

Haven House hero honored

By Katharhynn Heidelberg November 10, 2018

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Haven House Executive Director Rose Verheul stands Thursday in front of the transitional shelter in Olathe. Verheul was named 'Unsung Hero' of the year from Tri County Resources Hilltop Family Services. (Andrew Kiser/ Montrose Daily Press)

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Many of those who find transitional shelter at Haven House in Olathe have more than homelessness with which to contend: They are also fleeing a domestic violence situation.

But they have a champion in Executive Director Rose Verheul and Tri County Resources Hilltop Family Services has noticed. The organization, which provides resources to domestic violence victims, recently named Verheul its "Unsung Hero" for the year.

“I’m past the point of ecstatic. It was really nice to be recognized from the community for some of the work Haven House does,” Verheul said Thursday.

Many factors drive homelessness; Haven House was founded to surround families with services and individually tailored programs to break the cycle.

Many times, though, women become homeless by leaving an abusive relationship. Verheul said about 55 percent of families at the transitional living center have fled domestic violence.

“Many leave with nothing but the clothes on their backs. We work on helping them start rebuilding their lives again ... before doing just the average person’s daily living,” she said.

Haven House co-founder Larry Fredericksen said Hilltop has also referred clients to Haven House once their time at Hilltop safe houses has run out. Few are ready to make their own way when they leave the domestic violence shelter; Haven House then becomes a natural transition point.

“Rose has been very effective in developing closer relationships between Haven house and some of our referral sources,” Fredericksen said.

“We have taken in a number of families fleeing domestic violence. It’s really a good transition for them. They are limited as to how long the families can stay in one of the shelters. When that time expires, they have to discharge them.

“In many cases, they’re not ready to move on emotionally or financially. Haven House is a natural stepping stone back to normal life.”

Haven House helps domestic violence victims staying there apply for resources. It enjoys a close working relationship with Hilltop, which hosts domestic violence recovery classes for adults and children staying at Haven House.

“It’s just a wonderful opportunity to help our families heal,” said Verheul.

Abusive relationships cause lasting trauma, she said.

“Most of all, it’s getting the women to see their own worth, to know they are loved and valued. Most of the women are so beat down. They believe their mission was what they were doing. We’ve really got to help them find a way out,” Verheul said.

In one heartbreaking conversation, a resident asked her why she could only seem to attract abusive men.

“They have got to break that chain,” said Verheul.

“It’s a natural progression, the transition for them to move into Haven House,” Fredericksen said. “Hilltop has also been working with us on some of our enrichment programs. We work really well with Hilltop. It’s a good partnership.”

Other organizations also are partnering with Haven House, including Life Choices, which is set to begin offering relationships classes in January. It’s all outreach that helps make Haven House’s mission easier, Verheul added.

Haven House's ongoing needs include funding and donations of children's jeans, as well as mentors.

More information is available at havenhousehomeless.org; online donations, including recurrent ones, can be made there, as well. Donations can also be mailed to Haven House, P.O. Box 3122, Montrose, CO 81402.

"It's a wonderful place to be," said Verheul, who has served Haven House for three years. "There are many, many loving families here."

Through its Latimer House locations in Montrose and elsewhere, Hilltop Family Resource Center serves domestic violence and sexual assault victims, even if they do not want to make a police report. The Montrose office is at 540 S. First St. and can be reached at 970-252-7445.

Domestic violence victims in need of immediate help can contact the 24-hour crisis line for Montrose, Ouray and Delta counties at 1-844-990-5500.

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