

November Newsletter

Gratitude Builds Resilience

Special Dates

- **Nov. 4 - 4-5pm.**
Volunteer mtg.
- **Holiday parades:**
Dec 6 - Woodstock
Dec 7 - Strasburg
Dec 8 - Toms Brook



November traditionally brings thoughts of giving thanks and expressing gratitude, so let's talk about the benefits of gratitude in the work of domestic and sexual violence.

We know that many of the clients that we work with come to us discouraged, demoralized, and struggling just to cope with life in general. Helping them build resilience is an important part of our advocacy.

Helping clients find a way to regain some measure of control is a big step toward resilience. Clients can be encouraged to realize that although they don't have control of many aspects of their lives, they do have power over their thoughts and attitudes. Recognizing and practicing gratitude is one element of building resilience that works by reframing the stress that they are experiencing.

Research has shown that expressing gratitude on a regular basis can improve relationships, our mental health, and even our physical health. Practicing gratitude actually lessens stress hormones, which can result in improved immune response and cardiovascular function.

So, with all of these benefits, it seems like a pretty important concept to teach clients, as well as to practice in our own lives! Let's check out some tips for beginning a gratitude practice:

Current Needs

- **Baby monitors**
- **Toilet bowl cleaner**
- **Canned tuna/ chicken**
- **Laundry detergent**
- **Trash bags (33 and 13 gal size)**

- ***Set an intentional gratitude goal*** - This can be a set number of positive things you will look for, or committing to setting aside a time of day to recount the good that has happened during that day... the important thing is to formally commit to the practice of gratitude.
- ***Look for the good*** - This doesn't mean that you only see wonderful things around you; you might need to start by looking for "less bad" or more neutral events in your life. Taking note of even simple things helps us tune in more often to the good in our lives.
- ***Record the things you are grateful for*** - Keeping a daily gratitude journal, telling someone else about the events you noticed, or even just intentionally noting it to yourself each day helps you to become more aware of the positive things in your life.
- ***Remember the bad*** - Although this might seem counterintuitive, looking back on tougher times helps put things in perspective and enables us to be more grateful for what we currently have. It helps us realize the strength that is within each of us.

A regular gratitude practice can help us recognize the good in our lives, providing a stronger sense of security and resilience. Let's all start with this practice today!

Survivor Story

Winter G.



Our survivor story this month features a client who is currently staying with us here at Response and is receiving our services to help her get back on her feet. Winter was courageous enough to share part of her story at our candlelight walk in Woodstock this month, and agreed to be interviewed for this article.

We know that survivors of domestic violence often come from a generational cycle of abuse; Winter is a survivor with just such a background. One of her most vivid memories was of her mother being beaten and slammed into walls as Winter (age 5), and her brother (age 7) helplessly watched. Growing up in the '70s, there was very little acknowledgement of intimate partner violence, and no agencies that could provide assistance, so for Winter this became a normalized expectation in relationships.

Winter became involved with her first abusive relationship at age 12 or 13, when she was dating a 14-year-old gang member in the Norfolk area. Extremely jealous and physically abusive, he beat her so badly that she lost a pregnancy as a young teen. As a sophomore in college she married a man who became so violent that he would punch and hit her even as she was driving, in the grocery store, etc. Winter went on to date a number of abusive men throughout young adulthood, suffering many incidents of physical and emotional abuse. She had been conditioned to believe that control equals love, and the majority of the relationships that she entered reinforced her beliefs.

The effects of her abusive experiences continued into adulthood, even when she was in healthier relationships. Winter recounts a time when she became somewhat aggressive with a partner who was reaching for her to show affection, but his action triggered a defensive reaction in her. She knows firsthand the effect that being exposed to domestic violence in childhood has later in life.

It wasn't until her thirties that Winter was able to get the help she needed from mental health professionals to fully understand why she repeatedly chose relationships that were harmful for her. Now that she is in a healthier place, mentally and emotionally, Winter has become a published author, runs a publishing company, and has recently been the director of a re-entry program for imprisoned women through the Virginia Department of Corrections.

Due to some recent unforeseen twists in her life, Winter is currently using our services to help her achieve her goals and reclaim the life she wants for herself. Her words of advice for others is to "not let your past define your future." Thank you to Winter for sharing her story.

Recap of Events

Outreach events



Shenandoah Co. Dept. of Social Services held their first ever Open House on Oct 19th, and we are hoping that it becomes an annual event! In addition to all of the DSS departments, many non-profits and other government agencies had informational tables and activities for kids. Snacks, goodies, prizes and raffle items were a big draw as parents were able to pick up useful information and have discussions with vendors about services. Thanks to Brenda for helping to man our table!

Sunday, Oct 27th found us at the 50+ Senior Resource Expo at the fairgrounds. Designed for seniors and their caretakers, there were many vendors available to talk about their products and services. Door prizes and goodies, free lunch, and educational speakers made the day a fun and informative one. The brand new Senior Resource Guide was also given to each participant; this thorough guide was a joint effort between the Aging in Place Council and Shenandoah Co. Chamber of Commerce and is full of local resources for seniors. What a great opportunity it was to connect with our older population!



Recap continued

Celebration of Hope



The 2nd annual Celebration of Hope is in the books! Once again, it seemed that folks had a great time! From the delicious food, to the upbeat music, to the tasty drinks....it was a lovely evening. The COH is our major fundraiser, bringing in slightly over \$12,000 this year. A big thank you to all who helped to make this event a success!



Candlelight Walks



This year's DVAM walks were held in four local towns: Strasburg, Woodstock, Mt. Jackson, and New Market. We are attempting to



increase our visibility in all areas of the county, and feel like we were able to reach a more diverse

group of community members this year.

Thanks to all who attended or helped with any of the events!



Upcoming Events

Christmas Parades



Just a head's up — We will be participating in local holiday parades again this year, and we really could use some help!! The parades will all happen the weekend of Dec 6-8, but the schedules are not out yet, so more details will follow via email as we get more information. We could use help decorating the "float" on the Thursday before, we need folks to ride the float, and we especially could use a few people to walk along and hand out candy and our Response emery boards to the "audience"! Please let Lynn know if you would be able to help with any of these parades. It is great PR and a wonderful opportunity to reach out to our community!