

Have Justice–Will Travel

Ending the Generational Cycle of Violence



NEWS

FALL 2007

Moving Forward in Southern Vermont

DOJ Grant Renewed Until 2009

DRAFT #2
10/27/07



(L-R) Kathy Carrier, Jessica McManus, John Lamson, Peggy Prince, Nicole Briggs

On September 10, 2007, cheers went up everywhere at Have Justice–Will Travel (HJWT), in organizations that HJWT is connected to in serving abused women and children, with many HJWT clients, and with HJWT donors. Word was received from Senator Patrick J. Leahy (D-VT) that the United States Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women had approved HJWT’s application

for funding under Rural Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault, Stalking, and Child Victimization Assistance Grant Number 2005-WR-AX-0069 (Rural Domestic Violence Grant). This \$499,938 grant allows HJWT to continue its work for two more years on both the east and west sides of the Green Mountains in southern Vermont.

HJWT opened its first office in

Brattleboro under the first Rural Domestic Violence Grant, which was received in the fall of 2001; HJWT hired Amy Phillippo, Esq. to represent women and children who were victims of domestic violence in both Bennington and Windham counties. Since then HJWT has been extremely fortunate to have the grant renewed every two years. In 2003, Jessica McManus, Esq. opened the first HJWT Bennington office and

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From the Founder

When I grew up, and when many of you reading this newsletter grew up, spouse abuse, child abuse, and alcoholism were things no one in the community discussed. It was hidden behind a family's door and if brought out was quietly discussed by those who were not affected by the abuse. It never was discussed by those affected by the violence due to the denial that we now know exists in abusive homes. It was buried by both those who heard about the abuse and those caught in the never-ending cycle of abuse.

Now today's many professionals: social workers, victim advocates, teachers, lawyers, doctors, and those in family systems work have been schooled with new knowledge and theories. The secret is out for those working in the field. They are working to help those caught in domestic abuse to comprehend their denial, open up their secrets and deal with the immense challenges that they have. The secret is also out for the public: the neighbors, the relatives, the legislators, the religious leaders, and the community leaders.

Today, researchers estimate that 3.3 to 10 million American children annually witness violence by one parent against another. Until recently, many believed that children escaped without harm from violence against their mothers, unless they, too, were physically harmed. We now know that family violence affects children in multiple and long-lasting ways—family violence can haunt a child for a lifetime. Violence in the home deprives children of a safe and secure environment, and affects their ability to develop the skills and capacities they need to succeed in life.

Young children show outward signs of being exposed to family violence when they suffer from bed-wetting, sleep disturbances, and fears of abandonment—as they grow they may suffer from eating disorders. Adolescents may run away, engage in substance abuse, or have suicidal thoughts. Compared with children not exposed to domestic violence, children exposed to violence have a higher likelihood of being aggressive themselves, they have higher levels of depression and anxiety disorders, and their cognitive skills are slower to develop.

What can we do as professionals to help children? What can the public do? In the last decade as professionals have identified the close connection between violence against mothers and the devastating impact it has on children, we

have learned that enhancing a mother's safety and stability is a major avenue for providing her children with a safe, stable, and nurturing environment.

More public funding has been made available to help both children and mothers who are victims of domestic violence. The Child Witness to Violence Project at Boston Medical Center is one example of programs now offering treatment for children who have been exposed to violence. Although this project began as a response to children and adolescents witnessing violence on the streets, the staff soon realized that most of their referrals were children harmed by witnessing domestic violence in the home.

In Vermont, HJWT works closely with our child protection agency to provide services for children, including those who are victims of domestic violence, incest, and/or child sexual abuse.

My family violence came close to destroying my career as an attorney forty years after one of the many abuses I suffered. To become a licensed attorney in Vermont, after one graduates from three years of law school, you must serve a six month clerkship, pass an ethics exam, an essay exam, and a multistate multiple choice bar exam. I was able to fulfill all requirements immediately, except for the multistate bar exam.

If one fails the multistate portion, you are allowed to retake it. After studying hundreds of more hours, practicing thousands of multiple-choice questions, I still failed the exam by two points. By that time, I had been chosen the "1998 Outstanding Law Student of the Year by Who's Who—American Law Students," and been featured in national and local magazines and newspapers, and on local radio stations. I was embarrassed, humiliated, and had another "secret" from all but a few people. HJWT was being hailed as a wonderful new idea in the legal field. With HJWT, I was making the difference I had hoped to make and the fledgling organization was working with dozens of women to improve their lives and their children's lives. Yet, I could not pass the bar exam.

Coming down hard on myself, I lectured myself and told myself I wasn't studying hard enough, though I studied three times what was recommended. My husband, who often tries to lighten serious moments with laughter, joked that it could have been worse. Instead of missing by two



HJWT Executive Director
and Founder Wynona Ward

points, I could have missed by one point!

Taking the exam for a third time, I missed by one point and hung my head in shame. It is hard to describe how discouraged I was, the pressure I was under, the number of people who were counting on me to succeed. Those who knew, told me, it's just a multiple choice test, failing the test was in no way a measure of the kind of lawyer you will be. Yet I could not be a lawyer until I passed this test.

I was at wits end about what to do next when Cheryl Hanna, a Vermont Law School professor, suggested that maybe I had a learning disability. How could that be? I had graduated third in a class of sixty-three high school students, was on the Dean's List at Boston University, received excellent reviews at Vermont College, and graduated from Vermont Law School with a B average. Yet, I could not pass the multistate bar exam.

Taking her advice, I called a local neuro-psychologist, Dr. Dorrie Rapp, and scheduled testing. One of the first questions she asked me was if I had ever had a traumatic head injury. Shock then set in. Pain and sadness began. Anger came. One of my family's many secrets came out. I read the hospital record stating that at fourteen months old, I was in and out of consciousness for several days with a severe head injury, inter-cranial bleeding, and hemorrhaging from my eyes. My family told the hospital I had fallen out of a kitchen chair and they then brought me immediately to the hospital. The doctors didn't believe their story.

The doctors estimated I had been unconscious for several hours. One doctor

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Angels? I Think We are Committed and Engaged Citizens By Kate Kennedy

The community response works. In the following narrative by my client's wife, she encapsulates how a coordinated response can stop the cycle of violence. It took all of the professionals involved and one dad who, despite his fear of his ex-girlfriend, stepped forward to protect his child.

My client gained the custody of his daughter that she so desperately needed, despite the mileage to Vermont from out-of-state, and ten days off of work in three months from a skilled labor job that only gives two weeks' vacation a year.

A routine summer visit was turned around in the blink of an eye when the little girl disclosed the sexual abuse she suffered by a known sex offender while in the care of her mother. With the help of a Vermont State Trooper, the States Attorney's Office, a domestic violence agency, a Department of Children and Families social worker, one very concerned parent with a supportive spouse, and me, the lawyer, we have ensured the safety of one little girl through the Vermont Family Court.

Thank god for angels—Thank god for Have Justice Will Travel and our angel, Kate Kennedy, who represented my husband in Vermont Family Court. She was referred to us through a domestic violence agency worker. My stepdaughter came to me and her father with her heartbreaking life experiences. We turned to Vermont Department of Children and Families through the years and told them of the abuses she had suffered while living with her mother. They told us we had insufficient evidence to open a case and that we

sounded like we were just wanting to get custody of her. Well of course we wanted custody since she was being abused, how ridiculous is that. This summer something didn't seem right at all, there was something new and different. We knew of alcohol, drug abuse, name calling, and physical abuse throughout the household. What else could there be?

We sat down to talk about what could possibly be wrong. She looked into my eyes for a long moment in desperation and she told me she had been sexually abused during a time when her mother had the family moving from home to home. She had finally had enough and wanted to live with us. We live in another State, and would only see her on holidays and summer visits. Now she wanted to come live with us full time.

We called the police right away in our state, who referred us to the Vermont State Police and we went to the Vermont Family Court. The Court denied us a temporary relief of abuse order and temporary custody. We needed legal advice and help. We were with little to no funds and not knowing how to properly present to the court the evidence we felt we had. But we took a chance and called Kate Kennedy and it turned out she would be our family's angel, between Kate Kennedy, one family service worker, and one Vermont State Trooper Detective I don't believe our happy ending would have been possible.

Now my husband's little girl, who is also my little girl, is with us. She is in counseling that includes animal therapy



Kate Kennedy and her two children. Kate's work at HJWT is funded by the Ann L. Bronfman Foundation.

through horseback riding. She is going to school and succeeding. She is finding friends her age and living a childhood she has not had before. The sex offender, a previously known offender, is in jail in Vermont awaiting trial. Together, we have stopped the cycle of violence. Thank you for going above and beyond and for being our angel.

Have Justice–Will Travel, Inc.

is a nonprofit organization that operates exclusively on grants, fellowships, and private contributions. If you wish to make a tax-deductible donation, you can use your credit card on our Web site, www.havejusticewilltravel.org, or please make your check payable to:

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The mission of *Have Justice–Will Travel, Inc. (HJWT)* is to end the generational cycle of abuse in rural families by bridging the legal, cultural, geographical, psychological, and economic gaps that exist for victims of domestic abuse. *HJWT* provides legal and supportive services for battered, low-income women and their children. Wynona I. Ward, Esq., the founder and director of *HJWT*, created an innovative, mobile, multi-service program that **assists victims of domestic abuse through the legal process, from the initial interview and relief from abuse order through self-sufficiency and independence.** This holistic multi-service approach to assisting rural victims often is the key to women first escaping the abuse and then moving forward to improving the quality of their lives and their children's lives. Since 1998, *HJWT* has been serving women in the State of Vermont and is expanding to assist women who live in rural areas throughout the United States.

HJWT continued to maintain an office in Brattleboro. Today Nichole Briggs, Esq. works out of the Brattleboro office with Peggy Prince, who serves as the paralegal/client services coordinator. (See story on page 5.) On October 1, 2007, John B. Lamson, Esq., transferred from the HJWT Northeast Kingdom office in Brownington to assume Jessica's position in Bennington, as she is expecting her second child in April 2008. Kathy Carrier continues as the paralegal/client services coordinator for the Bennington office.

Wynona Ward, with assistance from her staff, has written all the grants sent to the Department of Justice and other entities. Wynona is now both the executive director and director of development. In this capacity she will be working on many more proposals to the federal and state government and to foundations. Such grants and the very important donations

from individual donors are what sustains HJWT and enables it to provide free services to those who so desperately need them.

The strategies HJWT uses to implement the Rural Domestic Violence Grant include: 1) putting into practice and expanding cooperative efforts among law enforcement, prosecutors, victim advocacy groups, and other related parties to investigate and prosecute incidents of domestic and dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking; 2) providing legal representation and other long and short term assistance to adult and child victims in rural communities, including assistance with immigration matters; and 3) working in cooperation with the community to develop education and prevention strategies directed toward such issues.

In an October news release regarding the Rural Domestic Violence, Dating

Violence, Sexual Assault, Stalking, and Child Victimization Grant funding received by the state, Senator Leahy (D-VT) stated, "These Vermont organizations offer victim-centered services that make a big difference to survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault. These are essential lifelines, and these grants will help ensure this help will be there when it's needed."

HJWT is deeply appreciative and thanks Senator Leahy for all the support he has given HJWT and other Vermont organizations in helping to bring these grants to our state. HJWT also sends special thanks to Senator Bernie Sanders (I-VT) and Congressman Peter Welch (D-VT) for their support in bringing federal grants to Vermont that help victims and survivors of domestic violence.

From the Founder, continued from page 2

wrote that it was as if I had been swung by my ankles with a great centrifugal force for an extended period of time. Back then; they were talking about what is known and called today, "shaken baby syndrome." I never stopped to realize that family violence could affect my life and career forty-five years after it happened.

The final diagnosis was a specific learning disability, which was more than likely caused by the injury inflicted upon me by my father who would often slap his children beside their heads when he was angry or drinking. The abuse I had suffered as a child was with me as an adult, not only psychologically but also physically, and without great insight from professionals it almost stopped my future career as an attorney.

Next came the survival skills I learned over the years to deal with the abuse I had faced as a child. Knowing and facing the situation, measures could then be taken to overcome the problem. Extra help was needed to pass the bar exam. I sought out and received assistance from the Vermont Department of Vocational Rehabilitation in the form of a special preparation course and a one-on-one tutor, and I requested extra time to take the exam. In April 2000 notice came that I had passed. In May I was sworn in as a licensed Vermont attorney.

This two-year process was a formidable barrier for me to overcome, but through it all, I learned to have compassion for myself. I became thankful that I was even alive. Many children die from shaken baby syndrome in this country every year. What I went through as a child who survived domestic abuse and then finally understood as an adult made my understanding and insight increase for all children living with domestic abuse, and for what they may face as an adult. My coping as a child and as an adult, continually with fallout from my earlier abuse, is no different than all the women and children who cope and struggle to survive the various consequences of domestic abuse as they go on with their daily lives.

My own case reminds me of two cases where HJWT attorneys have represented mothers. In the first the husband threw his wife to the floor and then sat on her stomach when she was eight and a half months pregnant, and in the second the boyfriend stabbed the young mother and left her to die before taking the newly born baby.

When these thoughts go through my mind I am extremely grateful for the opportunity I have had to found HJWT to protect children in Vermont. I am

thankful that HJWT has such wonderful, dedicated attorneys who are on the front lines everyday. I am also grateful to the HJWT Board of Directors who all volunteer their time to help me grow HJWT and to also help me grow so that HJWT can serve and work with more and more victims and survivors.

My responsibilities have grown from founder/lawyer of HJWT on the front line and in the courts, to growing this nonprofit with more lawyers and paralegals, and now to director with a large focus on development to ensure that HJWT has a future. I couldn't become a lawyer until I passed the test, and HJWT cannot serve clients unless money can be raised. HJWT has been extremely fortunate, with the help of Senator Leahy, in receiving Violence Against Women federal grants.

But no non-profit can survive without a strong donor base of those who understand and believe in the work of the organization. Most importantly, I want to thank each and every one of you who has donated to HJWT. You are doing a great deal to stop domestic violence in Vermont. Without you there would be no Have Justice-Will Travel.

Brattleboro Office News



(L-R) Paralegal and Client Services Coordinator Peggy Prince; Director, Windham County Nicole Briggs, Esq.

The other three Have Justice–Will Travel regional offices (Bennington, Brownington, and Vershire) are delighted to have Nicole and Peggy join us in southeastern Vermont to serve Windham County women and

children who are in need of legal and social services due to domestic violence.

Nicole began her work as the Windham County HJWT staff attorney/director in February 2007. She is licensed to practice law in Vermont and Wisconsin. Before responding to HJWT's national search for this position, Nicole worked as tribal prosecutor/attorney for the Lac Courte Oreilles Tribe in rural Wisconsin. In that capacity, Nicole, among other assignments, represented the Lac Courte Oreilles Social Services Department in child welfare matters. Prior to that she was a law clerk at Oregon Legal Services. Because of her previous work Nicole saw how domestic violence affected women and children, and this led to her desire to join the HJWT team. She is committed to working with children and their mothers to help them survive the abuses of domestic violence.

Peggy began her work at HJWT

in December 2006. Several years ago after almost eleven years in the banking business, she was laid off because of downsizing. Then a single mom, she demonstrated her commitment to raise her son by driving from Brattleboro to Boston and back every day to pursue her paralegal certificate from Northeastern University.

Peggy's son is now twelve years old and an avid sports player. As HJWT's paralegal/client services coordinator in the Brattleboro office, she answers the telephone, performs client intakes, prepares motions and letters, and schedules appointments. Peggy is a great asset to HJWT because of her familiarity with Windham County.

Clients often say how thankful they are that both Nicole and Peggy are there to represent them in the family court process and connect them to the various social services they need.

Northeast Kingdom Office News



John Lamson

John Lamson, born and raised in Vermont and a graduate of Vermont Law School (VLS), was admitted to practice in May 2007 after working as a part-time legal intern for HJWT since October 2006.

With funding from the Schultz-Blackwell Trust, he was hired as a full-time attorney in July and has been working to help set up the HJWT office in the Northeast Kingdom (NEK). John has a strong commitment to public interest law and has interned with the Vermont Attorney General's office in the Civil Rights Unit as well as at the VLS' South Royalton Legal Clinic.

I am proud to make my first report with Have Justice–Will Travel (HJWT) and from the Northeast Kingdom (NEK) office in Brownington. Since October 2006, under the supervision of Wynona Ward, I have been handling calls for this office and assisting over a hundred victims by answering legal questions and providing other types of assistance. Once I was admitted to the Bar, I was able to immediately begin full representation of clients. HJWT is extremely thankful to the Schultz-Blackwell Trust for its assistance in funding a full-time attorney position,

which has allowed me to serve many more clients.

In addition to working with domestic abuse clients, what I do includes work with the family and probate courts and victim advocacy organizations in Orleans and Essex counties and learning the NEK court systems.

HJWT is very grateful to the Town of Brownington for granting a tax exemption for our office building on the Brownington property. Combined with rental income from the house on the Brownington property, this will help to ensure the future of HJWT's NEK office.

While the Brownington office lacks proximity to any one courthouse it is in between the two I have been in most frequently, Essex and Orleans, and within commuting distance to the courthouses of Caledonia and Lamoille counties. Like much of rural Vermont there is a lack of high-speed Internet access. Hopefully there will be legislative attention to this matter to improve accessibility for all the work we do on the internet to serve clients, work with various entities, and write proposals.

I have also been learning the NEK's topography. The first thing I learned was that it takes a while to get everywhere, due to the distances, but the landscape is so beautiful that it is a pleasure to drive. I

remember one trip took me three hours to the headwaters of the Connecticut River. I had never seen these beautiful lakes before and it was breathtaking. I picked up something to eat and found a picnic table on the side of the road overlooking the Second Connecticut Lake, and hardly any cars passed while the sun set. The lifestyle here is rugged and I relate to many of HJWT's clients about getting wood in and winter tires on.

The quietness of the NEK lends itself to perambulations and daily sightings of wildlife. Amongst others frequenting the Brownington property (called Chris's Place) we have seen many white-tailed deer, a fox, a heron, a black bear and cubs, wood ducks, hedgehogs, skunks, moose, turkeys, and a pair of very large coyotes (sixty+ pounds).

It is always disturbing to realize that along with this geographical beauty and array of wildlife, domestic violence, child abuse, and poverty are everyday facts of life in the NEK.

Since writing this article John has transferred and become the director of the HJWT Bennington office. (See page one story.) Wynona continues his work in the NEK area until his permanent replacement is recruited.

2007 Southern Vermont Conference "Children, Domestic Violence and the Law"

A June 29, 2007, conference was hosted by Have Justice–Will Travel’s (HJWT) Bennington office at Mt. Snow Resort and Hotel in West Dover, VT, entitled “*Children, Domestic Violence and the Law.*” The support for the conference came from Grant No. 2005-WR-AX-0069 awarded by the Office on Violence Against Women, U.S. Department of Justice, and additional financial support for the event was received from an anonymous donor, the Bank of Bennington, the Bennington County Bar Association, CTX Mortgage, Catamount Rotary Club, Merchants Bank, The Grand Summit Resort at Mt. Snow, and the Vermont Country Store. As a result the conference was free to all seventy-five participants: Vermont judges, attorneys, court personnel, legal services staff, mental health professionals, prosecutors, supervised visitation and exchange center staff, victim advocates, victim-witness specialists, and the entire HJWT staff.

The nationally and internationally known presenters came from all over the country including: the Honorable Jerry Bowles, circuit court judge, Jefferson Family Court, Louisville, KY; the Honorable David Suntag, presiding family court judge, Bennington Family Court, Bennington, VT; Darren Mitchell, Esq., co-executive director, Legal Resource Center on Violence Against Women, Takoma Park, MD; Laura A. Martinez-McIntosh, Esq., Texas Rio Grande Legal Aid, Austin, TX; and Philip Stahl, PhD, ABPP, Queen Creek, AZ. HJWT was extremely fortunate to bring such knowledgeable and dynamic presenters to southern Vermont.

Judge Bowles has lectured in Kazakhstan and consulted with the Minister of State and the Crown Court in London regarding the implementation of an integrated Family Court and Domestic Violence Coordinating Council. In his lecture, “Listening for Domestic Violence in the Courtroom,” he provided participants with a judicial perspective regarding child access when domestic violence is present.

Judge Suntag is a faculty member of the National Judicial College in Nevada where he presents to judges from across the country on numerous topics including domestic violence, high conflict divorce cases, bench skills, jury trials, and contempt procedures. Judge Suntag is currently working with many others to develop the first integrated domestic violence



First Row: Robin Goodrum, Wynona Ward **Second Row:** Johnnie Doyle, Kathy Carrier, Jessica McManus, John Lamson, Peggy Prince, Kate Kennedy, Nicole Briggs
Missing: Janet Babcock and Brandy Todd

docket in Vermont. His well-received mock trial used current Vermont trial court judges, attorneys, and witnesses to simulate a Final Relief from Abuse Order hearing. This created an opportunity for all participants to learn about the process and dynamics in the courtroom.

Attorney Mitchell’s organization provides training and technical assistance to attorneys and others who assist survivors of domestic violence in complex interstate custody issues. This issue is often a part of cases handled by HJWT. Attorney Mitchell’s presentation on the Uniform Custody Jurisdiction Act explained how and why domestic violence is relevant to interstate and international custody cases.

Attorney Martinez-McIntosh trains advocates nationally on the topic of domestic violence for the American Bar Association Commission on Domestic Violence. Her presentation, “Handling Custody Cases from a Child-Centered Approach,” provided attendees with tools necessary to prepare for a contested custody trial when domestic violence is present.

Dr. Stahl, the keynote luncheon speaker, is a psychologist in private practice who conducts child custody evaluations and provides expert witness testimony. He has conducted trainings throughout the U.S. and internationally for child custody evaluators. He is a faculty member of the National Judicial College, the National Council of Juvenile

and Family Court Judges, and the National Institute for Trial Advocacy. In addition to his teaching, Dr. Stahl is the author of *Conducting Child Custody Evaluations: A Comprehensive Guide* (Sage, 1994), *Complex Issues in Custody Evaluations* (Sage, 1999), and *Parenting After Divorce* (Impact Publishers, 2000). His presentation, “The Effects of Domestic Violence on Children,” educated participants on the range of potential impacts of domestic violence on children and discussed the resiliency of those who are affected.

Feedback from this conference was overwhelmingly positive. Some of the comments we received included: “As a Judge I am hoping that the attorneys present will think more about how to present a divorce case which includes domestic violence.” “Learned good ideas on structure/presentation of case.” “I work with a lot of children and families of domestic violence. All this information will be very helpful.” “Thank you for bringing a conference to Southern Vermont. It was nice to have such a great conference in our area.”

HJWT thanks Jessica McManus and Kathy Carrier for bringing this conference together for the spectrum of participants who are intrinsic to Vermont’s work with children, domestic violence, and the law.

HJWT Women in Transition Group



This photo shows (L-R) Brandy Todd and JohnnieMae Doyle meeting about the bookkeeping for the most recent HJWT Women in Transition and Life Skills Mentoring Group (WIT).

This year Administrative Assistant JohnnieMae has taken on the responsibility of all HJWT bookkeeping including payroll, payroll taxes, direct deposits, journal entry, accounts payable, and accounts receivable. This important work has freed up Wynona's time for needed development and fund raising. Janet Babcock, a part-time staff attorney, who completes the yearly financial statements, says JohnnieMae's bookkeeping journals and ledgers always come out perfectly!

JohnnieMae continues to assist with writing grants, maintaining the donor database, and mailing out our yearly newsletter and annual appeal letter, and serving as receptionist for the central Vermont office.

Brandy Todd is also based in central Vermont. She leads WIT groups and serves as paralegal and client services coordinator for the office; her funding is provided by the Mill Foundation. In the last four years Brandy has successfully completed her Bachelor of Science degree in law and advocacy at Woodbury College, raised three children and worked at HJWT.

The spring WIT group experienced a myriad of emotions. The six women were at different levels of survivorship, and they created a strong bond while coming to see themselves in a new light.

The group began with budgeting exercises, and Brandy showed them how to set up weekly and monthly budgets. It was difficult for them to understand that they were in the red after they wrote down their expenses in black and white. They asked, "How do I get by when I don't have enough money?" Thus began a journey into coupon clipping and menu planning. Brandy set up a box at a local store for people to donate coupons to the group.

Some who had never used coupons before had no idea that so much money could be saved. Women wrote down their weekly menu and shopping lists, then went through coupons and supermarket fliers. At the next meeting they came back glowing with excitement about the savings.

The women studied their budgets and at what expenses could be cut back. One woman was on public assistance and

another was afraid to go back on it, and was filled with fear of the system that stigmatizes women as welfare moms.

Connie Button, a previous HJWT client and a survivor of domestic violence, spoke about her journey to independence and the several jobs she has held, each a step up from the other. Connie is now director of Kids Place, a supervised visitation program in Orange County that Wynona helped found in 1999. Making a huge impact, she showed the women in the group that they can come through their experiences, survive abuse, and empower themselves to become independent. Connie was a great segue into working on rebuilding self-esteem.

The underlying question throughout the sessions is, "How do we begin to rebuild our self-esteem when for so many years we have been beaten down?" Brandy, herself a survivor of abuse, knows it begins from within and the WIT participants realize this with her help.

The women ranged from just leaving an abusive marriage to having left twenty years ago. These women are now on their way to becoming strong independent women filled with self-worth.

HJWT is deeply appreciative for grants from The Vermont Women's Fund to fund WIT groups. Without these generous grants these women may have never realized that they can survive on their own.

A Client's Story—How LEAP Worked for Her

For over six years, the Have Justice—Will Travel (HJWT) Legal Empowerment Assistance Program (LEAP) has received funding from the Vermont Bar Foundation, which supports the work of LEAP Program Director Robin Goodrum. Funding for this program has also been received from the Lintilhac Foundation. HJWT thanks both for their support. LEAP is an extremely successful program that has helped hundreds of Vermont women. Following is a story a client wrote of how the LEAP program, Robin Goodrum, and Attorney Janet Babcock helped her and her children.

I gave up the past four years of my life to an abuser. The professional women of Have Justice—Will Travel helped me take them back. . . .



(L-R) Legal Intern and LEAP Director Robin Goodrum; Staff Attorney Janet Babcock, Esq.

After years of abuse, I finally took legal action against him by filing a restraining order. I soon found myself knee deep in parentage, parental rights and responsibilities, parent-child contact, and relocation

issues. My abuser hired a lawyer, but I was in no financial position to do so. I was confident in my abilities to defend myself, but had many unanswered questions about proper procedure and steps. All I needed was some guidance.

WISE, a victim advocacy group, referred me to HJWT and out of all the organizations I called, they were the first to call me back—not once, but twice. Robin Goodrum was patient with me, answered all my questions, and gave me helpful procedural advice. She helped me find ways to utilize and present evidence in my legal documents. Robin gave me a brief, but in-depth education on the legal system and its language. Most of

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Women's group

National toll free phone line

Women in Transition

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Life skills mentoring
Job and Parenting skills
Child Care Ideas/Assistance
Psychological support
Education about Violence

Supervised Visitation

Referrals for Supervised Visits
Exchanges
Parenting classes
Counseling Arrangements

A Client's Story–How LEAP Worked for Her, continued from page 7

all, she was available to provide me with the reassurance and a sense of stability I needed to just get through a hard day.

After a couple months of writing motions, petitions, responses, and conducting research, the Court ordered a hearing. At this point, I was physically, emotionally, and mentally exhausted. Caring for two toddlers all day, squeezing in research and connecting with valuable contacts during the day and then writing at night—how could I possibly prepare for a hearing against an attorney. I stopped exercising and eating right. I stopped the little social life I had. It was necessary for me to leave my job. I began feeling guilt and resentment because all of this was taking away from the time I could spend with my children. I knew I was close to a breakdown and was thrilled when Robin suggested that I meet with her and Janet Babcock, a HJWT attorney about the upcoming hearing. It was as if they had thrown me a life jacket in the ocean I was drowning in.

After meeting with the generous women of HJWT, I was overjoyed when Janet said she would take my case. I held back the tears and was just dumbfounded at the sense of relief and empowerment I now possessed. Janet told me to leave all my documents with her. In my head it was like she was saying, "Please, let me take away all of your problems and handle them for you while you get back to being a healthy and energetic mother."

Since that time, I have worked closely with Janet and Robin and we are slowly, but surely settling on an agreement that will serve the future of my children and I very well. The women of HJWT truly and genuinely want to care for and protect people who are abused and financially lacking. Without organizations like this, people like me would stay drowning prisoners of their oceans.

