittens and boots

Games, toys, puzzles, art supplies

Gift certificates or gift cards for long distance phone calls, gas, grocery stores, department stores

Over the counter medications (please be sure to check the expiration date)

## Services Offered at Renewal House

**Renewal House** provides a variety of services for victims of domestic violence in St. Lawrence County.

All services are free and confidential. Services include:

**24-hour Crisis Hotline:** Staff and volunteers are available 24 hours by calling **379-9845**.

Regular office hours are 8 am - 5 pm, Monday through Friday. If it is not an emergency and you would like to leave a message, call **379-9878**. We will get back to you as soon as possible.

**Individual Counseling/Emotional Support:** Short-term individual counseling in a non-judgmental atmosphere that acknowledges a

person's ability and right to make choices. Help is available to consider options and plan for safety. Home visits are provided if needed.

**Women's Support Group:** A facilitated self-help group for victims and survivors of domestic violence providing mutual support and understanding from other women who have been abused and who share something in common. It has helped many women feel less isolated, get useful information, and develop a safety plan. Transportation is provided if needed.

**Children's Program:** Recreational/Support group to help children understand what abuse is and to give

them a chance to talk about their feelings. Children are reassured that the abuse is not their fault. Individual counseling is also provided.

**Safe Housing:** 24-hour intake for emergency, temporary shelter.

**Advocacy:** Assistance in obtaining orders of protection, pressing criminal charges, and working with law enforcement. We also help in obtaining emergency assistance from Department of Social Services, Crime Victims Board and other community programs.

**Community Education and Outreach:** Presentations are available for any public or private group, school, business, or agency.

## Why Couple Counseling Doesn't Work

Couple counseling is not a viable tool for use in relationships where domestic violence exists. We define domestic violence as a pattern of coercive behavior in which one person attempts to gain and maintain power and control over another. It may include physical, sexual, economic, psychological, and emotional abuse. A domestic violence relationship is one in which physical or sexual assaults occur, when there are threats of violence against one partner, or when one is living in an environment of FEAR caused by his or her partner.

Couple counseling may be beneficial when working on marital problems. Domestic violence, however, is a crime, not a marital problem. It is a behavior that is the responsibility of the abuser or batterer, is chosen by him or her, and he or she alone is capable of changing it. The behavior

of one family member **cannot** compel another family member to become abusive.

Couple counseling remains inappropriate even when both parties request it and/or want to maintain the relationship.

Renewal House opposes utilizing couple counseling in abusive relationships.

Treating a couple together could:

Endanger the victim, who may face violence or threats of violence for revealing information during the session which is disapproved of by the abuser.

Imply that the victim is somehow responsible for the abuse inflicted upon them.

Ignore the denial, minimization, and deception about the violence that

occurs in counseling when the focus is on the couple's interaction.

Increase a victim's sense of isolation. The victim may fear to speak during the session. This could further discourage the victim from taking any other positive action to break free from the violence.

Imply that the victim has responsibility for seeing that the abuser or batterer gets help.

It is recommended that when referring partners of a domestic violence relationship for counseling, refer them separately as follows:

**Victim:**

Renewal House 379-9845

**Abuser/Batterer:**

Catholic Charities

Offender Accountability Program 393-2255

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## Donor Appreciation Report

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Renewal House recognizes the businesses, organizations, and community members who generously support the adults and children who seek services at Renewal House by donating money, items or time. The names listed on this report are from donations received since our last newsletter.

## Melissa's Story – A true story of teen dating violence

"And if he likes me, what does it matter if he strikes me.  
I'll fetch his paper with my arm in a sling, just for the privilege of wearing his ring."

The above lyrics from the 1959 Pulitzer Prize winning musical "Fiorello" illustrate the intense pressure of the time to be "coupled." Forty-three years later, teens are still facing similar pressures, thus contributing to an ideal climate for teen dating violence. Teen dating violence is defined as a pattern of coercive behavior that one partner exerts over the other for the purpose of establishing and maintaining power and control. This behavior may take various forms: emotional abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, limiting independence, isolation, threats and intimidation, harassment and minimizing, denying and blaming.

You may be thinking, "This wouldn't happen to my teen. They know better." Consider the following:

- In a survey of over four thousand 9th through 12th graders, approximately 1 in 5 female students reported being physically and/or sexually abused by a dating partner.
- 45% of teenage females and 43% of teenage males reported that they had received some form of physical aggression from dating partners at least once; girls reported that their boyfriends initiated the violence 70% of the time while boys reported that their girlfriends were the initiators only 27% of the time.
- Females between the ages of 16 and 24 experience the highest per capita rates of domestic violence.
- 30% of all teenage girls who are killed are killed by a boyfriend or former boyfriend.

While the statistics give us a sense of the scope of the problem, they don't speak as loudly as a survivor. The following is an excerpt of Melissa's story.

"Each day I wake up and I don't know exactly how I am going to feel. My emotions are constantly at battle and I am uncertain about what the outcome will be. I go from feeling very angry, to guilty, to weak, frustrated and powerless. I know I will make it through the day and wake in the morning to face it all again. It is a part of me and it is who I am. I ask myself why sometimes. Why me, why anyone? I know without a doubt, when I fall asleep at night, that I cannot keep this quiet. If I do, it makes it seem that this is okay to hide, that we shouldn't talk about it. That it is not our problem. I need to say it out loud. I am a survivor. It is easier to say that, but in order to become a survivor; I first had to be a victim. What happened, although not fair, happened to me. It is happening to teens everywhere. It is real and it is a crime.

I first met my abuser when I was sixteen and I was attracted to him because he was older and no one knew him. He was mysterious and exciting to me. At first he began innocently asking where I was going. That soon changed to him becoming controlling and jealous, demanding to know where I was and whom I was with. My parents and friends were more annoyed than I was. They saw it as a warning sign; I saw it as someone who cared about me. As his behavior began to get worse I knew that it was not appropriate, but I did not see it as harmful. The minor arguments did not last long. He didn't belittle me. I still felt completely in control.

The next stage was worse, not only for me but for those who loved me and cared about me. They were losing me. My abuser had started to build a fence around me. He would embarrass me in front of my family and friends and foolishly I would defend him. I would argue with them and he would point out that no one was on my side. He would instigate arguments with my family and intimidate my friends.

He began to ruin my special occasions. He did not want to go to my prom and he didn't want me to go. I decided to go anyway and about five minutes before I was supposed to leave he started saying "how can you go, you know I don't want you to go." I went anyway and tried to have a good time. Then he showed up at the door, threatened my date and I left the prom with my abuser. My high school graduation was one of the worst days of my life. I spent the night before graduation at a party with friends. When I got home I had a good discussion with my parents. The next morning I was feeling great as I began to get ready for my special day. Then he called me; he was screaming so loud my mother could hear his voice through the phone. "Where did you go last night? I never told you that you could go out. I hate you, you're a liar...I'm not coming." I was crying. I was embarrassed. My parents and I fought. How could he ruin another day for me?

His controlling behavior progressed throughout the summer of 1999. By the end of the summer the relationship with my parents was ruined and I almost never saw my friends. He had convinced me that everyone was against us. He convinced me that no one was on our side. From that time on it was about us. To be honest it made me feel pretty good that I was a part of something as I had lost everything I had with others. I didn't have anyone to turn to.....my abuser had successfully isolated me.

I turned seventeen and started college in the fall. Three days after school began I moved out of my house and in to an apartment with him. My parents were disappointed and my friends thought I was absolutely crazy. Within three weeks of moving in together, he successfully kept me from being able to attend school. He would take the car when I needed to go class. I would set the alarm for my morning classes and he would turn the alarm off. When he picked me up at school, he would create a scene in the parking lot. It was not worth the effort to continue going to class.

I cannot remember the first time I was physically assaulted. I know there were previous incidents of abuse, but October of 1999 is the first time I remember him hitting me. We had enjoyed a great day together and he suggested we stop by a party that my friends

were having. Once at the party I was thrilled to be with my friends again and started talking with them and paying less attention to my abuser. At one point I went over to a male friend of mine and nudged him with my elbow. My abuser went crazy. He grabbed my arm and started yelling at me in front of everyone. He called me a whore and slapped my face. Before I could feel the pain or the embarrassment, I experienced shock. I didn't know what to do. I just sat on the couch and stared. He did not want to go home yet and continued on as if nothing had happened. Later in the evening I heard some people laugh about the incident. I wanted to die.

The arguments and the physical abuse escalated. I was working as a waitress and the regular customers knew that I couldn't cook. One evening a male customer who frequented the restaurant brought me a copy of the book *Cookbook for Dummies*. In the car on the way home my abuser went ballistic because he felt that a man shouldn't be bringing me a book. He was speeding and driving erratically and I was scared for myself and the others on the road. Once home he took me in the back alley and screamed and emotionally tore me to shreds. He brought me in the house, kept me up all night and beat me. That was the day I knew I had no control. That was the first day I feared for my life.

Holidays were awful. While I was remembering the wonderful gatherings with my family had over the years, my abuser continued to batter me. Between Thanksgiving and Christmas I tried to leave him for the first time. I called my Uncle to come and get me, but when he arrived my abuser cried and told me he loved me and that he felt bad. He said I was good for him. I was sad, and feeling like there was no place for me to go anyway, so I stayed.

Christmas Eve, after a gathering at my grandparents, I went back to the apartment and he kept me up all night beating and belittling me. He could not stand me being around other people. I do remember sitting on the couch thinking of what I would be doing if I were home right now with my family. We had so many wonderful traditions....I felt so alone.

A few months later, after continued abuse, I found out that I was pregnant. I was horrified. How could I bring up a baby living like this? He had stopped working months ago and I was the one supporting us. He took my paycheck and spent it on anything he pleased. I had no financial independence. Still, I stayed.

I felt like my abuser owned my soul. My mother picked me up to visit my Uncle who had been hospitalized. We had a civil lunch together. She dropped me off and I said good-bye. He was waiting for me; he started to hit me, spit on me and began pushing me up the stairs. My neighbor threatened to call the police. My abuser stopped in fear for himself, but not for our unborn baby or me.

Shortly after we moved into his mother's house. I was confused by this move because he had always expressed hatred for her. Still I found some sense of relief, I thought I would be safe. The intensity and frequency of the violence increased at a much quicker rate than it ever had before. I was uncertain of my fate and became very fearful. I did anything he said because I did not want him to hurt our baby. He constantly accused me of preposterous things. He harassed me at work. When I was home, I barely left the bedroom. No matter where I was or what I did, I was unsafe. During the nonviolent moments I would talk about the baby. The more I talked about the baby, the angrier he got. I think part of my mindset during my pregnancy was that he couldn't feel this baby like I could. I hoped that once she was born, he would love her like I did. I thought his violence would stop.

I turned 18 and three weeks later my daughter was born. Peace lasted only a week. He was jealous of the time I spent with her. He wasn't interested in spending time with her. He would take off for the day and come back and cause trouble at night. One night, when my daughter was one month old, he hit me while she was in my arms. During prior months I had not even tried to reason with him, but this time I was outraged. I was crying and screaming, "don't you ever hit me when I have her or I will leave." When the argument was over I was so upset. I could not even see myself as enough of a person to say, "don't hit me or I'm leaving." It happened again. He smashed his head against mine while I was holding her. His mother was right in the other room. She had listened to months of verbal and physical abuse and did nothing to stop it. I didn't know how much more I could take. A few weeks later my father offered to take the baby overnight to give me a break. I came home from work and my abuser kept me up all night accusing me of outrageous things and making the worst threats I had ever heard. When it was all done, and it was almost morning, he forced me to have sex with him. I felt so disgusting. I couldn't take one more night of this. It had happened so often it was becoming "normal" to have a night like that. As soon as my father came to bring my daughter back to me I said what I had needed to say for so long, "I want to come home."

It's not easy to cut ties with someone, especially someone who controls and intimidates you, but it can be done. In order to keep my daughter and I safe, I have an order of protection against him. He has violated the order, but it is important for him to see that his actions are no longer being tolerated. I still carry some type of fear with me and I always will, but I am free. I have safety. It is something that I may have taken for granted before all this happened. Even as I look in the mirror today, I still find it hard to see myself as a battered woman. Before I met my abuser, I would never have thought that a young woman, from an upper-middle class family, could find herself in such a situation. I did not see myself as a potential victim of domestic violence. Anyone can become a victim, including teenagers. It is imperative that we recognize the need to openly discuss the seriousness of this crime."

Melissa was the 2002 recipient of the Governor's Courage Award To End Domestic Violence. In addition to public speaking, full-time employment, and raising her daughter, Melissa volunteers weekly at a local domestic violence shelter where she skillfully responds to hotline and crisis calls, counsels victims, coordinates a resource manual and helps around the shelter.

*This is Melissa's story, as told to Joan Faxon, Program Administrator, NYS Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence.*

*Education is Power.*

Renewal House  
3 Chapel Street  
Canton, NY 13617  
315-379-9845

renewalhouse@verizon.net  
www.slvrenewalhouse.org

Renewal House funding sources:

NYS Crime Victims Board

NYS Office of Children and Family Services

Division of Criminal Justice Services

Federal Family Violence Prevention and  
Education Services Act Grant

St. Lawrence County Department of  
Social Services

St. Lawrence County Youth Bureau

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Fall 2008 Newsletter

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*Your support is greatly appreciated!*