

# Domestic Violence Survivors Are The 'TRUE' Heroes

State Representative 134th District (Fairfield & Trumbull)

*In recognition of Domestic Violence Awareness throughout the month of October and inspired by the compelling story as told by a domestic violence survivor, it is my hope that we will move a step forward in preventing domestic violence and encourage victims to seek protection and safety away from the abuse.*

The first sign that Jane\* (*names are withheld to protect identity of abuse victims*) was in a relationship that would feature domestic abuse came unexpectedly on the night of her honeymoon, when her husband began a tirade of emotional abuse. The situation worsened and continued for more than 10 years.

The abuse she suffered was physical, emotional, and financial. For more than a decade Jane was isolated; not allowed to wear makeup, go out with friends, socialize or contact her family. She was closely monitored, and only allowed to go to work and back home.

The money she earned was controlled by her husband. She was only provided with an allowance to buy gas and food. She had to account for every penny. Jane gave birth to two beautiful children, and did her best to shield them from the horrific abuse she encountered; always concerned the abuse would soon extend to her kids. As survivors of domestic violence can attest, there was nothing

she felt that she could do to stop the abuse.

Jane endured the situation in silence. Throughout her marriage she maintained a professional career, kept a perceived “normal” household while enduring suffering and indignation because she felt there was no other way. The shame and guilt she felt prevented her from sharing her pain and trauma with friends and family.

This continued until a series of events led her to the [Center for Women and Families of Fairfield County](#). When Jane suffered yet another episode of abuse, she remembered public service announcements about support and counseling from the Center and believed that she finally might be able to escape from her life of abuse. Following some confidential counseling sessions and working with compassionate case workers, Jane finally decided, mostly out of concern for her children and her safety, to leave the abusive relationship. Today, Jane and her children are living free of abuse and she volunteers with the Center as a speaker and serves as a truly inspirational advocate for survivors of domestic violence.

The Center is the primary resource for survivors of domestic and sexual abuse and prevention education in Eastern Fairfield County, including the towns of Trumbull, Monroe, Bridgeport and Fairfield. The Center works within multiple systems of care and collaboration including justice systems, law enforcement, child welfare, eldercare, education, and multiple other social and private services.

The Center works to provide a path of healing for survivors and to

create a competent community response to domestic and sexual violence. It provides age-appropriate and culturally informed prevention, intervention, advocacy, and education to citizens of all ages. During the last fiscal year, the staff provided domestic and sexual violence intervention to over 4,600 individuals, of which almost 600 were children who witnessed abuse or were the direct target of physical and/or sexual abuse. In this same period, 198 Trumbull and 232 Fairfield residents received services.

These numbers, compared with the number of residents in the community, tell us that there are many victims not receiving the support they require. We need to advocate community education and awareness aimed at increasing the level of understanding of this type of violence; increasing individual's capacity for empathy and self-esteem. The Center is educating the community to prevent violence by providing information to over 6,700 individuals -- the largest percentage being school-aged children -- through forums, vigils, and in-school educational programs.

Jane and her children are not just statistics, three of the over 4,600 survivors mentioned above. They represent the many families who are living with violence in their home, most of whom are silently suffering. They are also survivors in the truest sense. It has not been easy, but with the help of advocates and case managers from The Center, Jane and her children are inspirational heroes who have survived and gone on to thrive despite the tragedy of domestic violence. They are even more heroic in sharing their compelling story with the public -- to ensure more people can escape from the

plight of domestic violence.

### ***State Rep. Tony Hwang***

*Rep. Tony Hwang is a strong advocate in the prevention of domestic violence and has worked to raise awareness and education on this important issue. Rep. Hwang represents the General Assembly's 134th District, covering parts of Trumbull and Fairfield. He is a ranking member of the legislature's Government Administration and Elections Committee and a member of Appropriations and Environment committees. Tony is also a founding member of the bi-partisan CT Bioscience Caucus to advocate the growth of bioscience technology and industries in Connecticut.*

[www.tonyhwang.com](http://www.tonyhwang.com)