



HARBOR LIGHTS

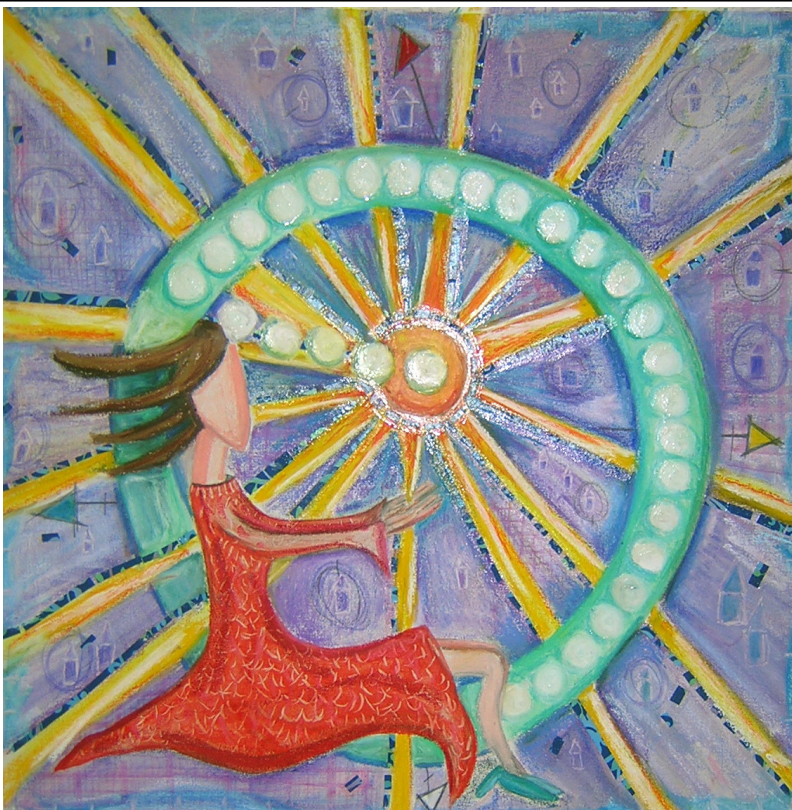
FALL 2008

MISSION

To lead a community-wide partnership in the awareness and prevention of domestic violence and abuse, and to offer safety and support to diverse families in crisis.

Harbor House Executive Director Celebrates 30 Years in DV Work, Looks Ahead to Next 30 Years With Hope

By Maria Turner



Pearls of Wisdom

*Artwork by Karen Hertz-Sumnicht
made especially for Beth Schnorr in honor of her thirty years
working in the domestic violence movement.*

Courage and stamina.



Beth Schnorr remembers seeing it in the elderly woman who came to the shelter doors with two blackened, fearful eyes—desperate for help, yet unable to cut off contact with her perpetrator.

Beth Schnorr remembers seeing it when the 20-year-old came with her own children to a place she had been just five years earlier as the teen-aged daughter with a mother caught in an unhealthy, abusive relationship.

Beth Schnorr remembers seeing it in herself, when after working and learning from the battered women she was helping, she realized they were helping her recognize that her own husband was verbally and emotionally abusive.

In 30 years working in the domestic violence movement, Beth Schnorr has witnessed the incredible courage and stamina of abuse victims she has encountered.

It's this courage and stamina that has bolstered Beth to remain in a field that is undoubtedly a challenging career path, where frustration, cynicism and burnout often cause advocates to leave.

And it's Beth's courage and stamina that provided the inspiration for a surprise event Aug. 14 where nearly 100 people gathered to formally honor her for her 30 years of work in helping women and children recognize their own courage and stamina to survive after abuse.

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Beth Schnorr continued

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As part of Beth's anniversary party, numerous colleagues, co-workers and friends talked about her influence in their lives, both personally and professionally. Common to everyone's statements were references to Beth's ability to empower others. Through her calm and nurturing approach, Beth encourages others to recognize their own strengths and follow their own intuition.

What greater gift can she possibly give to victims of abuse, who often have been emotionally beaten down to the point of not believing in themselves or trusting their own choices?

As executive director at Harbor House for the past 19 years of her career in domestic abuse, Beth leads her staff in reminding advocates to empower the women and children they work with to make their own choices. She often gives gentle reminders that although there are commonalities among every woman's story of abuse, there are also things that individual victims know about their own circumstances that best serve to keep them and their children safe.



Beth Schnorr is all smiles after realizing she'd walked into a party to honor her 30 years of service in the work of domestic violence. In the background is Rev. Dottie Mathews.

"Working with women in shelter, they taught me," she said. "When we separate ourselves from the reason why we're here—to help battered women and children—we get in trouble. We need to honor individual choices and remember the grassroots nature of how DV work began."



Patti Seger, executive director for the Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence, was one of many speakers on hand Aug. 14 to talk about Beth's dedication to the cause.

Such grassroots efforts began with the work of many pioneers in the DV movement. Beth cites P. Catlin Fullwood, Suzanne Pharr, Kerry Lobel, Beth Ritchie and Nancy Worcester as early influences on her and her approach to her work.

Also inherent to Beth's success is surely her humility. Devoid of the ego that drives so many other executives, she doesn't do this work to thrust herself into the spotlight and is always cognizant to introduce her staff members as "my co-workers."

And although Beth does concede that 30 years of work in this field is something that a lot of people never do, she also is quick to point out that it's the next 30 years that are important to the domestic violence movement and survivors of abuse.

"We've done a lot over the past 30 years, but what I'm really interested in is where we plan to go in the next 30," she said. "I believe that primary prevention—educating young people—and engaging nonabusive men in our work to speak out against violence against women are things that will make a real difference in the future."

Having just celebrated her 54th birthday in early September, it's improbable that Beth will be leading Harbor House through all of those next 30 years. Then again, after meeting human rights activist and Gray Panthers' founder Maggie Kuhn by chance in the 1990s, she walked away with a hopeful perspective.

"I just remember looking at her, this woman in her '80s then, and knowing all she had done over her lifetime and thinking, 'You know, I really can do this work I'm passionate about for the rest of my career, too.'"

State Director Shares Views of DV Advocacy in Past 30 Years

By Maria Turner

Q & A

In August, Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence Executive Director Patti Seger shared some of her thoughts on the domestic violence movement over the past 30 years. As Harbor House's Executive Director Beth Schnorr marks her 30th year working in the domestic violence movement, WCADV also will mark its 30th anniversary in serving as the statewide agency dedicated to the cause. Here's what Seger had to say about how far we've come in 30 years in the work to end domestic violence in Wisconsin and what still needs to be done as we look to the next 30 years.



Tell us about the domestic violence movement in Wisconsin 30 years ago.

I actually started as a volunteer in 1980—not quite 30 years ago! But the movement was quite a bit more political, and certainly more grassroots.

In many ways, it was much more creative than we are now. There weren't many laws to protect victims. Advocates had to figure out strategies without any clearly defined tools.

There was also a lot more protesting! And protests in Madison had huge turnout. I remember going to (and performing a comedy routine at) the Take Back the Night rally in 1984. There were over 3,000 people there! It was incredibly powerful.

I went to give a speech at the Take Back the Night rally three years ago, and there were about 30 people.

What do you think have been some of the most significant changes in the work in the past 30 years?

Loss of grassroots activism in lieu of development of formal systems. In some ways, the more formalized systems have helped many battered women. In other ways, the development of systems and tools have limited our creativity as a movement.

No single tool can meet the needs of all victims, yet we sometimes try to get all victims to use them—despite their lack of effectiveness for that particular person.

Back before we had all the formal tools, we figured out what strategies worked best for that individual victim.

WCADV's statewide conference this fall is called "Reinvent the Revolution" and will celebrate the 30th anniversary of the statewide organization. From a practical perspective, what do those who work in the DV field need to do to "reinvent" their approach, while still harnessing the success of past practices, especially as they relate to a "revolutionary" historical perspective of supporting the cause?

I think we need to hold onto the successes we have gained on behalf of victims, but we need to also stop being afraid to continue to struggle for what is right.

Because of the relationships we have developed, we are fearful of upsetting the DA or the police chief. So, even if it doesn't help a victim for us to remain silent, we will do so for fear of harming our relationships.

We need to be ADVOCATES again. We need to reclaim and redevelop our advocacy roots. We need to figure out how to challenge the system without getting tossed back out of the "circle of trust!"

It's a good time for us to REINVENT ourselves with a new model that incorporates the best of the old strategies with the best of the new!

What's your vision for the direction work surrounding the cause will take in the next 30 years?

See above! Reinvent, reinvent, reinvent!

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**If you are in an abusive relationship and need help, call Harbor House at
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“Commenting on Beth’s accomplishments over 30 years is a difficult task—mostly because her work over that period of time is indefinable. There were too many small acts and too many large acts that all add up, collectively, to safety for countless battered women and their children.

Her continued commitment is her biggest accomplishment. If you don’t feel passionate about what you are doing, it will translate.

This is more than a job for Beth. It is her purpose.

Many, myself included, have viewed her as a mentor. Hopefully newer, younger advocates will take the opportunity to learn from her so that her legacy can continue for many years.”

—Patti Seger, WCADV Executive Director



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