

## Help for victims of domestic abuse



JILL  
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GUEST COLUMNIST

across the Treasure Coast.

But domestic violence is not just physical abuse. It takes many forms, including verbal, sexual, emotional, financial and psychological abuse. Incidents of domestic violence impact every aspect of our community regardless of education levels, income, social class and geography. It cuts across all ages, races, religions, ethnicities and sexual orientations.

SafeSpace, the only certified domestic violence center serving the Treasure Coast, has an emergency shelter in Martin County and a new, long-term transitional housing center in Indian River County. In addition to providing more than 14,000 safe nights in our shelter to 450 women and children over the past year, we have also created nearly

1,200 safety plans to help victims escape and live safely and provided nearly 5,700 hours of outreach and counseling services to about 530 victims.

SafeSpace also fielded nearly 2,000 incoming phone calls on our emergency hotline and provided more than 5,200 information and referral sources to Treasure Coast victims of domestic violence.

The shelter and living facilities we offer to victims, along with our wide-ranging services, are making an impact. One recent survivor explained it this way: "Coming into the facility I was broken and alone, with no job, no car, no hope and two little boys to take care of. Within weeks, I obtained employment and am currently searching for a permanent home. The SafeSpace staff is like family and has treated me with the respect, dignity and compassion I so desperately needed to give me the courage to keep fighting. Residing here has taught me that there is always a light at the end of the tunnel, there is always

hope, and there is always help."

As a society, we must continue to recognize the serious threat that domestic violence poses and force this issue out of the shadows. Batterers are deadly serious and our community must be, too.

Education and understanding of the issue and its impact on the lives of our friends, family members and neighbors is paramount to efforts to both eliminate domestic violence in the future and help today's victims become tomorrow's survivors.

We hope you will join us this Domestic Violence Awareness Month by being more aware and more vigilant in watching for the signs of domestic violence in those you know and love. If they need help, encourage them to contact SafeSpace for help by calling our 24-hour hotline at 800-500-1119.

Jill Borowicz is the CEO of SafeSpace, nonprofit organization that serves and supports victims of domestic violence in Indian River, St. Lucie and Martin counties.