

IN TIMES OF CRISIS THERE IS HELP ON THE LINE

PONTIAC, Michigan, October 6, 2008...Every day Brenda Vesprini spends a few hours on the phone she feels like she has provided an invaluable service. She isn't selling anything and she isn't taking orders. Vesprini is a crisis line volunteer for HAVEN.

Brenda Vesprini of Waterford talks with women seeking resources or who placed the call as a last resort. She listens to clients with empathy, provides them resources and assists them in creating safety plans and identifying safe options for the future.

HAVEN's Crisis and Support Line is one of only two "hotlines" operating in Oakland County and it is the only one specifically dealing with the issues of domestic violence and sexual assault. The crisis line operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year, providing callers with crisis intervention, support, understanding and information and referrals to other agencies when necessary.

Access to the shelter for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault and their children is available only through the crisis and support line. The Shelter is available for those in eminent danger. When shelter is full and unable to house someone, staff assists them with finding alternative safe housing. HAVEN is forced to deny shelter to more families than they house because current space is not large enough to meet the need.

Appointments for the Counseling Program can be initiated through the Crisis and Support line and referrals to other programs and community resources will be made when appropriate. Anyone may call the Crisis and Support Line, including victims, abusers, family, friends or other concerned individuals. There is no fee for this program.

Brenda Vesprini has been volunteering at HAVEN for more than 4 years and answering our Crisis & Support Line for 2 years. Prior to working on the crisis line, Vesprini worked in direct service at the HAVEN Shelter coordinating evening programs for adults, teens and/ or kids on various topics having to do with DV.

All crisis line volunteers at HAVEN receive training from professional counseling staff. Once on the job, they are backed up with support at all times. During the call they can ask for input from a supervisor and after the calls they are debriefed and encouraged to "process" the call with trained support staff.

Vesprini says that what is important in a crisis line volunteer is the ability to really listen. "It is hard for some to really hear what people need. Often it might not be what they say but what they do not say", she says. Often callers have no family support and do not know where to turn.

Vesprini knows that her role is to help callers consider all options. "They are not in a position to know the resources that are available, nor the effects of their family's actions. I help them think it through." Every volunteer will offer every caller Safety Planning tips to prepare them in the event the violence reoccurs or increases.

HAVEN has been working towards eliminating domestic violence and sexual assault by building violence-free communities one family at a time for over thirty-years. It is a nationally recognized non-profit offering treatment and prevention services across Oakland County and the surrounding communities. For more information about programs and services visit www.haven-oakland.org, or phone (248) 334-1284.

For more information about HAVEN, its programs and mission, including how to become a volunteer, please contact Melissa Bunker at marketwrite@comcast.net and (313) 886-9074.