

No Greater Love

The quarterly newsletter of St. Gianna Women's Homes

Summer 2021



A fresh, new look

We are proud to debut the fresh, new look of *No Greater Love*, the quarterly newsletter of St. Gianna Women's Homes. Our first issue debuted ten years ago with the opening of St. Gianna Women's Homes. Over the past decade we've shared with you the latest happenings as SGWH, features on the lives you've helped us touch and information on the impact of domestic violence on the women and children we are blessed to serve. We hope you enjoy our new format and thank you for your prayers and support of St. Gianna Women's Homes and Catholic Social Services of Southern Nebraska.

Intimate Partner Violence affects 58,000 women annually in Nebraska

Katie Patrick, Executive Director

When we first think of domestic violence against women or crisis pregnancy, we are as we should be: immediately concerned for the woman and her children. Do they have shelter, do they need food, clothing, transportation, health-care, and counseling? Is she anxious or depressed due to trauma? What is her financial situation? Is she working? Will she need to work after she leaves him? What will she do for childcare? How will domestic violence affect the children and their physical and social well-being? Will she try to make it on her own or will she go back to him?

These are all questions that we ask ourselves as directors, advocates, and volunteers at St. Gianna Women's Homes. We work with the women solving almost all of these questions. The one question, however, that remains unanswered is what about him?

It seems contradictory perhaps to worry about the abuser, but I do and so do the women - their victims. I ask myself and they ask me, how? How? How could any person manipulate, control, degrade, humiliate, hit, and beat another human being? But they do. It happens.

According to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, one in three women have experienced some form of physical violence by an intimate partner. Almost thirty-four percent of women in Nebraska have experience physical violence, sexual violence, or stalking by an intimate partner in their lifetime - that is roughly 58,000 women a year in our state. And on a single day, in 2019,

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Humbly providing an example for our children

Sr. Bernadette Radek

I knew what his reaction would be before I even asked. It was a thoughtful, humble reply of “Oh, I don’t know about that.” But by the end of our conversation I had convinced him that I should write about him. He is Martin Garcia, a team member of Catholic Social Services of Southern Nebraska (CSS) in Lincoln. Martin has worked in maintenance at CSS for quite a few years. One of his many jobs is to make sure everything is kept safe and in good repair at St. Gianna Women’s Homes (SGWH). There isn’t much that he can’t repair, change, recreate, or you name it, and he can do it. Along with that we could easily say that Martin is our Maintenance Gentleman. He is kind and thoughtful and always ready to go the extra mile no matter how busy he is.

Our children here at SGWH consider Martin a friend. Some of the boys watch him as he works. One little fellow was so mesmerized by him that he followed every move Martin made when he mowed and worked in the building. One day he said, “When I grow up I want to be a fireman and a farmer like Martin.” Children need good parent role models. They can’t grow into healthy well balanced adults without good example. Our children here at SGWH have seen much trauma so their idea of how a good man should act is often distorted. I recall with sadness the day one of our six-year-old boys threatened his mother when she was trying to discipline him. He said, “I am going to



choke you like daddy does.” Children copy what they see or hear from their parents. So, we are happy when we see the children in conversation with Martin. He is definitely a good father figure. Martin has worked at SGWH from the beginning. He has done repairs in every apartment in the house, patched many water leaks, and replaced dozens of window screens, so he has the opportunity to visit with the children. He especially makes a hit when he speaks Spanish to the Spanish-speaking children. If we had a contest during this year of St. Joseph of men who exemplified the virtues of St. Joseph, Martin would be without a doubt in the top ten. Thank you Martin, for being such a good example. And blessings to all the good fathers who love their children as St. Joseph loved the Child Jesus. God bless you all, and St. Joseph pray for us!

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE- IT'S MORE COMMON THAN YOU THINK

About
1 in 3
women



have experienced some form of physical violence by an intimate partner.

33.7%
of Nebraska women

experience physical violence, sexual violence, or stalking by an intimate partner in their lifetime—an estimated 58,000 Nebraska women annually.

On a single day in 2019, Nebraska domestic violence programs served

597

adult and child survivors. Another 96 requests for services went unmet due to lack of resources.



The power of value

Dr. Courtney Miller,
Vice President of Clinical Services

Summer greetings from the Immaculate Heart of Mary Counseling Center (IHMCC)! We at the IHMCC feel very blessed and fortunate to have continued to provide mental health services during this past year with so much uncertainty and amidst the challenges faced by many in our communities. The women of St. Gianna Women's Homes know very well such challenges, whether during a pandemic or not. These women have experienced domestic violence and abuse in various forms, whether physical, emotional, verbal or sexual - one, several, or all. Yet, despite the violence and abuse, these women found the strength and the courage to reach out for help with the hope for a better life.

If asked, these women would tell you, their strength and their courage arose not for themselves but for their children. Often women of domestic violence feel very worthless, shamed, with little sense of self, of who they are as a person. They often do not feel they have positive strengths, gifts, or talents and may even blame themselves for the abuse. These women often struggle with diagnosable mental health disorders, sometimes alcohol and drug addictions, employment and financial struggles and have limited resources to address these issues.

Thankfully, St. Gianna Women's Homes is one such resource for these women and their children. St. Gianna's provides an environment that is safe and secure, something these women may not have had for a long time. In addition, the staff of St. Gianna's is loving, accepting, and supporting, joining these women on their journey to hope. St. Gianna's also provides the women with additional resources, including counseling services through the IHMCC. These counseling services are provided free of charge to the women for both themselves and their children as appropriate and are funded through the generosity of donors and benefactors.

The counselors at the IHMCC recently participated in the annual Catholic Psychotherapy Association conference which had many informative seminars. One of these seminars was given by a psychologist by the name of Dr. Michael Redivo on Values Grounded Parenting. While his talk and recently published book focus on parenting in particular, the principles and values he emphasizes can be extrapolated. Dr. Redivo identifies four anchor values, which are humility, gratitude, respect, and accountability. By aligning ourselves with these values, we "anchor" our lives and our families in areas that allow us to grow in a direction that God intended for us and for our families.

The women of St. Gianna's have come with humility in seeking shelter and asking for help. They have gratitude for all the amenities and resources provided to them and their children as residents. These women are given encouragement, perhaps for the first time, to develop respect for themselves, to know they are worthy of being respected, and in turn,

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Intimate Partner Violence affects 58,000 women annually in Nebraska (Continued from page 1)

Nebraska domestic violence programs served 597 adult and child survivors. Another 96 requests for services went unmet due to lack of resources.

To me this begs the question even more, what about him?

Well, one of the first books that was recommended to me by the Marian Sisters when I started working at CSS was Lundy Bancroft's, *Why Does He Do That?* It's a compelling read written by a counselor who specializes in working with abusive men. He uses his years of experience to help women recognize when they are being abused and how to get out of an abusive situation. Moreover, he presents several theories on what causes abusive men to react the way that they do, and as you may have guessed much of it comes from having been abused themselves and having grown up in broken families without any positive male role model. Keep in mind that these are reasons, not excuses.

While we primarily focus on how to serve these women, we need also to consider how we can "serve" the abuser. Our first response should be to pray. Pray that these men seek God and choose to amend all abusive behaviors. Our second response should be to educate. Educate ourselves on the cause of this societal breakdown of the family and the rising degradation of men as protectors and defenders of the family. Our third response should be to take action. To raise and support compassionate and strong men and to seek opportunities for them to become who God calls them to be - loving husbands, brothers, sons, uncles, priests, grandfathers, and great-grandfathers.

The power of value (Continued from page 3)

gain the ability to teach their children the value of respect. These women begin to develop skills to take care of themselves and their children, no longer controlled by violence and abuse. They become accountable for their decisions and life direction. Through these values, these women begin to find healing and hope in a new life.

Thank you for your continued prayers and financial support of St. Gianna Women's Homes. Through this collective effort, we can restore hope and value to the most vulnerable.

"Love is the most beautiful sentiment the Lord has put into the souls of men and women."
-St. Gianna