

## Rebecca Beckett - A peacemaker goes public

By Jackie Holfelder

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Common wisdom says find a non-profit about which you're passionate and you'll enjoy volunteering there. If the agency helps people who are suffering and hurting, and you were once in the same predicament yourself, the connection can be even stronger.

That's the case for Rebecca Beckett, a current board member of SafeSpace, Inc.

Rebecca agreed to go public with her story of being a victim of spousal abuse, because in many ways she doesn't fit the pre-conceived idea of what a victim is or does.

She's a respected professional, an investment counselor for David Lerner Associates. For virtually her whole marriage, Rebecca was the breadwinner and her husband was a stay-at-home dad.

When they wed in 2000, Rebecca and her now ex-husband had known each other for years.

In 2001, just six months after their wedding, they moved to Florida, excited to start a new life together. Rebecca had a young son from a previous relationship, whom her new husband readily accepted.

Things were fine at first. Rebecca got a job as a real estate agent, and - since he always knew her whereabouts - her then-husband was comfortable and non-abusive.

As she began to grow in her professional life, trouble began brewing. He had anger management issues, which escalated. He started to abuse her emotionally, verbally, mentally, spiritually and financially - things she couldn't show the police, because they didn't "show." He was sure she was prospering in her job because of "inappropriate actions." He was civil and well-mannered in public, saving his cruel treatment for when they were at home.

The couple had four children together, adding to Rebecca's quandry. She didn't know where to go or what to do with her brood, so she reverted to a life-long role of peacemaker. She didn't know where to turn, and kept the terrible facts to herself.

She encouraged her then-husband to go to Catholic Charities for marriage counseling. She urged him to become the financial provider for the family, assuring him she'd love to be a stay-at-home mom; that she chose this path only out of necessity.

Finally, on April 23, 2009 things came to a head. Through the years of abuse, Rebecca had never been physically attacked. That morning, her husband looked in her appointment book and read what he took to mean that she'd be home by 3 p.m. In fact, it said she had a business call at 3 p.m.

Arriving home at 5:45 p.m., Rebecca thought she was entering an empty house. She changed her clothes and suddenly, he came tearing down the stairs. A maelstrom followed. Her suits, Bible, even her knitting were strewn across the garage floor. He threw a coffee pot at her, punched her in the face, grabbed a broomstick and hit her across the thighs and hands. The whole time, the children watched.

When the attack ended, Rebecca went to bed in her daughter's room, formulating a plan for escape, something she had feared doing until that moment. The next morning, she dressed like she was going to work and got the children ready for school. But she detoured to the Martin County Sheriff's Office, speaking with a deputy who said, "Press charges or it will happen again."

And so she did. Her ex was arrested an hour later. At a loss as to what to do, Rebecca called friend Robin Delgado (who until then hadn't known of the abuse), blurted out her story and asked what to do. "Call SafeSpace" was the immediate answer.

Rebecca did, and hasn't been alone in her struggles since. A SafeSpace advocate, a Martin County Sheriff's Deputy and Robin were at her side for her legal proceedings.

In July of 2011, Rebecca had lunch with a friend, Tasha Chen, who was stepping down from the SafeSpace board. Unaware of Rebecca's situation, or that she was recently divorced, Tasha urged Rebecca to replace her on the board. It was time for Rebecca to share her story.

Today, she continues to move on, with the five children of whom she's so proud and a host of people ready to help. Rebecca says she doesn't walk on eggshells any more, and urges women to have a "safety plan."

Sadly, there are other Rebecca Becketts among us. If you need help, call SafeSpace 24-hours a day, seven days a week at (800) 500-1119.



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