

Chamber Corner-News of the Forney Area Chamber of Commerce

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Susan White and Mary Clemons, founders of The Victory House in Terrell, were the featured guest speakers during the March 5 general membership business meeting of the Forney Area Chamber of Commerce.

The two speakers were introduced by Chamber member Fay Headley

The Victory House is part of Healing Hearts Ministry, and it is the first transitional housing in Kaufman County for victims of domestic violence.

Susan White spoke first. She related how the concept for The Victory House grew from a church testimony by a domestic abuse survivor, and how the concept grew from an idea into a ministry to heal broken lives.

Ms. White, herself a survivor of domestic abuse, told Chamber members that Victory House clients range in age from 4 to 84. They can be either male or female.

"Many times, clients are hesitant when they first come in because they don't know us and because they're embarrassed," Mrs. White said. She went on to say, however, that clients shed their sense of reticence and embarrassment as they fill out paperwork.

In filling out their applications for help, clients are asked to describe their first three instances of abuse, Mrs. White said. The Victory House staff takes this and other information from the application and uses it to determine the client's needs.

The staff also goes into area high schools to raise awareness about domestic violence and abuse. (Abusive relationship patterns often develop as dating habits are formed in the teenage years.)

Ms. White added that law enforcement agencies in Kaufman County get an average of 700 domestic violence calls very year.

Mary Clemons, also a survivor of domestic abuse, added that abuse victims are often forced to walk away from their whole life. Many domestic abuse victims are usually driven from their homes, and they and their children come to domestic abuse shelters without money, sometimes without transportation, and often without even an extra change of clothes. Sometimes the adult victim is stalked by the abuser. Ms. Clemons said the task of The Victory House is "to help victims become self-sufficient and to stand on their own two feet."

The Victory House shelter is still a work in progress. It has cost Ms. White and Ms. Clemons \$100,000 to purchase the home and make upgrade to the property. They give annual operating expenses for the shelter at \$75,000.00. Current financial supporters are the Kaufman County United Way, Betenbough Ministries, the Office of the Texas Attorney General, and private pledges and fund raising.

Facts about domestic abuse

- Domestic violence is a crime.
- Domestic violence occurs among all races, ages and religions. It happens to people of all ages and income levels.
- Researchers estimate that 3 to 4 million women are beaten in their homes each year by their husbands or partners.
- A battering incident is rarely an isolated occurrence. It usually occurs frequently and escalates in severity over time.
- Attacks by husbands on wives result in more injuries that require medical treatment than rape, auto accidents, and muggings combined.
- Thirty per cent of the women murdered in this country are killed by their husbands, ex-husbands, or boyfriends.