

NELCWIT Update

Summer 2011



Assisting Children Who Have Lived With Violence

NELCWIT is excited to announce the opening of our newest program, the Franklin County Children's Visitation Program (FCCVP), which will begin working with families affected by domestic violence later this summer. NELCWIT has long offered advocacy for children and teens and for their non-offending parents, and now we are pleased to expand our services to include supervised visitation. According to NELCWIT's executive director, Sarah Dudzic, "The addition of this program, along with the advocacy work we already do in schools and with families, really highlights NELCWIT's commitment to developing programs that keep children and youth safe."



Newly hired FCCVP Coordinator
Juan Carlos Aguilar

The Franklin County Children's Visitation Program will provide a safe space in which children and their non-custodial parents can spend time together to maintain their relationships. Monitors will closely supervise all visits to ensure safety and will assist the adults with parenting skills and creating a child-friendly, nurturing environment. Visit monitors may also offer support and referrals for parents and children during and after their visits.

Juan Carlos Aguilar, FCCVP's coordinator, has been working since early June to develop policies, purchase supplies, and organize the set-up of the program. He says, "I'm thrilled about the opportunity to work on the initiation of such an important program. Providing a safe space so children can have the opportunity to strengthen their relationship with their parents may have short and long term positive effects on their lives."

Dudzic added, "There has not been a supervised visitation program for families in Franklin County since July 2009, so we are eager to start offering this program to the community."

Each year, more than 3.3 million children witness domestic violence, a terrifying experience with long-lasting effects. Children who live with domestic violence have a high risk of being abused themselves, and many experience physical, emotional, or behavioral reactions. Intervention at an early age may prevent older youth from engaging in risky behaviors, perpetuating violence themselves, or experiencing abuse as adults.

The part-time program's projected start date is August 1, 2011. For more information, call Juan Carlos at 413-772-0871 x119 or email fccvp@nelcwit.org. To offer financial support specifically for NELCWIT's children's programs, please use the enclosed envelope and note "children's programs" on the memo line of your check. You can also make donations through our website, www.nelcwit.org.

NEW ENGLAND LEARNING CENTER FOR WOMEN IN TRANSITION
479 Main Street, PO Box 520, Greenfield MA 01302 • 413-772-0871 • info@nelcwit.org • www.nelcwit.org
Hotline: 413-772-0806 (TTY) or 888-249-0806 (TTY)

Board of Directors: Dottie Benedetti, Vice President • Christine Forgey, Treasurer
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A FEW WORDS ABOUT NELCWIT'S PROGRAMS

Changing the Culture of Violence: Preventing Sexual Assault

“My work is about changing the culture of violence. In high schools, I give the students tools that let them do sexual violence prevention work themselves. I’m really into supporting the leadership of youth in their communities.

“The biggest part of my work is with the Visioning Bear Circle, a group formed to eradicate sexual violence in our area’s indigenous community by using traditional tools and activities. We are very active at area pau waus. We hope to develop restorative justice circles as an alternate to courts for families and offenders in our community. It’s an indigenous approach. It’s a heartfelt accountability. With restorative justice, offenders are accountable to their communities, their families, their victims, and their victims’ families. Both offender and victim have a circle of support throughout.”

—*Strong Oak, Prevention Educator*

Crisis Programs: Safety and Stabilization

Helping by Phone: NELCWIT's Hotline

“A woman called who was suddenly homeless in the middle of the night in winter. I couldn’t find an available shelter bed anywhere. She called from a gas station and I called back a couple times, but eventually I lost touch with her. I actually drove over to that gas station looking for her but she had left. I’d suggested she could go to the emergency room, and I hope she did.

“My role on the hotline is to connect callers with whatever services they need, and to allay their anxiety. Caring, compassion, those are my big goals.

“If I could have anything I’d say more money – not for me, for the hotline. A lot of times I talk to someone who needs something that I can’t get for

her because the services just aren’t there. With the state of the economy, more people are needing help and less help is available to meet the need.”

—*Melanie, Hotline Advocate*

Getting Through the Worst: Crisis Advocacy

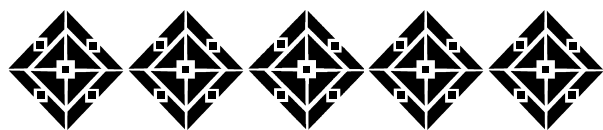
“I never pretend I know what another person needs, so we always start with a safety assessment. How can we keep you and the children safe? Then we can look at the bigger picture. What do you need for personal independence? I tell the women my job is to help them through the immediate crisis – not for long term. I know someone’s ready to leave when the immediate crisis is over and they’ve moved on to the next step, whatever that may be for them.”

—*Janet, Crisis Advocate*

Restraining Orders and Safety Planning: Project SAFEPLAN

“Often when people come into court to apply for restraining orders, they feel so scared and don’t understand what’s going on. Our goal is to make the it easier for them, to help them to understand the legal language and the court process. We work together on a safety plan that is tailored to their individual needs. Just as important, we let them know that NELCWIT is a place people can turn to so they can be safe. They’re not alone. We are here for them.”

—*Jessie and Kim, SAFEPLAN Advocates*



WIN A BEAUTIFUL LAP QUILT!

- ◆ Donated by the Cummington Quilters Quorum.
- ◆ Tickets are available for \$5 at NELCWIT and The Textile Company, both in Greenfield.
- ◆ View the quilt at The Textile Company or at www.nelcwit.org.
- ◆ Drawing on September 27, 2011.
- ◆ For more information, visit www.nelcwit.org or call 413-772-0871.

OUR STAFF TALK ABOUT OUR WORK

From Victimhood to Thriving: Preventing Domestic Violence

“A lot of my work is with high school students at the Four Rivers Charter School. In classes, groups, and drop-in hours, we offer participants a safe space to talk about the effects of interpersonal violence. As participants learn about domestic violence, sexual assault, and healthy relationships, they also begin to view these subjects on a community level. A new student group is forming that will come up with interventions to address inappropriate behavior at the school.

“With these activities, we are breaking personal and societal silence. The participants gain confidence in their personal abilities. They learn that they can move beyond victimhood into thriving, that they can use their personal experiences to become agents of change in their own lives and in society.”

—Sarah, Prevention Educator

Recovery Programs: Building a Future

Creating Their Own Happiness: Advocacy for Domestic and Sexual Violence

“My goal is to help people move ahead, not keep looking back at why this happened to them. There are certainly some practical aspects to ‘why did this happen’ that everyone needs to identify for themselves, but then I try to help people look forward, into creating their own happiness and independence.”

—Bunte, Sexual Assault & Domestic Violence Advocate

With Caring and Toughness: Latina Outreach

“In my outreach with Latinas, I make sure they know that the agency is here, that we are here for them. I help them to set their own goals. Often I have to be their voice, especially if they have problems with the language. I do my job with a lot of caring—and toughness. They may come to me trying to find solutions to their problems, or

answers, but at the end, my work is about the decisions that they choose to make.”

—Teresa, Latina Outreach Advocate

Breaking the Cycle of Violence: Child Advocacy

“We encourage the younger kids to tell us their stories. This way they can process the violence in their lives in a safe environment. We identify different emotions and how to express them safely. Who are their safe people? We do a lot around healthy interactions, and I try to link the message with something that’s relevant in their lives, like pets or school. I base a lot of it on play and activities. But every child is different. Some are very hands-on, physical, need to get energy out, while others might be quieter or like to have the same routine each time. You have to take the lead from them. When I work with parents, we look at how the violence has affected the child, how to redirect the child’s behavior in a positive way, and how they can develop their own coping skills, too. It’s all about breaking the cycle of violence.”

—Christina, Child and Family Advocate

SAVE THE DATE



Donor and Volunteer Appreciation Gathering
Tuesday, September 27, 4:30-6:00 p.m. at
NELCWIT, 479 Main Street, Greenfield



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Sons ★ Sugarloaf Mountain Athletic Club ★ Nicoletta
Welsh and Associates ★ Whole Foods Market ★ WHAI
& Bear Country Radio ★ YMCA in Greenfield
...and the many donors of items for our fundraisers.

Groups who Organized Events and Activities to Benefit NELCWIT

Amherst College Women ★ Sara Cohen & the
Cummington Quilters Quorum ★ Northfield Mt. Hermon
School ★ The Rendezvous ★ VDay North Quabbin
...and generous individuals who requested donations to
NELCWIT for their weddings, memorials, and other life
events.

Without our supporters, NELCWIT would not be able to continue to provide all of our life-saving services during these difficult times.

Perhaps the best way we can thank you is to share these words of appreciation written to one of our advocates:

...I wish to thank you and all the staff at NELCWIT for your help and assistance in my time of need/crisis.

I am so thankful that your organization exists, especially in such a small and out of the way town as mine. I felt trapped, with no resources or a way to escape.

But you were there. You gave me hope and encouragement that I needed desperately.

Again all my thanks, and I will never forget you and what you have done for me!

Sincerely....