

First Edition
Summer 2008

AVA'S CALL

A Word From the New AVA Director

AVA'S CALL is a quarterly publication of the Department of Women Ministries' program Advocacy for Victims of Abuse.

AVA's Goals are to:

- Provide resources to bring healing to victims of abuse
- Equip the church to minister to victims of abuse
- Promote preventative measures to combat abuse

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Every individual has a place to fill in the world and is important in some respect whether he chooses to be so or not.

Nathaniel Hawthorne

Four years ago God spoke to me and said *"It is time to go and tell your story."* At that time I could not imagine to whom or where I would tell my story. Answering his command to *"go"* meant leaving all that felt comfortable and beginning a journey of revealing my secret of enduring an eleven-year period of childhood sexual assault/molestation. It has required conveying how that experience has impacted and shaped my life and Christian walk for more than 50 years. It also meant telling that this occurred in a *"Christian"* home and church community and no one knew it!

My journey has crisscrossed paths with men and women who have been assaulted (sexually or physically) as children or adults. I have spoken to individuals in the United States, Venezuela, Africa; people in prisons, retreats and church settings. I have found that whenever I have spoken other victims have come forward to tell me their story. No matter what their story I recognize they all have a common denominator of pain and brokenness. All have had experiences that cannot be erased. Most have not had anyone to advocate for them so they have suffered and often continue to suffer in silence.

Over three years ago the Covenant church made a courageous commitment to partner with God in ending domestic violence. We knowingly committed to this work because we knew that domestic violence and sexual abuse exists not only in our communities, but also in our congregations. Shedding light and standing with AVA has been one of the highlights of our community of faith's commitment to stand up for the downtrodden and broken.



Matthew 5:14 tells us that *"You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden."* The importance of light is highlighted in Ephesians 5:13 *"But when anything is exposed and reproved by the light, it is made visible and clear; and where everything is visible and clear there is light."*

Catherine J. Foote wrote, *"An individual's ability to acquire perspective and some sense of meaning even in the midst of intolerable living conditions can mean the difference between life and death."* As light bearers, it is my hope and belief that we can create welcoming, safe environments and bridges to much-needed resources to provide hope for those suffering from this horrific social and spiritual disease.

Your continued response to partner with God by shedding light in the darkness in the lives of many people will change our communities and world. Your prayers, financial gifts and participation in the ministry will allow the ministry of AVA to continue to advocate for victims of abuse.

-Yvonne DeVaughn,
AVA Director

AVA TRAINING IN SARNIA, ONTARIO

by Karen Bayley

I was excited when I received an invitation from Pastor Glenn Peterson of the Lighthouse Community Church in Sarnia, Ontario to do the AVA training there. Trudy, the ministry assistant at Lighthouse, invited three agencies to present what they do in the community to address domestic violence. Friday night was the first session of the training, and the presentations were very well done and well received. There were many excellent questions asked, and at coffee break the presenters engaged in lots of interaction and dialogue. This created a place for the church community to see what resources are out there. The agencies represented were, the local women's shelter, an agency that deals with sexual assault victims, and a forensic nurse who works out of an assault unit in the hospital. This was a very good launching for the training.

Saturday morning we continued the training by looking at a video on domestic violence. I had prepared some handouts that we reviewed first. They helped us

know what to look for in terms of red flags and cycles in the abusive pattern. The participants found this helpful and were able to red flag important events and behaviors. Then we looked at how we handle disclosures of abuse in our spiritual community. Several of the leaders identified things on the handouts that they had done in past situations that had not been helpful. Through the material and the video clips used, they began to identify what they could have done differently that would have affirmed the victim and had greater potential for healing. There was a great deal of healthy discussion and many good teaching moments.

In the afternoon, I showed a video on sexual abuse, and how the church can respond in ways that support the victim. We talked about the need to report and get the authorities involved, and how to see that the family is cared for in ways that are helpful and healing. In the last session we watched a video clip of a pastor providing support for the perpetrator and calling

him to truth and repentance. Participants looked for signs of denial, manipulation and control in the perpetrator. They identified that this person was on the road to repentance, but had a long way to go in that journey. In the meantime, the victim was protected and supported to work on her own healing. We ended with a discussion about their next step as a community.

There were two other churches from the Sarnia area represented at the training, and they were appreciative of the opportunity to participate. There were 24 people in attendance. For a small community, that was so encouraging. There was strong representation from the leadership of all the churches. Leadership is where we must begin in the education process. I was greatly encouraged by the opportunity to present this material that represents a large part of my heart and my passion. *AVA, for me, is a way to be part of the solution!*

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The DVD's mentioned in this article are from **Faith Trust Institute**. They are:

Domestic Violence: What Can Churches Do

Pastor Care For Domestic Violence: Case Studies For Clergy

Hear Their Cries: Religious Responses To Child Abuse

The Healing Years Documentary: Surviving Incest And Child Sexual Abuse

October is Domestic Violence Month

The ECC will commemorate this on October 5, 2008

A LETTER TO SINGLES

by Debbie Marr

Dear Singles:

Are you beginning to date or re-entering the dating world? Safety planning is important. Know before you go.

The use of predatory drugs is exploding. Sold on any street corner, these drugs can be put in your food or drink and are odorless, colorless and tasteless. To reduce the risk, always have your server open any containers and never walk away from your food or beverage. At parties get your own beverages, even soda. Make a deal with friends to watch each other for unusual behavior or if you leave with someone suspicious.

Alcohol has been used for centuries by sexual predators. Today, we also have rohypnol (roofies), gamma hydroxybutrate (GHB, Grievous Bodily Harm) and several others that are effective on men as well as women. Telltale signs that you have been drugged include: feeling and acting excessively inebriated, dizziness and confusion. Higher doses can cause seizure-like activity or death. Memory problems and hallucinations can continue long after the initial dose wears off.

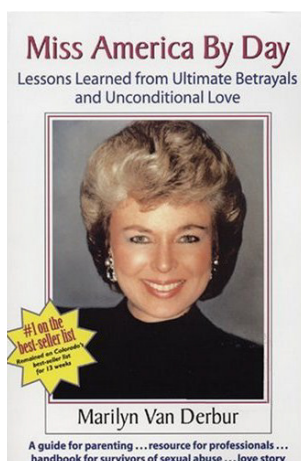
If you've experienced drug-facilitated sexual assault, you may notice the following symptoms: soreness, grogginess, incomplete memories of the previous night, fear or anxiety, numbness in one or more limbs, nausea and vomiting. You may also be unable to explain certain memories or conditions in which you regained consciousness (e.g. location, clothing, etc). If you experience these symptoms, collect a sample from your first trip to the bathroom in the morning. Most of these drugs can't be identified later.

If you think you've been sexually assaulted, call the Crisis Line at 1-888-235-5333 for information and support. You will need to be tested for sexually transmitted diseases and pregnancy. Only certain hospitals can do a forensic exam. If you make a police report within 72 hours, your exam and hospital care is usually free.

Please don't be afraid to get help. Dating should be fun and it can be if you stay aware of your surroundings. Your church family loves you and wants you to be safe.

—Debbie

This information was provided by resources from the crisis line that also provides assistance and support for people in domestic violence situations. 1-888-235-5333



In this long-awaited book, Marilyn Van Derbur, a former Miss America, tells the story of how she was sexually violated by her prominent, millionaire father from age 5 to age 18. She was 53 years old before she was able to speak the words in public, "I am an incest survivor." She opened the door for tens of thousands of sexual abuse survivors to also speak the words, many for the first time, within their own families and communities.

Marilyn describes, in detail, what specific "work" she did on her journey from victim to survivor. After learning of a woman's rape, Marilyn heard a close friend say, "It was a bad 20 minutes." In the hope that rape and sexual abuse will no longer be as easily dismissed or minimized, Marilyn writes for the first time about what her father did to her and what the impact has been on her adult life.

With her extensive research on the long-term impact of trauma and her belief that sexual abuse prevention is the best weapon for keeping our children safe, Marilyn urges parents to talk with children, as young as five, and provides suggested guidelines for important conversations that will, hopefully, evolve into continuous dialogues.

Order the book at www.misamericabyday.com or at www.amazon.com