

Have Justice—Will Travel

Ending the Generational Cycle of Violence



NEWS FALL 2011

HJWT — Unfortunately Down, but Fortunately Not Out

Serving Clients On a Shoestring, Until New Grants and Donations Arrived by Wynona I. Ward

Unfortunately, at the end of April 2011, I broke the news to all Have Justice—Will Travel (HJWT) employees and Board members that HJWT was out of funds. Grants had not come in and there was no money to continue paying salaries, travel, rent, or other expenses. Employees needed to seek other work or file for unemployment for an indefinite period of time until there were funds to bring them back to HJWT.

Immediate actions had to take place. The status of three HJWT offices was changed. The Randolph office in mid-Vermont was closed permanently. The Bennington office in southern Vermont was relocated, hopefully temporarily, as HJWT was waiting to hear if it would be awarded a grant from the U.S. Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women (it was). The third office, Brownington, located in the Northeast Kingdom area of Vermont had already drastically limited services when money began to get “tighter” earlier in the year. The fourth office, in Vershire, I decided to keep open temporarily, but downsized contents and did not take on any new full service clients.

It had been thirteen years and thousands of clients since I founded HJWT with the mission to provide free legal services

to victims and survivors of domestic abuse in Vermont.

Thirteen years since I became the Director, constituted a Board of Directors, and hired amazing multi-talented individuals to serve as lawyers, legal support staff, and as volunteer law school and undergraduate interns. Times are difficult for many non-profits and individuals, but HJWT has been a survivor. Not this time. It was a crushing blow to all employees, the Board, and to me. I had always worked to run HJWT on an extremely tight budget so the organization could serve many.

From the beginning, since HJWT could not afford to hire a development director, I made the decision with the Board that I would handle the development work to obtain government grants, private grants, and donations from individuals. HJWT has been extremely fortunate to have the help of Senator Patrick Leahy when it applied for and received federal grants. All these sources provide a non-profit’s employee salaries and direct services to clients, as well as overhead costs such as rent, telephone, and travel.

The first problem for HJWT came in 2007 when the federal Rural Domestic Violence grant that HJWT had been awarded three times, changed. New government regulations stated that

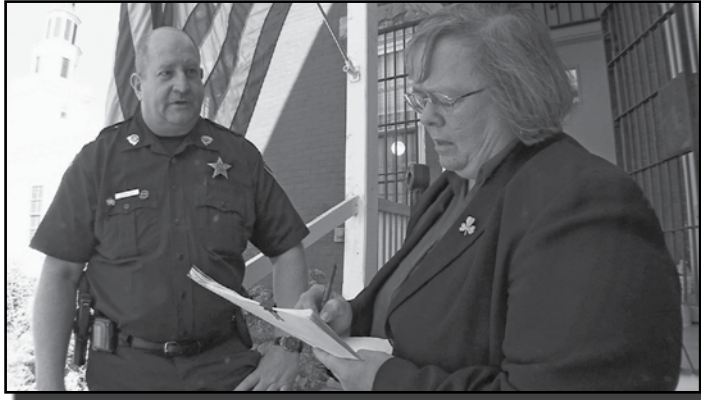


The HJWT offices from left to right: John Lamson in the Bennington office, the HJWT Vershire (Central Vermont) office, the HJWT Northeast Kingdom Area office.

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HJWT Works to Change Domestic Violence Policy in Vermont

by Wynona I. Ward



Wynona talks with Orange County Sheriff William Bohnyak

The State of Vermont is well known for having an active Domestic Violence Fatality Review Commission, which looks at adult deaths that occur in the State due to domestic violence. “The purpose of the Commission is to collect data and conduct in-depth reviews of domestic violence related fatalities with the goal of making policy recommendations to prevent future tragedies.”¹ Since the Commission began its work in 1994, 51% of all Vermont homicides were domestic violence related. “According to the 2009 Vermont Crime Report, approximately 60% of violent crime occurs in residences, making the home the most frequent location for violent criminal incidents.”² Hotline and crisis calls to the Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence increased by 37% in 2010, while calls to the Vermont Department of Children and Families reporting child maltreatment that included co-occurring domestic violence increased 18%.³ In 2009, Have Justice Will Travel (HJWT) received 1,029 calls asking for legal representation by victims and survivors. In 2010 that number increased to 1,493, a 45% increase.

The Commission completed one in-depth case review for their 2011 report, which involved a HJWT client. Wynona represented an elderly woman who called her at home at 2:00 a.m. saying, **“He came here, he broke in, he shot himself, and now he is dead.”** Wynona contacted the Commission because she had serious concerns about how this case had been handled by various state agencies, law enforcement, health care providers, and by the local emergency response services.

The HJWT client and Wynona were invited to testify before the Commission who came to the following conclusions about

strengths in the community concerning this case: 1) hospital emergency room personnel not only treated the victim, but were helpful by calling the local domestic violence program and the police; 2) the court and its personnel were helpful both during the day and after hours so the victim could obtain a relief from abuse order; and 3) emergency mental health services were readily available to the suicidal spouse.⁴

In addition, the Commission wrote the following about HJWT: “The victim of abuse was able to obtain exemplary legal representation through a local pro bono non-profit legal advocacy group which assisted her admirably in the relief from abuse, divorce and criminal process as well as providing her in-home consultations and transportation.”⁵

After listening to the HJWT client, Wynona, and others involved in the case, the Commission made several recommendations for policy changes in Vermont including: 1) Vermont Adult Protective Services should work with the Vermont Domestic Violence Council and the Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence to develop a targeted outreach program for isolated elders who may be victims of violence; 2) the Commission should work with health care providers to host a conference where medical and mental health providers would be trained about domestic violence, risk assessment, discharge plans, and the health care professional’s overall interactions with victims and alleged perpetrators of domestic and sexual violence; 3) emergency management services and local emergency authorities (police, fire, EMS) should coordinate their response to medical emergencies and crime scenes so that the closest resource is sent to respond to an emergency. (In the HJWT client’s case the response time for the ambulance team was 30 minutes, when a more local team was 5 minutes away and the law enforcement response was 45 minutes, when other local law enforcement was 5 minutes away.) **After the abuser shot himself, the abused woman, who was 68 years old, was advised by 911 to immediately leave the house and wait outside on a cold November night.** 4) the Commission recommended that a review of the firearm relinquishment recommendations in the 2010 Civil Protection Order Guide published by the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (See Speaking article on page 5) and work on an implementation plan for Vermont.⁶

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Rural funds could only be used for protective orders. Henceforth, Rural funds could no longer provide legal services for other family law cases such as divorce, parentage, custody and child support. Then the HJWT rural grant was cut from \$500,000 to \$110,000. At that point, HJWT closed the Brattleboro office and provided services out of the Bennington office only.

Following that was the financial downfall in the US. That drastically decreased the number of foundation grants HJWT received. Fortunately, HJWT has always had loyal and long-term donors who believe in the organization's mission and have been extremely generous to HJWT. Unfortunately, like many other nonprofits in the United States, the confluence of events in this country meant that the flow of money stopped. HJWT could not continue to pay employees or take on new cases.

So in April 2011 HJWT was down, but in the end not out. All the organization's employees, who were and are so dedicated to HJWT, and its model of providing legal and social services for each client until they are stable and independent, came to the rescue. To keep HJWT alive they volunteered their services.

Kate Kennedy, the HJWT senior attorney, volunteered to complete three divorce cases she was working on, plus remain on two cases where she was a volunteer Guardian ad Litem for children involved in the judicial system.

John Lamson, the HJWT attorney for Bennington and Rutland counties was interviewed on Vermont Public Radio in July where it was reported that John was showing up in "jacket and tie" for the Integrated Domestic Violence Docket in Bennington to represent victims of domestic violence although he was not being paid.

Robin Goodrum, the Coordinator of the HJWT Legal Empowerment Assistance Program (LEAP), continued working with LEAP clients from her home without pay and spent much of her summer fulfilling her role as a volunteer Guardian ad Litem in several cases in Vermont Family Court.

Johnnie Mae Doyle voluntarily appeared at the Vershire office once or twice a week to help me keep the bookkeeping and checkbook up-to-date.

After moving the furniture and files from the Randolph and Bennington offices, during the months of May and June I manned the Vershire office by myself as I had done when HJWT first started. During this time, I spoke with and advised

all new call-ins (as many as 3 each day) and continued to work on the caseload I already had, with little or no pay. My caseload consisted of seven full-service protective orders, divorce, and custody cases located in Orleans, Orange, and Windsor counties.

If no funds came by the fall, I decided HJWT would eventually move the Vershire office back into my home to save expenses. On weekends I began cleaning out old training and research files and took over fifty boxes of paper to recycling. By emptying out the barn, a garage, and the office basement of furniture, books, household goods, clothing, and unused previously donated office equipment and holding two-yard sales, a few hundred dollars was raised. There were some good buys for local people and lots of donations were made to victims of Hurricane Irene. All of this left me little time to work on development proposals.

In July and August, I was fortunate to have Eve Lindys, a Vermont Law School second year student intern volunteer. Eve had received an Equal Justice Foundation fellowship to work at HJWT. It was wonderful to have her help answering the telephone, interviewing clients, and assisting with preparation for court hearings.

By fall, I began breathing a sigh of relief. Robin came back to work full time in the Vershire office as grants came in from the Vermont Bar Foundation, Lintilhac Foundation, and the Mill Foundation. Emily Ross, a Case Western Reserve University School of Law graduate, who had just passed the Vermont Bar Exam, volunteered to work for HJWT for twelve weeks beginning in September in order to fulfill her clerkship requirement so that she can become a licensed Vermont attorney.

HJWT received notice that the US Department of Justice Office on Violence Against Women had renewed **and increased** our Rural Grant to \$341,014, which will keep the Bennington office open with a full-time attorney and a half-time paralegal for the next three years! John Lamson, who has worked in Bennington for HJWT since 2007, returned to work full-time on October 1 and is providing legal services in both Bennington and Rutland counties. We are thrilled to have him back on the job in a community he knows very well. John also serves as the President of the Bennington County Bar Association. (John and Kate are now the proud parents of Penelope Lamson, 9 lbs. 4 oz. who arrived on October 12, 2011.)

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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.

Although the temporary relief from abuse order in this case ordered that the defendant turn over all firearms to the police officer who served the order, instead the defendant either destroyed or hid his guns and told the officer that he didn't have any. The defendant was worried about being arrested since he was a convicted felon who by law was not allowed to possess firearms. Weeks later he used one of the handguns he hid to shoot himself.

HJWT was glad to see that as part of the Commission's review process, it adopted a new lethality assessment tool where risk factors for each case can be considered. In the HJWT client's case the following risk factors were noted:

1. serious violent threats, ideation or intent;
2. escalation of physical/sexual violence or threats, ideation, intent;
3. violations of civil and criminal court orders;
4. negative controlling attitudes about partner;
5. criminal history;
6. relationship problems;
7. access to weapons;
8. mental health history;
9. recent separation and divorce proceedings;
10. fear of return to jail;
11. isolation;
12. health issues; and
13. pet abuse.⁷

¹ State of Vermont Domestic Violence Fatality Review Commission Report 2011, p. 1.

² *Id.* at 2.

³ *Id.* at 2.

⁴ *Id.* at 5.

⁵ *Id.* at 5.

⁶ *Id.* at 6-12.

⁷ *Id.* at 5.

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I am also happy to announce that Kate Kennedy has set up her own law practice, Kennedy Law, in Randolph. She is busily taking on her own cases in both Vermont Family and Probate Courts. During the ten years she worked at HJWT, Kate built a fine reputation as an efficient and compassionate attorney, not only for victims of domestic violence, but also for children. She is working on children's cases that have been referred by the Courts and as a conflict attorney in juvenile cases. Kate is excited to be taking on types of cases that HJWT does not handle, such as adoption, estate planning, and real estate closings. Once additional funding is received, Kate has agreed to work part-time for HJWT on a low-bono contract basis.

Grant requests continue to be submitted. Hopefully HJWT will be able to bring JohnnieMae back to work full-time soon. Hopefully, I will be able to receive a modest salary soon.

I want to express to the HJWT staff how grateful I am for all they have done. Each is a truly wonderful individual and each has given much to many. I also want to express how grateful I am to the many of you for the continued support and dedication given to the mission of HJWT. Only with all of you has HJWT flourished, grown and helped many victims become survivors, out on their own, who are now strong individuals raising their children in safe homes.

Fortunately, as a non-profit, HJWT is still a survivor and can continue to work with those who are abused, and who unfortunately experience even more abuse due to such a difficult time in our country.

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 Mentoring 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

2011 Speaking Engagements for Wynona Ward

Training for Judges, Attorneys, and other Legal Professionals in Nevada

In March, Wynona was fortunate to be included as a faculty member for the National Conference on Juvenile and Family Law for the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ) in Reno, Nevada. There she presented the HJWT model. The conference showcased innovations in programming and practice and provided new opportunities for courts and communities to improve outcomes for children, youth, families and victims. Diverse educational sessions focused on the challenges faced by many children and families, such as child abuse and neglect, mental health, delinquency, custody, immigration, domestic violence, and substance abuse. Wynona's presentation was well received. Participants were from all over the country and she saw judges and advocates there she knew from Vermont.

Training with a Judge in Arkansas

Stemming from the Reno conference, in September, Wynona was asked to present for a Statewide Multi-Disciplinary Conference on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault in North Little Rock, Arkansas with the Honorable Steven Aycock, a retired judge, who is the Assistant Director of the Family Violence Department of NCJFCJ. This two-day conference attracted approximately 150 people from all over Arkansas. Judge Aycock and Wynona presented together on "Civil Protective Orders: Prioritizing Safety for Rural Victims," a guide developed by the NCJFCJ in 2010. (See Policy article, page 2, last sentence.)



Johnnie Mae Doyle has been with HJWT since 2001.

Speaking to Faculty and Students at the University of Maine at Machias

Wynona and her assistant Johnnie Mae Doyle, made the eight-hour drive over mountain ranges to Machias, Maine in October to speak about the HJWT model for faculty and students at the University of Maine campus. Meghan Duff, Assistant Professor of Psychology for the Psychology and Community Studies Program, invited HJWT to Maine. Professor Duff and Wynona are both Fellows for Life in the national Albert Schweitzer Fellows Program. The event was co-sponsored by the Omicron Delta Pi fraternity, the Next Step Domestic Violence Project and the Community Caring Collaborative.

A Letter of Support from a HJWT Client



Working as a team from left to right — Kate Kennedy, Robin Goodrum, Wynona Ward

legal help but cannot afford it. I was one of the lucky ones who have had that from *Have Justice Will Travel*.

I thought I wasn't ever going to be a whole, happy and confident person again. I was married and lived with a man for forty years who was

I am writing this letter with sadness in my heart. When I heard *Have Justice Will Travel* was closing their doors my heart sank, as there are so many women in need of

abusive, controlling and degrading me. I had enough but didn't have the money to get a divorce. I talked with a local attorney who gave me the number of *Have Justice Will Travel*. That's when I met two angels, Robin Goodrum and Kate Kennedy.

I spoke first with Robin. She comforted me and right from the beginning she made me feel confident enough to follow through on filing for my divorce. Robin told me what papers I had to get, how to fill them out, and how to file them with the court. If Robin didn't have the answer to one of my questions she would find it. Robin's ability was far more than aiding me with the court papers, she was encouraging, caring and comforting. At that time in my life, I needed that.

If it wasn't for Kate and Robin I honestly feel I would be in a mental hospital today. Kate came to my rescue when I needed someone to represent me in court. Kate has been by my side all the way. These two women have made my life so much healthier and happier. They're my angels. It's too bad there aren't more people in this world like Kate and Robin who not only represented me--they became my friends.



Have Justice–Will Travel

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So many need so much in our country right now. There is much more poverty, which can cause more domestic abuse. Millions are without jobs, that also can cause more domestic abuse. HJWT is one of many organizations trying to survive and continue the work we do, which is desperately needed. Your gifts to HJWT help many live better lives. We are extremely grateful to you.

(802) 685-7809 or Toll Free (877) 496-8100

www.havejusticewilltravel.org

E-mail: hjwt@together.net

In Memory of Ann L. Bronfman *by Wynona I. Ward*



Ann Bronfman, Twinkles, and Kate Kennedy at age two.

Everyone at Have Justice—Will Travel (HJWT) was deeply saddened to hear of the death of Ann Bronfman in April 2011. She was an extraordinary woman and an inspiration to us all. Her generosity provided the means for HJWT to make a significant difference in the lives of thousands of abused women and children in Vermont.

Ann faithfully supported the work of Attorney Kate Kennedy at HJWT for nine years as well as contributing to general funds at HJWT. Kate recently wrote, “She [Ann] believed in what we were doing at HJWT and was so proud and downright amazed by our voices and what we did every day. She felt a connection with what we accomplished here and she would smile and say ‘that’s just marvelous’ when I would call her with our successes in the courtroom.”

Ann was featured in the summer 2006 issue of JCA Today, a publication of the Jewish Council for the Aging. The article described Ann’s giving as a way of life: “Ann Loeb Bronfman is living proof that greatness is not inherited; it is achieved. By refusing to rest on others’ laurels, Ann has literally changed the world, adding compassion to an otherwise uncaring place. Her singleness of purpose and generosity of spirit teach us all that we, too, possess the power to change the world if we, like Ann, but listen to our hearts.”

All of us at HJWT truly admired Ann and the work that she did to improve the society we live in. The world is a better place because of what Ann did during her life and the way she did it.

Have Justice–Will Travel, Inc.

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