

JANUARY NEWSNOTE



January 12, 2015

I want everyone in Handmade to know about our January 7 meeting at Concepts in Yarn where Sister Anne Kelley, executive director of the Good Shepherd Shelter, talked to us about domestic violence and especially about its prevention. If you attended the Jan. 7 event, you know how interesting her comments were. If you didn't, here's your chance to find out.



Sister Anne at Concepts in Yarn on Jan. 7, 2015

Sister Anne emphasized that the “abuser” learned abuse by watching it probably in his family during his childhood. She stressed that the foundation of the Good Shepherd’s very successful program is that since abuse is “learned,” it can also be “unlearned.” The Good Shepherd gears its program toward the children who arrive there with their mothers. Every aspect of the program at the Good Shepherd goes toward unlearning abuse and learning alternate ways of talking, acting, feeling, that teach the children to act differently than their parents did.

Of course, the Good Shepherd also works with the abused woman. The shelter is very selective about which women and families they accept into their program, one of the reasons for their very high success rate (92%). They make sure that the women they include already understand that they personally are not responsible for the abuse. They also choose only women who understand that AA (and similar organizations for other addictions besides alcohol) are not the cure for their abusers’ actions. Sister Anne explained, much to our amazement, that attending AA, etc. often makes things worse for the victims, because it takes away the

abuser's "pain pills," drugs and alcohol. Finally, the Good Shepherd Shelter accepts only women whose abusers witnessed abuse in their families.

After her initial comments, Sister Anne answered questions. Members of our group asked several times and in several different ways about alcohol being an important cause of domestic violence. Each time Sister Anne was emphatic that alcohol and drugs were not "causes." Even "anger" isn't a cause so "anger management" classes aren't a solution, especially because they are court ordered and not voluntary. "Abuse," she said, "is about control, not anger. The abuser wants the victim to focus on him, his needs, only. Abuse frequently starts when the woman becomes pregnant, because she starts thinking about the developing child, rather than her partner." (As an aside, a major cause of birth defects is abuse during pregnancy.)

Another surprising strategy recommended by the Good Shepherd Shelter is that even though they have all kinds of legal services for the woman who seek their protection, they counsel the women to wait to begin divorce proceedings. Their experience shows that if they initiate divorce soon after the woman leaves, the negotiations are very messy, long, and drawn-out. If the woman waits a year or so, the abuser has already found a new partner to adore him and cater to his every need. He is much readier to move on.

The Good Shepherd Shelter is the leader among abuse prevention shelters. They do not receive financial support from the government or from the Catholic Church. As a result, they have created their own program based on what works for the abused women and their children, with the ultimate goal of breaking the domestic violence cycle. As Sister Anne told us: "We make our own rules, so we can break our own rules." They share their outlook and methods with other shelters.

Finally, we asked Sister Anne about what we could do for the children, since she believes helping them "unlearn" abuse is crucial to preventing them from becoming abusive adults. She answered, "Make scarves for them." The Good Shepherd typically houses 12 families, right now 12 mothers and 45 children are under their protection. We are taking her suggestion seriously. We are planning to develop patterns for scarves for small, medium, and large (up to 12 years old) children. We want patterns for boys, since we easily can adapt our regular comfort scarf patterns for girls. In the case of children, it's the handmadeness of the gift that's important, not so much that the gift is a scarf. So hats might be good too. And friendship bracelets. If you have patterns to share, we'd love to see them.



Handmade participants listening to Sister Anne at Concepts in Yarn

If you'd like to know more about the Good Shepherd Shelter or Sister Anne, here is a link to their website: <http://www.goodshepherdshelter.org/>

Handmade is deep into making kits, scarves and wrapping and shipping. We want to thank all our volunteers and donors who helped us reach our goal (12,100 scarves shipped in 2014), but will do so in the next Newsnote. In the meantime, please remember that we always need more scarves, more yarn, and more money.

If you want to donate scarves, yarn, or actual \$\$\$\$, please mail to:

Handmade Especially for You c/o Leslye Borden
30065 Grandpoint Lane
Rancho Palos Verdes CA 90275

You can also donate \$\$\$\$ through PayPal. We have a link on our website: www.handmadeespecially.org

Thanks in advance for however you support Handmade Especially for You. I appreciate, and so do all the abused women who receive our comfort scarves. And, yes, we will send a formal receipt for your records once we receive your donation.

Sincerely,

Leslye Borden, Founder
Handmade Especially for You

501(c)3 EIN: 26-3529292

Handmade Especially for You is a 501(c)(3) tax exempt non-profit charity, so your donation is tax-deductible. We provide appropriate receipts for all donations. 100% of cash donations go toward helping abused women, paying for shipping scarves to shelters, etc.