

# STEPS



## STEPS TO END FAMILY VIOLENCE 2006 Annual Report

### A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

Sister Mary Nerney, CND, PD Psych

20 years going on 21! It hardly seems possible that STEPS To End Family Violence has been around this long. You have been partners with us during these years and we appreciate your support and encouragement. We started as an innovative alternatives to incarceration program for abused women as a response to the women at Bedford Hills Prison. They had held a hearing on domestic violence and asked for support for women to prevent them from going to prison. STEPS has now grown into a comprehensive, holistic program of services for women, teens and children who witness abuse in their homes. Clinical intervention, advocacy and both individual and group counseling are provided to our participants. We are pleased to also have legal assistance and employment readiness programs to complement our clinical services.

Please enjoy the brief descriptions of the programs included in this report. If you have any questions, please contact one of our wonderful staff. Please consider a contribution to our programs so that we may grow and develop for another 20 years. You can also help by using "GoodSearch" when you are on the internet. Every penny counts!

Have a happy and healthy new year!



### The Search that Keeps on Giving... Good Search!

You can raise money for STEPS to End Family Violence just by searching the Internet at GoodSearch.com. Use Goodsearch.com like any other search engine - the site is powered by Yahoo! Each time you use it, money is generated to support STEPS to End Family Violence. Since GoodSearch shares its advertising revenues with charities and schools, every time you search the Internet, you'll be earning money for STEPS to End Family Violence. Here's how it works:

1. Go to [www.goodsearch.com](http://www.goodsearch.com)
2. Type STEPS to End Family Violence into the "I support" box and click "verify."
3. Search the Internet just like you would with any search engine.
4. GoodSearch also has a toolbar you can download from the homepage so that you can search right from the top of your browser. The more people who use the site, the more money STEPS to End Family Violence earns, so please tell a friend.

Every Search Counts!

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## RELATIONSHIP ABUSE PREVENTION PROGRAM (RAPP)

Supervisor: Michele Richard, MPA

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This past year, the RAPP program trained 45 students to be peer leaders in preventing teen dating violence. The teens in the program were especially proud to create a video that highlights their experiences in RAPP. With these experiences, the teens are actively working to increase others understanding of key concepts related to the issue of dating violence. For example, when a teacher stated that the terms gender and sex had the same meaning, one of RAPP's leaders gracefully explained why that was incorrect and led his peers and teacher to understand the difference between the two terms. It is evident that the newly trained leaders are equipped and eager to share their knowledge.

## TEEN ACCOUNTABILITY PROGRAM (TAP)

Over the past year, the teen accountability program expanded its collaboration with the Center for Court Innovation (CCI). This expansion included the establishment of a Domestic Violence court for youth in the Bronx. This court will provide youth with a consistent experience in the criminal justice system, from the judge who hears the case to the consequences imposed.



## YOUTH CHANGING ABUSIVE PATTERNS (Youth CAP)

Supervisor: Michele Richard, MPA

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Youth CAP reaches out to teens ages 16 and over to educate them about the components and consequences of abusive relationships. Their powerful curriculum was heard by many this year. One audience member summarized the value of their work in a letter to the program. She wrote to say that a Youth CAP presentation helped her recognize she had been in an abusive relationship. She expressed gratitude that the program is educating young people about abusive relationships and their potential consequences. Youth CAP helped a client overcome the challenges of securing a safety transfer. The client had applied and been waiting for a housing transfer for over a year. During the year her paperwork was being processed, her Protective Order expired, leaving her ineligible to transfer. With the dedication, advocacy, and support of Youth CAP, this client was able to obtain safe housing.



## ALTERNATIVES TO INCARCERATION PROGRAM

Supervisor: Lucia Riviuccio, LCSW

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The Alternatives to Incarceration (ATI) program works with women who have histories of domestic violence and are charged with crimes related to their abuse. The ATI counselors collaborate with clients' attorneys in an effort to reduce or dismiss these charges. They accompany clients to court dates, provide oral and written court reports, and work with clients through individual and group counseling. The ATI program serves 50 felony and 30 misdemeanor clients each year.

## ATI IN ACTION: A CASE STORY OF SUCCESS

Yu-Kwan Soon\* kept her eyes on the dirty tile floor of the Rikers Island women's clinic, her voice barely audible over the cacophony of the jail. I immediately noticed the thick, angry purple scars running from wrist to elbow on both of Yu's forearms. The newspaper said only that Yu had "snapped" and murdered her husband while she was eight months pregnant, but the jail chaplain who had referred her to the STEPS ATI (Alternatives To Incarceration) program mentioned the suicide attempt, the trauma, the baby born by emergency C-section, and the extreme degree of domestic violence Yu had experienced at the hands of her husband. Yu was charged with the highest possible level of homicide and faced 25 years to life in prison and deportation to South Korea, where she had previously been the victim of a rape.

Yu remained on suicide watch for many weeks at Rikers Island while she awaited trial. While she was initially reluctant to discuss her situation with anyone, Yu gradually began to talk to me about the severe abuse her husband had inflicted upon her, including beatings, isolation, forced hours of kneeling prayer under the threat of a knife, re-enactments of her rape in Korea, forcible sodomy, and death threats to her family and to her

several months, Yu the counseling was not want legal help; deserved whatever received. Yu began Beginnings, our education group Rikers Island. As the stories of other

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unborn child. For insisted that while helping, she did she said that she punishment she attending New domestic violence run by STEPS on she began to hear women who had

experienced domestic violence and were now incarcerated for defending themselves against abuse, her shame began to lessen. She finally consented to letting me bring her son, now living with his paternal grandmother, to visit with her at Rikers.

Yu eventually agreed to be evaluated by a forensic psychologist contacted by STEPS. This psychologist diagnosed Yu with severe depression with psychotic features precipitated by extreme domestic violence, and the District Attorney's evaluator agreed. STEPS then helped to mobilize an extraordinary advocacy effort in which anti-violence groups from all over New York City petitioned the judge for leniency. These groups took on Yu's cause whole-heartedly, mobilizing hundreds of people and spending countless hours assisting with Yu's defense. Yu never stopped expressing her amazement that so many people cared about her case and went to such lengths to help her.

A little over two years after I first met her at Rikers, Yu stood in front of the judge, again with her eyes to the floor. With dozens of advocates from domestic violence groups, I sat on the edge of a bench awaiting the judge's decision. After making a moving statement addressing the abuse that Yu suffered and the tragedy which could have been avoided had she been able to connect with domestic violence groups such as STEPS before it was too late, the judge sentenced Yu to the minimum sentence of five years. Yu and her advocates cried tears of relief and gratitude.

No longer suicidal, Yu hopes to reunite with her son after her release, to finish the Master's degree which she came to the U.S. to pursue, and to work as a spokesperson and advocate for other Korean women who are the victims of sexual assault and domestic violence.

*By Ashley Hatcher-Peralta, Senior Counselor, STEPS ATI Program*

\*Name has been changed to protect client confidentiality

## STEPS Welcomes the Expansion of the Alternatives to Incarceration Program

STEPS is excited to announce the expansion of its Alternatives to Incarceration Program (ATI). The ATI program works with survivors of domestic violence who have been charged with crimes related to their abuse. STEPS provides clients with counseling and court advocacy in an effort to reduce or dismiss their criminal charges. Until now, the ATI program worked with felony cases. Its recent expansion allows the program to also work with clients who have been charged with misdemeanor crimes. As part of this expansion, we are pleased to welcome two new staff members, Rebecca Holmes and Lucia Dundara, who will help STEPS serve clients of the ATI program.

## FAMILIES IN TRANSITION

Supervisor: Laura Lombardi, LCSW

Separation and divorce can be very painful and confusing for children. STEPS' *Families in Transition* program focuses on alleviating the impact of this experience for families by working with divorcing and separating parents to emphasize the strength of the parent-child relationship and how they can best use this to support their children through this difficult period of change and adjustment.

*Families in Transition* is a New York State credentialed Parent Education course for divorcing or separating adults/parents and the first of its kind in New York City. This 7 hour class provides a space for divorcing or separating parents to explore how to support their children about what is happening to the family and practice different parenting techniques that work best between themselves and their former partners, if there are no safety concerns. This class is intimately designed to give parents practical tools and guidelines to help reduce the stress of their breakup on their children and to help assure the overall well-being of children whose parents are divorcing or separating. Parents receive a resource packet for services in New York City if they need additional support.

*Families in Transition* accepts referrals from the courts as well as voluntary participants. *Families in Transition* is located in the Wall Street area in a secure building to ensure confidentiality and safety. The first and only fee-for-service program at STEPS, *Families in Transition* is supported by payments from participants on a sliding scale basis. Those who have successfully completed the program receive a certificate of compliance from the State.

Laura Lombardi, LCSW, Director of the *Families in Transition* program, and Martha Hauze, LCSW, Senior Social Worker of the *Families in Transition* program, co-authored the parent education curriculum approved by the New York State Education Advisory Board. Program Coordinator Regina Zlotina oversees the *Families in Transition* program implementation.



## **CHILDREN'S THERAPY PROGRAM**

**Supervisor: Laura Lombardi, LCSW**

The *Children's Therapy Program* at STEPS offers services that meet the unique needs of children exposed to domestic violence. Through services, such as individual therapy for children, children's groups, family/sibling counseling, parenting groups, family art therapy groups, special events, and referrals to other agencies, children are offered a nurturing environment to begin to heal from the effects of family violence.

The *Children's Therapy Program* fosters healing and development in children between the ages of 3-14 years through individual therapy and children's therapy groups. To fully support these children, there is no maximum length of participation in the program. Children are assessed for appropriateness every six months. Each child's treatment plan is individually tailored to meet the needs of the child.

In February 2005, the *Children's Therapy Program* received a four-year grant from the Family Trust Fund of the New York State Office for Children and Family Services to continue to provide services for children exposed to domestic violence. In 2006, the program provided services to over 50 children. Many of these children were also able to participate in a successful event at the New York Hall of Science in Queens.

The *Children's Therapy Program* has a proven track record of positive outcomes for its participants: improved grades, increased interaction with parent(s), improved relationship skills, improved ability to express feelings, increased involvement with after school activities, and a decreased number of negative written and verbal reports by teachers. The program strives to strengthen each child's support systems by offering a variety of opportunities that create healthy self-esteem, a sense of belonging and identity, and safety and security.



## **TAKING STEPS AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

**Supervisor: Lucia Riviuccio, LCSW**

*Taking STEPS Against Domestic Violence (Taking STEPS)* is STEPS' non-residential domestic violence services program. The union of legal, clinical, and case management services has proven to be an effective framework for *Taking STEPS*. The program provides an array of services, including hotline counseling, education, advocacy, individual and group counseling, and legal services to women affected by domestic violence.

The staff are experienced professionals who work with a variety of populations and issues. *Taking STEPS* collaborates with numerous community organizations to provide the utmost support for survivors of domestic violence and referrals can be made for very specific issues. *Taking STEPS* staff is available for on-site staff trainings, clinical consultations, legal clinics, and DV education or support groups for other agencies and have presented for many community-based organizations, PTAs, and religious groups. *Taking STEPS* staff also speak a number of languages including Spanish, Arabic, Russian, Italian, French, Romanian, Creole, and American Sign Language.



*Taking STEPS* has worked with over 470 women and their children since we started in October of 2003! Our staff continue to work tirelessly in advocating for their clients in court and with many other services as well as provide counseling and safety planning. This year we added two more support groups - one in Spanish & one in English - to join the Creative Arts group and the Graduate support group.

# STEPPING STONES TO SUCCESS

Supervisor: Savannah Lilly, MA

Developed in 2001, *Stepping Stones To Success* (*Stepping Stones*) is STEPS' youngest program that is geared towards incarcerated and formerly incarcerated mothers. As a TANF-funded employment readiness program, *Stepping Stones* provides services to prepare clients for employment and/or vocational training. The overall goals are to place each individual in a job or training program and foster growth and self-sufficiency. Through the use of our curriculum, participants are fully supported to successfully transition back into the workforce.

*Stepping Stones* offers a number of resources, including case management, advocacy, individual/family counseling, legal assistance with employment-related issues, workshops, vocational/educational outreach, Adult Basic Education/GED preparation services, outside referrals, resume and interview preparation, job search, mentorship and internships, recreational services, follow-up services, employer support services, and work opportunity tax credit referrals. Services are provided in both local and state prisons as well as at the STEPS offices in East Harlem with no educational or vocational requirements for enrollment.

The significance of *Stepping Stones* is insurmountable; the program works with mothers who are seeking to end their dependence on public assistance while gaining invaluable life skills. Each graduate is essentially *stepping* towards self-empowerment and economic independence whether she is beginning her job search or completing studies for a high school diploma. Furthermore, support and job development services are available on an ongoing basis, before and after full time employment has been obtained. *Stepping Stones* offers client-specific services and has maintained an open-door policy since the program's inception. In the past year, more than 60 women have participated in and have benefited from the knowledge, direction, stability, encouragement, and hope offered by the *Stepping Stones* staff.

## MISSION STATEMENT

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.

## Did you know...

- 85 to 90% of all STEPS ATI cases have been reduced or dismissed.
- Most women prisoners are domestic violence survivors.
- 17% - 46% of lesbians & gay men report abuse by a current or former partner.
- Of 57 domestic homicides occurring in NYS between 1990 and 1997, 75% of the victims had ended the relationship or stated an intention to end it at the time of their death.
- Slightly more than half of female victims of intimate partner violence live in households with children under the age of 12.
- In a survey of over four thousand high school students, about 1 in 5 female students reported being physically and/or sexually abused by a dating partner.

Sources: NYS Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence, Domestic Violence Data Sheet, [www.opdv.state.ny.us/about\\_dv/dataweb2003.html](http://www.opdv.state.ny.us/about_dv/dataweb2003.html); Coalition for Women Prisoners; STEPS: Alternatives to Incarceration Program Brochure



# STEPS



## STEPS TO END FAMILY VIOLENCE *In the Community*

### *Caroling in Brooklyn, Spreading the Joy*

On December 10<sup>th</sup>, friends and staff members of STEPS to End Family Violence celebrated the holiday season by caroling their way through Brooklyn Heights and Cobble Hill.



### *World Keys: Music to our Ears*

Community members and clients can now purchase the CD of world renowned pianist Joel Fan from STEPS to End Family Violence. Those who would like to enjoy his music may purchase his new CD *World Keys* for \$20 by contacting Lucia Riviuccio at 212-401-4200, ext. 105 or by email at [lriviuccio@egscf.org](mailto:lriviuccio@egscf.org). All of the proceeds will be donated to STEPS!

### **\*Thanks to our funders:**

- New York City Human Resources Administration: Domestic Violence Services
- New York City Criminal Justice Coordinator's Office
- New York State Division of Probation and Criminal Justice Alternatives
- New York State Office of Children and Family Services
- Center for Court Innovation
- Fund for the City of New York
- Sills Family Foundation
- Lincoln Fund
- Mary Clancy Charities
- Whistler Family Foundation
- Congregation of Notre Dame
- Church of the Heavenly Rest
- Church of the Epiphany
- Annunciation Church
- And most of all many, many wonderful individuals!

# STEPS To End Family Violence

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A Program of Edwin Gould Services for Children and Families

Editors: Amy Ferguson and Grace Lee

## STEPS Interns and Volunteers

This past fall, STEPS welcomed 5 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, and children of STEPS!

### Children's Therapy Program

Cathy Donoso	Columbia University
Emily Weisenbach	Columbia University

### Alternatives to Incarceration

Amy Ferguson	Columbia University
Grace Lee	Columbia University
Josie White	Columbia University
Chitra Aiyar, JD	NYU Law School '04
Ada Chan	Fordham University

