

Morrow Manor is
'an incredible gift —
a life-saving gift'

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Almost Candid Photography

POULSBO — One-fourth of all women who live on the streets in Kitsap County say domestic violence is a factor in their homelessness.

The YWCA ALIVE Shelter provides temporary emergency housing for women and children, but in 2013 was unable to provide shelter or housing for 1,020 women and children because of lack of capacity. Women and children are remaining in the shelter longer than usual because of a lack of safe and affordable housing in the county.

For many women, YWCA Executive Director Denise Frey said, their only choices are to return to the abuse or live in their vehicle with their children.

“Morrow Manor will give them a third choice,” she said. “It’s an incredible gift — a life-saving gift.”

The upcoming site preparation for Morrow Manor was celebrated Sept. 9. The work is expected to begin in October. When completed, the four townhouse duplexes — set amidst alders, cedars and firs near Noll Road and Mesford Street — will provide a safe and nurturing place for survivors of domestic violence to rebuild their lives.

Frey said residents will be able to live there until they are established and self-sufficient. Residents can attend college or begin careers. They will pay rent, based on what they can afford. Available for them will be YWCA of Kitsap County’s safety net of supportive services, such as advocacy, counseling, support groups, and case management. Poulsbo-North Kitsap Rotary Club Foundation has \$120,000 in cash or committed funds to provide support for YWCA client advocacy/case management at Morrow Manor for 10 years.

The 2.3-acre site was donated by a member of the Poulsbo/North Kitsap Rotary Club — he’s asked to remain anonymous, but said a niece and her two children had survived domestic violence and he wanted to help others.

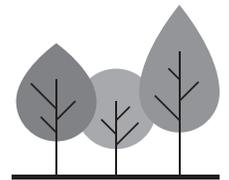
Morrow Manor will be owned by the YWCA of Kitsap County. One acre of the site will be developed into a park, which will be deeded to the city. The park will feature a sculpture of Eli Creekmore, a young boy who died because of domestic violence; his life and death drive his aunt Ardis Morrow’s work to develop housing solutions for domestic violence survivors, and to ensure they are better protected by the law. Morrow Manor is named in her honor.

She also led the development of Eli’s House, which provides shorter-term residence for domestic violence survivors (Tersha’s House is another shorter-term residence).

“The work she has done has saved lives,” Frey said of Morrow. “Without your inspiration, it wouldn’t have happened.”

The fundraising goal for Morrow Manor is \$2.1 million, of which \$1.1 million has been raised. Major donors include the C. Keith Birkenfeld Memorial Trust, \$500,000; and Tim Ryan Construction, \$100,000.

In her remarks, Poulsbo Mayor Becky Erickson revealed she was a victim of domestic violence in a previous marriage; breaking free required “working hard for two years and a lot of lawyers.” Her experience made her “tough



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as nails,” she said, but also made her more compassionate.

She went on to point out the acts of compassion by others that led to this day: Morrow, who’s driven to do the right thing “because she loves her neighbor”; the land donor, who most people know but who insists on remaining anonymous; the Rotary Club, which has worked with the YWCA on other housing solutions and is shepherding Morrow Manor’s development; and the YWCA.

The result of all of this involvement will be a place where people can live in dignity and rebuild their lives, a place where children will play and be nurtured.

Safe, secure home is key to recovery.

According to a Morrow Manor fact sheet, Kitsap County 911 reported an average of 5,862 domestic violence incidents annually in 2010-13. An average of 1,545, or slightly more than 25 percent of those incidents, were categorized as a “potential danger to life” or “life in jeopardy.”

A safe and secure place to turn to is key to escaping and recovering from domestic violence.

The YWCA’s HomeFirst program helps domestic violence survivors with housing location and placement, financial assistance with housing costs, advocacy and assistance in overcoming barriers such as poor credit history or debt, and case management focused on acquiring or maintaining a permanent home.

HomeFirst is funded by a grant from the Gates Foundation. In its four years, according to the YWCA, all HomeFirst participants reported moderate or strong improvement in their quality of life and were more comfortable accessing other resources available in the community. Ninety-five percent had retained housing by the end of 2013, 94 percent found it easier to set and achieve life goals, 88 percent felt safe in their home most or all of the time, 84 percent felt like they were a part of the neighborhood and community in which they lived.

In an earlier interview, Amy Sanford, a member of the local Rotary Club, said she got the courage to escape a physically abusive marriage when, during another visit to the hospital emergency room, her daughter asked her, “Mom, when is this going to end?” Sanford and her daughter escaped with the help of a pastor.

Safe housing provided Sanford the stability and support she needed to return to school and earn a degree in accounting. She now works in Seattle and lives on Bainbridge Island.

“Earning my degree took the power away from him,” she said. “I could stand on my own two feet.”

Fundraising is being managed by Poulsbo-North Kitsap Rotary Club Foundation is the applicant for all grants and will serve as custodian of all funds received. Donations may be made out to the Poulsbo-NK Rotary Foundation (note “for Morrow Manor” on the memo line) and mail to Poulsbo-NK Rotary Foundation, P.O. Box 1334, Poulsbo, WA 98370. All contributions are tax-deductible and will be acknowledged by letter.

CALL FOR HELP

You can break free from domestic violence. The YWCA wants to help.

One: Call 9-1-1 or the YWCA Domestic Violence hotline, 800-500-5513. Jackie Brown, director of YWCA’s shelter and housing programs, said local transportation to the confidentially located emergency shelter is available. If space is not available in the YWCA’s ALIVE Shelter (ALIVE is the acronym for Alternatives to Living in a Violent Environment), the YWCA will reach out to other shelters in the state.

Two: The YWCA ALIVE program will provide you and your children with counseling, clothing and food, children’s activities, housing and employment advocacy, support groups, and transportation.

Three: YWCA ALIVE’s Legal Advocacy Program will provide you with court accompaniment; assistance obtaining restraining, protection and anti-harassment orders; safety planning; counseling and referral services; assistance filing Crime Victims Compensation Claims; and enrollment in the Address Confidentiality Program.

Four: YWCA ALIVE/DSHS WorkFirst provides case management services for clients referred by the DSHS Bremerton Community Services Office. An ALIVE advocate assists WorkFirst program participants in overcoming barriers to successfully transitioning to work.

Five: YWCA ALIVE Transitional Housing provides housing in Poulsbo and Bremerton, where women and children can stay until they have the resources to be economically self-sufficient.

