

What is a home to you? Is it safety, comfort, stability and love? Are there people there who will support you and advocate on your behalf? Does it provide some of your most basic needs as well as keep you rooted in your community?

Located in Council Bluffs, Catholic Charities' Phoenix House Domestic Violence Shelter and Sexual Abuse Program provides home and shelter to victims and their children. Phoenix House also offers an array of services to victims of domestic violence and sexual assault to Harrison, Pottawattamie, Mills, Fremont, Shelby, Audubon, Cass, Montgomery and Page counties in southwest Iowa. Services available include a 24/7 crisis line, legal advocacy, individual and group counseling, 24-hour hospital response to victims of domestic violence and sexual assault, and prevention education.

Each situation is unique, like the assistance provided to a woman who needed help in filing a protective order against her abuser. She told staff that she would have been overwhelmed at the courthouse and probably would have left because she would have been too intimidated to ask anyone for help. By working with Phoenix House staff, she successfully navigated the often confusing and daunting court system. Last year, over 525 individuals received criminal justice support from Phoenix House staff, and 255 were assisted in filing protective orders.

Phoenix House also offers assistance through educational and support groups. *Take Back My Life* is a 12 session group that uses cognitive behavior therapy (CBT) model to help people with emotional distress due to experience/s of domestic violence and/or sexual abuse. The purpose of this class is to help participants understand their negative emotional thoughts and behaviors and to learn to manage the distress they experience so they can change their lives in positive way. When asked what she learned in class one participant said, "Just being here knowing I'm not the only one feeling bad or lonely. I'm glad to be part of this class." In another group offered at Phoenix House, a participant in the *Journey Beyond Abuse* class found comfort, "...knowing that I can set an example for my son so he can grow up to be a great man and treat people, and especially women, with respect and have great relationships with others. I am going to go home tonight and have a special bonding time with my son and make sure that he knows and will never forget how much he means to me".

Staff reach out to teenagers by presenting a ten-week curriculum on healthy relationships in middle and high schools. They also work on college campuses teaching students about sexual assault and give them strategies to intervene safely and effectively when they might witness a sexual assault.

Prevention education is provided in the community through programs like *Coaching Boys into Men*. The program equips athletic coaches with strategies and resources they can use with their young male athletes to build attitudes and behaviors that prevent relationship abuse, harassment, and sexual assault. It enables athletic coaches to help shape the attitudes and behaviors of young male athletes.

Catholic Charities' Phoenix House works towards creating a community free of violence where each individual is respected and valued. They believe that no one deserves to be abused for any reason, and work toward the empowerment of all victim/survivors, and respect an individual's ability to make choices for themselves. For more information go to www.CatholicCharitiesDM.org.