

breaking barriers

Spring 2009

A Quarterly Publication of Barrier Free Living Holding Corp., Inc.

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V-Day Performance Benefits Barrier Free Living



On April 25, a special V-Day performance of Eve Ensler's award winning show *The Vagina Monologues* will benefit Barrier Free Living (BFL) in its work addressing the emergency needs of disabled victims of domestic violence in crisis. The show will be performed at Manhattan's Theater 3 at 311 West 43rd Street (accessible to people with disabilities) with shows at 2 p.m. and 8 p.m.

For over 25 years, BFL has been helping people with disabilities who are homeless, and more recently working with disabled victims of domestic violence. V-Day is a global movement (running Feb. 14-April 30) to end violence against women and girls that raises funds and awareness through benefit productions of *The Vagina Monologues* and other artistic works.

Jenny Lambert, who organized, directed and



Photo: Jon Desrats

Back row L to R, cast members: Tracey Stone, Brianna Seagraves, Adriana Giangregorio, Raneshia Pitt, Galit Sklar. Front row L to R: Alexandra Devin, Constance Reardon, Jenny Marie Lambert

performs in the April 25 production, chose BFL as the beneficiary after viewing the agency website.

"When I logged on to the BFL website, it became immediately clear that the clientele of BFL are exactly the folks we are trying to reach out to and support," said Lambert. "I am especially impressed by Freedom House, not only the physical size of the structure, although the capacity to house so many

people is fantastic, but also the perseverance and hard work that went into the entire process of putting Freedom House together. To be the only agency in the United States to offer fully handicap accessible emergency housing to families who are escaping from situations of domestic violence...I am deeply impressed and grateful to find that such a place exists."

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Message From The COO

Donald Logan, Barrier Free Living's new Chief Operating Officer, shares his views on the unique quality of BFL's services and some accomplishments thus far this year.

Nationwide, 51.2 million people have some level of disability. Of all people who have disabilities, 32.5 million (12%) have a severe disability. This statistic, sadly, speaks directly to the need for an organization such as ours, which focuses on those individuals who have physical disabilities.

Barrier Free Living's Freedom House offers the only emergency domestic violence shelter in New York

State that is fully equipped and built to house people in wheelchairs, those who are blind, and those who are deaf or hard of hearing. Many of our residents come to us with their children, and we welcome them with open arms as well. (In some cases the child is the one with the disability and is also being abused). Services include, but are not limited to counseling, support groups, life skills training by occupational therapists, a child care center, and a computer center where older children can keep up with school.

A 2008 end of year internal evaluation of our Transitional Housing Program revealed that its permanent

housing placements had increased by 44% over the previous year! Since it is the mission of Barrier Free Living to help people with disabilities live dignified, secure and independent lives, we are especially proud of this accomplishment.

Barrier Free Living's non-residential domestic violence program, Secret Garden, has been helping people for more than 20 years. People who have at least one disability and who have either left, or are taking the first steps to leave, their abuser, have a safe place where they can get the help they so desperately need. The services include counseling, life skills training by



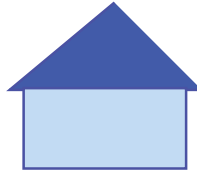
Donald Logan President/COO

occupational therapists, assistance with the often-confusing benefits process, and referrals to legal support agencies for help with the filing of protection orders.

We are also proud of our Outreach Team who are dedicated to assisting the homeless and physically disabled secure permanent housing, substance abuse treatment, benefits and therapeutic services.

FIGURES + FACTS

63 Number of clients placed in housing or reunited with family by BFL's Outreach Team over the past year.



44% The percentage increase in housing placements made by the Transitional Housing team at BFL this past year.

10 The miniscule number of hours per week currently funded to provide much-needed psychiatric services to disabled survivors of domestic violence at BFL's Secret Garden program.

200 Number of domestic violence client cases open at BFL's Secret Garden right now.

\$100,000 Amount of dollar funding to provide services to the children of domestic violence clients at BFL's Secret Garden.



3 Number of years Freedom House Emergency Shelter has been as of this month. Labeled one of the best shelters in the city for disabled victims of domestic violence and their families by the Office of Children and Family Services.

Domestic Violence Education: The Key to Change

By Molly Freyer, Assistant Director, BFL Non Residential Domestic Violence Program

Domestic violence against individuals with disabilities is a crime that all too often goes unrecognized and underreported. Education is an important aspect of ensuring that the issue of domestic violence and disability receives the attention that is warranted, as well as letting people know that services exist for those who are struggling with abuse.

Outreach to the community is a key component of Barrier Free Living's (BFL) Non-Residential Domestic Violence Program (Secret Garden). Through outreach, our team educates social service agencies, legal personnel, police, consumers, and others on issues related to domestic violence and disability.



Freyer with President / CEO Paul Feuerstein.

Secret Garden provides everything from basic trainings on abuse and disability to in-depth workshops on safety planning, criminal justice, and intervention strategies.

The Secret Garden team provides nearly 150 trainings per year, and recently presented a workshop on "Serving Survivors of Interpersonal Violence with Disabilities" at the LG-BTQ and Domestic Violence conference. In addition, legal personnel in Niagara County, New York were educated by our team on mental illness and domestic violence. We also provided information to New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) residents in Brooklyn, Queens, the Bronx, and Manhattan at the NYCHA Domestic Violence Conferences.

Contact Secret Garden Program Director Georgette Delinois; or Molly Freyer at 212-533-4358 or email Mollyf@bflnyc.org.

This article is featured in the March 2009 Able News www.ablenews.com

Homeless Services United Honors Community Leaders at Fund Raiser

Homeless Services United (HSU) honored Danny Kronenfeld, founding Executive Director of the Urban Family Center at Henry Street Settlement, and Michael Hickey, Executive Director of the Center for NYC Neighborhoods (CNYCN) at its recent annual fund raising event. The next fundraiser will be held in June 2009.

"The proceeds from the fundraiser help to further the mission of Homeless Services United and gives us an opportunity to honor leaders from the community while bringing the membership together in good spirits and reinvigorating our commitment to serving the homeless," said Christy Parque, Executive Director Homeless Services United.

HSU is a coalition of over 60 non-profit agencies providing emergency

and transitional assistance to homeless and at-risk adults and children in New York City. Barrier Free Living is a member agency of HSU, supporting its vision and mission.

HSU advocates for the expansion of affordable housing and prevention services and for immediate access to safe, decent emergency and transitional housing, outreach, and drop-in services for homeless New Yorkers.

HSU also offers free and low-cost trainings for member agencies, providing invaluable opportunities to connect with experts and each other on a number of specific topics. Upcoming trainings include:

Boundaries and Professionalism
Tuesday, March 25th, 2009



Parque, HSU Executive Director with HSU Board President Louis Rodriguez at the 2008 Annual Fundraiser.

Communication and Writing 101:
Incident Reports/Crisis Intervention
Tuesday, April 28th, 2009

Info: 646-827-2272, www.hsuunited.org

Healing of Memories: A Partnership of Hope

*We promise people one step
on the road to healing*



Recently, Fr. Paul Feuerstein, President/CEO of Barrier Free Living, began a partnership with Fr. Michael Lapsley (*above*) who heads the Institute for Healing of Memories in Cape Town, South Africa. Fr. Paul wanted to explore the connection and capacity the program has for helping survivors of domestic violence and for those who work with survivors at BFL's programs, specifically Secret Garden and Freedom House Emergency Shelter.

Fr. Michael initially developed the Healing of Memories workshops while heading the Chaplaincy Project of the Trauma Centre for Victims of Violence and Torture. Through his own experience of living in exile, losing both hands in a parcel bomb explosion, and listening to the stories of the survivors whom he counseled at the Trauma Centre, Fr. Michael realized the importance of giving people a space in which their experiences could be told and acknowledged.

He became a driving force in developing Healing of Memories workshops as an alternative form of providing support for victims and survivors of apartheid violence. Working with Fr. Michael, BFL has developed and customized a Healing of Memories workshop curriculum for both staff and residents at our programs with success and a path toward healing.

Following is an excerpt from a recent speech by Fr. Michael about his work.

Three months after Nelson Mandela was released from prison, in April of 1990, I received from the South African government, a letter bomb, hidden inside the pages of two religious magazines. Among other injuries, I was left with no hands and one eye. What enabled me to heal? To travel towards wholeness. Excellent medical treatment both in Zimbabwe and in Australia, Yes. But also I received messages of prayer, love and support from across the globe.

My own story was listened to, acknowledged, revered, recognized and given a moral content. Every person has a story to tell. Every story needs a listener.

I would like to emphasize the difference between knowledge and acknowledgment and its importance for healing individuals, communities and nations. Families can have guilty secrets.

There is abuse in a family. Everybody knows. There is knowledge but no acknowledgment, perhaps even denial. What is true of individuals and families is also true of nations.

Where torture, or forms of abuse, have taken place, the torturer will tell the tortured that no mark will be left so no-one will believe that they have been tortured. Finally healing begins, when it is publicly acknowledged that yes, you were tortured, and it was wrong. Torture inverts the moral order. Acknowledgment helps to recreate the moral order.

I have spent some time with the Sami people in the northern part of Sweden. There the church has acknowledged its role in oppression. However the wider community has not been educated about the history of the oppression. So knowledge and acknowledgment are both important on the journey to healing.



V-Day

(continued from page 1)

When I received a letter bomb, I became a victim. I physically survived so I was a survivor. I realized that if I was filled with hatred, self pity, bitterness and desire for revenge, then I would be a victim for ever.

One of South Africa's great leaders, Chief Albert Lutuli, once said, "those who think of themselves as victims eventually become the victimizers of others." This is as much true of what happens in intimate space as within nations and between nations. We don't have to look very far to find dramatic examples. People give themselves permission to do terrible things to others because of what was done to them. Of course sometimes there is competition for victimhood.

There is also the relationship between political violence, legitimized or not, and what happens in the privacy of the bedroom. Armed conflict comes to an end for the society or the individual but does not necessarily end in the home where there maybe self harm or harm to others in the form of domestic or sexual violence.

The life giving alternative to victims becoming victimizers is that victims should become victors, not in a militaristic sense rather those who have become objects of history, become subjects of history once more. The key as to whether victims becomes victimizers or victors often lies with whether or not there has been acknowledgment

In South Africa, we did have a considerable amount of acknowledgment in terms of the role of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission which listened to the stories of 23 000 people..

My question was what about those who did not qualify to come to the Commission. What happened to their stories? When horrible things happen to human beings, it is normal to harbor feelings such as bitterness, hatred and desire for revenge. The problem is that those feelings destroy us. For our own sake, we have to find the way of detoxifying, of vomiting out the poison.

It was in the context of reflections of my own journey and that of the nation that some of us developed an intervention, which we call a Healing of the Memories workshop. This particular intervention takes two and a half days. We promise people one step on the road to healing. However for some the step maybe life changing especially if a story is being told for the first time.

We often say in our Institute, those who would be the healers of others must be on their own journey of healing. Permission and space is needed for chaplains to deal with their own stuff, and the impact of the lives we lead. Lest we too become victimizers rather than victors.

In conclusion may I just say that the Institute for Healing of Memories has worked in a variety of contexts across the globe, with combatants and civilians, in post and present conflict situations, in relation to HIV and AIDS, with refugees, prisoners, victims of war here in South Africa, in Zimbabwe, Uganda, the US, Northern Ireland, Fiji, Australia, Germany and the UK.

For more information about Healing of Memories visit www.healingofmemories.co.za

For information about Barrier Free Living visit www.bflnyc.org

V-Day's 2009 Spotlight Campaign focuses on Women and Girls of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Since 1996, sexual violence against women and girls in the Eastern part of the DRC has been used as a weapon of war to torture, humiliate and destroy not only women and girls, but entire families and whole communities. Since the conflict began, hundreds of thousands of women and girls have been raped.

In 2008, over 4000 V-Day benefit events took place produced by volunteer activists in the U.S. and around the world, educating millions of people about the reality of violence against women and girls. To date, the V-Day movement has raised over \$60 million and educated millions about the issue of violence against women and the efforts to end it, crafted international educational, media and PSA campaigns, launched the Karama program in the Middle East, reopened shelters, and funded over 6000 community-based anti-violence programs and safe houses in Democratic Republic Of Congo, Haiti, Kenya, South Dakota, Egypt and Iraq. V-Day was named one of Worth magazine's "100 Best Charities" in 2001 and Marie Claire's "Top Ten Charities" in 2006.

"Before I went to the Congo, I'd spent the past 10 years working on V-Day, the global movement to end violence against women and girls. I'd travelled to the rape mines of the world--places like Bosnia, Afghanistan and Haiti, where rape has been used as a tool of war. But nothing I ever experienced felt as ghastly, terrifying and complete as the sexual torture and attempted destruction of the female species here. The violence is a threat to all; young girls and village elders alike are at risk. It is not too strong to call this a femicide, to say that the future of the Congo's women is in serious jeopardy"

---- Eve Ensler, Founder and Artistic Director, V-Day

Date: Saturday April 25, 2009
Times: 2:00 PM reception following
8:00 PM reception following
Location: Theater 3, 311 W. 43rd Street
Tickets: \$20

*** To purchase Tickets, to buy an ad in our program, or to make a tax deductible donation: please call Jenny Lambert at 917-324-0163**

On the Calendar

March 15 Director Jeff Calhoun and Deaf West Theatre have transformed the Tony Award winning musical Pippin (right) into an inventive theatrical event featuring deaf, hard-of-hearing and hearing actors as voice and American Sign Language are interwoven with music, dance, and joyous storytelling. The show, called an “Aggressively saucy new revival” by the New York Times runs through March 15 at Los Angeles’ Mark Taper Forum.
www.centertheatregroup.org



March 23 In New York, the City Council holds its preliminary budget hearings on Monday, March 23 beginning at 10 a.m. at Council Chambers, City Hall. The Department of Homeless Services is slated for 2 p.m. and the public slot is at 3:15 p.m.
To testify contact: nanderson@council.nyc.gov.

May 2 Freedom House Emergency Shelter is holding the Second Annual Handprints of the Heart event May 2. Over a dozen volunteers from Goldman Sachs will guide Freedom House mothers and their children in arts and crafts activities aimed at celebrating the importance of family. Children will create a clay hand or foot print, which they sign and present them to their mothers to cap off the day.
www.bflnyc.org/freedom.asp

Summer A release date is not yet set for Linas Phillips’s critically acclaimed documentary portrait of nine homeless people living on the streets of Seattle, “Great Speeches From a Dying World” but advocates hope the film will find DVD distribution.

How to Donate

Support BFL at: www.bflnyc.org/Contribute.asp

Editor: Scott Hess

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