



THE VOICE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

— fall 2016 edition —

Legal Advocacy Program is a Lifeline for Victims of Domestic Abuse

By Theresa Walker, *The Orange County Register*, July 28, 2016



He had never been to court before.

Apologies and sweet talk would follow the abuse in his nearly 5-year-old relationship with a boyfriend and they'd always make up.

But this time, the 24-year-old college student wanted a restraining order.

"It was definitely the worst," says Thomas, who asked that his full name not be used out of concern for his safety.

The violence back in January sent him to the emergency room with a fat lip, two black eyes, bruises and scratches.

A week later, he went to court.

His dad told him he had to do something this time and accompanied him to Lamoreaux Justice Center in Orange, the Superior Court that handles the bulk of domestic violence filings in Orange County.

Thomas had no idea what he needed to do. Worse, he felt ashamed.

"I felt like people were looking at me," he says of his journey through the metal detectors at the court entrance and up the elevator to the seventh floor to seek a restraining order.

"I felt like I had to keep my head down."

But there was help for him: the Laura's House

Domestic Violence Advocacy Center, a free service offered on the spot.

"Without them," Thomas says, "I don't know what I would have done."

The advocacy center began two years ago as a pilot program in the courthouse hallways to provide guidance and support.

Now, with a small suite of offices a few minutes away in Garden Grove, services have expanded to include transportation to court, low-cost counseling and referrals to pro bono attorneys.

The center is an outgrowth of the legal advocacy that Laura's House, based in Ladera Ranch, has been providing survivors of domestic abuse since 1997.

But before the advent of the legal advocacy center, the organization only reached those who called the Laura's House hotline, came to their resource center in south Orange County or were being sheltered by the organization.

The number of clients – from all over Orange County – has multiplied almost fivefold since April 2014, from about 200 to more than 900.

So far this year, about 80 percent of clients who see the process to the end obtain a restraining order, according to the center's statistics.

"Our goal is to try to be there every day and ensure that every survivor of domestic violence has a legal advocate," said Adam Dodge, legal director at Laura's House.

The advocacy center is his brainchild.

Dodge, who has been with Laura's House for five years, had observed something on his visits to Lamoreaux that bothered him.

"I saw hundreds of domestic violence survivors in the courthouse who had nobody to help them," Dodge says. "They were alone. They were unprepared."

"The odds were stacked against them mostly because they didn't know what they were doing."

Even someone studying the law, such as Renee, a 32-year-old mother of three, can find the ordeal intimidating.

Renee, who also asked that her real name not be disclosed, walked out of a decadelong marriage that she says was rife with emotional and physical abuse. Dodge helped her prepare for a restraining order hearing, where she represented herself.

★ CONTINUED ON BACK COVER —>



Margaret's Corner

Laura's House is bursting at the seams! So far this year we are experiencing tremendous growth and expansion within many of our programs. This is good news because it means that our message is getting out to those people in our community who need us that we have resources and services to support them. Our residential programs have been

full of hopeful families working their way through our programs to a better future; our H.E.A.R.T. program is busier than ever, educating our youth and young adults about the dangers of teen abuse and how to avoid becoming a victim, and we have more volunteers than ever before assisting us in many different capacities across the organization to make all this important work possible.

We are excited to share an update regarding our Domestic Violence Advocacy Center (DVAC) in Garden Grove. We opened this department at the beginning of the year and the demand for services has been beyond our expectations. By this Fall, we will

have moved into offices more than three times the size of the existing suite and we will have added extra staff and volunteers so we can provide legal and therapeutic services five days a week to meet the urgent needs of clients in Central OC.

Our Resale stores are both doing very well and this is because of the amazing community support we receive in the form of donations and volunteer hours which make this vital piece of the Laura's House organization so successful. It is part of our Strategic Plan to expand our resale operations within the County so watch out for more details early next year!

Our Gala this year on Sept 24th is themed 'British Invasion' – something I know a little about! It will be full of surprises and should be a great evening to come out and support Laura's House and learn more about our success this year, our goals for the future, and areas of need. I hope to see you there!

— Margaret R. Bayston, CEO/Executive Director

2016 Events

ANNUAL GALA – THE BRITISH INVASION: LAURA'S HOUSE ROCKS!

Saturday, September 24, 2016

Join us for our Annual Gala, celebrating 22 years of service to the community. Enjoy a cocktail reception, silent & live auction and dinner reception at the Island Hotel Newport Beach. We will be honoring Pam Jacobson, from The Healing Sanctuary and Urban Decay with our 2016 Crystal Heart Awards for their contribution and integral support to the programs and services we provide. Sponsorships, ads, and tickets available – [click here](#).



OCTOBER IS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS MONTH!

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month. Laura's House has many fun activities to mark this Month and we encourage you to learn more about each of these on our website:

Saturday, October 8, 10-8pm

San Clemente Outlets Shopping Extravaganza

Saturday, October 15

**Cycle for a Cause at Loco Cycle –
Rancho Santa Margarita**



Visit our Resale Stores all month long for special Purple Ribbon promotions!



EVENT HIGHLIGHTS



WOMEN'S GUILD LADERA DERBY DAY

\$14,000 raised and 130 attendees



1ST ANNUAL BRIGHTER FUTURES LUNCHEON

\$41,000 raised and 180 attendees



4TH ANNUAL HOPE GOLF TOURNAMENT

\$62,000 raised and 100 golfers

Event tickets and table sponsorships available at laurashouse.org.

MAKE YOUR DONATION TODAY, in Honor of Domestic Violence Awareness Month and/or someone you know that has been touched by domestic violence.

Legacy Society



We are delighted to announce the formation of Laura's House Legacy Society, honoring caring and visionary individuals who are making a contribution to the future of Laura's House. Learn more about the benefits of Planned Giving and how you can make plans now to benefit your favorite

charitable agencies, like Laura's House, in the future. We will be hosting an informational salon in February 2017, if you are interested please email amccallister@laurashouse.org, or visit us online at laurashouse.org/lauras-legacy-society.

Holiday Giving Guide – Gift Cards Empower!

Gift Cards are the easiest way to donate this holiday—they are easy to purchase, easy to deliver, and easy for us to store and distribute. Gift cards ensure the families and children of our programs receive the gifts they really need and want this Holiday Season! **Gift card wish list:**



- **Superstores:** Target, Wal-Mart, Costco
- **Grocery Stores:** Albertsons, Vons, Pavilions, Ralphs, Stater Bros., Fresh & Easy, Trader Joe's, Sprouts, Whole Foods, Smart & Final, Costco
- **Pharmacy:** CVS, Walgreens, Rite Aid
- **Clothing:** Old Navy, Forever 21, Claire's, Payless, TJMaxx, Marshalls, Macy's, Sears, Gap, Pac Sun, Tilly's, Dick's Sporting Goods, H&M, Disney Store, Buy Buy Baby
- **Gifts:** Toys-R-U's, Barnes & Noble, Sephora, Ulta, Dick's Sporting Goods, Sport Chalet, iTunes, Best Buy

Please consider donating gift cards between Nov. 1st and Dec. 2nd. The bulk of the gift cards will be distributed at our annual Alumni Holiday Party on December 4th.

Falling out of love with your car?

Laura's House
Ending the Silence of Domestic Violence
877-411-3662
visit www.laurashouse.org/donate-vehicle

Grants

Our partnership with foundations, corporations and public agencies such as these enables Laura's House to provide direct, cost effective solutions to end the cycle of domestic violence and foster self-sufficiency and healthy relationships for the women, men and children of our community.

Laura's House was recently awarded funding from the following organizations*:

Arbor/ResCare	OC Community Foundation – Confidential Funder
California Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES)	OC Community Foundation – Margaret E. Oser Fund for Women
City of Aliso Viejo	OC Community Resources – Community Services DV Grant
City of Rancho Santa Margarita	OC United Way – Women's Philanthropy Fund
City of San Clemente	Pickford Realty Cares
Dept. of Health & Human Services (DHHS) & Community Action Partnership of OC (CAPOC) – OC Healthy Marriage & Family Grant	ProSight Specialty Insurance
Dhont Family Foundation	Resnick Foundation
Disneyland Resort Dreamers & Doers Program	Sempre Employee Giving Network
Home Depot	Sidney Stern Memorial Trust
Jerome Foundation	Sunwest Bank Charitable Foundation
NCL – Canyon Chapter	United Way Combined Federal Campaign
NCL – Capistrano Coast Chapter	Ueberroth Foundation
NCL – Laguna Chapter	Vons/Safeway Foundation
OC Bar Association	Western National Group
	Zonta Club of Newport Harbor

*Grants as of 7/27/16

– 2nd Annual – SHOPPING EXTRAVAGANZA



Outlets at San Clemente's Shopping Extravaganza on October 8th to Benefit Laura's House

Laura's House is proud to announce its participation in Outlets at San Clemente's second annual Shopping Extravaganza charity fundraiser on Saturday, October 8, from 10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. to benefit 25 local nonprofits. A \$35 ticket includes guilt-free shopping with unique offers and discounts at most of the 50 plus stores, live entertainment, prize drawings, private catered lunch and wine and craft beer tastings – all while benefiting Laura's House. Outlets at San Clemente donates \$25 for every ticket purchased to a local nonprofit organization of the shopper's choice.

Purchase the Laura's House Ticket on sale now at ShopOSC.com/tickets.



★ CONTINUED: Legal Advocacy Program is a Lifeline for Victims of Domestic Abuse

Her request, heard by a judge in divorce court, was not granted. But she says she was glad to expose the dark secret in her marriage to her husband's family members in attendance.

"It was my first time ever standing up to my husband in 10 years," she says. "It was nerve-racking, but he knows for sure that I'm not going to lie down taking it anymore."

Through the advocacy center, Renee enrolled in a program designed to empower abuse victims. She will take the bar exam soon and, instead of aiming to become a criminal lawyer, she wants to focus on the legal advocacy from which she benefited.

"I saw the need," she says.

The Laura's House advocates work in partnership with the county's Domestic Violence Assistance Program, established at the courthouse in the 1980s and run by Community Service Programs Inc. The advocates share a desk in that office during court hours, but can still be found in the hallways.

The small staff in the Domestic Violence Assistance office assists with the paperwork necessary for someone to file for what is known as a temporary restraining order.

A TRO is typically granted by the court the same day it's requested and stays in effect for three weeks until a restraining order hearing can be held. (A hearing is set even if the judge denies a TRO.)

The help offered at the Domestic Violence Assistance office can include attaching evidence of the alleged abuse, such as text

messages, to the court filing. But services do not extend beyond filing for the TRO.

"We help on the front end," says office supervisor Leticia Ambriz, looking up from photographs of a woman's bruised arm and back that she prepared as documentation.

"They help on the back end."

The Laura's House advocates step in throughout the ensuing court process – and afterward.

No longer a pilot project, the center has four legal advocates on staff who are assisted by five interns through a partnership with Cal State Fullerton and up to four volunteers.

Two therapists also provide counseling services on a sliding rate scale.

"We are making sure now they've got all those resources available," says Margaret Bayston, executive director and CEO of Laura's House.

Bayston anticipates a move to a larger office to serve increasing clientele with added staff. Private grants and donations will cover the roughly \$250,000 annual cost, she says.

Mostly, those who seek protective orders as victims of domestic violence are women. But there are men, too, such as Thomas.

For him, the advocacy center proved invaluable.

"I was a total mess," he says.

Signs directed him to the Domestic Violence Assistance office, where he met Magdalena Diaz, a Laura's House legal advocate the past three years.

Thomas says the compassion and advice provided by Diaz gave him the courage to return three weeks after his first court visit, when the TRO was approved right away, for the restraining order hearing.

He had to sit 20 feet away in a public courtroom from the man he says beat him up and take the stand to be questioned by lawyers. Diaz helped connect him to pro bono legal services and stayed in the courtroom, lending moral support.

The court commissioner in Department L-11, where restraining order hearings are typically held, did not grant Thomas' request. Thomas failed to convince her that what happened between him and his boyfriend had not been a mutual fight, he says.

Still, like Renee, Thomas felt he had won a victory of another sort.

He began weekly therapy sessions at the legal advocacy center and gained back self-confidence. He doesn't break down crying at work anymore, he says, and is close to getting his degree in psychology.

"I can genuinely say I really like myself now where I definitely did not when this started," he says.

And if he were to run into his ex at one of their old hangouts, Thomas believes he can face him without fear of returning to an abusive relationship.

"I'm strong enough now to turn around and walk away."



Have you ordered a **DOUBLE DOUBLE** for Laura's House?

Many corporations and employers offer programs that will match employee donations to Laura's House. Matching gifts are an important revenue stream for the on-going operation of Laura's House. Visit our website at laurashouse.org/donate and click the "See if your employer will match your donation!" button while making a gift to see if your corporation is a MATCH.