

Finding Strength and Safety

By Suzy Devers

The Women's Crisis & Family Outreach Center
Offers Women and Their Children a Hand Up

After being hospitalized for injuries from her husband, Nancy turned to the Women's Crisis & Family Outreach Center (WCFOC) in Douglas County. Nancy needed help finding a primary-care physician to provide follow-up care for her injuries.

The women's center put Nancy in touch with Doctor's Care, a non-profit organization that provides affordable health-care based on a sliding fee. This hand up helped Nancy get the medical attention she needed so she could start a life on her own and provide for her three children.

According to Jennifer Walker, the Executive Director of WCFOC, the center offers services well beyond providing a temporary safe haven for women and their children. "Our mission is to remove the barriers to a violence-free life," she says.

Examples of barriers to leaving an abusive relationship include lack of financial resources, as in Nancy's case, lack of self esteem, a scarcity of shelters, extreme isolation from family and friends, fear for one's physical well-being and cultural pressures to save the marriage at all costs despite the violence.

"We take a holistic approach and meet the woman where she is," Walker says, acknowledging the fact that each woman comes to the shelter with a range of different needs. In addition to offering 12 beds and an around-the-clock staff, the center provides on-going support services, such as assistance with financial planning, emotional support from experienced therapists and help navigating the criminal justice system.

The WCFOC also partners with the Douglas County School District to provide outreach programs to children who are often traumatized after witnessing violence. The programs, which include classes about conflict resolution and anger management, strive to give children the coping skills they need to stay in school.

Domestic violence is the number one violent crime in Douglas and Elbert counties. During the past five years, requests for services from the WCFOC have risen 208 percent.

The financial support that Parker Adventist Hospital provides to the WCFOC helps provide victims of domestic violence with the resources they need to break free from abusive relationships and heal from their trauma.