



REACHING OUT

Summer 2008 Volume 16, Number 2

Letter from the Executive Director



Margaret Singer Photography

Jessica C. Brayden

Dear Friends,
As I enter my sixth month of service at RESPOND, I am struck by two observations related to the changing of the seasons this year. First, the warmth and

celebration of new life that spring and summer brought was all the more sweet after a long, cold winter. Second, the weather in New England sure can be fickle.

Now you may ask what, if anything, that has to do with being appointed as the new executive director of New England's first domestic violence agency. But for me these observations sum up well the sense of humility and honor that I feel in being given the responsibility of my new position.

Observation One

Just as the long-awaited arrival of spring and summer each year affords us the chance to appreciate and enjoy life anew in a beautiful and fragrant celebration of rebirth and renewal, so RESPOND offers women and their children the hope of new lives free from imminent harm and the threat of death. It is truly humbling to know that we represent a chance for change and renewal for so many families that have suffered for too long through a winter of abuse and fear. My pledge to you is that no matter how many meetings I attend or emails I write, I will never lose sight of our mission or forget the hope and joy that new lives bring.

Observation Two

Only in New England can you say that the average temperature was in the 50s and mean that half the days were in the 30s and the other half were in the 80s.

Please continue to page 2. ➤

RESPOND Opens New Shelter!

Over 100 donors help us reach \$2.5 million capital campaign goal and double capacity

After many months of intensive construction and renovation, RESPOND opened its new shelter in April. The house is everything we imagined and more—a beautiful, wheelchair-accessible home equipped with a spacious Children's Learning Center, a bright kitchen, inviting common spaces and eight comfortable bedrooms.

Staff and volunteers worked day and night leading up to the big move, arranging new furniture, making the beds with crisp, clean sheets and stocking the kitchen with pots and pans, a toaster, a coffee maker. The next evening, residents and staff excitedly shared the first of many meals in the new house. Women all report loving the space and the sense of safety it provides.

“One of the amazing things for me about the new shelter is that it doesn't feel institutional at all,” remarked shelter coordinator Victoria.



Margaret Singer Photography

“It's so much more than a safe place... it's a welcoming home where families can begin to heal with dignity,” added program director Michelle Fine.

RESPOND kicked off a capital campaign in early 2007 in response to the extreme lack of shelter space in Massachusetts. “The sad reality is that every day many families in danger are turned away from domestic violence programs because there simply aren't

Please continue to page 6. ➤

SAVE THE DATE

Harvest Moon Gala

Friday, October 24, 2008
Boston Marriott Cambridge
See page 7.

Pauline Dwyer, RESPOND Founding Mother 1934 - 2008

RESPOND mourns the loss of our beloved founding mother, Pauline Dwyer, who passed away on April 14 after a battle with cancer. Pauline was a true pioneer in the movement to end domestic violence and a community activist who fought ceaselessly for the rights of women and children. Her enormous heart, her incredible commitment to helping survivors, her kindness, and her ability to laugh even when things were difficult touched everyone who knew her.



In the early 1970s, Pauline and a small, courageous group of women gathered around her kitchen table in Somerville and began talking about a problem that was usually spoken of only in whispers or behind closed doors: domestic violence. They knew it was happening all over their communities and they decided the time had come to take action.

“It was the silence,” Pauline said of the overwhelming mood at the time in a 2006 interview. “The silence screamed.” It is difficult to imagine today, but just 35 years ago there were literally no services for victims of abuse—nowhere to turn, nowhere to go, no one to call for help.

Pauline, together with Anne Broussard, Jean Luce, and Maureen Varney, would change all that—and the course of history in Somerville, throughout Massachusetts, and even nationally. The spark ignited at Pauline’s kitchen table would lead to the creation of RESPOND—the very first domestic violence agency in New England and the second in the country. Since those early days, the agency has assisted over 50,000 individuals by providing emergency shelter, emotional support, advocacy in the Somerville and Malden courts, children’s services, and outreach and education in the community.

Throughout her life, Pauline remained deeply connected to RESPOND’s mission and work. Whenever asked why she felt so passionate about RESPOND, Pauline proudly proclaimed, “It’s about respect for women.”

She leaves a remarkable legacy through her work and the countless lives she changed—from those she knew well to generations of women and children she never met. Pauline was the kind of person you encounter once in a lifetime if you are lucky. Her legacy and spirit will be with all of us and with RESPOND, always. ■

LETTER continued from page 1.

And if you live around here for any length of time you find nothing odd or ironic about it. For those of us who have been involved on a daily basis with completing the final steps required to open our beautiful new shelter it felt just like a typical New England change of seasons. When you stand back and look at it, we plugged right along at a steady pace and as of April 8, we opened the doors of one of the most amazing shelters that I have ever seen. But if you look at all the sweat and challenges we had to overcome even in just those final two months, you realize that there were no typical or average days in the mix. Whether it was the variance required for the roof or the endless modifications to the final relocation plan—nothing seemed easy or average.

...I will not soon forget the faces of the families as they walked for the first time into that gorgeous and inviting front hallway.

Yet with it behind us, all we remember now is that we got everything done we needed to get done and we couldn’t be any happier to hear the sounds of joy and laughter already bouncing off the walls of the playroom. While I can barely remember those final details that threatened to delay our opening yet another day, I can assure you that I will not soon forget the faces of the families as they walked for the first time into that gorgeous and inviting front hallway.

I am grateful to have been a part of such amazing work with such dedicated individuals at such a remarkable organization for even a short period of time. And I know that each passing season I spend with you will only serve to deepen further my sense of respect for the mission and my commitment to the work. I can’t wait to see what the fall brings to us and those we serve.

With gratitude,

Jessica C. Brayden
Executive Director



As RESPOND's new board president, it gives me great pleasure to write to you. I'm honored to step into this new role after four years as a member of the board of directors

and excited about what we can accomplish together. With a visionary new executive director at the helm, the opening of our new shelter, and the annual Gala celebration just around the corner, there is much to look forward to.

Since I first joined the board in 2004, I have developed a powerful sense of pride in the life-saving work that goes on at RESPOND—over the hotline, at the shelter, and in the community. I am proud of the compassionate staff and volunteers, awed by the courage of survivors, and humbled by the generosity of our community of supporters—all of you who have helped RESPOND to remain strong for over 34 years.

Please join me in welcoming RESPOND's new executive director Jessica Brayden. In the spirit of our founding mothers, Jessica has demonstrated in her first months on the job that she is a dynamic leader who brings passion and conviction to everything she does. I hope you will enjoy reading about the latest developments at RESPOND, and that you will join us at this year's Harvest Moon Gala to celebrate the power of working together to end domestic violence.

Thank you.
Colby C. Brunt

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Support Group Helps Women Heal Through Self-Expression

Earlier this year, RESPOND began to offer an expressive empowerment support group for survivors of domestic violence. Haitian Creole Advocate Tarshe and Lesley intern Aleta created and co-facilitated this innovative group, using tools such as poetry, art, music, movement and drama to help women in their healing process. The first group cycle was so successful that a second group was added. Members participate in such activities as creating superheroes inspired by their own strengths and acting them out, bringing in favorite song lyrics and re-arranging the words to create new poetry that is meaningful to their personal journey



Native American-inspired "warrior shields" created by women in RESPOND's expressive empowerment support group.

(see one woman's poem on page 5), and using art to create Native American-inspired "warrior shields," decorating them with images that feel strengthening and protective. Group members have said the arts increase their sense of courage and hope and help them feel a part of a supportive, healing community. RESPOND has also recently started a support group for Spanish-speaking women, a meditation group, and a parenting group that draws upon the principles of the nationally recognized Nurturing Program curriculum. **R**

Governor Issues Public Health Advisory

On June 5, driven by the recent rise in domestic violence killings, Governor Deval Patrick directed the Massachusetts Department of Public Health to issue a public health advisory on domestic violence, identifying the problem as an urgent and epidemic health issue. Governor Patrick declared domestic violence a "public health emergency" and called on state government and members of the community to come together to increase awareness and prevention efforts.

In a prepared statement, Governor Patrick stated, "We feel the impacts of domestic violence everywhere—on families, in our communities and in social services throughout the Commonwealth. While we have made progress in this area, there is still much to do. We must continue to work together in state government and with family members, friends and neighbors to put an end to domestic violence."

How RESPOND is Helping

In the last 12 months, RESPOND has:

- answered approximately 3,000 calls on the 24-hour crisis hotline
- provided shelter for 26 women and 30 children (the average stay is three to five months)
- provided individual advocacy and support to 366 community participants
- led 87 domestic violence support groups for shelter and community participants
- provided legal support including accompaniment to court appointments to over 200 individuals
- distributed 37 emergency 911 cell phones and provided food, gift cards, and school supplies to over 200 families in need
- provided children's services to 76 children and 25 mothers
- led or participated in 54 outreach and education trainings/events.

How You Are Helping!

Thank you to all our generous donors for making it possible for us to help so many. Every time you make a gift to RESPOND, you are ensuring that we can continue to provide these vital services and save lives!

If you would like to make a first-time gift or renew your support, please make your check out to RESPOND, Inc. and mail to us at P.O. Box 555, Somerville, MA 02143, or visit our web site at www.respondinc.org to make a credit card gift. **R**

Interfaith Concert Brings Communities Together for Musical Celebration and Fundraiser

Since the late 1980s, Congregation B'nai Brith in Somerville has hosted a total of six festive Purim Dances to benefit RESPOND. When the group agreed last year that it was time to try something new, the Temple's Social Action Committee decided to expand the event to involve multiple faith-based groups. The Committee had been involved in a joint peace project with the Clarendon Hill Presbyterian Church and interfaith work with the Muslim American Society and the First Congregational Church of Somerville.

"These collaborations inspired us all to come together on a community building project in Somerville that would support such an important service—a cause that impacts every faith community," said Janet Gottler of Congregation B'nai Brith, one of the primary organizers of the concert.

RESPOND is so grateful to the team that led the planning for the event including Janet Gottler, Ruby Poltorak and Ellen Stone of Temple B'nai Brith, Ellen Schemerhorn and Naila Jirmanus of the Clarendon Hill Presbyterian Church, Reverend Molly Baskette and Keisa Bennett of First Congregational Church of Somerville, and Ahmed Elewa of the Muslim American Society. ■



Janet Gottler of Temple B'nai Brith with RESPOND Executive Director Jessica Brayden.



Photo courtesy of Driss Bahraoui



Photo courtesy of Driss Bahraoui

On April 6, A Besere Velt: The Yiddish Chorus of Workmen's Circle (above left) performed with The Noor Ensemble: Moroccan Spiritual Choir (above right) at a rousing Interfaith Concert to benefit RESPOND at the First Congregational Church in Somerville. The unique event was sponsored by Clarendon Hill Presbyterian Church, Congregation B'nai Brith of Somerville, First Congregational Church of Somerville, and the Muslim American Society of Boston.

RESPOND Benefits from Citizens Bank Community Service Sabbatical Program

RESPOND is delighted to welcome Denise Lamas, a commercial loan analyst at Citizens Bank, who will be working full time for RESPOND for three months beginning in September as part of the Bank's Community Service Sabbatical Program. This innovative program, which began in 1994, allows a Citizens Bank employee with three or more years of service to work full-time in the community for three months and bring back to the workplace a greater appreciation of the social needs and challenges in the community at-large. Citizens Bank selects sabbatical awardees among each of the geographic regions it serves. We are thrilled that Denise was awarded the Community Service Sabbatical for Massachusetts and look forward to her time with us. ■

Introducing RESPOND's Newest Language: Portuguese!

In the Fall of 2007, RESPOND added another language to its repertoire of bilingual bicultural services—Portuguese. US Census data indicates that as many as 1 million Portuguese speakers live in Massachusetts today, with over 200,000 residing in Greater Boston communities. During her first nine months at RESPOND, Bilingual Advocate Elaine has worked with 77 Portuguese-speaking women, approximately one-half of the total program participants she has served to date. In addition to Portuguese, RESPOND continues to provide services in Spanish, Haitian Creole, and French. ■

RESPOND Leads the Way in Innovative New Collaboration

RESPOND has helped to spearhead an exciting collaboration between local government agencies and human service providers. RESPOND initiated the formation of a new High Risk Assessment Team. This cutting edge initiative brings together local domestic violence service providers, law enforcement officials, the district attorney's office, healthcare providers, and the Department of Social Services to create a well-organized system for coordinating a rapid response in dangerous cases of domestic violence. ■

Boston Marathon 2008!

One Communications Donates Charity Numbers to RESPOND



On the sunny spring morning of April 21, local runners Kevin Cardinal and Laura Fink hit the pavement to raise much-needed funds for RESPOND. Both runners devoted months of training time to run the 26.2 mile race—and on top of that, rallied friends, family, and colleagues to donate over \$6,000 to support RESPOND's Shelter and Community Programs. "The entire project was so difficult," said Laura. "But it was so rewarding and so worth every moment. I can't tell you how grateful I am to RESPOND and everyone there." We couldn't have asked for two more dedicated, enthusiastic champions of the cause—and the race. Congratulations, Kevin and Laura, and special thanks to our friends at One Communications, who generously donated two Marathon numbers to RESPOND. ■

Kevin Cardinal of Melrose runs to cheers of "Go RESPOND!" from the crowd as he proudly dons a makeshift RESPOND tank top.

We also wish to express our gratitude to the following groups who sponsored recent events to benefit RESPOND

Harvard Divinity School graduate students who organized an incredibly successful First Annual Charity Ball; MIT students who put on a wonderful production of *The Vagina Monologues* in conjunction with V-Day; Tufts Graduate Student Council, and especially David Proctor, for sponsoring the fantastic 11th Annual 5K Run/Walk; and Somerville Road Runners who organized Khoury's 17th Annual Summer Steamer Race. ■

The following poem was written by a woman in the Expressive Empowerment Group who rearranged the words to song lyrics by Ani DiFranco and Leah Morgan.

Memoir of the Brokenness

There was a time
When I never knew
Just how much I loved me

I was haunted by
The way you wanted
Me to be

And your voice echoed
From the skyscraper
Of judgment-
Your decision
That I was wrong
Made clear

I was your toy
Committed and crying
But my world was
A home which
Choked that child
Into believing

Excuses
Tolerating abuses
And denying her truths

And it's been too long
Too many school nights
Spent grieving and crying
For the duties
She probably
Adored to perform
Anyways

For the equation
Was being your favorite child
Meant falling
So far and fast
Into unthinkable choices

So it's finally time
I say goodbye
Because now I look at me
And like what I see

The Alarming Rise in Domestic Violence Homicides

The number of domestic violence deaths in Massachusetts rose nearly 300% in 2007 over 2005.

According to statistics maintained by Jane Doe, Inc., there were 42 murders and 13 suicides in 2007. A total of 31 children were directly impacted by these homicides. Five children were killed, 13 orphaned, 11 lost their mother, and two lost their father. So far in 2008, this disturbing trend continues; as of August there have already been 29 domestic-violence related deaths.

Thank you to our Capital Campaign Committee and to all the remarkable donors who made this incredible milestone possible.



Margaret Singer Photography



Margaret Singer Photography



Margaret Singer Photography

enough beds,” said Executive Director Jessica Brayden. “Our phenomenal community of donors has responded to the need and made it possible for us to serve up to eight families at a time for years to come—twice as many as ever before. What a gift!” Individuals, foundations, city and state government, local businesses, and entire communities came together to make the new shelter possible. Many gave generous

financial contributions while others donated practical essentials—sheets, towels, plates, and bowls. IKEA contributed \$10,000 worth of furniture, helping us outfit the house with sofas, lamps, dressers, beds, desks, bookshelves, and chairs. The Agnes M. Lindsay Trust gave \$5,000 to help cover additional furniture costs.

Horizons for Homeless Children designed and furnished our beautiful play space, making it a safe, fun environment where the kids who stay with us can learn and play. Local photographer Margaret Singer generously donated her services and took beautiful photos of the house to document the momentous occasion. A team of volunteers from the First Congregational Church of Somerville were our valiant clean-up crew, helping staff to get every last item out of the old shelter and leave the space clean and orderly.

“Walking through the new house, you see how much thought went into every detail,” said Board President Colby Brunt. “And to think of how many families will be able to sleep soundly for the first time in a long time here is very moving.”

In the first four months, 17 women and 17 children (ranging in age from newborn to 14 years) have stayed at the new shelter. Currently, we are at full capacity with 21 residents including two families of 4. Children have been delighted to play in the well-stocked colorful play space with its cushiony athletic flooring. Women now have an inviting room off of the play space where they can meet with their advocate and still watch their children play through interior glass windows. Teens have access to a modest library of books and can use computers to help them with homework or to play educational games. The living room is the heart of the house, a comfortable space where everyone enjoys hanging out, relaxing, reading, and watching TV. The sunny kitchen allows for several families to cook at once as children sit at a specially-designed pint-sized counter space to help! The elegant dining room holds a large table that seats 16, allowing for residents and staff to sit together and enjoy weekly house dinners. The bedrooms vary in size, but each is cozy and intimate with doors that lock so each family has privacy and security.

“If I were ever in a situation where I had to seek safety at a shelter with my children, this is where I would want to be,” said a donor. R

CAPITAL CAMPAIGN COMMITTEE

Co-Chairs

Nancy Busnach, The Honorable Dorothy Kelly Gay,
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Harvest Moon Gala

THE AUTUMN AWAKENING

SAVE THE DATE

Friday, October 24, 2008
Boston Marriott Cambridge
www.harvestmoongala.com

COCKTAIL RECEPTION • DINNER • DANCING • SILENT & LIVE AUCTIONS

Please mark your calendars for RESPOND's Fifth Annual Autumn Awakening—the Harvest Moon Gala—and join us in welcoming this year's wonderful Gala Committee Chair, Elizabeth Grace, and her dynamic team of volunteers. We hope you will join us for this yearly celebration of our work and our community of supporters with dinner, exciting live and silent auctions, music, and awards. Reserve your ticket today!

Staff and Board NEWS

RESPOND extends our profound gratitude to Io Cyrus for her three years of service as president of the Board of Directors. We are delighted she will remain an active board member. We are very pleased to announce the following new board officers: Colby Brunt, president; Mary Reece, vice president; Lydia Rios, clerk. Finally, we wish to thank departing board members Becky Bell, Jane Conway, and Ron Nelson for their dedicated service, and welcome new board member Hanishi Ali.

RESPOND welcomes new staff members Darcie Deluca, controller, and administrative assistant Jane Murdoch. We bid a very fond farewell to Aristides Garcia, business manager, and thank him for his many years of hard work and commitment. We also say goodbye to staff members Melissa Levine, Rebecca Popuch, and Div Sternman, along with our interns Aleta, Christy, and Rachel and wish them all much luck as they embark on new adventures. R

With Gratitude to Our Recent Funders

Special thanks the following foundations for generous grants made in 2008:

- Adelaide Breed Bayrd Foundation
- Alfred E. Chase Charity Foundation
- Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Catalyst Fund
- Boston Bar Foundation
- Clipper Ship Foundation
- Emergency Food and Shelter National Board Program
- Foundation M
- Harvard Memorial Church
- Sills Family Foundation
- Tufts Giving Fund
- City of Somerville Community Development Block Grant
- City of Somerville Emergency Shelter Grant



RESPOND Senior Advocate Glennys accepts a grant from the Tufts Giving Fund that was created by students in Louise Sawyer's innovative Experimenting with Philanthropy class at the Tufts Experimental College this spring. Students each had the unique opportunity to take on the role of both nonprofit grant writer and foundation grant-maker. Thanks to a grant from Doris Buffett's Sunshine Lady

Foundation, the class's student-run foundations were able to distribute actual cash grants. The Giving Fund made a \$2,500 gift to support RESPOND's new Spanish-speaking support group.

