

WINTER
2007

STEPS

STEPS TO END FAMILY VIOLENCE

A Program of Edwin Gould Services for Children and Families

Dear Friends:

Welcome to our winter newsletter! In the spirit of change, we are following a different format this year. Featured inside is an update from the Children's Therapy Program and an introduction to new staff. You will also find an overview of significant policy issues that impact our past and current clients. Future issues will profile other STEPS programs.

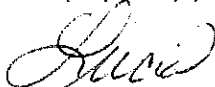


Of course the biggest change this year has been the transition in leadership over the summer. After more than twenty years at the helm, Sr. Mary Nerney, our esteemed founder and now former director, resigned to begin a well earned sabbatical. As to be expected, if you know Sr. Mary, this will not be an idle year. She has many learning experiences and travels planned and will return to work with STEPS as a volunteer. A fitting testament to her tireless work and wide-ranging influence in the criminal justice and domestic violence fields, she was presented the *In the Trenches* award by the Lawyers' Committee Against Domestic Violence and Fordham Law School at their jointly sponsored conference earlier this year. The East Harlem Human Services Coalition also celebrated her work in the community at a party thrown in her honor this June.

Our services to our clients remained steadfast throughout this transition. I was reminded of this earlier this fall when one of our clients came to us in need of medical care, shelter, and support in contacting the police. Our staff, across all programs, immediately rallied to assist her – minding her children here as another staff member accompanied her to the hospital, making calls to find shelter for the night, supporting her as she spoke to the police, and most importantly, bearing witness to her experience and her strength throughout. It was a long night for all of us, but in the end her immediate needs were addressed, her children were spared the frightening experience of watching their mother navigate the ER and the police, and they all had a safe place to sleep. I would be remiss if I didn't also mention the assistance we received from the social work department at Metropolitan hospital who facilitated her arrival at the ER.

In the spirit of this holiday season, I am so thankful to be part of an organization whose staff is able to so selflessly and professionally manage a trying situation, thankful for the many individual donors, foundations, and government agencies that make our programs possible, and most of all, thankful for the strength through adversity of the women and families we serve.

I hope you enjoy this issue and I wish you all the happiest of holidays.


Lucia Riviuccio, LCSW
Director



STEPS TO END FAMILY VIOLENCE

Founded by Sister Mary Nerney in 1986, STEPS to End Family Violence has grown to serve over 600 women, 2,000 adolescents, and 100 children each year in the New York City area. Each year we provide crisis intervention, individual and group counseling, counseling for children, support groups, job training and placement, information, education, referrals, and legal advocacy to improve the quality of life for victims of domestic violence. Our domestic violence services are available to women and children from all boroughs of New York City. STEPS currently works with over 400 women, 2,000 adolescents and 75 children in New York City through the following programs:

- Taking STEPS Against Domestic Violence and Youth Changing Abusive Patterns (YouthCAP)
- Alternatives to Incarceration Program (ATI)
- Children's Therapy Program
- Relationship Abuse Prevention Program (RAPP) and the Teen Accountability Program (TAP)
- Families in Transition

UPDATE FROM THE CHILDREN'S THERAPY PROGRAM

As the second oldest program at STEPS, The Children's Therapy Program continues to offer individual and group counseling to children around domestic violence, loss, and other traumas. The program provides a safe nurturing place for children ages 3 to 13 years old to begin to heal from the traumas they have endured and begin to build a strong personal foundation. Children are re-assessed every 6 months to ensure that their therapeutic needs are being met. Each child has treatment goals individually tailored to their needs. Families are involved in the program as partners who meet with the therapist weekly.

Children and their families participated in several special events this year. In August, forty-two children were taken to Disney's Back to School event at the Queens Hall of Science. The children had a wonderful time exploring the museum and all were given a book bag filled with school supplies. In September, STEPS hosted the first of a series of family movie nights which we hope will become a tradition. September featured *Happy Feet* which concluded with pizza and a lively group discussion. The *Pajama Program* welcomed some of our girls in October for a night of reading and snacks. Each child went home with pajamas and books.

Parenting groups, children's group and the family art therapy group (P.A.C.T.) hosted by Free Arts were offered in continuous cycles throughout the year. In October, Devon Wayne, age 16, who attended counseling in the past and still attends the P.A.C.T. group, was one of the recipients of the Urban Heroes Award sponsored by the Catalog for Giving at Chelsea Piers. Devon delivered a speech before 500 guests and named his mother, Victoria Klasa, and his past STEPS counselor, Laura Lombardi as people who helped him overcome his hardships and motivated him to achieve his future goals.



"This program continues to be one of our success stories."

*Cheryl Cannon
NYS Office of
Children &
Family Services*

STEPS WELCOMES NEW STAFF

In keeping with this summer and fall of transitions, STEPS is very excited to welcome new staff as well as applaud the promotion of staff to new roles. We are very happy to welcome **Emily McNeil** to our support staff. She joined us in September as a volunteer and impressed us all with her energy and commitment. Whether it is answering phones, checking the mail, or replenishing supplies, she does it with a smile! Newly joining our *Alternatives to Incarceration* staff is **Rachel Teicher**. She has already proven her worth ten-fold in immediately jumping in to successfully assist a client with a complicated legal issue during her very first week. **Carol Grannum** joined the *Youth CAP* staff this summer and brings many years of experience and a wealth of talent in working with teens on relationship violence. **Josie White, MSW** came to us as an MSW intern last fall, covered a part-time group facilitator position in the late spring, and was appointed to a full time Court Advocate/Counselor position in the *Alternatives to Incarceration* program in July. She inspires us with her boundless energy, unflinching dedication, and an injection of Texas spice to our day.

Rebecca Holmes, MSW, formerly our *ATI Misdemeanor Program Coordinator* is our new *ATI Coordinator*, responsible for both the Felony and Misdemeanor Programs. Rebecca has more than fifteen years experience working in program and community development with gender and social justice organizations in the United States, Canada and South Africa. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Women's Studies and Politics from McGill University in Canada and a Masters in Social Work from the Hunter College School of Social Work in New York

Kahli Pascal-Mercik, LMSW, has joined STEPS as the Clinical Supervisor for *Taking STEPS* and *Youth CAP*. She joins us from the EGSCF Crisis Intervention /Foster Parent Support Team where she was the supervisor this past year. Ms. Mercik has more than a decade of professional experience working within the child welfare system and extensive experience working with survivors of domestic violence, childhood witnesses to violence and juvenile offenders. Ms. Mercik received her undergraduate degree in Psychology from Hampton University in Virginia. She later attended Hunter College School of Social Work, where she received her Masters degree in Social Work (MSW). Ms. Mercik is currently studying at The Ackerman Institute for the Family.

One in three women has been abused in their lifetime.

-Family Violence Prevention Fund (2007)

"Arrest and incarceration can result when women try to protect or defend themselves and their children from abuse."

-Gilfus, M.E. (2002), *Women's Experiences of Abuse as a Risk Factor for Incarceration*.

"A majority of women incarcerated in the New York City jail system reported engaging in illegal activity in response to experience of abuse, the threat of violence, or coercion by their male partners."

-Beth E. Richie (1996), *Compelled to Crime*

Policy News

The policy work group of the Harlem Community and Academic Partnership (HCAP) is currently researching the barriers to housing for individuals returning from prison. STEPS to End Family Violence has been a member of HCAP for several years. As part of the work group's recent research, a report was produced entitled, "Housing and Reintegration in East and Central Harlem: Coming Home and No Place to Live," which discusses the difficulties in obtaining housing from the perspective of formerly incarcerated individuals. Next steps for the policy work group include implementing the recommendations of the report, and beginning a new report on housing from the perspective of community residents.

The "Drop the Rock" campaign has a goal of repealing the Rockefeller drug laws, established in New York State in 1973. These laws create very severe punishments for low-level drug offenders. They also created mandatory minimum sentencing, which successfully took away the discretion of judges to examine cases on an individual basis. These laws are some of the most severe in the nation and disproportionately affect communities of color. They have also contributed to an increase in prison population at the expense of taxpayers. The campaign to repeal is stepping up its efforts this year.

As a member of the Correctional Association's Coalition for Women Prisoners and its Violence Against Women Committee, STEPS has actively participated in increasing support for the Merit Time Bill for Domestic Violence Survivors. Currently merit time is only granted to non-violent offenders who receive their GED, an alcohol and substance abuse treatment certificate, a vocational trade certificate, or give 400 hours as part of a community work crew. This legislation, **S.3124/A.6150**, would allow the New York State Department of Correctional Services (DOCS) to grant early release to violent offenders that can prove they were subjected to substantial abuse by a member of her family or household, and that the abuse was a "substantial factor" in causing her to commit the crime.



STEPS Interns and Volunteers

This past fall, STEPS welcomed 7 new MSW interns, as well as a number of dedicated volunteers into the STEPS family. All have worked tirelessly and enthusiastically and we appreciate their time and dedication to working with the clients, families, children, and community of STEPS!

STEPS

Giselle Routhier	Columbia University
Diana Lock	Columbia University

RAPP

Rachel Manlkan	New York University
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Taking STEPS/Youth C.A.P.

Malabika Das	Columbia University
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Alternatives to Incarceration

Amy Gotheimer	Columbia University
Randi Sinnreich	Columbia University

Children's Therapy Program

Amber Weintraub	Hunter College
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Contributions from our funders in 2006-2007 have enabled STEPS to serve:

- 1,869 adolescents in the Relationship Abuse Prevention Program (RAPP)
- 200 Women in the Alternatives to Incarceration Program
- 646 Women and teens in the Taking STEPS & Youth CAP Programs
- 96 Children in the Children's Therapy Program
- 70 male adolescents in the Teen Accountability Program



Thank You to Our 2006/2007 Funders

We can't thank enough the many generous individuals and organizations who have contributed financially or through donations of their time, expertise, or needed items. Your belief in our work is invaluable and a tremendous help in meeting the many needs of our clients and their children.

Government, Foundation, and Corporate Funders:

- | | | |
|--|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| New York City Human Resources Administration: Domestic Violence Services | Shelter Alliance | LDI Color Toolbox |
| New York City Criminal Justice Coordinator's Office | Goya Foods | Choral Society of Grace Church |
| New York State Division of Probation and Criminal Justice Alternatives | New York State Department of Labor | Mary Clancy Charities |
| New York State Office of Children and Family Services | New York City Council | Whistler Family Foundation |
| Center for Court Innovation | United Way | Congregation of Notre Dame |
| New York State Unified Court System | Fund for the City of New York | Church of the Heavenly Rest |
| Fordham University Campus Ministry | Sills Family Foundation | Church of the Epiphany |
| | Lincoln Fund | Annunciation Church |
| | New York Junior League | Society of the Sacred Heart |

STEPS would like to thank all of our funders and individual donors who have supported STEPS either financially or in-kind. We apologize for any inadvertent omissions.

WANT TO GET INVOLVED?

- If you would like to be added to the STEPS e-mail list please send an e-mail to lrivleccio@egscf.org. Our e-mail list will be used no more than monthly to distribute information regarding STEPS & significant issues affecting our clients.
- We are currently looking for creative, energetic individuals interested in joining our junior committee to work on fundraising ideas and plan our annual event. Please e-mail lrivleccio@egscf.org or call Lucia at (212) 410-4200 xt.107.
- We are also looking for individuals with grantwriting and fund development experience to work on select projects with us. If you are interested in being part of our team, please e-mail lrivleccio@egscf.org or call Lucia at (212) 410-4200 xt.107.
- Lastly, we are looking to expand our legal services and are in need of lawyers and paralegals who are interested in a pro-bono experience in family law. If interested please contact Ana Davila at adavila@egscf.org, or by phone at (212) 410-4200 xt. 116.

STEPS



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New York, New York 10128

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STEPS

STEPS TO END FAMILY VIOLENCE

Mission

STEPS To End Family Violence is dedicated to empowering families and communities through innovative strength-based programs that promote healing and social change.

We are a progressive community organization that values justice and diversity.

Vision

STEPS to End Family Violence is nationally recognized for its comprehensive work in empowering individuals and families. We work in partnership with schools, the criminal justice system, and collateral agencies to promote greater health and safety. STEPS is committed to raising awareness around the social issues that affect the people we serve and increasing community involvement toward enabling greater empowerment.

OUR VALUES

Non-violence/peace

Justice/human rights

Empowerment

Growth

Respect

Community/ Support

Diversity

Compassion