

A. Executive Summary:

The Haven of RCS is applying for \$5,000 from the Spring 2010 Student Philanthropy Board 3, USF St. Petersburg, housed in LDR2010.602S10: Leadership Fundamentals to enhance and expand our Online Access Project for survivors of domestic violence striving to rebuild their lives.

Our goal is to provide online access to all women seeking our domestic violence services. The purpose of providing online access is to foster financial and emotional independence by making available a safe and efficient way to accomplish daily life tasks, increase communication options for women wanting to connect with family and friends, and enable women to apply for employment or educational opportunities and seek stable housing.

To break the chains of domestic violence, survivors must have access to resources that promote independence and services that recognize their special needs. The Haven of RCS, a state certified domestic violence center, offers a continuum of services to provide safety and support to anyone impacted by domestic violence, and advocates for social change to end the violence. The Haven of RCS, primarily serves North Pinellas County, yet services are not restricted to geographical eligibility. Providing services for over 28 years, The Haven of RCS is a Religious Community Services (RCS) program. RCS is a secular non-profit organization serving the basic needs of food, shelter, safety, and clothing throughout Pinellas County since 1967.

The Haven of RCS serves people of all ages and backgrounds through three components: Outreach Services, an Emergency Safe House, and our Transitional Living Program. During the past fiscal year, we provided domestic violence services to 24,408 individuals, and we expect to serve a comparable amount of individuals in this fiscal year. Our specific objectives for the project are as follows:

- 120 survivors of domestic violence will utilize the Online Access Project annually at The Haven of RCS Outreach Services.
- Of the 400 women projected to receive services at The Haven of RCS Emergency Safe House, 70 percent or 331 women will utilize the Online Access Project.
- Of the 12 women projected to receive services at The Haven of RCS Transition Living Program, 100 percent or 12 women will utilize the Online Access Project.

Implementation of the Online Access Project will involve purchasing and installing computers and desks within The Haven of RCS programs, and recruiting volunteer tutors for women requesting assistance with basic search and email skills. However, it is predicted that the majority of people have some basic skills.

Victims of domestic violence have unique challenges to overcome. A woman recovering from financial, emotional psychological and physical abuse needs to be empowered to take back the control over her own destiny. While online access may not be a basic human need, it is a basic tool that provides safe access to various resources, promotes communication and provides a sense of normalcy for a woman in crisis. Therefore, it can be seen that online access fosters financial and emotional independence for women who have been a victim of domestic violence.

B. One Year Plan:

As a means to foster financial and emotional independence for women, The Haven of RCS requests funding to provide online access to survivors of domestic violence receiving program services. If awarded funding, the following timeline will be implemented:

Day 1-30:

- Purchase five computers and monitors for The Haven of RCS Emergency Safe House
- Purchase one printer for The Haven of RCS Emergency Safe House
- Purchase three computers and monitors for The Haven of RCS Transitional Living Program
- Purchase one printer for The Haven of RCS Transitional Living Program
- Purchase one computer and monitor for The Haven of RCS Outreach Services

Day 30-90

- Install and connect to internet the eight purchased and received computers and monitors
- Install and network the two purchased printers
- Network the purchased computer for The Haven of RCS Outreach Services to the office printer

All funds will be spent within the first 90 days of receipt if funded. Survivors of domestic violence will have access to the installed computers within 90 days of project implementation. Each computer will have internet access and be networked to a shared printer. We currently have desks and chairs to meet the needs of creating workstations. The Haven of RCS has other funding streams that allow for general office supplies expenditures, which will cover the costs of paper and ink cartridges. The cost of internet service is already covered in the budget for The Haven of RCS and will not increase due to the additional computers. Volunteer tutors will be recruited to assist in teaching basic navigation skills and email basics for those who request such assistance.

C. Program goals linked to critical needs:

Survivors of domestic violence face unique challenges as they recover from financial, emotional, psychological, and criminal abuse. Women fleeing domestic violence commonly face lack of access to safe bank accounts and encounter barriers to employment. Abusers often use emotional abuse to isolate their intimate partner from family, friends, neighbors and co-workers as a means to have power and control over her. Emotional abuse can leave a victim without a support system and often without the confidence or means to access the support of those who do care about her well being and the well being of her children. If a victim of domestic violence has children, the children are often used by the abuser to manipulate her behavior through ongoing psychological abuse after she leaves the relationship. Additionally, a women's vulnerability to physical violence increases the six months after she leaves an abuser, because abusers frequently will do anything to reclaim their power and control over her.

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To break the chains of domestic violence, survivors must have access to resources that promote independence and services that recognize their special needs. The Haven of RCS, a state certified domestic violence center, offers a continuum of services to provide safety and support to anyone impacted by domestic violence, and advocates for social change to end the violence. We provide these services through Outreach Services, an Emergency Safe House and a Transitional Living Program.

Through our Outreach Services we provide legal advocacy at two courthouse locations, access to an onsite immigration attorney, prevention education, professional training for law enforcement and businesses, Peace Maker K-8 education, Emergency Response Team that assists law enforcement with domestic violence police calls that involve children in the home, intervention education and support for teens, limited financial assistance, crime victim compensation, and advocacy. The majority of Outreach Services consists of women meeting individually with a state certified Domestic Violence Advocate and support groups facilitated by Advocates. We offer eight weekly support groups, two in Spanish, three with corresponding children's group, and one at the Pinellas County Jail.

For single women and women with children who are fleeing abuse without a safe home to go to, we offer The Haven of RCS Emergency Safe House (ESH) services. Located at a confidential location, this secure facility provides a communal living environment with 34 beds in nine bedrooms, two living rooms, one for children one for women only, a large dining room, a commercial-style kitchen and laundry room. The twenty-four hour hotline office is at ESH, along with offices for Advocates, a playground and children's activities building. Survivors and their children are empowered to independence through one-on-one advocacy and group support; they set their own goals and are assisted with referrals to achieve those goals. Most women and children stay six weeks at ESH, but more and more in this economy, stays are extended.

For those needing additional time to repair their lives, The Haven of RCS Transitional Living Program (TLP), offers up to two years of independent apartment living in a secure location, with onsite Advocate support for adults and children. Services include assistance with transportation, childcare, accessing education, job placement, and English for Speakers of Other Languages classes. The 11 apartments are complimented by laundry facilities, a playgroup and activity room.

To access any of the services at The Haven of RCS all one must do is call. All services are free and confidential. As an agency, we collaborate with Coordinated Childcare for daycare services, Suncoast Services for mental health services if needed; and WorkNet Pinellas, Women on the Way and St. Petersburg College for job placement and education assistance.

One of the first things a victim of domestic violence is assisted with at any of The Haven of RCS programs is creating a safety plan. Injunctions for Protection are discussed along with how to secure legal documents such as birth and marriage certificates, doctors records and services available to domestic violence victims. An individual plan addresses safety issues associated with basic daily tasks such as going to the bank, going to work, dropping children off at school or daycare, visiting family and friends. Sometimes while safety planning, it is discovered that these basic life tasks are too risky and should be avoided. Remember a woman is most vulnerable to violence the six months after she leaves an abusive relationship.

However, many of these tasks can be managed safely online. Bank accounts can be closed and new accounts can be monitored. Communication and reconnecting with friends and family can sometimes be safe through new email accounts. Communication with teachers through email may be safer than attending parent-teacher nights where an abuser may have the right to attend. Job searches are almost impossible without online access, along with searching for a new home. Mainstream services such as food stamps, Temporary Aid to Needy Families and unemployment are nearly impossible to apply for and maintain without computer access.

D. Program activities:

Therefore, The Haven of RCS is requesting funding to implement a comprehensive Online Access Project. The funding would allow us to purchase eight computers and monitors along with printers. One computer will be located at Outreach Services to be used to meet the above-mentioned needs by women accessing our domestic violence services. This computer will be networked to the main office printer. Five computers, and a networked printer would upgrade our current computer lab at our Emergency Safe House. Currently the lab, located in its own room, consists of four computers that are approximately five years-old, workstations and a book exchange library. At TLP, three computers and a networked printer will enhance the services available once installed in the activity building.

Computer lab access will be open at all times at ESH, empowering women to develop their own time management skills. At TLP, the computers will be accessible during hours that correspond with staffing at the activity room. Outreach Services computer will be available Monday thru Friday 9am to 5pm corresponding with regular business hours.

Volunteers will be recruited to be available to provide basic computer skill tutoring at The Haven of RCS ESH for women requesting this service. Local tutors will be sought through referrals from local colleges, and universities, women's civic organizations and individual expressed interest. If participants at Outreach Services or TLP need assistance with basic computer skills, their onsite Advocate will provide instructions and guidance.

Once implemented the Online Access Project will be evaluated through daily use logs to determine utilization, staff meetings and general comments from the women receiving services will help determine if the project is successful and what, if any, changes need to be made. Further evaluation will take place through exit surveys that program participants are encouraged to complete prior to moving out of ESH, TLP or leaving group support meetings. These surveys help guide program services and procedures.

To sustain this project, RCS has a full time Network Specialist, who can maintain the computers, and predicts that the computers and monitors will remain viable for a minimum of four years. Relationships with volunteer tutors will be cultivated. Volunteer recruitment to support programs is an ongoing responsibility of the RCS Volunteer Coordinator. When things become outdated, we will seek appropriate funding streams to replace equipment and furniture.

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Budget Summary	From SPB	Matching	Totals
Training:*			0
Equipment: Computers and Monitors	8 x \$585 = 4680		4680
Equipment: Printers	2 x \$160 = 320		320
Supplies: paper and ink		1000	1000
Consultants: Tutors/Volunteers**			0
Totals	\$5,000	\$1,000	\$6,000

*No training money is budgeted, as most women have basic computers skills or can be taught basic skills by a volunteer tutor.

**The Haven of RCS currently supplements services with a dedicated team of approximately 120 state-certified domestic violence volunteers

Victims of domestic violence have unique challenges to overcome. A woman recovering from financial, emotional psychological and physical abuse needs to be empowered to take back the control over her own destiny. While online access may not be a basic human need, it is a basic tool that provides safe access to a variety of resources and safely expedites daily task. Additionally, performing life's errands online in turn conserves time and transportation resources. Emails document communication with employers during the turmoil of fleeing domestic violence that can help enforce job protection laws for victims of domestic violence; documentation that is not available through a phone call. Networking online can open job opportunities and many jobs require online resume submission. Online communication can help subdue feelings of isolation and help a woman reconnect with friends and family. Therefore, it can be seen that online access fosters financial and emotional independence for women who have been a victim of domestic violence.

Assessment plan and performance measures:

Criteria for success will be based on percent of adults residents utilizing the Online Access Project. Usage will be measured through sign-in logs. When 70 percent of adult residents at ESH and 100 percent of TLP residents, utilize the Online Access Project the project will be considered successful. If success is not met within 90 days of implementation, changes to the project will be guided by exit surveys, written comments of women receiving services and staff meetings. Criteria for success of the project at Outreach Services will be based on how many utilize the service, with success based on an average of 10 users each month.

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Login sheets will be collected weekly and the data compiled monthly and discussed at monthly staff meeting for one year and as needed after that. Positive and negative comments on exit surveys about the project will be used to supplement sign-in log data and provide guidance to any changes that may be necessary to reach success.