

Ravalli County Commissioners

From: coalition@cybernet1.com on behalf of SAFE <coalition@cybernet1.com>
Sent: Tuesday, December 10, 2013 11:32 AM
To: Ravalli County Commissioners
Subject: You can provide someone you may never meet, hope.

With your support we change lives.

S.A.F.E.

*Providing a safe place and supportive services for
battered and abused residents of our valley for
25 years.*

Donate today and keep this dream alive!



SAFE stands committed to our 25-year history.

**You can help make this dream of a future free of violence
continue for the next twenty-five years. Donate today.**

SAFE stands committed to our 25-year history of providing a safe place and supportive services for battered and abused residents of our valley. It is a cherished and real dream, one we are realizing with every child we see, every woman we touch and every group we attend.

Together, with you, we have moved this dream forward to success over the last twenty five years. But most dreams, particularly decades-long dreams, come with obstacles. I write this letter with the knowledge that this has been a year of challenges for our community and for SAFE.

You may recall the 2013 loss of a major source of funding for SAFE's Transitional Housing Program. This grant source provided the bulk of the funding to support the provision of over 8,000 nights of affordable housing for approximately 13 families transitioning away from abusive homes each year. When we received this funding news, we were faced with the concern that we wouldn't be able to continue to offer this crucial program in the community.

We decided to do what we do best-keep going. We knew that without housing support, families may be forced to choose between homelessness and returning to an abusive family situation. We had some funds remaining in our current grant to hold us over. We made changes, reduced our staffing, re-applied for the funding and asked you for your support. You, our community, provided an amazing response and we were able to keep the program operational.

Next came February. In February, we were informed that the state Coalition of Montana would no longer be providing prevention funds to local communities. SAFE has utilized these prevention dollars, roughly \$30,000 annually, to do our work in the schools and community for the past nine years. Again, we took a deep breath and began looking for other funding to support this important work.

A blustery March day provided us with an opportunity to truly understand what this community might be like if SAFE were never founded, if SAFE didn't exist. This spring, we were preparing to celebrate **SAFE's 25 years of service in the community**. Although faced with significant financial uncertainties, we knew that it was important to honor our roots and celebrate our accomplishments. As the wind blew in our valley, a small fire was ignited outside of SAFE's facility. The fire traveled into the building and soon engulfed our crawlspace. We evacuated our facility and watched in horror as the local fire department worked to minimize the damage. Our building was spared but sustained significant smoke damage and compromised floors rendered our facility uninhabitable for six long months.

In the days following the fire, most of us involved with SAFE were overwhelmed at the daunting tasks before us-locating alternate shelter for our residents, finding new space from which to operate our programs, and worrying about the future of our organization. We were equally overwhelmed at the outpouring of support we received from our friends, neighbors, former program participants, past board members, current colleagues and others in our community. It served to remind us that **we have not and will not ever be doing this work alone.**

Over the past eight months, we've been working to rebuild. A two pronged approach, facility and funding, began to see success with the selection of our prevention program for funding by the Steele-Reese Foundation. This provides us with one year of funding for the program, allowing us time to secure more on-going funding for our community's prevention efforts.

In September, we received word that our Transitional Housing program would receive funding for the next three years. As a model program in Montana serving the Bitterroot Valley, we have proven that our dream is more than a wish and a prayer. It is based on real lives being impacted and supported by SAFE.

Finally, this fall, we were able to move back into our facility, the heart of our organization and the place from which we can again offer safety, security and support. Here we stand committed.

Through all of this change, chaos and challenge, we were still able to provide services to 334 adults and 81 children last year, including 2,176 nights of emergency shelter and 8,806 nights of transitional housing. Even faced with such uncertainty, we never stopped trying to change lives. We never stopped working to create a future free of violence.

Yes, this year had obstacles. Putting our facility and program funding back in order has certainly proven to be a costly and challenging, yet achievable task-one that can't be left undone. And so, we turn to you. For this fiscal year, we are hoping to raise approximately \$30,000 in direct local donations to assist us in the continued operation all of our programs. We know that we can count on your support to make that happen.

We know we can count on you to donate today.

Your **tax-deductible** donation today will ensure that families will continue to have access to safe, affordable housing, supportive help and prevention services in the Bitterroot Valley. Donate. Please, let us count on you to send your donation today. You can also learn more about SAFE or donate online by going to our website, www.safeinthebitterroot.org, and clicking on the "Donate" button. Thank you!

Stacey Umhey
Executive Director

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