

Teen Safe Program Expands



In Massachusetts, one-in-five girls is physically or sexually abused by a dating partner before graduating high school. Given this statistic, the need to educate teens was clear and thanks to a three-year grant totaling \$174,000, from the Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance, Kol Isha began reaching out to Jewish teens a few years ago. Now through innovative programming and partnerships, Teen Safe is successfully reaching large numbers of teenagers throughout Greater Boston.

Kol Isha has worked extensively with Brandeis University in addition to summer camps. Also new this year were presentations to middle and high school students and faculty at synagogue religious schools and day schools.

Kol Isha's presentations to teens have been revolutionized by the film "When Push Comes to Shove, It's No Longer Love," produced by Jewish Women International. The documentary presents compelling stories of Jewish teen-dating violence survivors.

If you want to bring programming to your organization, contact Elana Premack at 781-647-5327 or epremack@jfcsboston.org.

Kol Isha – Going the Extra Mile

Kol Isha offers a range of services — from counseling, safety planning and court accompaniment to case management, financial assistance and support groups — but for one client the organization's religious sensitivity made all the difference.

One such client moved here with her husband from their native country so they could pursue their graduate education. This motivated pair from South America seemed like an average couple dealing with a challenging marriage. But when the client went home to visit her family, the husband told her not to return to the U.S. — he wanted a divorce.

A devout Jew, the client believed strongly in her marriage vows and thought that through love and dedication she could make her husband happy. But when she flew back to work on her marriage, he put her things in garbage bags and threw her out of the apartment. She was left traumatized, depressed and isolated, with no place to live, no food, no transportation and no source of income.

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Volunteer Profile

Fred Katz has a passion for helping abused women and children and decided to "give back" by putting his 35 years of accounting experience to work in a unique way. He donates significant time to Kol Isha clients by providing pro-bono accounting services. Such services can include budgeting, tax preparation, retirement planning, solving credit issues, life insurance needs analysis and financial divorce planning.



Fred says, "I am here to provide information that will be helpful in a divorce." And he adds, "It's equally important to empower [the client] not to feel like a second class citizen." Financial information puts the client on equal footing. When Fred recently got an early morning call from a tearful client whose husband was threatening her with the loss of her home, he said, "Take two very deep breaths. Don't panic — information is forthcoming."

He urges other CPAs and attorneys to do pro-bono work, adding, "There's a great deal of spousal abuse that goes on. I asked myself, 'Can I take my experience and do something with it?'" The clients of Kol Isha are grateful that he is helping them.

To become a volunteer, contact Elana Premack at 781-647-JFCS (5327) or epremack@jfcsboston.org.

Dear Friends

In preparing this year's newsletter, I was moved by the diversity of our efforts. From working with teens to Russian-speaking immigrants, from fundraisers to advocating for clients, from volunteers to conferences, our activities are as diverse as our clients themselves. Often people assume that we only work with Jewish victims of domestic violence, or that our clients are only from this country. Nothing could be further from the truth. Working with victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and human trafficking, we meet with people from all ethnic, religious and socioeconomic backgrounds. Rich or poor, whether a doctor or a delivery truck driver, batterers and victims come in all forms.

In addition to serving Jewish clients (who range equally across all the religious movements), we serve Haitian clients, Brazilian clients, Irish-Catholic clients and of course, those from the Russian-speaking community. Our goal is to provide culturally competent and religiously sensitive services to all victims, no matter what their diverse backgrounds, in order to help them to stay safe.

Through our diverse initiatives, and with your support, we are doing just that. Thank you for helping to make these efforts possible.

Sincerely,



Nicole Lesser, Director of Kol Isha

Sukkah of Peace Raises \$93,000 for Kol Isha

One in five girls is physically or sexually abused by a dating partner before graduating high school. This shocking statistic has led Kol Isha to expand its vision to include the issue of teen dating violence in the Jewish community.



Nicole Lesser, Director of Kol Isha, Keynote speaker
Ken Novack and Patti Kraft, Event Chair

On October 20, Kol Isha held its third Sukkah of Peace Event, this year entitled, "Voices for the Future: focusing on Jewish teen dating violence." At the event Kol Isha Director Nicole Lesser called on attendees to "take action, by listening to the voices of our teens, the voices of our future, and by making sure that there is a forum for these issues to be discussed in our synagogues, our youth groups, our days schools, our camps and our Hillels."

The event, which was chaired by Patti Kraft, featured keynote speaker Kenneth J. Novack. Ken serves as senior counsel to Mintz Levin and is former Vice Chairman of AOL Time Warner. Ken's leadership and philanthropy helped develop the Kol Isha program and other local and national organizations focusing on this vital issue. Ken was joined by Rebecca Chernin, a college student who is a survivor of teen dating violence.

Patti Kraft said, "When you see firsthand — through our speaker and the film — that [teen dating violence] affects girls and young women just like those in your own family, it's hard not to pay attention. With an event like this and through its ever-expanding outreach efforts, Kol Isha continues to create an educated, caring community to prevent violence."

Kol Isha extends a special thank you to the event committee for their successful efforts and to event benefactors Julie and Barry Jaye, Beth and Seth Klarman, Patti and Jonathan Kraft, Mintz Levin Cohn Ferris Glovsky & Popeo, The Novack Family, and Women's Philanthropy at CJP.

Kol Isha – Going the Extra Mile *Continued*

Clinical Intern Kaylee Murphy said, "When I met her she was in shock. She had been sleeping on people's couches and had to ride her bike to our office in the winter."

In a short time Kaylee helped her get an apartment, provided her with food and helped her find a pro-bono lawyer. She helped the client prepare for the divorce hearing and accompanied her to court for support.

Although the woman chose not to pursue an equitable financial settlement, calling it "dirty money," it was very important to her to have a religious divorce or "*get*," saying she wouldn't feel pure without it. According to Jewish law, only the husband may grant the *get* to his wife. She is unable to pursue a relationship or marriage until she receives this document. Often the abuser uses the *get* as leverage in the divorce proceedings or to further abuse.

With Kaylee's help the woman was able to work with the religious court to

persuade her husband to grant the *get*. Rabbi Karen Landy at JF&CS was instrumental in connecting the woman with a rabbi in her home country to complete the process. Kaylee said, "[The client's] religion is so important to her. We could validate that."

Since obtaining the *get*, the woman's temple has become her place of healing. In a recent letter to Kaylee she wrote, "I feel at peace in the temple. I am starting over again. Thank you so much for standing by me. I will never forget you."

Legislative Advocacy Succeeds RISE Grant Renewed

After two years of legislative advocacy, Kol Isha, in partnership with other domestic violence programs, has lobbied successfully to reinstate a significant state grant to provide specialized domestic violence services to immigrants and refugees.

Kol Isha Director Nicole Lesser said, "It's wonderful that through collaboration and determination we were able to help make this happen."

Three years ago, the Refugee and Immigrant Safety and Empowerment (RISE) grant was cut from the Massachusetts state budget. This Department of Public Health grant had been used by Kol Isha to fund a part-time Russian speaking advocate and to provide counseling, safety planning and financial, legal and medical assistance to Russian-speaking clients.

After the budget cut, domestic violence programs and interested community members formed Friends of RISE to educate key sponsors and legislators about the need for linguistically specific and culturally appropriate services. Their campaign was so successful that the RISE grant was reinstated. Kol Isha will receive \$40,000 a year for the next six years.

Kol Isha is the only domestic violence program in Greater Boston working specifically with Russian-speaking teens and adults that provides direct service to victims and outreach and mobilization of the Russian-speaking community.

Kol Isha Director to Present at National Conference

Director Nicole Lesser has been invited to speak at the 2006 AJFCA Annual Conference. The Association of Jewish Family and Children's Agencies is the membership organization of over 145 Jewish Family and Children's Agencies and specialized human service agencies throughout the United States and Canada. The 2006 Annual Conference will be held from April 30 to May 2 in San Jose, California. She will discuss the importance of building partnerships with the secular domestic violence service community. Nicole will present with a colleague from the JF&CS of Long Beach, California.

When Push Comes to Shove... It's No Longer Love!TM

Kol Isha and Jewish Women International are co-sponsoring an event designed to inspire discussion about gender and power issues in a Jewish context. **The event will be held at the Boston University Hillel in Boston on April 6 and 7.**

College students and young professionals are invited to participate in this opportunity to build their knowledge and leadership on dating violence and healthy relationship issues, as well as strengthen their local networks and connections within the Boston Jewish community.

Rachel Keller, program specialist at Jewish Women International, said, "Our goal is to galvanize college students and young professionals to get involved in the issue. By partnering with Kol Isha we're able to offer the attendees a way to stay involved."

The program will conclude with a session led by Kol Isha about the ways in which these young leaders can join in the efforts to build a coordinated community response in Boston.

If you or someone you know is interested in attending, please register at www.jwi.org or call Elana Premack at 781-693-5592 with any questions.

Emergency Hotline Numbers

If you or someone you know is being abused, help is available. To access support after hours, call these emergency hotline numbers.

REACH
1-800-899-4000

Massachusetts SafeLink
1-877-785-2020

Shalom Task Force Warmline
1-888-883-2323

For more information, please call
781-647-JFCS (5327) and ask for Kol Isha.

A Call for Safety

Give a Phone. Save a Life: Kol Isha Cell Phone Drive

Beginning last summer, Kol Isha launched a community-wide cell phone drive. This program has three benefits: increasing awareness, raising funds and helping us get phones in the hands of clients who need them. Since we started the program, we have raised almost \$2,000 through the donation of more than 500 cell phones!

They have been collected at a variety of institutions including JF&CS Offices, Combined Jewish Philanthropies, Jewish Vocational Service, Temple Israel in Boston, Temple Emanuel in Newton, Newton Center Minyan, Temple Beth Abraham in Canton, Kolbo Fine Judaica, The Butcherie, Vintage Boutique in Brookline and Northeastern University as part of a domestic violence awareness-raising program organized by students. Several bar and bat mitzvah students are in the process of collecting phones as their mitzvah projects, and groups of college students, B'nai Brith Youth Organization (BBYO) members, and other congregations and Jewish community programs have begun setting up collection sites.

Cell phones are important because abusers often try to prevent victims from calling the police. If you have a cell phone you no longer need, you can donate it to help a victim of domestic violence. With your help, victims can have a 24-hour lifeline to the help they need.

Donate phones at current sites:

JF&CS Offices: Waltham, Boston, Norwood

Kolbo Fine Judaica, Brookline

The Butcherie, Brookline

Jewish Vocational Service, Boston

Temple Israel, Boston

Become a cell phone collection site!

Contact Elana Premack at epremack@jfcsboston.org



A Special Night for Kol Isha Clients

On Valentine's Day, Kol Isha clients, volunteers and staff gathered for an evening of socializing and pampering. It was a night of fun and sharing on what is for many a lonely or stressful holiday.

After a casual dinner, attendees then enjoyed a roomful of activities and workshops. There were arts and crafts for the children, a sing-a-long with a guitarist, facials, color matching, yoga and boxing instruction.

Each woman was encouraged to create a self-care toolbox, which consisted of tangible reminders of friends, favorite activities, helpful phone numbers and other comforting images. They were able to gather information on relaxation techniques, healthy eating and sleeping, using humor to cope with stress and other self-help topics.

The hope is that these toolkits will serve as a way to help each woman refocus and stabilize during stressful moments by reminding her of techniques and sources of comfort and help.

At the end of the evening the women and their children turned out the lights, lit a candle and took a few moments to celebrate being together and the courage that it took for all of them to be there.

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