



## United Way of Tri-County's Women's Leadership Council Funds Mini-Grants

Six programs and/or events that address education on domestic violence prevention and building a stronger self-image for girls have been awarded funding from the Women's Leadership Council.

The programs to be funded include the following:

### **Stand By Me: Women and Girls Honoring Their Voices and Visions**

#### **The Girls Center in Walpole**

This 9-month long program will offer a two-pronged approach to empowerment for women and girls, addressing both the issue of preventing domestic violence, and the timely topic of bullying and violence in our schools.

For adult women, there will be two offerings: the first being a speakers' series, entitled "In Celebration of Women". This will be a monthly offering from September, 2010 through May, 2011, in which women from a wide variety of backgrounds will share their journeys, challenges and successes. Separately, the program will offer an ongoing support forum specifically for those directly affected by domestic violence.

For girls, a school-based program that teaches them how to create their own safe and healthy environment will be offered. The girls learn techniques to promote problem-solving and other creative skills to prevent bullying and similar behaviors in a more natural and positive way, rather than simply telling kids "don't be a bully." In addition they will be developing a partnership program with school children in Rwanda, the majority of whom are from families that were killed in the genocide. Through this program children will discover the positive effects of being in creative service to Rwandan children, as well as the harmful consequences of community conflict.

The Girls Center will be able to provide these offerings thanks to its strong collaboration with many civic groups in the area, including the Walpole and Norwood school systems, Women at Work Museum, Lesley College, and several other organizations that provide counseling and education regarding domestic violence.

### **Domestic Violence Education for Immigrant Women**

#### **HEAL**

Health Education and Advocacy for Latinos (HEAL) will be forming an advocacy program aimed at women who find themselves victims of domestic violence in a place where they may not understand the language, the laws, or where to find the help they need. It will focus on the immigrant population of Milford, and work in conjunction with local churches that serve this population, along with the local police force, and other community organizations. HEAL will assist these women to overcome and remove barriers to sorely needed services, such as counseling, education, finding housing and employment, and helping children to cope with the situation.

## **“Know Your Rights”**

**MetroWest Legal Services, Framingham, MA**

This 5-week series will provide knowledge on issues in which victims of domestic violence might have to be involved. Aimed particularly at immigrant victims of domestic violence, this series will be led by lawyers from MWLC, and will cover such topics as restraining orders and harassment, divorce, legal rights and benefits. The goal will be to empower attendees through information and education in a supportive environment. Other trained staff will also be on hand to assist the attendees with non-legal related issues.

## **Multi-Media Contest to Promote Healthy Relationships**

**South Middlesex Opportunity Council, Framingham, MA**

This will be a community-based venture, in which Framingham high school girls will both learn and educate each other about what makes a healthy relationship. Its goal is to raise awareness in order to empower girls and reduce teen dating violence. The program will be a multi-media contest, inviting entries in four categories: video, art, poetry and performance. The contest will launch in September, and will culminate in October (Domestic Violence Awareness Month,) and will result in a poster that may be used for publicizing the issues involved.

## **Clothesline Project at Milford High School**

**Wayside Youth & Family**

This program is especially for girls who have experienced sexual or dating violence, incest, bullying, racial hatred, or a similar violent, hurtful experience. With the help of trained professional staff, the girls are asked to create a t-shirt that expresses their feelings about what they have experienced. This day-long art project will be a major step in these girls' recovery from damaging events, and an opportunity to help replace violence with respect, safety, and tolerance.

## **Girls Circle: Violence Prevention Education for Middle School Girls**

**YWCA of Central Mass**

The WLC will help fund a larger program that the YWCA will run, in towns served by the Clinton District Court. This area includes four communities served by United Way of Tri-County: Clinton, Bolton, Berlin and Lancaster.

The Girls Circle is a research-based emerging technique, which teaches middle school girls skills and practices in a specific format that is designed to increase positive connections, personal and collective strengths, and competence in girls. The 8-10 week curriculum includes discussion themes such as friendship, body image, connections between mind and body, expressing individuality, relationships with peers and adults, self-identity, and paths to the future. Studies have shown that this approach helps girls find growth in self-efficacy and relationships with others.