



Dignity of Space... *Our Shelter's Philosophy and Practice*

A As the taxi pulled up to the address Stacy had scribbled on a scrap of paper, she summoned all her strength not to cry in front of Max. She couldn't let her four-year-old son know how desperate their situation was. How had it come to this? They had nowhere else to go. It was this shelter or the streets. They would make the best of it. She had told Max they were going on an adventure, like camp. There would be other kids to play with, and it would be fun to sleep in bunk beds! At least they had each other and they were away from her abuser, who almost choked her to death earlier that day. She had left her car, bank cards and cell phone at home so he couldn't track them. This was the worst day. Every day moving forward would be better. This is where they would begin to heal and rebuild their lives. It wasn't ideal, but it was SAFE. Stacy looked down at Max, smiled and gave his hand a reassuring squeeze.

Like most survivors of domestic violence, Stacy came to SafeHouse Denver's Emergency Shelter with a mix of emotions. Desperation, fear, hopelessness and a myriad of other feelings surround a survivor's decision to leave an abusive relationship. Recognizing these emotions as very normal, our skilled and caring Advocates strive to make the transition as easy as possible, ensuring that our residents feel comfortable as they cross the threshold into the shelter that they will temporarily call home.

Once survivors are out of crisis, they can shift their focus to recovery. SafeHouse Denver Advocates utilize Trauma-Informed Care, a best practice approach based on understanding, recognizing and responding to the effects of trauma. It emphasizes physical, psychological and emotional safety to help survivors reclaim a sense of control, thereby promoting a culture of safety, empowerment and healing.

Physical surroundings play a vital role in defining this culture. "Recognizing how physical space impacts us, we try to keep



Living Room

that lens on what we can do to make the environment feel warm, welcoming, inviting and cared for," shares Laurel Tawresey, MSW, LCSW, SafeHouse Denver's Director of Shelter Services.

"We hope that translates to a positive feeling for survivors when they walk in the door, as that often sets the tone for what kind of experience they will have with the program."

"If you walk into a place where there are holes in the wall and things are broken," continues Tawresey, "most people would say this place isn't cared for. How does that make a survivor, who is already traumatized, feel? 'If people don't care about the space, then maybe they won't care about me.'" At SafeHouse Denver, we believe that everyone deserves to have a space that is well cared for and continually maintained. We strive to provide a safe shelter that makes our residents feel comfortable, secure and valued. In the shelter community, this attention to the physical environment is often referred to as 'Dignity of Space.'

While many of the newer domestic violence shelters are designed with private units for survivors and their families, SafeHouse Denver's Emergency Shelter, built in 1889, is configured for communal living. We may not have an abundance of space, nor the ability to structurally alter

our space, but we can borrow from the best practices of modern DV shelter design and incorporate some of those concepts into our existing structure to provide our residents with Dignity of Space.

"We can be creative with the spaces and options that we do have," explains Tawresey. This starts by asking, "Are there things that we can do intentionally with our space, our decorations, the art on our walls that will communicate that the Shelter is an inviting, warm and well-maintained place? We're dealing with a building constructed 130 years ago, yet we can still do little things to improve our space while recognizing our limitations and ensuring that our Advocates are mindful of them when they're working with survivors."

Beyond the age and design of the structure, there are also challenges presented by the constant use of the building by the 31 adults and children living there at any given time. Things wear out faster and more maintenance is required. "Sometimes people equate things that are older with being worn and dirty, but old doesn't mean dirty," Tawresey explains. "While everything in the shelter isn't new or fancy, everything is functional and there are features, such as decorative iron work and stained glass windows, that add a touch of elegance to the building."

Continued next page

Message from Our CEO



Dear Friends,

I hope that you and your family are well and enjoying these most welcome days of spring! It's hard to believe that more than a third of 2019 has passed and for me, personally, amazing that I'm well into my 12th year as CEO. I continue to be honored to work with an incredibly dedicated Board of Directors, outstanding Staff and talented Volunteers, as well as to interact with our many donors, funders, partner agencies and other supporters.

As I prepared to write this message, the word "relationships" immediately came to mind. Without question, our success in exceeding our calendar and fiscal year goals was based on our ability to strengthen and sustain long term relationships, as well as develop new ones.

I'm proud to share just a handful of the outcomes our relationships helped make possible over the past year:

- Our Extended Stay Program (ESP) housed its first family in July and, to date, has served 12 adults with a combined total of 16 children. Through their work with our ESP Case Manager and access to a wide range of strong community resources, seven families have already transitioned into more permanent living arrangements.
- With volunteer, business and exceptional professional staff support, our Emergency Shelter provided 188 adults and 101 children with safe shelter, basic necessities and counseling services in a home-like, Trauma-Informed environment.
- A total of 513 adults, children and youth received services through our non-residential Counseling and Advocacy Center with 149 of these survivors participating in off-site programming through key community partners such as: the Center for Work Education & Employment, Warren Village, Colorado Coalition for the Homeless, and Safe Cities Juvenile Diversion Program.
- As we marked the Second Anniversary of our partnership with the Rose Andom Center, our onsite Domestic Violence Advocates connected with 213 survivors and provided ongoing, individual advocacy-based domestic violence services to 82 of those survivors.
- Awareness of the dynamics of domestic violence and SafeHouse Denver's lifesaving services has never been higher as demonstrated by great attendance at our education and fundraising events, consistent social media activity, local print and broadcast media coverage, record-breaking participation in CO Gives Day and strong volunteer involvement.
- Through the generosity of our individual, foundation, corporate and government supporters, we ended our fiscal year in a strong financial position and are well-positioned for the future.

Please watch for our **2018–2019 Annual Report** on our website early this summer to learn more. Meanwhile, everyone at SafeHouse Denver joins me in thanking you for your commitment to **Helping Adults, Children and Youth Reclaim Their Right to Lives Free from Domestic Violence** and looks forward to your continued involvement and support.

With Deepest Appreciation,

Victoria A. McVicker, Chief Executive Officer

Continued from page 1

As any homeowner knows, the 'To-Do' list for maintaining a home, especially an older home, is long and never-ending. Over the past year, we completed some upgrades to our shelter and wanted to share how these improvements, made possible by the generous support of our donors and funders, are providing Dignity of Space to our Emergency Shelter residents at the most vulnerable time of their lives. They include:

- *New windows throughout the entire three-story building*
- *New flooring and vanity in the first-floor bathroom*
- *New flooring in the first-floor hallway*
- *Drywall repairs throughout*
- *Fresh paint wherever needed*
- *A new light fixture and ceiling in the children's clothing room*

In addition to these major renovations, a thorough, deep clean of the building was completed . . . celebrating spring! No surface was left untouched as baseboards, floors, walls, doors, doorknobs, ceilings, bathrooms and couch cushions received tender loving care. A major reorganization of the Children's Room, involving restocking and labeling, was also undertaken by our Advocates and a handful of volunteers. This has truly enhanced the space that our youngest shelter residents, like Max, will experience each year.

While major improvements are managed by SafeHouse Denver staff, routine chores are the responsibility of shelter residents. Living in a communal setting requires being considerate of others and respecting their needs. "For example, you can't leave your dirty dishes in the sink all day while you're at work because others have to use it," Tawresy explains. Trauma-Informed Care relies on effective communication to resolve these types of





issues. Our Advocates strive to understand each survivor's history and unique experience and then respond with empathy and positivity.

Good communication is truly the cornerstone of Trauma-Informed Care. "Having an ongoing conversation allows us to meet people where they are," Tawresey emphasizes. "Our residents need to help maintain the space, but everyone has experienced trauma and different life experiences that manifest in many different ways. People have their limitations – physical limitations, emotional limitations – how do we meet each individual where they are on any given day and support them? We focus on how they can contribute versus their limitations. Using positive, strength-based language, we have the difficult conversations – those conversations that make space for supporting clients," she continues.

"We ask individuals to focus on themselves – 'What can I do? How can I help?' If we have everyone focusing on themselves and doing what they can, then it goes a long way in maintaining the space. We try to engage people as much as possible in the process because it often leads to really beautiful, deep conversations about what they're going through. Life in a communal shelter can be challenging, but it can also be uplifting. Being around other people who are experiencing something similar can make you feel supported, empowered and heard," Tawresey concludes.

After 26 days in Shelter, Stacy and young Max moved into their own small apartment and accessed services at SafeHouse Denver's non-residential Counseling and Advocacy Center as they continued to rebuild their lives. During her last session with her Shelter Advocate, Stacy shared her gratitude for the services she received in a caring, home-like setting that helped her develop healthy coping skills and become part of a community of survivors. ■

News Notes

Save the Date!



Be sure to mark your calendars for **Saturday, October 12, 2019**, and join us at the beautifully modernized Ritz-Carlton in downtown Denver for the 2019 Hope Gala. The New Look, New Feel, and New Attitude of the 2018 Hope Gala proved to be a hit with attendees. In 2019, we'll continue to mix our favorite traditions with the innovative changes introduced last year.

The Hope Gala remains our signature fundraising event, one that supports survivors of domestic violence throughout the year. Keep an eye on our website and social media channels in the coming months for more specific information on the event and how you can be involved as a sponsor, auction donor, volunteer or attendee.

Warren Miller Film Screening Benefits SafeHouse Denver

Approximately 225 guests gathered at **Stoney's Bar & Grill** on Friday, January 11, 2019, for the **12th Annual Warren Miller Film Screening to benefit SafeHouse Denver**. The event raised over \$9,000 for SafeHouse Denver and 100% of the proceeds will support SafeHouse Denver's programs and services for adults, children and youth experiencing domestic violence.

Special thanks to longtime SafeHouse Denver volunteers, **Christopher and Brenda Volgenau**, for their hard work and dedication in making this event a success for a dozen years!

Third Party Events

Thank you to the following individuals and businesses for hosting a third party event or initiative since October:

Breakthru Beverage, Brenda & Chris Volgenau, CED: Consolidated Electrical Distributors, Colorado Escrow & Title, Denver DA's Office Trivia Night, Denver

Press Club & Roger Sherman, Fairway Villas, FirstBank, Glendale Girls Club, Jacalyn Gallegos, Kutak Rock, Little Pub Company, Lunnon Realty, Major Letdown Records, Medical Students for Choice from Rocky Vista University & University of Colorado, Meredith and Eric Eisenger, One Hope Foundation, Plains End, Terrecon Consultants, Walnut Room, Women in Brewing/Pints for a Purpose Hosts/Organizers: The Colorado Keg House, 4 Noses Brewing, Fiction Beer Company, Grossen Bart Brewery, Horse & Dragon Brewing Company, and Kokopelli Beer Company.

Board of Directors Update

Trevor Bartel, an Attorney/Partner with Lewis Roca Rothgerber Christie, was recently elected to the Board of Directors. Welcome!

Special thanks to **Ramona Gomoll** who resigned from the Board in February after serving for four years! We're happy to report that Ramona will continue to serve as an Advisor to the Hope Gala Steering Committee. ■

2019 Board of Directors

Roger Sherman, *CRL Associates, Inc.*, Chair
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Crisis Line: 303-318-9989
www.safehouse-denver.org

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Sampling for HOPE

Wednesday, June 12, 2019, 6-9pm
Westin Denver Downtown

Make plans now to join us for our fifth annual **Sampling for Hope**, a casual food tasting event to benefit SafeHouse Denver. Enjoy a night of tasty bites and sweet treats from Denver's best chefs and caterers to support survivors of domestic violence. Proceeds from this event will be directed to operating the Extended Stay Program!

Early Bird Registration is now open at safehouse-denver.org or 303-302-6126. Ticket prices go up May 6, 2019.

Follow **#SamplingForHope2019** on Facebook and Twitter for the latest updates. 🍷

SafeHouse Denver Programs & Services

SafeHouse Denver offers comprehensive services in English and Spanish at our Emergency Shelter, non-residential Counseling and Advocacy Center, and Extended Stay Program.

SERVICES INCLUDE:

- 24-Hour Crisis and Information Line 303-318-9989
- Secure Emergency Housing
- Extended Stay Housing
- Counseling and Advocacy Services
- Support Groups
- Referrals to Community Resources
- Teen Dating Violence Intervention & Prevention Services
- Family Services
- Community Education and Outreach

24-Hour Crisis and Information Line 303-318-9989
Administration 303-318-9959
Community Education Program 303-302-6125
Development Department 303-302-6126
Volunteer Opportunities 303-830-2660 x207
Fax 303-318-9979
safehouse-denver.org

Ways to Support SafeHouse Denver

The generosity of our donors, sponsors, funders and friends is essential to our work. Every gift is important, so please consider making a donation in one of these ways.

- Make a financial contribution: mail a check using the enclosed giving envelope; call 303-302-6126; or donate online at safehouse-denver.org.
- Commit to a monthly gift and become a Sustainer of Hope by selecting the option on the enclosed giving envelope or donate online at safehouse-denver.org.
- Make a legacy gift by naming SafeHouse Denver in your will or estate plans. For more information, please contact Valerie Chilewski at 303-302-6116 or vchilewski@safehouse-denver.org.
- Consider making a planned gift of stock, an IRA distribution, or from your donor-advised fund or charitable trust. For more information, please contact Valerie Chilewski at 303-302-6116 or vchilewski@safehouse-denver.org.
- Designate SafeHouse Denver as your charity of choice during your employer's workplace giving campaign. Simply note SafeHouse Denver on the pledge form.
- Ask your employer to match your contribution.
- Donate in-kind goods. Visit our website and click on 'Get Involved' to view our current Wish List.
- Earn even greater tax relief on a donation of \$100 or more. Write 'Enterprise Zone' on your check or make a note in the 'comments' field of your online donation.
- Volunteer! Learn more at safehouse-denver.org.