

Family Renewal Shelter's Twentieth Christmas 2006

"I feel safe here!" – a 9 year old girl at the shelter

Often when people hear the word shelter they think of buildings and we have been blessed with beautiful, protected and functional buildings. But, when we think of Family Renewal Shelter we can't help but think of the changed lives and new beginnings for the thousands of people we have had the privilege to serve. We hope that the words of this valiant woman will encourage your heart this Christmas season.

One Survivor's Story

What makes Family Renewal Shelter special? I want to share with you how it has helped me to shape and define my own life.

I was so traumatized by the time Family Renewal Shelter accepted me into their shelter that it took weeks before my mind and spirit could begin to comprehend that my physical self was finally safe. This shelter is especially designed for the worst case scenario of domestic violence victims. We women arrive with many or all of the symptoms found in prisoners of war. We are physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually battered almost to the point of extinction. Our very lives are at stake. If we are seen or found by our abusers we are quite simply dead. And possibly so are the people who have been protecting us.

Family Renewal Shelter is not just another well meant strategically placed band-aid. It is a true (and for some, this woman included) last chance to stop running. It is a chance to live without daily terror and to stop seeing your abuser in every single man who even remotely resembles him. It is a chance to break the cycle of "being a victim." We humans are not born to be victims. Being a victim is a learned behavior and for many of us the process has been a part of our entire lifetime.

Upon entering the shelter we are provided a chance to slow down from the flight or fight pattern our lives had become accustomed to. This gives us time to recognize and internalize the truth that we are finally *safe*. Accepting this and beginning the long, slow and often just as painful path to recovery is as much a process as becoming a victim had been. Family Renewal Shelter realizes this. We, the women and children, are lovingly and gently nurtured to the point where we are capable of being responsible for the rest of our own recovery processes.

Surrounded by beauty and genuine caring, we are presented with a bounty of resources. Books, video and audio tapes are available, as well as notebooks, pens, pencils and highlighter markers. There is a self defense program which enables us to begin to feel empowered to protect ourselves as well as exercise tapes and supervised programs because the staff at Family Renewal Shelter recognizes that we women have to rebuild ourselves from our battered souls outward to our physical selves. There is a weekly Bible study offered to all. There is a Tech room which houses, among other things, a bank of computers where one can go online for resources; practice using the latest in word processing programs and work on ones clerical and office skills. Sewing classes are available as is every conceivable type of craft material – from counted cross stitching to yarn for knitting and crocheting to kits for making the first replacements of lost Christmas and seasonal decorations! Their pet kenneling program allowed me to bring my beloved dog, Jeb, with me and these years later he is still a daily comfort and always faithful friend. I also observed while at the shelter the comfort afforded through their onsite pet therapy program to women like me and their children.

There is an old saying, “Give a man a fish and you’ve fed him once. Teach him to fish and you will feed him for a lifetime.” At Family Renewal Shelter we are not being given our fish! Instead we are being led to relearn how to fish for ourselves. We are sheltered, fed and clothed, but the emphasis is, again, on recovery and helping us get prepared to move on from this shelter to transitional situations where we will continue learning and discovering the key to recovering from domestic violence. A lot of us women, myself included, are given chances through Family Renewal Shelter that we have never had before in our entire lives, including a scholarship program which is there to help re-educate, or for some, to educate ourselves for the first time. This makes it possible for us to enter the work force with a viable skill or trade, enabling some of us to be self-supporting for the first time in our entire lives!

We all enter Family Renewal Shelter at various stages of despondency and despair. Once there, we are all given the chance to grab hold of life – a new safe life based on faith and the ability to grow and embrace a life freed from abuse – Prisoners of war no longer.

To be able to touch a heart shattered by pain, to reach a soul shriveled with terror, this is a gift. And for the women who come to Family Renewal Shelter it is literally the gift of life. This Christmas I hope you will help the Shelter to offer more women like me the chance at a new and positive future. God bless and keep each and everyone of you whose love, time and generosity has made it possible for me, *and hundreds of women like me*, to live again.

Sincerely,

Kim

Dearest Friend and Supporter of Family Renewal Shelter:

I can't tell you how thankful we all are to reach this wonderful milestone of twenty years of helping our most vulnerable neighbors to first stay alive and then move on to lives worth living.

We honor the memories of our co-founders Beverly Harrison and Barbara Nixon who sacrificed greatly to see this shelter started. In these twenty years through the generous support of donors like you and our hundreds of volunteers we have now helped thousands of women, children and men to find safety, peace and new lives.

Whether we are accepting families who have traveled from other states, or helping local families travel great distances to find safety, it is always encouraging to hear from those we have helped that we have made a real difference in their lives. Those who are our supporters and volunteers should also be encouraged by the important role that they play in making our work productive.

We always have challenges and this year has been no exception, but we are celebrating the many changed lives that we have been blessed to be a part of. Our staff and Board of Directors have great and exciting plans for 2007, which we see as a year of new beginnings.

Will you please join us if you haven't, and if you have, please continue to invest in Family Renewal Shelter? We look forward to fulfilling our mission in the future. *Family Renewal Shelter is a Christian humanitarian organization dedicated to bringing healing hope and a new life to victims of domestic violence.* With your help we can.

During this Christmas season, may you and your loved ones be blessed with the true spirit and message of Christmas and may God's peace, love and joy fill your hearts.

Grateful for twenty wonderful years,

Keith Galbraith
Executive Director



Why give gift cards?

We're so grateful to everyone who supports our efforts to share joy at Christmas with gifts of presents, food and so many other things for the women and children.

This year we are asking our friends to consider giving gift cards. Here's why. Gift cards are much appreciated because they allow a freedom that most of our residents have not experienced. Women are able to get what they really need and want for themselves and their children as well as experience the joy of shopping that we all take for granted.

Any excess gift cards that we might receive at Christmas will be used for birthdays and other special occasions throughout the upcoming year. Thanks so much.



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Celebrate our 20th Christmas with us

Here's how you can help today!

Support

1. *Return the enclosed envelope with your Christmas or year-end gift.*
2. *Online. Go to our website (www.domesticviolencehelp.org) select "donate" and follow the directions –OR go to www.networkforgood.org, type in FAMILY RENEWAL SHELTER, WA. and follow their directions. Our website is still under construction; networkforgood.org has a lot of good information about our shelter. Both options are **secure**.*
3. *Donate through United Way of Pierce County WA Donor voice program, FAMILY RENEWAL SHELTER #2420, or give through the WA State Employee Combined Fund Drive.*
4. *We also provide opportunities for major gifts, donations of land, vehicles, and other real estate property as well as bequests.*

Thanks again for 20 blessed Christmases at Family Renewal Shelter

FRS is a 501 (c)(3) tax-exempt charity founded in 1986. Our Federal tax identification number is 91-1347741, and we are registered with the state of Washington Charities Division. They can be contacted at 1-800-332-GIVE. We are funded by private contributions from businesses, community service organizations, individuals, and churches. All of our services are free and no monies come from government funding.

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