



Season's Greetings from Dawn's Place



A Glimpse into Life at Dawn's Place

Before bringing you up to date with the news of Dawn's Place, I want to quote one of our graduates who was the keynote speaker at our 10th Anniversary Gala. She began her address with these words:

There was a time I was in the dark...It was the kind that polluted your flesh into a permanent state of rotting... While pleas escaped my cracked lips and endless begging for mercy rose and fell like the breathing of a great beast. Time had no meaning. I was never getting out."

Tammy expressed well the reality of what it is like to be trapped in the experience of commercial sexual exploitation or sex trafficking. The women who come to us may have different stories but the experience is the same. In Tammy's words, they all had to "fight for a life I (they) no longer thought I (they) deserved but was so desperate to have."

In November, two new residents came to live at Dawn's Place and it is possible that two more residents will join us before Christmas. The resident coordinator and the peer mentor specialist will provide an Orientation Program for them. The ebb and flow continues as we welcome new residents and transition with some others. One graduate of our program has moved into the transition house in the early fall and is pursuing SSI and then affordable housing.

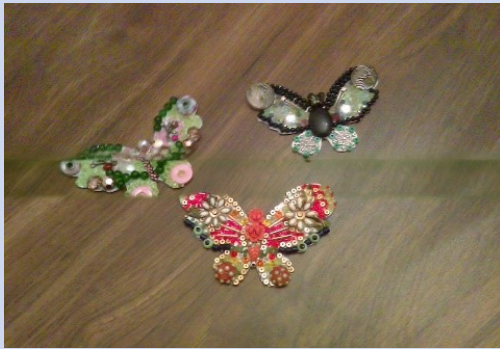
Currently, she teaches knitting to our new comers, to women in Interim House, an alcohol and drug treatment center and helps out the other residents when they need advice. She fills her days with helping others and hopes to pursue a career as a peer recovery specialist. She is also very creative and is busy making and decorating butterflies which are pictured here at left.

After welcoming each new resident, we show her to her private bedroom which has been prepared with great care. She finds clean towels, bed linens and a stuffed animal to provide a bit of comfort during her first days with us. The woman then begins her formal orientation to life at Dawn's Place.

Sweetie, our house cat, senses the needs of each woman —especially a new resident. She will be there to comfort them day or night. We call Sweetie our house therapist! Our residents have also begun to attend music therapy classes. This new modality complements their weekly individual and group trauma-informed therapy as well as mindfulness sessions. They also attend an outpatient alcohol and drug treatment facility three days a week. Our residents appreciate the time they have for relaxing which many use to knit.

We are deeply grateful for our many supporters of Dawn's Place especially those who attended our 10th Anniversary Gala and others like you who join us in our mission of hope and healing. Without you we couldn't provide our women with the services that are critical for their healing process. Thank you.

-Sister Kathleen Coll SSJ, Executive Director of Dawn's Place



[Visit our website to learn more about Dawn's Place](#)

Finding Her Voice

A huge “thank you” to all of our friends who made our Tenth Anniversary Gala - Finding Her Voice - an outstanding success. So many of you showed up, and it was delightful to meet you and to put faces to the names of our donors. Many of you could not attend, but so generously sent donations. And our sponsors! We have never had so many and at such high levels. Bless you all.

Oh, what a night it was! The Sheet Metal Workers Union Hall was beautifully decorated. Lights twinkled off the gold, silver and rose colored walls of the ballroom. The aroma of the delicious food prepared by The Penn's Landing Caterers tempted our 260 guests. The music of DJ Russ Ferrante was a wonderful background to the dinner and kept many dancing long after the auction and 50/50 were called. Our keynote speaker, Tammy MacDonnell, a former resident and graduate of Dawn's Place, brought people to their feet and tears to many eyes. Jennifer Childs of 1812 Productions, brought her iconic character, Patsy from South Philadelphia. Patsy humorously made the case for women finding their voice and speaking up for their rights.

Certainly from all the feedback the staff, graduates and volunteers have been getting, it seems a good time was had by all. But more importantly, more people became aware of the work of Dawn's Place, and what they can do to fight sex trafficking.

We could not have done this without the generous support of all of you. You support us, not just during our big events, but throughout the year. You support us during our fall

appeal and our spring appeal. You support us through monthly donations. You support us to honor family members at weddings, birthdays and even at memorials. We are moved by you generosity.

Legislative and Advocacy Updates

There is important legislation currently pending before the Pennsylvania General Assembly that, in part, seeks to address instances of sexual misconduct perpetrated by those in positions of authority. In the spring of this year, Rep. Tedd C. Nesbit and Rep. Joanna E. McClinton introduced [HB 1402](#); its companion bill, [SB 337](#) was introduced by Sen. Schwank. The bill was first considered by the House on October 29, 2019 and has made its way through committee. This piece of legislation defines and establishes the new crime of “sexual extortion.” Sexual extortion, or “sextortion,” occurs when an individual abuses their power or authority to coerce or obtain sexual conduct or material from another. The ubiquity of technology and ease of digital access facilitates this growing form of exploitation which often occurs through text messages or social media.

The examples of sextortion are numerous and disheartening, covering everything from ex-partners threatening to reveal nude images if victims refused to engage in sexual activity, to teachers promising higher grades in exchange for sex, to landlords threatening to evict victims unless they receive explicit images, to employers refusing promotions without their employee engaging in sexual conduct. Under this pending legislation, each of these examples could be prosecuted if this legislation becomes law, representing an important step toward protecting vulnerable individuals from exploitation.

Further, calling to mind the conduct of [Jerry Sandusky](#), [Harvey Weinstein](#), and [Bill Cosby](#), the bill specifically creates higher penalties when the actor is in a position of supervisory or disciplinary power. It is important that our legislators recognize, as they have here, that vulnerabilities can come in many forms.

The bills also, however, specifically exempt certain people from prosecution under this law including those who act in the “legitimate and lawful course of their business.” It is unclear exactly what this means, and who exactly who be exempt from prosecution based on this exception. It is important that this exception is clarified. Our legislature must be sure to protect **everyone** from sexual extortion, regardless of their employment.

Though sexual extortion is not identical to trafficking, coercion is inherent to both and the work of legislators to prevent coerced sexual conduct is extraordinarily important. The CSE Institute will continue to watch this bill with interest.

*-Shea M. Rhodes, Esquire
Dawn's Place Board Member
Director and Co-Founder of Villanova Law Institute to Address Commercial and Sexual Exploitation*



Healing Stories

On the evening of October 5, 2019, Dawn's Place celebrated its 10th Anniversary with a widely attended and joyous Gala event in Philadelphia. As part of that Gala, I was honored to present a commendation to the pro bono attorneys at Ballard Spahr, who have been with us since our inception. For those of you who were unable to attend the Gala, I would like to repeat the heartfelt words that I said that night:

On September 28, 2006, Sr. Teresita Hinnegan, Sr. Kathleen Coll, Sr. Terry Shields, and myself wrote a letter to a law firm in Philadelphia that we had heard was rumored to be generous in providing pro bono legal assistance. That letter was addressed to the Chair of the Pro Bono Committee, that law firm was Ballard Spahr, and that rumor turned out to be true.

We were then in the beginning process of incorporating and we had the opportunity to purchase a house from the Sisters of the Good Shepherd for \$1. We had no money, and no idea how to develop bylaws, or how to change the zoning from a convent to a group home. We were in WAY over our heads.

True to the rumor, the attorneys at Ballard responded promptly and generously. Without their expert legal assistance and guidance, there would have been no Dawn's Place to open two and a half years later.

In the ten years since then, the attorneys at Ballard have remained incredibly responsive and helpful in facing down every challenge that opposed us. And these lawyers did all of this, not only without pay, but without even the gratification of seeing the many clients who benefited from their work. I'm not sure that any of these generous attorneys ever got to meet any of our women face to face. Until tonight.

So here's what I want to do now. I want to give all of you some idea on a personal level of all that these attorneys have enabled our dedicated and amazing staff, volunteers and donors to accomplish in the lives of the women of Dawn's Place. (I will change any names, but the facts are true):

When 5 Latin American women went from being underfed, frightened and clinging to one another, to facing down their traffickers in court, and living happy and productive lives, it was Sandra Wintner, Brian Pedrow, and Mary Croft who put the smile on their faces.

When Emily went from the county prison, through Dawn's Place, to meet her parents for the first time in thirty years, it was Jean Hemphill and Chris Jones who brought about that reunion.

And when three Indonesian women went from bewildered and beaten to competent and productive lives, it was Eileen Quigley and Kurt Anderson who handed them their first paycheck.

These are just three of many happy endings that the good work of Ballard attorneys has made possible. In the ten years since our opening, Dawn's Place has literally saved lives. We have been able to do this because of the hard work and commitment of our staff

and volunteers. We have been able to do this because of the tireless generosity of our donors. And we have been able to do this because of the selfless caring and expert work of these attorneys, the Pro Bono Committee, and the law firm of Ballard Spahr.

All I can say on behalf of myself, my co-founders, and the women of Dawn's Place is "Thank you, thank you, thank you!"

*-Mary DeFusco, Esquire
Dawn's Place President of the Board
Director of Training, Defender Association of Philadelphia*



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