



STEPPING STONES agencies

EMPOWERING WOMEN...CHERISHING CHILDREN

CELEBRATING 40 YEARS OF 24/7/365 SERVICE TO THE COMMUNITY

Stepping Stones Agencies Newsletter Fall 2019



FINDING SELF-WORTH AFTER ABUSE - BARBARA'S STORY

From the outside, some wouldn't have thought Barbara was living with abuse. She had a wonderful job in the medical field, an intelligent and successful husband, and opportunity to travel the world. But under the surface, Barbara was living a life full of abuse that began long before her outward "success."

Abusive Beginning

Barbara began experiencing abuse at the age of 9 when she was sexually molested by her brother, and it continued until she was 13. Finally, at age 17, Barbara joined the Navy to "get out" of her family home. After she joined the Navy, she found her adult life full of new experiences. "I had an amazing learning experience in the Navy. It taught me a lot of self-

discipline." When she finished serving, Barbara put herself through radiology school and worked as an x-ray tech for nearly 30 years, but continued finding herself living in abuse. "Although I had an amazing career, my relationships were always abusive. It never started out that way, you always think you find the fantastic guy. Because I never really dealt with the initial trauma, it really spun into a lifetime of major overachieving and picking the wrong people."

Life without Worth

Throughout her adult life, Barbara experienced several abusive relationships. *"I was in a seven year relationship where it was very physically abusive. I had a gun put to my head more than once. I have titanium in my jaw."* She didn't leave because she didn't have the self-worth. "I felt like I deserved this for some reason. Even though I was educated and professional, I didn't have the personal self-worth. I kept trying to define myself by not what I was doing, but who I was with." Later when she married, Barbara experienced verbal and physical abuse, especially after a car accident that ended her career. What little value she found in herself through her work disappeared when she couldn't physically do her job any longer. On top of it, her husband retired, and they moved to Prescott where she felt isolated.

"I already had zero self-worth and was tolerating things that I didn't even realize were



Stepping Stones Advocates Melissa and Erika work together to provide referrals and support for adults in Stepping Stones 24/7/365 advocacy services, including safe shelter, one-on-one support, and education groups.

abuse. He drove like a maniac knowing that I lost my entire career due to an accident by somebody's negligence. So, I would have panic attacks, and he would yell at me in the car. Things got really bad to the point where I would sit in my bedroom in the corner and just cry. And it dawned on me that this wasn't right."

Divorce and Suicide

It took Barbara two years to get a divorce because of ongoing harassment and violence she experienced from her husband.

"I had a restraining order. He shot at me twice, tried to run me over a couple of times. It was very nasty."

Yet even after her divorce, Barbara continued in a series of abusive relationships that took a toll on her life, and she attempted suicide twice in 2017. After the first attempt, Barbara was put on 24-hour suicide watch, and for the first time, she began receiving "good counseling and good advice." After six weeks, she went back to living with her alcoholic partner at the time.

"He was very demeaning, very

continued on page 2



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Stepping Stones Agencies
6719 E. 2nd Street Suite A
Prescott Valley, AZ 86314
928.772.4184

24/7/365 Advocacy, Emergency Shelter, and Support Programs
www.SteppingStonesAZ.org

**24-HOUR HELPLINE:
928.445.HOPE**

FINDING SELF-WORTH AFTER ABUSE - BARBARA'S STORY



Advocates share about boundaries in an educational support group (ed block) with adults receiving services from Stepping Stones.

continued from page 1

demanding. It was not a good space to be in. I just spiraled right back down.”

Shortly after, she attempted suicide for the second time. **“They found me before I completely died. My heart did stop. Paramedics brought me back. All I knew was that something was telling me that it just wasn’t my time yet. I’m not done.”**

The Turning Point

“The day I got released, I called the person I was living with at the time [to pick me up], and he told me he was too busy.” Barbara took a cab to the house in her hospital gown, only to discover all of her possessions loaded in her car and no place to call home. “I changed in my car and slept overnight in a parking lot.”

Because of the connection she made at Southwest Behavioral Health, Barbara called a crisis counselor in the morning. The counselor helped her make the call to Stepping Stones.

“When I walked through the door at Stepping Stones, I was below zero. They were wonderful, they were welcoming. All I heard was, ‘You’re safe. You’re ok.’”

With old bruises still showing on her skin, and fresh from a second suicide attempt, Barbara moved into Stepping Stones emergency shelter.

“At this time, I still didn’t identify myself as an alcoholic, but here I am. I cried a lot, I was pretty battered from what I’d done to myself. These [advocates] are saying they can help. I got nothing to lose.”

A Cold, Honest Look

One of the most important

parts of Stepping Stones for Barbara was the structure and the space to examine her life. **“The hardest part of Stepping Stones is taking that safe spot they’ve given you and taking an honest, cold, hard look at yourself - good, bad, every bit of it - and saying alright yeah, I screwed up big. Some of this was thrown on me, but I accepted it in my life. The hardest part of the program is being straight forward.”**

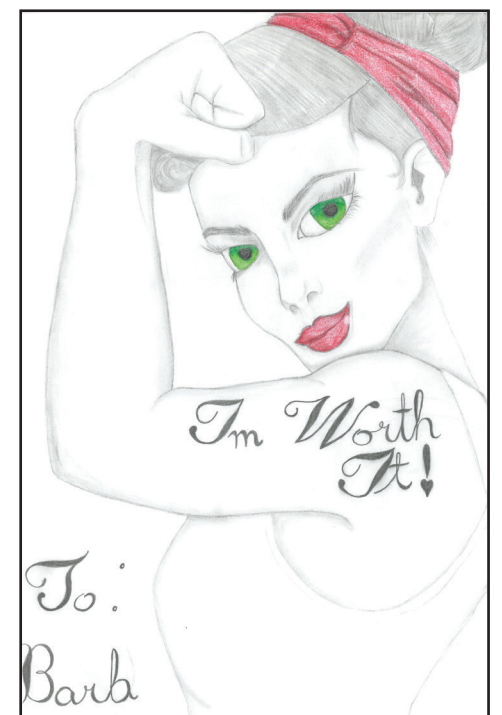
Once she began putting in the hard work to take a look at her life, she found hope again. “It’s no wonder I was tired or broken or hurt. I know there’s a better way. So here I am. I’m in a safe zone. I’m gonna fix it. I’m going to look at myself and learn from every bit of what they’re trying to teach [me].”

Building a Future

Barbara spent nearly two years at Stepping Stones. Throughout her time in transition housing, Barbara became a mentor advocate, welcoming and providing peer support for others who entered the shelter. “I started mentoring and talking to the new people. The first one [I talked to], she was about to leave, she came in with a knot on her head, kids were scared and begging her not to go back. And we’d just sit and talk. It’s like, here’s what I did, I was more than done, I was dead. So, if I can die and then come back

and do all of this, you can [do it]. Look at yourself and fix it.” Now, Barbara is living on her own again, working a job that she loves, and is excited about the future. “I just finished my coursework at GCU in psychology. Because I’m a veteran, U.S. Vets helped me get into my apartment. It’s a one year program, and they also have a second program to help get me into the position of buying a home. That’s my next goal, buying a home. And, I want to start traveling again.”

If you or someone you know needs help finding freedom from all forms of victimization, call our 24/7 Helpline and speak with an advocate: 928.445.4673.



Artwork given to Barbara from teenage shelter resident to remind Barbara of her worth!

SUPPORT LOCAL FAMILIES WITH A CHARITABLE TAX CREDIT



CHOOSE WHERE YOUR TAX DOLLARS GO!



Keep your tax dollars in your community with a **2019 AZ State Charitable Organization Tax Credit** donation! This tax credit program allows you to receive a **dollar-for-dollar tax credit** on your AZ State income tax when you give to Stepping Stones.

For those filing a single tax

return, your donation can be up to **\$400**; for those filing jointly, up to **\$800**. This means that money you would otherwise pay toward your AZ tax liability will stay local benefiting families finding freedom from abuse. Call Cori or Alexis at 772.4184 or SteppingStonesAZ.org/donate.

* Please check with your tax professional for information regarding donations.

Please fill out and mail with donation to: Stepping Stones Agencies 6719 E. 2nd Street, Suite A Prescott Valley, AZ 86314

I am excited to support families in our community by donating:

- \$25
- \$50
- \$100
- \$400 tax credit (individual)
- \$800 tax credit (couple)
- Other: _____

I would like my donation to go directly to the following service:

- Children’s Program
- Emergency Shelter
- Transitional Housing
- Wherever Needed Most
- Safety Planning
- Employment Program
- 24/7 Helpline
- Please send me information on how I can help local families for years to come through a **Charitable Legacy Gift**.

- Cash or Check enclosed
- Secure online donation at www.SteppingStonesAZ.org/donate via PayPal
- Credit Card donation by phone 928-772-4184 or in person at our Administration Office: 6719 E. 2nd Street, Suite A in Prescott Valley

Please send acknowledgment and tax receipt to:

Name: _____
 E-mail: _____
 Mailing Address: _____
 City/State/Zip: _____

Stepping Stones Agencies is a not-for-profit 501(c)3 tax-exempt organization. Check with your tax advisor for documentation for tax deduction.

FAMILIES FINDING FREEDOM BECAUSE WE WERE HERE

At Stepping Stones, women, men, and children work hard to find freedom from all forms of abuse. Because of you, our advocates are available 24/7/365 to support families receiving services. Check out a few statistics that we've seen from January 1 - June 31, 2019:



24/7

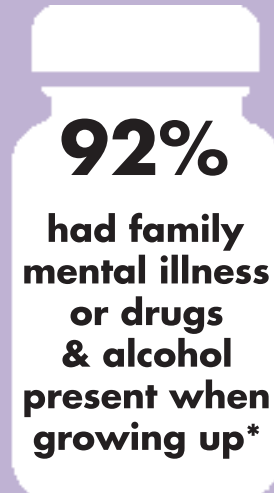
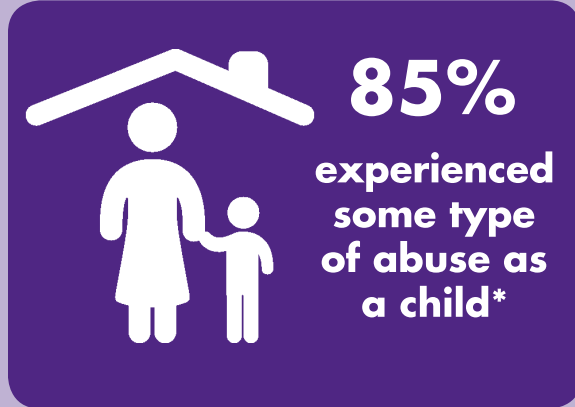
622 Helpline crisis and referral calls answered



118 adults & children received face-to-face services



\$214,346 in paid job training provided at our social enterprises



Advocates provided over **2,400** hours of face-to-face advocacy services including educational support groups

Upon completing services, adults anonymously reported:



96% said they have an increased knowledge of domestic violence and its effect on their life

96% felt they are (re)gaining control of their life

98% said their safety has improved, even after leaving the program

93% set up their own household or moved in with supportive family or friends

100% did not return to their abuser

* Based on Stepping Stones data from July 2018-June 2019

COMMUNITY BASED ADVOCACY GIVES TOOLS FOR FREEDOM

Prescott's Next Chapter Recovery Bookstore is more than just a bookstore with a variety of 12-step books, medallions, and gifts, it is also a safe space for community based advocacy services for anyone who wants to talk to an advocate.

At Next Chapter, lead advocate Betty Della Corte spends time with adults who need to talk.

From one-on-one advocacy to educational groups, Betty provides adults with support, guidance, and tools to live free

from all forms of victimization.

"It's not just about domestic violence. Many people who come here don't know what abuse is or anything about families of origin. But these are the type of things they are made aware of in our one-on-ones and in groups."

Topics that are often discussed include: defining abuse, family of origin dynamics, carried feelings versus feeling realities, codependency, and more.

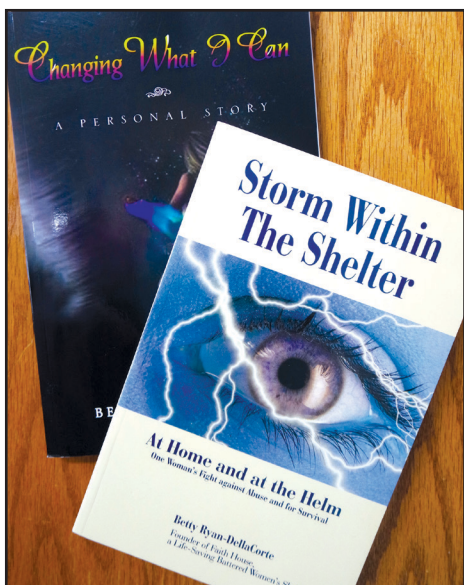
Even if someone is not currently experiencing physical abuse, these topics can help support anyone experiencing painful unmanageability in their life. Betty shared, "Many people don't know what boundaries are, and when they understand boundaries it can make a world of difference. They realize the type of people they were allowing to come into their life and allowing to control them."

Many who call are currently safe but want to speak with an advocate and begin working through their experiences. For

others, they are ready to take time to address the behaviors or choices that have made them vulnerable to abuse in the past. Regardless of the why, women and men can talk to our advocates and gain tools to be

free from victimization.

If you or someone you know wants to speak with an advocate, call our 24/7/365 Helpline: 928-445-HOPE (445-4673). You can meet with an advocate in Prescott or Prescott Valley.



Betty Della Corte, founder of first domestic violence shelter in the country in 1972 and author, talks with a client. Betty is the lead community based advocate at Next Chapter Recovery Bookstore in Prescott. Left: Betty authored two books. Call 928.772.4184 for book information.

SHOP LOCAL • DONATE LOCAL • SERVE LOCAL

SHOP FOR TREASURES AT OUR TWO HUGE THRIFT STORES



Photos above: New Stepping Stones Thrift Store location in Prescott Valley opened August 14, 2019. The huge new space features furniture, clothing, housewares, books, seasonal items and more all under one roof. Stepping Stones Thrift on Goodwin Street in Downtown Prescott continues to offer a variety of all our treasures. Both locations accept donation drop offs. Visit our website for more details: www.steppingstonesaz.org.

VOLUNTEER WITH US!

Looking for a place to serve in our community? Become a Stepping Stones Superhero Volunteer! From volunteering at our thrift stores to serving in our advocacy program, there is a place for you! In addition to individual volunteers, we are also able to provide opportunities for groups and businesses to give back with us. Whether it's a one-time volunteer opportunity or a regular commitment, our team is

grateful for the amazing service provided by our community. Thank you to the many superheroes we have on our team - we couldn't serve local families 24/7 without you! If an individual, a business, or a special group is interested in learning more about volunteering with Stepping Stones, contact our Volunteer Coordinator, Jesus Gutierrez, for more information: 928.772.4184 or email him at: volunteer@steppingstonesaz.org.

Right: At our thrift stores, volunteers give back in many ways, from helping display items and assisting customers to sorting donations - including games! To learn more about volunteering, call Jesus at 928.772.4184.



Now, you can shop at our TWO big thrift locations - one in Prescott and our new spot in Prescott Valley.

In August 2019, Stepping Stones opened a BIGGER thrift store in Prescott Valley. By combining the Red Barn thrift store and Clothing Outlet locations, the move provides the organization with more opportunity to focus on the direct services for families in West Yavapai County. The new thrift store location is in the old Armadilla Wax Works building at 2651 N. Industrial Way in PV.

At Stepping Stones Thrift Stores, you'll find the best variety of

gently used furniture, clothing, books, housewares, games, sporting goods, and more! Every time you shop and donate at our thrift stores, you are supporting local families in Stepping Stones' 24/7/365 advocacy services, including helpline and safe shelter. Everything stays LOCAL and supports families right here in OUR community who are finding freedom from all forms of victimization. Beyond treasures, our thrift stores provide on-the-job training for adults in our advocacy programs and others in our community who need a second chance. Thank you to our amazing community who choose to shop, donate, and volunteer at Stepping Stones! You're changing lives for local families! To learn more about our thrift stores, visit steppingstonesaz.org.

VISIT OUR TWO HUGE LOCATIONS!

CALL US TO PICK UP FURNITURE: 759.0225

PRESCOTT

Stepping Stones Thrift
408 W. Goodwin
(in the Park Plaza)
776.3010

PRESCOTT VALLEY

New BIGGER location!
Stepping Stones Thrift PV
2651 N. Industrial Way
499.3206

STORE HOURS:

Mon - Sat 9 am - 5:30 pm; Sunday 10 am - 5 pm

DONATION DROP OFFS:

Mon - Sat 9 am - 4 pm; Sunday 10 am - 4 pm

No Drop Offs in Prescott Valley on Wednesdays



Photo taken by a high school student photography volunteer - Ava!