



Help and Healing for
Victims of Violence

Witness Justice e-Newsletter

April 2008

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On the Mend: Pat Risser and the Stoney Creek Sewing Club

A stitch in time saves nine, but in this pioneering program for troubled youths in Ashland, Ohio, it does much more than that. It saves lives.

The Stoney Creek Club, founded by Pat Risser and his wife Trish, offers a safe-haven where kids can escape the physical and emotional abuse they often experience at home. Stories of molestation and physical violence are a common thread uniting many club members.

"The kids pay huge consequences for the actions of their parents," Pat Risser notes. Often, these consequences are borne from poverty and a struggle to survive. One child comes from a family of ten who share a two-bedroom apartment. The seven girls share one bedroom, and the three boys share the other. The mother, father, aunt, and uncle, and a baby share the

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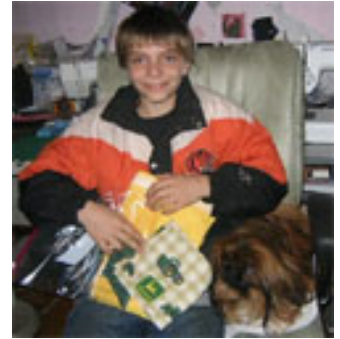
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living room. Another child, who had a hard time concentrating, admitted that she hadn't eaten for three days. But she can always count on a meal at the Rissers, who keep out snacks for the kids who come to sew but also to mend.

Risser's program allows empowerment to kids often left powerless by the circumstances. The pride in accomplishment that comes from completing a work such as a quilt brings with it a sense of success and ownership. Sometimes, the group works toward a goal. For example, the group is sewing baby-sized quilts to give to newborns at a local hospital.



Chance threaded the needle that began the Stoney Creek Sewing Club. Pat Risser, a consumer and survivor, and his wife Trish had moved into a house adjacent to a low-income apartment complex. One day while Risser was out walking his pet Pekingese, a few kids from the apartment complex asked if they could pet the dogs. Risser offered them a way to make some pocket change: they could walk his dogs. One time when the kids came to pick up the dogs, they noticed Trish, whom Pat characterizes as "the heart and soul" of the program, sewing and asked if they could try. Word spread, and a few weeks later, more children appeared at the Risser home to learn about sewing. The Stoney Creek Sewing club was born.

As many as thirty kids aged 5-14 frequent the club, which is centered in the Rissers' basement, but the club does more than create quilts. Since its inception, the Stoney Creek Club has grown to include additional activities coordinated by the Rissers and other interested adults. The Rissers and volunteers, like Molly Smith and her brother Bob Brownson, teach everything from sewing to watercolor painting to a "girls day" run by a licensed cosmetologist. Sometimes the club will host cooking days and on occasion the always-popular "Chocolate Day." Regardless of the activity, the club unites troubled kids with positive adult role models, something missing in many of the participants' lives. Kids love the sewing, but perhaps the club is really about mending; it may just patch the holes left by extreme poverty, abusive parents, or both.



A stitch in time saves nine, or in other words, preparation can save time and the damaging effects of trauma later. Pat Risser is hoping that quilting along with the other activities done at the Stoney Creek Club will prevent the need for repairs later. "I believe," Risser says, "that

It's worth "checking" out!

Lights! Camera! Advocacy!

John Walsh, host of television's ***America's Most Wanted***, and Rep. Patrick Kennedy (D-RI), co-chair of the Congressional Caucus on Addition, Treatment and Recovery, appear in a new 4-minute informational video on Witness Justice. [Click here](#) to view the video.



one of the surest ways to create a 'mentally ill' adult is to abuse, neglect or otherwise traumatize them as a child. The fact that we're helping these low-income kids is probably the best mental illness 'prevention' around. I'm hoping that our ounce of prevention will forestall the need for pound of cure."

VAWA Funding for FY '09 Passed

Support for the Biden VAWA Budget Amendment Paid Off

The FY '09 budget for the Violence Against Women Act was in serious jeopardy last month with President Bush's proposed budget cuts for both VAWA and the Victims of Crime Act.

On March 26, the Senate unanimously passes the amendment that increases the former budget by \$100 million dollars. The additional funding will help support VAWA programs.

For additional information, please visit <http://www.endabuse.org/vawa/>.

Board Member Profile of the Month

Maria Rodman

A spirited individual born in Cuba, Maria Rodman has many lifelong passions - most instilled in her at a young age by her parents. Her father taught her to dance, to love baseball (she is a Boston Red Sox fanatic), and most importantly, to know the value of good friends. Her mother taught her the joy and love of music, compassion for others, and the importance of family. Recently Maria has been soaking up the love and energy from her newest family member, Lucy, a happy little Golden Retriever puppy that regularly dictates their daily walking route. In her spare time, which isn't often, Maria also enjoys traveling, watching old movies and sports of all types.



As the Associate Executive Director of the Western Massachusetts Training Consortium, an organization created to ensure that people living with disabilities and/or the impact of abuse have a comprehensive resource to help enhance their lives through creating and influencing positive environmental change, Maria is able to extend the compassion -

taught by her mother- to those most in need. In addition to the extensive work she is doing with WMTC, Maria serves on the National Trauma Consortium - an organization formed to raise public awareness about violence and trauma, the effects of trauma, and the value of trauma-informed care.

Maria was the recipient of the "Living the Dream" award in recognition of her contributions to community service.

Clearly in line with the character and mission of Witness Justice, Maria has been a member of the WJ Board of Directors since 2005 and currently serves as the Interim Board Chair. As a board member, Maria has contributed to the substance of the organization by bringing her leadership and expertise to WJ and offering her compassion and creativity to those we serve. Maria strongly believes in working for and with trauma survivors, promoting the need and importance of trauma-informed practice in all systems (health, social, educational, correctional and others).

Hearts of Hope Scholarship Offers Hope for Family Members Left Behind

Foundation Will Award \$1,000 to Sibling Survivors

The Peyton Tuthill Foundation for Victim's Rights is a non-profit organization created in honor and memory of 23-year old Stephanie Lynn "Peyton" Tuthill, who was raped and brutally murdered in 1999 by an unsupervised probationer in Denver. Peyton's mother, Pat Tuthill, created the foundation after having to face the unbearable pain of losing her daughter and the reality of having to survive for her other child. Pat found comfort in advocating for victims and their families, and became very much involved in lobbying the states to amend and enforce "The Interstate Compact for Adult Offender Supervision," originally enacted in 1937. The new law went into effect in 2004 and by 2005 all 50 states, in addition to the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands adopted the Compact legislation.

The Hearts of Hope Scholarship was created to continue Peyton's legacy of helping and offering hope to others and provides scholarships to siblings and children who have been left behind by violent crime. Four scholarships of \$1,000 each will be awarded in July 2008. To apply, please visit <http://www.peyontuthill.org/Scholarship.html>.

Verizon's Velocity Program Helping Non-Profits

Verizon Velocity - Support Witness Justice

Funds will be used to advocate and offer support to victims of violence and trauma.

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- Verizon FOIS TV - \$20.00
- Verizon Freedom Calling Plans - \$10,00
- Verizon Long Distance - \$10.00
- Additional Line - \$10.00

* Visit Verizon.com for details

Calendar of Events

June 16 - International Study for Traumatic Stress Studies symposium on "Interventions for Traumatized Populations: An Expert Update" at College of Physicians - London, UK http://www.istss.org/resources/uk_symp.cfm

July 11-12 - National Center for Trauma Informed Care's "Dare to Transform" meeting at The Phoenix Park Hotel - Washington, DC http://mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/nctic/newsletter_12-2007.asp#dare

November 13-15 - International Study for Traumatic Stress Studies meeting on "Terror in the Aftermath" meeting at The Palmer House Hilton - Chicago, IL
<http://www.istss.org/meetings/index.cfm>

Witness Justice is a national, grassroots, nonprofit organization created by survivors for survivors. Our mission is to offer advocacy and support to victims of violence and trauma. Witness Justice offers support regardless of where a victim lives, when or where the crime occurred, or whether the crime was ever reported. For more information, visit www.WitnessJustice.org.

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