



SAFE

By: Crystal Miller

What is SAFE? S.A.F.E. stands for Sheltered Aid for Families in Emergencies and it provides counseling and intervention for victims of domestic violence, rape, sexual assault, and incest. They also promote the prevention of violence against any individual through community education as well as educational programming.

The SAFE shelter is a home in which women and children will receive support and safety in emergency crisis situations. This provides a way for these individuals to escape violence and abuse. SAFE will also assist men by helping them to find a safe refuge when they are victims of domestic violence, rape, sexual assault, and incest. This organization provides 24-hour crisis services along with counseling by trained staff and volunteers. The staff and volunteers educate clients in issues of empowerment, self-esteem, parenting, skill development, and independent living.

SAFE empowers an individual by providing them with the building blocks they need to improve their situation while encouraging the victim that they can make it. SAFE also provides parenting skills in behavior management of children as well as providing parents with nutritional training so they can provide healthy meals for their children. S.A.F.E. offers a wide range of job referrals and assists victims in increasing their job skills so that they may support themselves and their family. Ultimately the goal of the staff and volunteers is to enable the victim to become independent of their abuser.

Other resources that one could find at the S.A.F.E. shelter are food, clothing, toiletry items, household goods, and furniture for those in need. Support groups are available for abused women, where they can share their experiences, learn from other women in their situation, and find the strength to escape an abusive relationship. They also provide emergency financial assistance to some extent, assistance with social services and housing, as well as civil and criminal processes.

One important aspect of S.A.F.E. and their educational goals is the cycle of violence. By teaching people about this cycle they hope to enable victims of domestic violence to recognize the difference in a loving relationship and a dangerous one. Once an individual chooses a partner and falls in love many things can happen. The two may live happily ever after or in worst case scenarios, the cycle of violence will begin. The first step of the cycle consists of minor arguments, anger incidents, jealousy, possessiveness, and controlling behavior. The second step is often when violent behavior starts. This would be described as acute battering and the abuser appears to have lost control. The last cycle is referred to as the honeymoon stage. The abuser is loving and kind, apologetic, and promises to never lose control again. Most often the cycle continues and tension will build until the violent behavior is present once again. The whole cycle surrounds the victim's denial of any problem.

It is also important to understand that abuse takes many forms; it is not only physical. It can also be emotional or psychological. Economic abuse is another form in which the abuser keeps financial resources from the victim. This way the victim has no means of survival except through the abuser. Sexual abuse or forced sexual behavior, threats, isolation, or intimidation are all forms of abuse and should always be treated with the same stigma as that of physical abuse.

If you are in a violent relationship, have been raped, sexually assaulted, or are a victim of incest, you can find help and the friend you need at SAFE. The 24-hour a day crisis line number is 838-SAFE or the office number is 667-7656.

S.A.F.E. is always in need of volunteers for their crisis line, sharing time with shelter women and children, shelter maintenance and repair, public awareness programs and fundraising activities. Donations are also accepted. S.A.F.E. tries to give all children who come a new teddy bear. Perhaps you could make a donation of a teddy bear to brighten a child's day.

Information provided by: Regina Miller, SAFE Weekend Services Coordinator