Blackburn Center Against Domestic & Sexual Violence is a private, not-for-profit organization that provides 24-hour hotline services, counseling, advocacy and support groups to survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, incest, child sexual abuse, and sexual harassment; emergency shelter is available to survivors of domestic violence and their dependent children. Blackburn Center also provides community education, school student awareness programs, and in-service professional trainings throughout Westmoreland County.

Contact Information
Office 724-837-9540
Fax 724-837-3676
Hotline 724-836-1122
Toll Free Hotline 1-888-832-2272
Website www.blackburncenter.org

Board of Directors
President Becky Campbell
Vice President Len Caric
Secretary Julie Ankrum
Treasurer Michael Matthews
Members Thomas Daughenbaugh
Muna Jabbour, MD
Rhonda Anderson Marks
William Meekins
Yolanda Pavloff
Linda Polinsky
Lauren Wassil

Executive Director Ann Emmerling
Solicitor QuatriniRaffertyGalloway, PC

Blackburn Center is funded in part by United Way of Westmoreland County, PA Department of Public Welfare funds, including Title XX and Act 44 funds, foundations and local contributions.

A copy of official registration and financial information for Blackburn Center may be obtained from the PA Department of State by calling within Pennsylvania 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

This newsletter sponsored by FISA Foundation

“Working together, we can change attitudes, continue to support victims, and hold perpetrators responsible.”
— Cindy Dyer, Director
Office on Violence Against Women
United States Department of Justice

**NEEDS LIST** Your contributions have a direct impact for victims of domestic and sexual violence.

Blackburn Center needs items throughout the year to sustain the shelter program, and to support activities with children and in our support groups for victims. In addition, some of these items are made available to women and children who are establishing their own homes and need support with basic household items. We ask that all items be new.

Please put the items in **bold** at the top of your shopping list.

**FOOD**
Nonperishable food
Coffee: regular and decaf
Coffee creamer
Drink boxes
Packaged snacks for lunches
Spices and condiments
Sugar-free treats, drinks

**CHILDREN’S ITEMS**
Toddler car seats
Stroller
Fabric markers
Baby wipes
Disposable diapers (large sizes)
Diaper rash cream
Outlet plugs

**GENERAL HOUSEHOLD**
Cleaning products
Laundry detergent
Fabric softener sheets
Mops, brooms
Paper towels, toilet paper
Light bulbs (60 watt and three-way)
Liquid hand soap refills

**TOILETRIES**
Hotel-size items no longer needed
Sunscreen (SPF 15 or higher)
Hair brushes, hair dryers, curling irons
Hair care and skin care products for African-Americans
Shaving cream
Denture adhesive
Benadryl
Calamine lotion
Lip balm for chapped lips

**BEDROOM**
Alarm clocks
Bed pillows
Bed-in-a-bag sets
Blankets: twin and full
Crib sheets
Sheet sets: twin and full
Mattress covers (vinyl, zippered): twin and full
Mattress pads: twin and full
Pillowcases (white)
Plastic hangers
Waste baskets
Bedspreads: twin

**KITCHEN**
Aluminum foil
Dish drainers, dishpans
Flatware
Food storage containers
Kitchen garbage bags
Paper products: paper towels, napkins
Paper towel holders
Plastic pitchers
Plastic wrap
Pots, pans and skillets
Hand-held can opener
Small appliances: coffee maker, can opener, knife sharpener, microwave oven
Waste baskets
Zip-lock bags, gallon-size

**BATHROOM**
Bath mats
First aid and healthcare supplies

**HEATING**
Heating pads
Plungers
Shower curtains and rings
Soap dispensers
Toilet brushes
Bath towels, hand towels
Waste baskets with step-on lids

**CLOTHING**
Sweat suits (women’s M, L, XL)
Nightgowns: women’s one-size-fits-all
Pajamas: women’s one-size-fits most
Underwear (Women’s, sizes 5–8)

**MISCELLANEOUS**
Phone cards
Gift cards: small denominations
Wal-Mart, Target, grocery stores
Gasoline cards ($15, $20)
Batteries: AA and 9-volt
Bottled water
Bucket
Extension cords
Outdoor garbage bags
Telephones
Tool kits
Umbrellas

Please consider contributing funds to support two special needs in the shelter:
Pots and Pans: the shelter kitchen gets a lot of use throughout the year, and is in need of durable pots and pans.
Sewing supplies: shelter residents need sewing supplies for mending and repairs.

**PLEASE NOTE:** Deliver donations to Blackburn Center’s administrative offices on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9:00 to 4:00 pm. Please call if you cannot bring your donation during regular business hours. We can make other arrangements if necessary.
A LETTER TO MY SON ON HIS FIRST BIRTHDAY

James:

I read this today: The societal structure that supports the control by one group of “a disproportionately large share of power” results in a culture that expects coercion and control to be a part of relationships.

You’re way too young to understand this, and I’d like to think that by the time you and your sister are grown up, words like “power” and “control” and “coercion” and “abuse” will no longer be part of any kind of relationship between people. But I know this won’t happen by itself.

As you grow, your mother and I will teach you that being decent, caring, fair-minded, and responsible is what makes a real man (the same things that make a real woman) but some people still think that men are supposed to be in charge of women and that being a real man means being tough and mean. I promise to work hard to change that.

Some people still think that only men should be in charge and that women should always do what men tell them to do. I promise to work to change that.

Some people still think that when a man hurts a woman, it’s because the woman did something wrong. I promise to work to change that.

Some people still think that children are lying if they say a family member or close family friend touched them in a “private place.” I promise to remind them to believe their children and to remind them that most of the time, the bad guys are not strangers.

Changing the world won’t be easy, James. I will have to speak up and say things people sometimes don’t want to hear. I will have to write letters and make phone calls and maybe even stop buying certain things. Your mom and I may have to say “No!” to some of the things you want us to buy for you and “No” to some programs you want to watch on TV.

Mostly, I will have to remind people that pretending not to notice, or saying “it’s really none of my business” is not okay. Most people don’t do bad things, but most of us do see, or at least know about, the bad things being done. We have to say ‘No!’ We have to make sure the people who do the bad things know what they’re doing is wrong. Otherwise, they’ll just keep on doing them. I promise to work very hard on that.

Love,
Dad

Life for Sale

According to Naomi Johnson of Longwood University in Virginia (Newsweek, March 17, 2008), references touting or denigrating specific brand-name products, including cigarettes, alcohol, prescription drugs, clothing, and cosmetics, have made their way into best-selling novels read by teen girls.

“The … books I read as a kid were about life lessons and defining yourself,” says Johnson.

“The life lesson here is that you can buy your identity.”

April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month and Child Abuse Awareness Month

Be part of the solution – become informed, speak out, demand change!

Check out page 2 for information about the HERO Project and Men Against Sexual Violence (MASV) activities.

Children and Abuse

Domestic violence and sexual assault are usually seen as adult issues, but they can have devastating effects on children. It is a mistake to assume that just because children are too young to understand adult violence or too young to know what sex is, they are not affected by abuse. Children who are exposed to domestic violence or who are sexually abused have the best hope of recovery if there is an adult nearby who will listen, believe, and care enough to act. (www.blackburncenter.org)

CHALLENGE THE POWER. DEMAND CHANGE.

Domestic and sexual violence are rooted in an imbalance of power between men and women. Our society accepts violence against women as normal and inevitable. For Blackburn Center to fulfill its mission to end domestic and sexual violence, we must challenge this imbalance of power that supports the oppression of women.
Ending child sexual abuse requires ending other forms of OPPRESSION and VIOLENCE

Child sexual abuse is a form of violence that is an outflow of systems of oppression ...

If we want to end child sexual abuse, we have to participate in movements and organizing that also address larger systems of oppression.

When we make child sexual abuse a problem of the individual, we fail to understand the root causes of the issue and then are ineffective in changing the social conditions that make child sexual abuse so widespread.

— Generation FIVE, generationfive.org

COMMUNITY ACTION COUNCIL FORMED FOR THE HERO PROJECT

Child sexual abuse is a crime that is committed every day, in every social, economic, racial, ethnic and religious group in the country. It happens in our cities, suburbs and rural communities. It is not typically, as some people think, a crime committed by a stranger. In fact, 85% of child sexual abuse cases are committed by family members, caregivers, neighbors and friends. In 2006 in the state of Pennsylvania, more than 4,151 reports of suspected child abuse were substantiated according to the Child Abuse Annual Report through the Department of Public Welfare. Child sexual abuse was involved in 59% of all substantiated reports.

Child sexual abuse is a national problem, but solutions begin in neighborhoods and communities, one step at a time. The HERO Project was launched in 1997 to raise awareness about child sexual abuse and encourage intervention when abuse is suspected. To expand the project’s impact, Blackburn Center has recently convened a HERO Project Community Action Council.

This Council will lead regional grassroots efforts aimed at increasing the willingness of parents, relatives, teachers, caregivers and acquaintances to intervene to protect children, and report suspected child sexual abuse.

In order to communicate the problem and encourage people who suspect child abuse to report it, the HERO Project Community Action Council will take the message to neighborhoods, schools, universities, social service agencies and businesses to ease the apprehension felt by many child protectors about reporting abuse.

To learn more about child sexual abuse and how to report it, visit the HERO Project website at www.hero-project.org, Blackburn Center’s website at www.blackburncenter.org, or call the HERO toll-free hotline at 1-877-874-HERO. To learn more about the HERO Project Community Action Council, contact Dottie at 724-837-9540 ext. 114 or via e-mail at DottieC@blackburncenter.org.

STEP IN, STOP ABUSE. BE A HERO TODAY.

Challenging gender attitudes and media messages is not easy, but the men and women of Blackburn Center’s Men Against Sexual Violence (MASV) Taskforce of Westmoreland County have been at it for several years. Through speaking engagements, panels, pledge signing events and other activities, MASV focuses attention on the myths surrounding date rape and sexual assault. Many forms of media and technology perpetuate these myths by over-sexualizing girls and women. The result is a wide-spread societal acceptance, even expectation, of sex and violence in our culture, along with a tendency to blame the victim instead of the perpetrator.

Included in MASV’s message is the recognition that men and boys can also be victims, and that sexual violence affects family members and friends as well as the victims themselves.

The most recent addition to MASV in Westmoreland County comes from the University of Pittsburgh, Greensburg (UPG). Led by student Chad Smith, the UPG Men’s Group has carried out education and training programs throughout the year, both on and off campus. This spring, Chad will speak to a teen father’s group, and will attend the MASV State Conference in June, where the Westmoreland Taskforce will lead a workshop.

Like UPG, Seton Hill University has hosted MASV activities, including a public MASV Pledge signing and a panel discussion on the importance of having men involved in the movement against sexual violence.

All speaking and training events through Blackburn Center’s Education Department include the MASV message, and several recent events for boys and young adult males have been led by members of the Taskforce. Westmoreland County’s MASV Taskforce is one of the largest and most active of its kind in Pennsylvania. To schedule a speaker for your group or to find out more about volunteering with the Taskforce, contact Dottie at 724-837-9540 ext. 114 or via e-mail at DottieC@blackburncenter.org.
Improving the Status of Women in Westmoreland County

Blackburn Center has joined representatives from a number of local organizations to launch an important project for our local communities: Improving the Status of Women in Westmoreland County: A Strategic Approach. This partnership brings together women leaders from the business, education and not-for-profit sectors who are collectively concerned about the status of women in our community and who want to lead systemic change.

Improving the Status of Women in Westmoreland County: A Strategic Approach will employ three strategies to improve the status of women in our community. The first step is to compile existing research and conduct additional research to assess the current status of women in the county across a variety of issues, such as pay equity, the incidence of violence against women, health concerns, and leadership opportunities. Using this information as a benchmark and call to action, the next step is to host a summit in fall 2008, convening community leaders from the public sector, businesses and nonprofit organizations. The goal of the summit is to raise the level of awareness of the status of women and to engage participants in prioritizing the key issues for action. The third strategy is to work toward systemic change on the issues identified at the summit.

Initial planning team members include representatives from Blackburn Center Against Domestic & Sexual Violence, YWCA of Westmoreland County, Westmoreland County Commission for Women and Families, Seton Hill University, including E-Magnify, and the United Way of Westmoreland County and its Women’s Leadership Council.

www.blackburncenter.org

As we’ve noted in recent newsletters, Blackburn Center has rededicated efforts to address an important part of our mission—the rights of all people to live free from violence and oppression. Our website is a core strategy for dissemination of information, both through e-mail communication and the creation of a comprehensive library of resources on the site. We have upgraded the website to be more reflective of our commitment to social transformation, to more clearly describe the impact of our services, and to provide tangible information to support our call to action to the community. To become part of the solution, visit us at www.blackburncenter.org.

More Ways to Help Blackburn Center…

Give us your old car (or motorcycle, van, truck, or boat) and receive a tax deduction. Call us at 724-837-9540 for details. If you do decide to make the donation, we will connect you to Goodwill Industries so you can make arrangements to have your vehicle towed.

Use GoodSearch as your on-line search engine, and designate Blackburn Center as your charity of choice. GoodSearch donates fifty percent of its revenue to the agencies designated by its users. The number of searches completed determines how much the agency receives. And the money donated comes from the advertisers. The users and organizations do not spend a dime.

CORRECTION

We extend an apology for having omitted the following donor from this year’s annual report: Family Eye Care West.