

SAFE, Inc.

Offering survivors of domestic and sexual violence options for safety, empowerment, healing, and hope



Fall 2011 Newsletter

SAFE spearheads effort to start accredited child advocacy center

Bringing better care to sexually abused children

SAFE, the Wilkes Department of Social Services, the 23rd District Attorney's office and all three local law enforcement agencies signed a letter of commitment Nov. 17 to work together to establish an accredited child advocacy center in Wilkes County. The center will improve care for sexually abused children. SAFE is coordinating the multi-year process to start the center. 🐦



Working together to help kids

From the left: DA Tom Horner; SAFE director Kristi Thomas; Wilkes Sheriff Chris Shew; Wilkes DSS Director Bill Sebastian; N. Wilkesboro Police Chief Joe Rankin; SAFE Board Chair Erica Walker and Capt. R.T. Rhodes, representing Wilkesboro Police.

Here's how an accredited child advocacy center in Wilkes will improve care for sexually abused children:

- Children won't have to tell their story over and over to untrained interviewers.
- A specially-trained multidisciplinary team will work together to coordinate care and get justice for victims.
- Medical, counseling and victim services will all be available under one roof.
- A CAC will provide quicker response to abuse cases, with fewer trips to out-of-town hospitals and interview sites.
- Services will be provided in a convenient, welcoming, child friendly environment. 🐦

FROM THE DIRECTOR: RENEWED ENERGY TO IMPROVE CARE

It's been a busy year at SAFE. We entered 2011 with a renewed energy to improve services for sexual assault victims.

In March, SAFE brought together representatives of Wilkes Regional Medical Center, law enforcement, the Department of Social Services and the District Attorney's office to discuss

this topic. The group identified several key areas where our community is falling short in its care for victims.

A Need for Nurses

First and foremost, the group identified a critical need for additional Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners

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NEED HELP? PLEASE CALL 838-SAFE (838-7233) ANYTIME

“Cut It Out!” training helps stylists know how to spot, help abused customers

SAFE enlists salons in fight against domestic violence

SAFE has established an innovative partnership with local beauty salons to fight domestic violence.

Representatives from A Class Act, Artistic Beauty Salon, J.C. Penney salon, J Jules, Parisi of New York and the Wilkes Community College Therapeutic Massage Program recently completed a training seminar to help them recognize and respond to clients suffering from domestic abuse.

The program was presented by SAFE, Inc. using the “Cut It Out” curriculum developed by Salons Against Domestic Abuse.

During the seminar, stylists learned how to spot the physical

and emotional signs of domestic abuse. They also learned how to start the conversation when they think a client may be in danger.



The training was a real eye opener for Jeannette Watkins, a stylist at Artistic Beauty Salon in North Wilkesboro.

“The seminar was helpful,” Mrs. Watkins said. “It helped me get educated as to what happens in an abusive relationship and how to get help.”

Sandy Anderson of A Class Act, Holly Foster of the WCC Therapeutic Massage Program, Julie

Hamilton of J Jules, Hazel Mayes of Artistic Beauty Salon, Victor Parisi of Parisi of New York and Pat Poteat of J.C. Penney also participated.

In addition to the “Cut It Out” seminars, SAFE delivered free awareness materials to about three dozen salons in Wilkes.

“Stylists are a powerful partner in the fight against domestic violence,” said seminar

instructor Tim Murphy. “SAFE is pleased to have offered this training for the first time in Wilkes. We hope more salons will participate in the future.”



In their own words: Hope after abuse, thanks to you

Your gifts help victims of family violence make a new start after abuse. Here are some comments we’ve received since our last newsletter from women helped by SAFE.

- “It was wonderful and I knew that I was truly safe. I got help on legal issues and the other women comforted me about the issues I had. My child was very well received. He loved all the attention he got. I’m confident I can move on from my abusive relationship and live a happier life.”- Shelter Client, July 2011

- “Thank you for your love and kindness. (SAFE) is a good place for women to go .”-Shelter Client, October 2011

- “It was like a home, not a shelter. The staff was extremely supportive, kind and understanding. They made me comfortable and at ease. I

will miss them very much. (The shelter) is a good transition place to gather your thoughts and get positive feedback.” Shelter Client, July 2011

“I’m confident I can move on from my abusive relationship and live a happier life.”
-Shelter Client, July 2011

- “I will really miss the staff members. SAFE does help very much. I’m starting to feel more independent.”- Shelter Client, October 2011

- “I felt there was a great open-door policy and the staff was very helpful. SAFE has taught me that I don’t need to stay in an abusive relationship. (SAFE is) a great place to come to get out of an abusive situation.”-Shelter Client, July 2011

- “Love the staff!”-Shelter Client, October 2011

SAFE's 2011 Givers to Date

We gratefully acknowledge the generosity of these individuals, churches, clubs, foundations and businesses. Giving circles, memorials and honorary gifts will be announced in our next newsletter.

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“There’s a delight that comes from helping other people.”

Actor and Philanthropist Paul Newman



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SAFE's 2011 Givers to Date

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*“To keep a lamp
 burning,
 we have to
 keep
 putting oil
 in it.”*

Mother Teresa



New “Jane Doe” reporting option lets victims heal, think it over before involving police

SAFE working to improve care for rape victims

It's a terrifying situation. You're a woman having car trouble. You accept a ride with a man, and he rapes you.

Imagine the intense flood of emotions afterward. You feel ashamed, vulnerable, and frightened. You fear your attacker, and dread the reaction of your family and friends if they find out what happened to you. You've heard about rape victims who were revictimized by the legal system, and you're worried that will happen to you.

You need immediate medical attention, but would you go to the hospital for help if you knew you had to face the police, too?



Fortunately, rape victims in North Carolina no longer face this agonizing choice. North Carolina now allows rape victims to seek medical attention without reporting the crime to police.

Sexual assault victims in N.C. are also entitled to forensic medical exams at no out-of-pocket cost. Evidence gathered in the exams can be held anonymously for up to one year, giving the victims time to decide whether or not to report the attack.

At Wilkes Regional Medical Center, a specially trained Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) treats sexual assault victims. SAFE advocates are on call 24-7, and can report to the hospital to support victims and help them explore their options.

SAFE's Rebecca Parker has been working with sexual assault victims at the hospital for the past five years. “Many women in this situation are angry,” she says. “Some



of them get fed up and just walk out, but fortunately things are changing.”

SAFE is taking the lead to promote anonymous reporting and improve the response to victims:


- SAFE is working with Wilkes Regional to be sure all sexual assault victims are told about the “Jane Doe” reporting option. Victims are also offered support if they decide to make an immediate report to police. Immediate reports give law enforcement the best chance to recover evidence from the suspect and the crime scene.
- Last spring, SAFE convened an interagency meeting to discuss community response to sexual assaults. One outgrowth of the discussion: an anonymous reporting agreement signed by the hospital and all three of the county's law enforcement agencies.
- And SAFE is helping to increase the availability of spe-

cially trained nurses. Earlier this month, SAFE landed funding from the Health Foundation, Inc. to provide SANE training to three additional nurses at WRMC.

The anonymous reporting option empowers victims, SAFE's Kristi Thomas says.

“During an assault, all your power is taken away. This awful thing is happening and you cannot stop it. Anonymous reporting lets victims choose which path to take. The victim is back in control and has the power to decide what happens next, and that is the first step in healing.”

If the experience of other communities repeats here, once word gets out about the “Jane Doe” reporting option, the number of exams and rape reports will increase.

Increasing the percentage of victims who report is important, because, according to the FBI estimates, a scant 16 percent of rape victims ever report. 

SAFE, Inc.

Sheltered Aid to Families in Emergencies

P.O. Box 445
Johnson J. Hayes Federal Building
207 W. Main St., Suite G10
Wilkesboro, NC 28697

Office Phone: (336) 838-9169
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INSIDE: BRINGING BETTER CARE TO SEXUALLY ABUSED CHILDREN

FROM THE DIRECTOR: RENEWED ENERGY TO IMPROVE CARE FOR VICTIMS IN 2011

Continued from page 1

(SANEs). SANEs are our forensic first responders to all adult sexual assault victims at WRMC's Emergency Department. We currently only have one practicing SANE in the county, and she is on call 24/7. SAFE sought funding from the Health Foundation, and I'm happy to announce that the foundation generously agreed to fund training scholarships for three additional SANE nurses.

Better Care for Children

The group also strongly supported the establishment of an accredited Child Advocacy Center (CAC) to coordinate the local response to child sexual

assaults. Currently, many of these young victims and their families are carted to Winston-Salem or Statesville for investigative interviews and medical exams. Victims are forced to tell their horrific stories over and over to multiple people. A CAC in Wilkes will change all that. For the past six months, a broad-based community team has been working hard to establish a CAC here, with SAFE taking the lead role. It will take time, but I'm hopeful that soon, Wilkes will be able to provide better care for sexually abused children.

Giving Rape Victims Time to Heal

And SAFE is taking the lead to promote an empowering option for adult sexual assault

victims—anonymous reporting. This month, SAFE convened officials from WRMC, law enforcement, and the DA's office to renew a protocol allowing victims to have vital evidence collected during a rape exam and have that evidence held for up to a year. Anonymous reporting gives the victim crucial time to decide whether he/she wishes to go forward with an investigation and eventual prosecution.

Yes, in 2011, SAFE has been busy, working to offer victims options for safety, empowerment, healing, and hope. ♡

Kristi

Kristian Thomas
Executive Director