

Embrace Quarterly E-Newsletter  
March 2017



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## Embrace and Flambeau Correctional Center Collaborate to Prevent Prison Rape

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As Sexual Assault Awareness Month begins next week, Embrace is excited to announce the collaborative partnership with Flambeau Correctional Facility that ensures all survivors of sexual violence and rape have access to confidential, supportive services.

In 2003, the United States Congress unanimously passed the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA). The federal civil law addresses sexual abuse and sexual harassment in prisons, jails, and other detention facilities. The legislation called for nationwide data collection on sexual abuse in confinement, and established federal grants to help states combat it.

The Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault (WCASA) along with the Wisconsin Department of Corrections (DOC) developed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to provide sexual abuse

survivors with supportive services. This formal agreement will coordinate efforts between state prisons and local sexual assault service providers to provide sexual abuse survivors with confidential emotional support, hospital accompaniment, and crisis intervention services. WCASA's Prison Rape Elimination Coordinator, Rebecca Main, says, "The MOU was released in December 2016 and is being implemented statewide at all Wisconsin prisons, including the Hawkins-based Flambeau Correctional Center, in partnership with the local sexual assault services provider, Embrace."

"This agreement highlights the ongoing collaboration between Embrace and the Flambeau Correctional Center to provide confidential counseling and support services to prison rape survivors," explains Embrace Executive Director, Katie Bement.

One of PREA's largest achievements was the development of national standards to detect, prevent, and respond to sexual abuse and sexual harassment in confinement settings. The PREA standards fueled important changes inside detention facilities and provide safer and more secure facilities for staff, visitors, and inmates. Flambeau Correctional Center (FCC) Superintendent, Brad Hoover, says, "FCC was last audited by the U.S. Department of Justice in 2016 and was in compliance with all of the PREA standards."

"Because of the standards, many prisons, including FCC, as well as jails and youth facilities, now have staff who receive specialized training to investigate sexual abuse and sexual harassment, all corrections officers are routinely trained on how to prevent and respond to this violence," Hoover explains. "More than 90% of incarcerated individuals are released back to their communities, and providing support for survivors of sexual abuse enhances the abilities of these individuals to successfully transition back into the community."

Bement adds, "Prisoners across the country are being taught about their right to be safe from sexual violence and how they can get help. At FCC, survivors are able to obtain confidential rape crisis services through Embrace's crisis line as well as in-person trauma counseling at the prison."

*Pictured above from left to right are Embrace's Sexual Violence Program Coordinator (Rusk County) Cassandra Clark, Executive Director Katie Bement, Crisis Advocate Kyann Leisner and Flambeau Correctional Center's Superintendent Brad Hoover signing the PREA response Memorandum of Understanding on March 1, 2017.*

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## Program Highlights



**Eaux Claires 2 A Billion: Neaux Violence**  
Bon Iver, Embrace, and Family Support Center proudly announce a partnership at this year's Eaux Claires Music Festival: Neaux Violence, brought to you by the band's own gender equity campaign, 2 A Billion. Keep an eye out for our booth at this year's Festival! [Read More >>](#)



### Increased Social Media Outreach and Support for Teens

Embrace has now expanded our social media presence to include Instagram! Instagram is a popular way to showcase our work and available services to teens and young adults. Embrace also created individual employee contact pages on Facebook. [Read More >>](#)

### Tri-County Faith Leaders Gather to End Domestic and Sexual Violence

More than 30 local faith community leaders from Price, Rusk and Washburn Counties gathered on November 29, 2016 and December 1, 2016 for an all-day event at which they asked themselves how they can do more to end sexual and domestic violence and how they can better serve those who turn to them in an hour of need. The event was sponsored and hosted by Embrace. The workshops were led by trainers from Boston's Safe Havens Interfaith Partnership Against Domestic Violence, a non-secretarian nonprofit working to bring together advocates and communities of all religious faiths. Embrace and the tri-county faith leaders were selected as one of 18 national groups to receive the training

through the Safe Havens Hearts and Hands program. [Read More >>](#)



### Survivor Story

Walking away from an abusive relationship can be one of the biggest steps in taking the road to finding yourself again. Brooke\* did just that. She realized she could not take any more of the tumultuous relationship after her abuser, David\*, choked her, slammed her head against the wall, and punched her... [Read More >>](#)

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"At the center of non-violence stands the principle of love." -- Martin Luther King Jr.





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## Newsletter

### March 2017 E-Newsletter

#### [Eaux Claires 2 A Billion: Neaux Violence](#)

[Bon Iver](#), Embrace, and Family Support Center proudly announce a partnership at this year's Eaux Claires Music Festival: Neaux Violence, brought to you by the band's own gender equity campaign, 2 A Billion.

An effort to eliminate barriers and create pathways for women and girls to live safer, more prosperous lives, Neaux Violence intends on helping move the needle on gender equity and domestic abuse.

“One of the biggest problems with domestic abuse is that people don't talk about it. It's insidious, stigmatized and hushed,” says Justin Vernon of Bon Iver. “It's very important to us to encourage dialogue and support the incredible work of our nonprofit partners.”

Embrace and Family Support Center will partner with Bon Iver to raise awareness and stir up conversation around such issues at [Eaux Claires on June 16 + 17, 2017](#). Keep an eye out for our booth at this year's Festival!

#### [Increased Social Media Outreach and Support for Teens](#)

In addition to maintaining a successful Facebook page for Embrace, we have expanded our social media presence this year to include Instagram! We utilize our business Facebook page to help spread awareness and information about our services and programs, as well as any other information useful to survivors and their families. We found, though, that we really wanted a place to showcase the cool and fun things we do as employees of Embrace, and Instagram is the perfect fit! We are also able to utilize hashtags on Instagram to help the information reach an even wider audience.

We have also expanded our use of Facebook as a communication tool by adding individual employee pages. The pages are labeled by our position (ex: [Price County Sexual Violence Program Coordinator](#), [Washburn County Domestic Violence Program Coordinator](#), [Rusk County Sexual Violence Program Coordinator](#), [Washburn County Sexual Violence Program Coordinator](#)) and are used primarily as a tool to connect with those who have internet access but no phone access, an increasingly-widespread issue in our rural area. We have found that this is a particularly useful way to communicate with youth and to give them an easy way to obtain information

about our services. We have disclaimers about privacy and confidentiality on each page, as well as an automatic response to our personal messages that inform the person messaging us that we will be in contact with them the next business day. These individual pages are not meant to be a crisis response and are not marketed as such.

We've found that our rural area makes communication and outreach difficult if we focus on using only one or two media; we need to use every tool available to us to reach those in need of assistance or support. Social media is one more evolving, progressive tool for us to utilize. We are coming very close to reaching 600 likes on our business Facebook page. Your action of liking us raises awareness about domestic and sexual violence, shows solidarity to survivors, and gets the word out about our services to someone who may be following you and needing support! Please go to [facebook.com/Embracewi](https://www.facebook.com/Embracewi) to check us out and **help us reach our goal of 600 likes by Summer of 2017.**

### Hearts and Hands: Tri-County Faith Leaders Gather to End Domestic and Sexual Violence

More than 30 local faith community leaders from Price, Rusk and Washburn Counties gathered on November 29, 2016 and December 1, 2016 for an all-day event at which they asked themselves how they can do more to end sexual and domestic violence and how they can better serve those who turn to them in an hour of need. The event was sponsored and hosted by Embrace. The workshops were led by trainers from Boston's Safe Havens Interfaith Partnership Against Domestic Violence, a non-secretarian nonprofit working to bring together advocates and communities of all religious faiths.

"Our communities' faith leaders play a fundamental role in people's well-being, health and spiritual life. They frequently meet people at very critical times in their lives and are often the first to hear of violence within a person's relationship. If our faith leaders are given the tools to support survivors and are willing to raise their voices condemning domestic and sexual violence in their faith community, lives will be saved and our wider communities will become a safer place," said Embrace Executive Director Katie Bement.

Safe Havens' missions are to provide training for faith leaders and congregations, connect religious leaders with service providers and law enforcement, and advocate for religious communities to take the lead in ending domestic and sexual violence. Over the past 25 years, Safe Havens has earned many awards — and grants from the U.S. Justice Department's Office on Violence Against Women to provide training around the country. Embrace and the tri-county faith leaders were selected as one of 18 national groups to receive the training through the Safe Havens Hearts and Hands program.

### **NEED FOR TRAINING**

Co-presenter Anne Marie Hunter, a Methodist minister and the founder and Executive Director of Safe Havens, noted faith leaders are often the first place survivors turn for help.

"Research shows that ... they're more likely to turn to their faith leaders than they are to call the police or call the hotline," she said. "So that means that faith leaders are first responders. You wouldn't send someone into a burning building as a first responder without training. So in the same way, faith leaders shouldn't have to respond to victims and survivors without critical training."

Yet few seminaries, Hunter said, teach faith leaders how to work with trauma victims, and that lack of training can prove dangerous for those who turn to them.

For example, she said, an untrained person might elicit a confession during couple's counseling and not understand how a beating might follow, or encourage the abused person to leave without a safety plan and not

know that leaving is often the point of greatest danger for the individual and their children.

Hunter added an untrained faith leaders might not hear carefully guarded clues that alert an experienced listener that an individual could be suffering abuse, or might unintentionally use language that shames, blames or silences the victim.

Hunter also addressed the ways that religion has been at times used to keep people in abusive relationships and the ways that faith leaders themselves have abused their positions of trust and authority.

Bement said that Price, Rusk and Washburn Counties' faith communities have been important partners for Embrace, and the training was intended to strengthen referrals and faith leaders skill sets in identifying and taking a stand against the violence in their communities.

## WIDER APPLICATION

Safe Havens' Associate Director Alyson Morse Katzman joined Hunter in addressing such topics as:

- Defining domestic violence.
- Learning more about trauma.
- Understanding why people stay with abusive partners.
- Countering "boys will be boys" and "locker room" stereotypes.
- Building bridges between advocates and faith leaders.
- Learning how best to respond to abuse disclosures.
- Understanding the safety challenges with joint-marital counseling when violence exists in the relationship.
- Connecting survivors with advocacy groups, so they can access additional services and counseling.

Hunter and Katzman urged attendees to lead not only their congregations but also their wider communities.

"We believe that the key to broad social change lies with faith communities," said Hunter.

The group brainstormed on the issue of how violence and abuse affects people and created lists sorted with labels such as trapped, shocked, nauseous, frozen, alone, betrayed and defeated.

At one point, Katzman read a monologue that recounted a "composite survivor's" journey from meeting a "really great guy," through first experiencing physical abuse, to finding herself married with three kids and saying, "Everyone thinks he's perfect, so it must be me. I'm going crazy. I just hope this relationship isn't the death of me."

At another point, the presenters explained to the attendees how survivors often sanitize the language they use to disclose abuse and how the code can be broken. They provided a handout detailing the destructive statements used by perpetrators to subdue intimate partners.

Faith leaders offered up their own questions and suggestions, including ideas about how to let survivors know that it's "OK" to ask for help, such as putting up posters in bathrooms, using sermons, addressing instances of abuse in scripture, teaching healthy sexuality through youth programs, and distributing Embrace materials.

Pastor Matthew Arneson of First Presbyterian Church in Phillips described the training as "a meaningful day of reflection, learning, and planning in regards to the sinister secret of domestic abuse/violence in our local community and congregations".

Victory Christian Center's Pastor Carol Gabrielsen said the whole experience was "very eye-opening".

## Survivor Story

Walking away from an abusive relationship can be one of the biggest steps in taking the road to finding yourself again. Brooke\* did just that. She realized she could not take any more of the tumultuous relationship after her abuser, David\*, choked her, slammed her head against the wall, and punched her. A couple days after the incident, she went to the hospital to get checked over as the bruises started to show and the pain started to increase. This was not the first time there was life-threatening physical violence in their relationship, and Brooke wanted to make sure it was the last for her. She was growing more and more concerned her kids would be the next target during another one of David's drunken rages. She made her way to Embrace after seeing a brochure in the hospital and decided to stay in shelter.

Being in a shelter is not an easy thing to do, but Brooke felt safe being there. Getting to know the other residents that lived there and hearing their stories, she knew she was not alone. As the weeks went on, she was receiving constant and apologetic text messages and phone calls from her abuser. This was the ninth time she had left him in their three year relationship, and she knew his repetitive plays too well. She shut her phone off. Making the choice to put a restraining order on David helped to give her the space and time she needed to heal. Brooke was noticing the little things she missed such as managing her own checking account.

Brooke worked at her job and learned to budget her money to save up for her own rental house. Also, attending group with other survivors when her work schedule allowed helped her healing. As time went on Brooke noticed herself feeling more confident and her self-esteem rising. The laughing and smiling became more common, and she started to get her confidence back, which helped her get back up on her feet again in her very own place to live.

Sometimes it's the small things we miss when someone comes into our lives and tries to take those away. Whether it be a checking account, new clothes, or independence. Asking for help in a crisis can be a very scary step to take, but it's a step that can change everything for the better.

**Note from the Advocate:** A victim of an abusive relationship will leave the relationship approximately seven times before he or she leaves for good. There are countless reasons to return—love, low self-worth, kids and potential custody battles, addiction issues, and finances. Leaving the relationship is also the most unsafe time for a victim. As the abuser senses that they're losing power over the victim, they will often act in dangerous ways to regain control over their victim. Witnessing the back and forth can be frustrating for friends and family, but it's important to remember if you continue to respect and support the victim, he or she will grow stronger and gain the confidence to make his or her OWN decision to leave. If he or she feels judged by a friend or family member, he or she could lose trust, withdraw, become skeptical of talking about the abuse to anyone else and end up cutting off a way to escape and safety.

\*Pseudonyms are used to protect the survivor's safety and privacy.

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