

# HOMEPAGE

A Newsletter of the Safe Homes Project,  
a Program of **Good Shepherd Services**

Fall, 2008



## Join our 15th Annual Remembrance Vigil



This October marks the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of the Safe Homes Project's Annual Remembrance Vigil. The purpose of the vigil is to commemorate Brooklynites whose lives were taken at the hands of an intimate partner within the last year, from October 2007 to October 2008. Additionally, the vigil serves to honor the strength and courage of those domestic violence survivors who continue to fight for their safety and their right to live violence-free.

On Thursday, October 16<sup>th</sup>, 2008 at 6:30 P.M. staff members, community supporters, and survivors alike will gather in front of P.S. 321, on 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 1<sup>st</sup> Street in Brooklyn, in remembrance of those lost to domestic violence. After opening comments are given, the names of those killed in Brooklyn in the past year will be read. As a testament that these victims will not be forgotten, a candle will be lit in honor of each victim.

Candles aglow, we will walk as a community in silence and reverence through the Park Slope area, distributing leaflets about the meaning of the vigil, as well as SHP hotline cards. The vigil will end at the Park Slope United Methodist Church (PSUMC) sanctuary where survivors will share their struggles and triumphs with us and guests will speak briefly about their partnerships with SHP. The Voices of Women Organizing Project of the Battered Women Resource Center will present a special tribute to survivors in honor of SHP's 15<sup>th</sup> vigil. The PSUMC Women's Committee will provide refreshments and the Center for Anti-Violence Education will do a short self-defense/martial arts demonstration.

October marks Domestic Violence Awareness Month, and we look forward to recognizing the Safe Homes Project's 15 years of commitment to honoring and remembering those lost and those courageously fighting for their lives.

Please join us this year as we commemorate this special 15<sup>th</sup> vigil year.

**For further information, please contact 718-499-2151 or visit our website:**  
[www.safehomesproject.org](http://www.safehomesproject.org)

Safe Homes Project 718-499-2151



## HOMEPAGE

The Newsletter of the  
Safe Homes Project

The Safe Homes Project is funded by New York State Office for Children and Family Services, New York State Crime Victims Board, New York State Legislative Member Item Grants, New York City Human Resources Administration, Federal Family Violence Prevention Act Funds, Violence Against Women Act Funds and private sources.

The Safe Homes Project  
is a program of  
Good Shepherd Services



# Letter From the Director

Dear Friends,

Since the last time we updated you via an edition of HOMEPAGE, we have celebrated our 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary, changed our name, and gone public with our relationship to Good Shepherd Services. Let me elaborate a bit: The Park Slope Safe Homes Project was founded in 1976 by social work staff from Good Shepherd Services, with help from local clergy and community volunteers. The relationship to Good Shepherd, our parent agency, was kept confidential in order to maintain a low profile, especially given that in those days, we sheltered battered women in volunteer neighborhood host homes. Fast forward to 2006, when we celebrated 30 years of advocacy and service, unveiled our new name, The Safe Homes Project, reflecting our reach beyond the immediate community, and publicly identified as a program of Good Shepherd Services. Of course, as most of you know, this all followed on the heels of consolidating our safe dwellings into one larger fully renovated domestic violence facility, housing 20 individuals at a time.

The articles in this edition of HOMEPAGE give you an idea of the breadth of activities and initiatives in which the Safe Homes Project is currently involved: outreach to youth and to members of the LGBTQ community, ongoing partnership with the Brooklyn Family Justice Center, a new partnership with the Columbia School of Social Work, and of course, our upcoming Annual Domestic Violence Remembrance Vigil.

This will be a special vigil for me because I came to SHP the same year that we did our first candlelight vigil. When I think of the survivors I have had the honor of witnessing speak at past vigils, I am moved by their courage and grace. SHP has been fortunate over the years to have amazing staff members and many supporters as we continue to work with survivors of domestic violence, providing counseling, advocacy, shelter, support groups, and safety planning. We continue to change and grow, and I am so grateful and proud to be a part of this program. As our Values Statement says: We hold the following core values that keep our work focused and directed:

- Advocacy
- Justice
- Empowerment
- Leadership

Thank you to all of our friends and supporters and to the many volunteers who have worked with us and contributed so generously over the years. I will see you at the vigil on October 16th!

Best,  
Catherine Hodes

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## A New Home on the Web

In the summer of 2008, the Safe Homes Project joined the world wide web at the web address listed at the end of this article. The online website, connected to Good Shepherd Services website, is a resource for those interested in learning more about SHP's activities, as well as for those looking for assistance with domestic violence.

Specifically, the website provides information about Safe Homes Project's non-residential services, as well as our emergency shelter named Poetry House, also hotline services, support groups, and training and education news. The website outlines the history of SHP's commitment to helping survivors of domestic violence and their children since the organization's beginning in 1976. Other Safe Homes-related updates are available in the "News" section, which details recent initiatives and new programs undertaken at SHP. These include the Healthy Youth Relationship Options (HYRO) Initiative, SHP's expansion in working with LGBTQ survivors, and our partnership with the Brooklyn Family Justice Center. The website also provides users with links to other safety and domestic violence-related organizations and services.



In addition to its educational resources, the SHP website can serve as a vital resource for victims who may find the internet a useful form of help seeking, depending on their circumstances. Under SHP's "Need Help?" section, listings are provided in English and Spanish of where victims can go for help both within and outside of the New York City area. Additionally, a section is provided for victims on "Safety Planning," which instructs survivors on strategies to make their environments safer, while communicating fundamental messages such as: "abuse is never the fault of the survivor" and "reaching out for help can be the first step towards increasing safety."

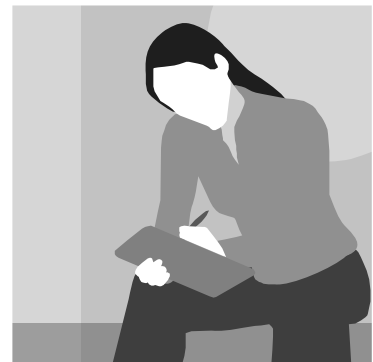
Finally, the new website posts any current employment openings, as well as ongoing volunteer opportunities and specific donation requests for those individuals and organizations looking to contribute to the needs of survivors in a meaningful way.

Please visit us at <http://www.safehomesproject.org>

### Poetry Corner from Poetry House

Many of the survivors with whom we work use poetry as a way to heal from their abuse. The following poem was written by one of the residents of our shelter, Poetry House.

*For the last seven years I have cried  
Inside I died  
Over and over  
And under your thumb  
But my spirit won't rest  
My words cannot be silenced  
My mind is not yours.  
Why am I even still talking to you?*



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## EVE, a New Partnership

In April 2008, SHP began the EVE project, a new partnership with the Brooklyn Family Justice Center (BKFJC). BKFJC is a collaboration between the Mayor's Office to Combat Domestic Violence, the Kings County District Attorney's Office, community-based organizations, legal assistance agencies, faith based organizations, and government partners. EVE, which stands for Early Victim Engagement, endeavors to make contact with and provide support to victims of domestic violence who have made a police report which did not result in an arrest. When survivors make a complaint, but an arrest is not warranted, they may face increased risk and isolation. Reaching out to those survivors is crucial in order to safety plan and maintain contact. The goal is to reduce the isolation and provide links to services and safety. SHP works together with the BKFJC and three Brooklyn police precincts to reach out to victims that have reported domestic violence. An SHP bilingual (English-Spanish) advocate is posted full-time at the BKFJC, where she offers a full array of crisis and criminal justice services.

The SHP/EVE Project faces significant challenges because survivors are often reluctant to report to the police or use safety resources for fear that the abuse will escalate. SHP is working together with the BKFJC and the precincts involved to create greater safety and access to services for victims of domestic violence.

In addition to the specialized EVE Project, SHP is also a regular on-site BKFJC partner, working with numerous survivors who arrive at BKFJC in search of information, support, and safety. On average, SHP workers see about twenty victims per month at BKFJC, providing counseling, advocacy, referrals, and safety planning.

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## Fair Access to Family Court Now a Reality

Along with many dedicated advocates and colleagues in the domestic violence field, the Safe Homes Project has long supported expanding access to family court orders of protection for dating partners. This includes couples who are unmarried or do not have children in common, young dating couples, elderly unmarried couples and LGBTQ couples. Victims in these categories have been unable to use NYS family courts to gain protection because their relationships did not meet the court's definition of family. New York was one of the last states in the country that did not provide some kind of civil legal remedy for victims of domestic violence not related by marriage or blood ties. The only recourse for an order of protection for these victims was to use criminal court, which required police and prosecutory involvement, something many survivors are afraid or unable to do for safety reasons.

After 20 years of advocacy and lobbying, led by Assembly Member Helene Weinstein, a bill sponsored by her and by NYS Senator George Winner passed both the NYS Senate and Assembly. Governor Patterson signed the expansion of New York State's domestic violence law this past July. The revised law means that a much greater diversity of survivors will be able to obtain protection. It means a gay or lesbian survivor, a teenager in a dating relationship, or an unmarried elder can go to family court and request an order of protection against his/her abuser, just as other married victims have done for years.

Under a legislative grant, Safe Homes has employed an LGBTQ Outreach Consultant for the past two years. Our consultant provides educational trainings to local organizations, as well as tabling events and other activities which raise awareness about queer intimate partner violence, and provides outreach to the community about available services.

As members of the New York State LGBTQ Domestic Violence Network and the LGBTQ NYC Domestic Violence Task Force, SHP has sought this legislation and we are proud and pleased to see it come to fruition!



## SHP Partners with Columbia's Workplace Center

In May 2008, SHP staff began a relationship with the Workplace Center of Columbia University's School of Social Work. The Work Opportunities for Rewarding Careers Program (WORC), has provided training, and ongoing consultation to SHP staff in order to assist us in providing greater support and resources to our participants with regard to educational and employment goals, and self-sufficiency.

Although we know that domestic violence crosses all boundaries of ethnicity, culture, language, and community, one thing that is consistently correlated with domestic violence is poverty. This doesn't mean that poverty causes domestic violence, nor does it mean that a well-off person cannot be victimized. What it does mean is that poverty makes it difficult to deal with domestic violence in many ways.



*“Domestic violence and poverty are interwoven. Significant numbers of low income women are battered, and the violence they experience can make the climb out of poverty impossible. Poverty, in turn, makes it more difficult to end domestic violence and heal from its effects.”*

~Jill Davies in “Policy Blueprint on Domestic Violence and Poverty”

Economic self-sufficiency goes to the heart of increasing safety and autonomy. In addition, most NYC housing subsidies, which many survivors depend upon to obtain safe affordable housing, are tied to gaining employment and income. Although SHP has always provided educational and employment related resources and referrals, it became apparent that in order to best serve those we work with, we needed to address issues of education and employment in a more organized and cohesive manner. WORC is helping us do that.

The WORC program has three components: in-depth individual assessments, career clubs, and a labor market strategy. An assessment of each participant's education/employment needs and goals helps to establish a step-by-step plan and connects the survivor to her own dreams, ambitions, and options. Career clubs build on those assessments by providing ongoing group support. Finally, the labor market strategy makes sure that resources such as GED, ESL, college, and other education and training resources, as well as employment opportunities, are gathered, updated, and made available to participants.

We are excited to launch the WORC program this fall with the help of Columbia's Workplace Center, and look forward to a productive collaboration towards greater independence and safety for survivors of domestic violence.

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# Safe Homes Project Values Statement

In striving to live out our values of:

*Advocacy*

*Justice*

*Empowerment*

*Leadership*



We will continue to advocate on behalf of survivors of intimate partner abuse by accessing information and services that help our participants gain a better understanding of legal, economic and educational options.

With our belief that no one deserves to be abused and no one has a right to abuse another, we strive to confront the obstacles and challenges that survivors face in their efforts to become free of abuse/violence.

We endeavor to provide fair treatment to all participants regardless of their situation and not be judgmental.

We strive to help restore a sense of personal power and autonomy to survivors by providing support, information and community connections.

We strive to stay flexible, current and innovative in this work and to be resourceful and creative in supporting survivors.

We will continue to conduct outreach in diverse communities and among other professionals to raise awareness about domestic violence/intimate partner abuse.

We will continue to partner with other systems and organizations, such as criminal justice, government, schools, hospitals, coalitions and social service organizations to address the changing needs of survivors.

We will continue to initiate dialogue where needed and advocate for change that will benefit survivors and families in their efforts to live free from violence.

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# Make a Gift to the Safe Homes Project

One of the most meaningful ways that you can help to support the Safe Homes Project is to make a donation in support of our work. If you would like to make a cash donation, please fill out the form below and return it to us in the enclosed envelope or make a donation via our website [www.safehomesproject.org](http://www.safehomesproject.org).

If you would like to make an in-kind contribution, the following items on the SHP "Wish List" are needed for the women and children currently living in Poetry House, our 24-hour emergency domestic violence shelter. Though they may seem small, they make a big difference in the lives of those we serve.



### ***Safe Homes Project Wish List***

Metrocards

Movie Theater Gift Certificates

Bookstore Gift Certificates

2009 Date Books

Museum & Zoo Passes

Disposable Cameras

Pre-paid Calling Cards

Baby Bottles

Disposable Diapers

Blank Journals

Powdered Formula

Gift Certificates to Chain Stores (Target, K-mart, etc).

**Yes! I want to support the Safe Homes Project  
and its efforts to end Domestic Violence.**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

**Use the enclosed envelope or  
mail to:**

**The Safe Homes Project  
PO Box 150429  
Van Brunt Station  
Brooklyn, NY 11215**

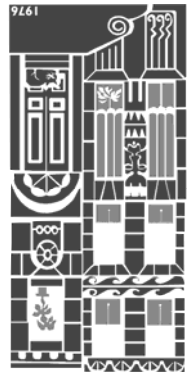
Please make your check out to *Good Shepherd Services*, with Safe Homes Project on the memo line.

Enclosed is my tax deductible donation of:

\$25       \$50       \$100       \$200       Other \_\_\_\_\_

***Until all Homes are Safe Homes***

Safe Homes Project  
PO Box 150429  
Van Brunt Station  
Brooklyn, NY 11215



## **ABOUT THE SAFE HOMES PROJECT**

*The Safe Homes Project is a community-based, multi-service domestic violence program, and a program of Good Shepherd Services. For over 30 years, Safe Homes has been offering a full array of free and confidential services to battered women and their children, including:*

- *Hotline*
- *Individual Counseling*
- *Support Groups*
- *Legal Advocacy*
- *Housing Advocacy*
- *Community Referrals*
- *Emergency Shelter*

*From its inception, the Safe Homes Project has been committed to moving battering from the realm of a personal problem into the public arena. Only in this forum can domestic violence be responded to as a crime with the responsibility for the violence placed on the perpetrator rather than the victim. To this end, we are actively involved in a number of advocacy groups which are attempting to effect changes in our legal and judicial system and we provide consultation and educational services to the community about relationship abuse. For people interested in supporting our efforts, we offer volunteer opportunities from March to October of each year.*

**HOTLINE: (718) 499-2151**