

# Safe Home helping shelter victims of domestic abuse

## Safe Home

By Bristow Marchant 11-21-07  
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(Eleventh in a series about United Way-funded agencies in Laurens County)

Criminal domestic violence is a serious problem in South Carolina, and often those caught in violent relationships feel as if they have nowhere to go. The Laurens County Safe Home provides domestic violence victims from around Laurens County and beyond an avenue for escape and a safe haven to get their lives back on track.

"We provide services for victims of domestic violence; men, women and children," said Tina Flynn, the executive director of the Safe Home. "The shelter is the most obvious part of our operations, but we also offer related services. If an individual has to leave their home, we help them get an order of protection, we walk with them into court, and help them find a new home or apartment, and through the generosity of the community through the



United Way, we can get it fully furnished down to the silverware."

As Flynn says, domestic violence is an issue that can affect not just women, but men as well. "If we have a male victim of domestic violence, which does happen, no male can stay in the shelter," she said. "We would put him up in a motel."

The Safe Home is a private, non-profit initiative, started by a team of volunteers in 1983, and is dependent on outside funding. "We're very grateful to the community for all the support they offer," Flynn said. "The United Way is a big part of our funding. We also get legislative appropriations, and the generous donations of the community."

**Safe, 7A**



**Safe haven:** The women and children who rely on the Laurens County Safe Home live in small rooms like this one at the organization's shelter for victims of domestic violence. — Photo by Bristow Marchant

### From 1A

Another source of income for the shelter is a thrift store the organization runs in downtown Laurens. "The idea there wasn't to make any kind of profit," Flynn explains.

"We're happy to break even. We set that up in the '90s when we received federal seed money through the Emergency Shelter Grant Program. Its purpose was to find an outlet for the people who can't even afford Walmart. Our clients can shop there at no cost, and everyone else just pays a small fee. All the profits go to the shelter."

Flynn tries to make the best of whatever money the Safe Home gets. "We're a small organization, so things can get tight," Flynn said. "General operating costs are our main need. A large part of our funding goes right into the shelter; heat, water. It's just like a regular home, and it needs everything a regular home does."

Julie Fuller, a staff member at the Safe Home, says the home is in constant need of upkeep, often done by volunteers. The floors need to be refilled, and the window screens are so old and full of holes that bugs are a recurring problem.

"Around this time of year, we

also need Christmas donations," Fuller said. "We have children here, and these women have no way to get them presents."

The Safe Home tries to tailor itself to the needs of its clients. "Someone doesn't have to stay at the shelter if they don't want to," Flynn said. "It's always more comfortable if they can stay in their home, especially for the children."

The Home also takes care of the needs of those who do opt to use its shelter facilities. "The children who do stay here go to school when they're able to. A bus picks them up here and then drops them back off."

"We also have a counselor on staff. We received \$25,000 from United Way in 2007, and a lot of that goes to pay the counselor and our other 11 staff members who keep the shelter open 24/7."

"Without United Way," Flynn said, "we wouldn't be able to stay open."

United Way of Laurens County Director Caroline Thomas said she is aware of what a pressing need the Safe Home addresses. "The issue of domestic violence is very real in Laurens County, unfortunately," Thomas said. "Men and women fall victim, and having a safe harbor during those times is important."

Thomas said the circumstances surrounding domestic violence victims can often be dire, making a place like the Safe Home all the more important.

"When crisis hits the home, women sometimes have to leave very quickly. Some of them only leave with the clothes on their back," she said.

"With this home, they know they don't have to leave the county, they know there's an emergency center where they can recover."

The Safe Home, with its location a closely-guarded secret, gives victims that opportunity.

"They have an amazing facility," Thomas said.

"It's very well taken care of; it looks anonymous and safe, but also easily accessible. The law enforcement and victim's advocates there do a great job."