

# Have Justice – Will Travel

*Helping to End the Generational Cycle of Violence*



## NEWS

WINTER 2005-06

## Rock Bottom to Soaring High

*Welcome Aboard, Brandy*



*(L-R) Have Justice – Will Travel Founder and Director Wynona Ward, Brandy Todd, and HJWT Attorney Kate Kennedy. Todd received the Vermont Women's Fund 2005 Holly D. Miller Award.*

It was with great pride and the utmost respect that Have Justice – Will Travel nominated Brandy Todd for the 2005 Holly D. Miller Award sponsored by the Vermont Women's Fund. The award honors Vermont women and girls who have transformed their lives through programs funded by the fund. Brandy had traveled a long, hard road

since becoming a client of HJWT when her life was in chaos.

The court had granted Brandy a relief from abuse order against her husband. She survived years of physical and sexual abuse by self-medicating with drugs and alcohol, a coping technique she learned as a young teenager, but it was impossible to hide

from the name calling and the constant put downs that destroyed her self-esteem. Even with the extreme duress she was under, she realized she did not want her four-year old daughter and two-year old twins (a boy and a girl) to see the violence or hear the threats anymore.

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# HJWT Serves Vermont; Looks to Replicate in Other Rural Areas

In October 2005, Have Justice – Will Travel received a third grant from the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) Rural Domestic Violence and Child Victimization Program. This two-year funding will again make it possible for HJWT to provide free legal and social services to “survivors” of domestic abuse in southern Vermont’s Bennington and Windham counties (in addition to our ongoing services in other regions of the state). The grant funds will help HJWT increase cooperative efforts with victims, law enforcement, prosecutors, and advocates, while increasing regional awareness of domestic violence.

All funding goes to support direct services by HJWT staff to clients. Attorneys Jessica A. McManus (Bennington County) and Mary B. Claassen (Windham) and their respective staffs will continue serving their current clients and will be able to offer services to many more in need.

HJWT is experiencing a constant struggle for funds, resources, and government grants, while the number of women we serve and who need to be served are experiencing increased domestic abuse. There are many factors that contribute to this troubling trend, including a difficult economy, the war in Iraq (returning soldiers occasionally bring the violence they’ve experienced overseas home with them), less government support in health care, and higher costs of gasoline, heating, and utilities. HJWT continues to believe that by bringing the right resources, help, and support to the survivors of domestic abuse, we can help them turn their lives around, become independent, and help stop the generational cycle of domestic abuse.

Rural areas around the United States have contacted HJWT about setting up our program in their communities. They too have many women and children who need assistance. We are confident that the HJWT

model can be successfully replicated, because it is simple, direct, inclusive in all the services it gives, and has proven successful. Those replicating the model will need to use all of its components in order to maintain its effectiveness.

With this in mind, HJWT is developing a Replication Model Program and in 2006 will begin initial work in other states.

HJWT is now seven years old. The mission continues to be the same; clients come, grow, and become independent, and many more new clients are served each year. We continue to work diligently, worry about finances, and hope to add a grant writer or development director to our talented staff. We have met our goals each year and set ever-higher ones for the next. Generous donors continue to support HJWT to enable us to serve others. Thank you all – we are extremely grateful for your vital support.

## *Many Thanks to All Those We Work With Everyday*

The work that HJWT does builds on and incorporates the work that has been done by victim advocacy groups for decades in Vermont and across this nation. Groups that began and many that are still run as grassroots organizations, providing 24-hour hotlines, safe homes, shelters, education, and the multitude of support services work they do everyday.



*Five members of the HJWT team (L-R), Robin Goodrum, Janet Babcock, Wynona Ward, Johnnie Mae Doyle, and Kate Kennedy. (Congratulations, Kate on the birth of Maive Elizabeth, November 1, 2005.)*

In Southern Vermont, HJWT works with the Women’s Crisis Center in Windham County and Project Against Violent Encounters (PAVE) in Bennington County. In Windsor County, HJWT works with Women’s Information Services (WISE) and New Beginnings.

In Orange County, HJWT works with Safeline, Inc. and is a member of the Orange County Domestic and Sexual Violence Task Force. In Washington County, Battered Women Services; and in Lamoille County, the Clarina Howard Nichols Center serves victims and survivors.

In addition, HJWT often works with the other victim advocacy groups in Vermont that are members of the Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence. The network is a feminist organization committed to eradicating domestic and sexual violence through advocacy, empowerment, and social change. It offers a statewide, 24-hour hotline; victims counseling and short-term advice; transportation to shelters; and makes referrals to other services. Currently, 16 different organizations are available through the Vermont Network “umbrella,” some dealing with sexual assault and some with domestic violence.

In those counties where HJWT cannot provide full legal services, it provides the Legal Empowerment Assistance Program (LEAP). Please contact us for more information about this and other services.

## 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](http://www.havejusticewilltravel.org), or please make your check payable to:

***Have Justice-Will Travel, Inc.***

9580 VT Route 113, Chelsea, VT 05038

### Have Justice – Will Travel, Inc.

#### *Legal Services*

Representation in court for:  
Relief from Abuse hearings  
Child support needs  
Divorce and Parentage issues  
Custody and Visitation hearings

#### *Social Services*

Safety planning/Shelter referrals  
Financial advice/Creditor Plans  
Assess financial needs of family  
Referral for continued education  
Referral for driver's license  
Agency referrals/Support services  
Assist/Obtain subsidized housing

#### *In-home consultations*

#### *Transportation to:*

Court hearings  
Social Service appointments  
Supervised visits  
Doctor's appointments  
Women's group

#### *National toll free phone line*

#### *Women in Transition*

Women's Support Group  
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



(L-R) HJWT's Mary Classen, Diana Lischer Goodband (credit: Jason R. Henske/*Brattleboro Reformer*)

The Brattleboro, VT, satellite office is staffed by Attorney Mary B. Claassen and Paralegal/Administrative Assistant Diana Lischer-Goodband. Over the past six months the Brattleboro office has worked closely with the Women's Crisis Center advocates, the State's Attorneys Victims Advocate, Family Court, and others to provide a total of 102 women with emotional support and legal and social service referrals. This includes full legal representation to 18 women and one teenager (pregnant by landlord), and legal consultations to 17 women and

two children. HJWT gave "advice only" to 64 women, thereby assisting them and their 44 children with legal and social service referrals.

The staff participated in "trainings" from the Boston Conference on Domestic Violence on "Difficult Conversations for Legal Professionals;" the Vermont Police Academy on "The Physical and Psychological Effects of Strangulation;" and seminars on "Violence in Society" and on recognizing the signs of potential violence in the mentally ill.

#### *A Success Story*

Our first Women in Transition group of eight women relished the staff's home-cooking while enjoying the support of peers and lively discussions on subjects such as abuse, employment, budgeting, safety, and family dynamics. The series culminated in an art class at a local art school, underwritten by a grant from the Anne Slade Frey Charitable Trust.

A dramatic success story involving a former client/WIT participant arose from the discussion of strangulation. Some of the reading materials in the WIT notebook included handouts from Vermont Police Academy staff training on strangulation, including what to look for as signs of strangulation in women, and how women and their friends and co-workers can document their injuries. A member of the WIT group happened to have her notebook in her car when visiting a co-worker who had experienced an assault by her boyfriend.

She remembered some of the classic signs of strangulation, and noticed that her co-worker had these signs. She went over the information with her co-worker and encouraged her to take the assault seriously, contact the police, and call our office. Mary was able to obtain a Final Relief from Abuse Order for two years for this client and her children, and had all court records sealed due to the woman's HIV health status.

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.

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Brandy filed for divorce but continued to struggle. She went on public assistance because her husband, who held a good paying job, refused to pay child support. Brandy went many times to local food shelves to feed her children. The bill collectors were calling and foreclosure on her home was imminent. Brandy listened to her children cry many weekends because their Daddy didn't want them for visits. In February 2003, Brandy hit bottom when she was arrested and charged with driving while intoxicated.

With assistance from HJWT and the HJWT Women in Transition Life Skills and Mentoring Group (WIT), Brandy began rebuilding her life and her children's lives. HJWT Attorney Kate Kennedy provided free legal representation for her divorce, child support, parental rights and responsibilities, and parent child contact. The in-home consultations, transportation, and referrals to social agencies that HJWT provided were extremely helpful for Brandy, as were the daily, and sometimes two or three times a day supportive telephone calls from Kate. The WIT group taught

Brandy how to improve her life so that she could grow beyond the dependency she was conditioned to live with by her abuser. It taught her how to stand on her own two feet and how to access available resources to help herself.

Brandy now thanks the officer who arrested her. She has been sober ever since and continues to participate and excel in AA. As part of her restitution, she spoke at a local high school about drug and alcohol addiction. Brandy tells teenagers her story and stresses that they too may be at risk of having an addiction illness. Her service requirement is long over, but she continues to talk at local high schools, reaching out to youth to show them there is help and where they can get it.

Brandy has moved into a small house, purchased with the assistance of her mother. Her children are sleeping at night without nightmares or wetting their beds. They feel safe in their home and are healthy. Brandy, too, is safe and developing as a mother and a single woman. She graduated from Woodbury College with a degree in paralegal studies and aspires to be an attorney one day. Brandy has the investigative skills and the tenacity to advocate for

individuals in the legal system. She also has the life skill of building self-esteem from scratch as a single mother saddled with debt and addiction.

Last spring, Brandy volunteered at HJWT as a paralegal and is now working for HJWT through a grant that she researched, wrote, and received from the Mill Foundation. Brandy's legal and personal skills are invaluable resources. She understands what our clients need and is a constant reminder that survival is day to day. Her insights into how to turn the survival mechanisms used in an unhealthy marriage into survival for yourself and your children (once you are alone in the world and up against the court and welfare systems) are of great benefit to our clients.

Brandy understands what it feels like to be in denial about your life, in a downward spin, and then at rock bottom. More importantly, Brandy understands how to pick up the pieces, start over, and then soar high. With utilization of HJWT programs Brandy has transformed her life and her children's lives for the better. She is truly an inspiration to us all.

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## McManus Benefits from Trial Advocacy Institute

Attorney Jessica A. McManus of HJWT's Bennington, VT, office, received the K. Byron McCoy scholarship to attend the American Bar Association's Family Law Trial Advocacy Institute in Houston, TX. The institute was held May 21-28, 2005.

The trial advocacy institute was invaluable to Jessica, and the other HJWT staff members are also beneficiaries of her increased knowledge. The eight-day training provided instruction, simulated trial practice, special workshops in Family Law, videotaped reviews of each day's exercises, and immediate feedback from faculty and staff. The training also provided specific instruction in



*Jessica McManus Esq.*

opening/closing statements, direct and cross examination, evidence, qualifying an expert in custody cases, using psychologists in custody cases, ethical issues in Family Law, and financial issues in divorce cases. The week ended with a simulated divorce trial.

This experience would not have been possible without the K. Byron

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an expert

McCoy scholarship, which was created in 1995 through a joint effort of the faculty of the ABA Family Law Institute and the ABA Family Law Section.

James E. Lawrence, one of the program coordinators, states "the scholarship is in honor of K. Byron McCoy, who was the director of the institute for many years. His dedication and commitment to the institute faculty and participants helped shape the program into a tremendously successful pedagogical experience. Providing a scholarship to the institute to someone who is devoting their life to helping others through a nonprofit organization is a perfect tribute to Professor McCoy."

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## A Family Restored, A Future Reassured

The Orange County Court assigned HJWT Legal Intern Robin Goodrum as guardian ad litem for three children who had been court ordered into state's custody. Robin worked intensively with the family for over ten months,



*HJWT's Robin Goodrum went the extra mile for a needy family.*

employing the services of many community organizations to accomplish the goal of returning the children to their mother's custody.

When Robin was assigned to the case, the three children were living at home with their mother but in state's custody and under the close supervision and direction of the Vermont Department for Children and Families (DCF). The mother had suffered a back injury that prevented her from working, and the family was forced to live without electricity, heat, running water or bathroom facilities, or telephone. They had lost all the food in their

refrigerator and freezer during a very hot and humid spell. They could not afford gas nor could they get their car inspected by the upcoming due date.

The family was having a hard time meeting the caseworker's goals due to circumstances beyond its control. One of the children had shared confidential information with a caseworker, who betrayed this trust by turning in a report to DCF. The family felt threatened, intimidated, and defensive, and was unable to work effectively with DCF toward reunification.

Robin devoted herself to building a trusting relationship with each of the three children, and with the family as a whole unit. During this time many large underlying issues came to light, which enabled Robin to understand the factors preventing a cooperative effort between the family and service agencies. Robin worked diligently to address these prevailing stresses and pressures, and her involvement improved the relationship between the family and the DCF caseworker. A cooperative team effort developed that focused on

keeping the family together, which the caseworker determined was definitely in the "best interests of the children."

Robin transported the family to doctor's, counseling, and social service appointments, to food shelves, and to the library. She worked with many agencies to get immediate help in order to return custody of the children to their mother and to secure the on-going support needed to prevent problems from recurring.

These agencies included the Clara Martin Center, an agency in Orange County that provides mental health services for families; the teachers and counselor at the special therapeutic school one child attended and at the elementary school the other children attended; and Intensive Family Based Services (IFBS), which made sure that the children's academic, social, and emotional needs were met. She also worked with Community Action; DCF; local food shelves, Central Vermont Public Service (CVPS); the Vermont Office of Employment and Training; and U.S. Rep. Bernie Sanders's office.

The children are back in their mother's custody. This summer they participated in the reading program at their local library and attended various camp programs. The children's mother and her fiancé are currently receiving employment training, working toward their GED's, and doing intensive work with a budgeting counselor. Robin's role in this case over the past ten months was crucial to keeping this family together.

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### Thoughts From HJWT's Founder

When HJWT began, I was just one lawyer driving a 20-year old vehicle and working at her clients' kitchen tables. It hardly seemed possible to think at that time we would be where we are now. In seven years, we have grown from one lawyer to five lawyers, from one small office to four offices in southern and central Vermont, from having no staff to having two client service mentors, two paralegals, one office manager, and several undergrad and law student interns.

Rather than traveling to clients' homes, I have been on the road in the past year speaking about the HJWT model. I have traveled to Pennsylvania, Boston, and Minnesota to spread the word that HJWT can stop the generational cycle of abuse in rural areas throughout America.

Needless to say, I would rather be



*Wynona thanked Senator and Mrs. Leahy for their support of HJWT at the senator's 9th annual Women's Economic Opportunity Conference.*

sitting with clients in their homes helping them to become safe, independent, and self reliant, but HJWT can, with ten

people, serve many more victims and survivors of family violence than it can with one person.

Since it started, HJWT has provided full legal and social services to hundreds of women and children and has given advice and assistance to thousands. When I used to watch a woman walk away, who had gone from being abused, isolated, and afraid to being happy, outgoing, and enjoying life, it always brought a smile to my face. Now, I stand and watch the other HJWT attorneys do the same and I smile even more because I know that not only the client, but the attorney has become more empowered.

HJWT is truly the story of one woman helping another, who helps another, who helps another – that is how we will stop the generational cycle of abuse in families.

