

SAVI Advocate

The Mount Sinai Sexual Assault and Violence Intervention Program

TV's "Law and Order" Stars at Fundraiser



(Seated left to right) Detective Clare Romano, Detective Lydia Martinez, Elsie Chibbaro, Detective Georgianna DeRosa .
(Top row left to right) David DeClerque, Iona Siegel, Christopher Meloni, Ted Kotcheff, Dann Florek

At a celebrity-studded event on May 14, Dick Wolf, the Emmy Award-winning creator and Executive Producer of the popular TV series "Law and Order: Special Victims Unit" received the annual Silver Whistle Award. Mr. Wolf spoke about his goals. "First of all, of course, we want Law and Order to be entertaining. And we also want it to help people speak out by shedding light on the darkest corners of the human condition."

He was joined at the Benefit by many members of the Law and Order creative team, including cast members Mariska Hargitay, Christopher Meloni, and Dann Florek.

The evening's emcee was famed prosecutor Linda Fairstein, who until recently, headed the Manhattan DA's Sex Crimes unit. Ms. Fairstein lauded Mr. Wolf and the creative team. "People often ask professionals who deal with crime if we watch TV shows like "Law and Order: Special Victims Unit", and if we like them. The answer is, of course we watch and, yes, we like this show very much."

Iona Siegel pointed out, "We are thrilled to have TV's Law and Order team here tonight. And we're especially pleased to have them meet the real life law and order team," indicating the many represen-

tatives of the police and Manhattan and Queens' District Attorneys' Offices in the audience.

Senior Vice President Gary Rosenberg welcomed guests on behalf of The Mount Sinai Medical Center.

One highlight of the evening was the inaugural screening of a five-minute short film on SAVI, created and produced by Emmy Award-winning documentary filmmaker, Lisa Jackson. The film brought into focus the extent of the problem of sexual assault and the emotional impact on those who volunteer.

Also unveiled was a print public service ad campaign donated by the Leo Burnett ad agency. The ads show photographs of private settings with the line, "Rape happened here". The ads also show the

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(left to right) Debbie Schwarz, Carolina Nudo, Mariska Hargitay, Lauren Moran, Jagruti Shah, and Rosie Reyes, SAVI staff

Honorees Turn Tables

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(Lower far Left) Ted Kotcheff (Top Left to Right) Iona Siegel, Christopher Meloni, Eileen Treacy, Mariska Hargitay, Dick Wolf, Dennis F. Strigl

Mount Sinai SAVI logo and phone numbers with the line, “Help happens here: Call for help. Call to help”.

Also honored with a Silver Whistle Award was Verizon Wireless President and CEO Dennis Strigl, who initiated the company’s

HopeLine, a community service program which puts wireless services to work to combat domestic violence. Verizon has put more than 20,000 reprogrammed cell phones in the hands of battered women to enable them to summon help quickly.

Psychologist, court consultant and authority on sexual assault, Dr. Eileen Treacy received a Silver Whistle Award for her pioneering work with rape victims. Dr. Treacy has evaluated over 1,500 sexual abuse cases and testified in more than 250 cases in New York courts.

Silver Whistle Awards were also presented to Linda Fairstein and to SAVI Board of Advisors Chair, Phyllis Rattner Schwartz.

The benefit raised funds for the Mount Sinai SAVI Program, which was founded

in 1984, and is led by Director, Iona Siegel, CSW. SAVI offers free and confidential counseling to survivors of rape, sexual assault, and incest, as well as to friends and families of survivors. In addition, trained volunteer Advocates are on call around the clock to provide immediate crisis intervention, emotional support, and information to female and male survivors in nine hospital emergency rooms in Manhattan and Queens, including The Mount Sinai Hospital and The Mount Sinai Hospital of Queens.

SAVI provides workshops for schools, businesses and community groups, and professional sensitivity trainings for medical, social service, and law enforcement personnel.

“A Gathering of Voices”

—It’s July, 1969, 9:30 p.m. My five sons and I are huddling together in my locked bedroom—we’re all crying, sobbing, trying not to be heard. “He,” my “husband,” our sons’ “Dad” is finishing his full gourmet breakfast—he’s about to leave for work, midnight turn.

—He finally leaves—slams the back door shut! It always scares us—to this day——something he still does when he is mad. He is always mad.

—My five wonderful little boys, my sons, ages one through thirteen, whisper to me, “Mom, when Dad gets home in the morning, we’ll all hold him down so you can beat him up.”

What’s wrong with this picture?

He hasn’t changed. It’s now 2002. Outside the doors of our house, he is loved by all—he is the most jovial, agreeable, helpful brother, brother-in-law, son-in-law, friend, neighbor; today, the best grandfather in the whole world!

I hate him. I stay because one of our sons is disabled. . . . Our son is thirty-eight years old. I am a buffer. My husband does not really love me—or anyone. He can not love himself.

So much more—

anonymous

He bites you, but he loves you. He hits you, but he loves you. He urinates on you, but he loves you. He hits you with flying objects, but he loves you. He pulls your hair, but he loves you. He rams your back into things, but he loves you. He rapes you constantly, but he loves you. He grabs and flings you, but he loves you. He threatens to kill you, but he loves you. He’s no respecter of children in your arms, but he loves you. He wants to help you out the window, but he loves you. He wants a gun for your head, but he loves you. He harasses and stalks you when you finally get out, but he loves you. He tries to take your son from you; he knows it will kill you, but he loves you. He turns people you love against you—even pays them off, but he loves you. He violates court orders then fakes strokes to get out of the consequences, but he loves you.

DON’T YOU KNOW HE DOES IT ALL BECAUSE HE LOVES YOU?

M.B.

Reprinted with permission from *A Gathering of Voices: Survivors and Friends Speak out Against Domestic Violence*, James A Michener Art Museum, Doylestown, Pa., 2002.

Living

Staring up the blade of a knife while the stranger who has broken into your home in the middle of the night threatens to kill you if you don't perform according to his directions is one of those experiences that truly tests your survival skills. I was 26 years old, and my survival skills were pretty good. Faced with the choice of "do it or die," I picked "do it." I just wanted to live through this. It was a disgusting and terrifying 45 minutes, and then it was over. I was "lucky" to have been raped by a man who dropped his wallet on his way in my second-floor window. He was arrested the next day.

In the weeks that followed, I spoke frequently with the police, the prosecutor, and the victim witness advocates. By immersing myself in the legal process, I was able to focus on something concrete and result-oriented when everything else felt very shaky. I found the local rape counselor wholly unhelpful and somewhat alien. The cops and the lawyers, on the other hand, really knew what I was going through and provided the best comfort. I knew I was lucky – having been caught, this guy couldn't come back. Still, the rapist was sent to jail for only seven years. Big deal.

It would have been comforting if the end of the legal process brought an end to my pain, but it didn't. My sense of myself as a confident, strong woman was shattered. I was left with a fear that filled me in the years that followed. I avoided eye contact with strangers. I kept an unlisted phone number. I closed myself off to all but a few close friends. I did function, getting through law school, going to work every day, carrying on a social life, but triggers remained, and at times my life was unbearable. There wasn't a night that passed when I felt safe in my own home, when I wasn't afraid to turn off the lights and go

to sleep. Any unfamiliar noise in the night triggered a panic attack. I became hyper-vigilant. I dulled my senses with drugs. The fear finally peaked when I received a letter from the parole board advising me that the rapist was being released from jail. Talk about a trigger.

I thought I was going to lose it. I was so angry – this man was getting out of jail, and I was still suffering from what he had done to me. I went 30 days with almost no sleep. My overriding desire was to go kill this man. I even worked out a plan to do it. Fearing that I might actually attempt it, a friend sent me to the Victims of Violence program at Cambridge Hospital, in Cambridge, Mass. I was immediately connected with a doctor who diagnosed me with post traumatic stress disorder and prescribed

a very strong sleeping medication. A course of counseling and antidepressant drugs followed, and, after about two years, I started to feel like myself again – like the person I had been before I was raped. It was amazing. For the first time in 10 years I was able to find a way through the pain and fear. Now and then, events can trigger that fear, but a line that a doctor once told me has become my mantra and pulls me through those moments: Living well is the best revenge.

Rothchild is an attorney with the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection. She lives with her life partner in rural western Massachusetts.

Reprinted with permission from *Wellesley*, Spring 2002

Long-Term Effects of Rape

We've known for quite a while now that rape survivors can sustain not only physical scars but also emotional trauma that can last anywhere from weeks or months to years.

Recent reports, however, suggest that the trauma may be far more severe than initially thought to be the case. A number of recent studies cite the connections between sexual violence and long-term illnesses. In September 2000, the *Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology* published a study done on 558 female military veterans who had been physically assaulted, raped or both. The research showed that victims of violence were more likely to score poorly on health issues than non-victims.

A more specific study done in 1998, found that 13% to 40% of women who suffered from three common gynecological problems—painful periods, heavy bleeding, and sexual dysfunction—had a history of sexual abuse. And The Center for Disease Control and Prevention lists the following symptoms as common long-term effects of rape and sexual abuse: chronic headaches, fatigue, recurrent nausea and menstrual pain.

(excerpted from the YWCA of Bergen County Rape Crisis Center April 2002 Newsletter)

Has It Been a Year Already

by Melissa Goodman, CSW

My one-year anniversary as the Program Coordinator at Mount Sinai Hospital of Queens came and went. I was too busy seeing clients to notice!

Fortunately for me, by the time I came on board, the hospital administration had recognized the importance of our program. As Maryann Cashin, RN, the emergency room manager, noted: “The emergency department staff welcomes SAVI Advocates, especially at night. They have the time to comfort the survivors, plan for their safe discharge, and help them decide if they want to file a police report. The Advocates also explain to the survivors how to fill out the Crime Victims Board applications and arrange for counseling with Melissa.”

One client I saw in the emergency room stands out in my mind. An African-American woman was treated three times in one year for injuries inflicted by her boyfriend. She came to counseling once or twice after each incident and then faded back into her daily life. I could not contact her by phone because her boyfriend screened her telephone calls using caller ID.

Then, in a bizarre turn of events, her boyfriend came to the hospital claiming to be the victim of domestic abuse. He said that he had been thrown out of his apartment by his girlfriend. As evidence of this abuse, he brought with him an order of protection against HIM on behalf of our client. With her usual composure, Constance Maslow, our social work intern from New York University, explained to him that SAVI does not provide services for perpetrators of domestic violence.

Our work at Mount Sinai Hospital of Queens is not restricted to the emergency room. Referrals to SAVI from in-patient units began during my first month here

and have steadily increased. A number of these clients represent the preponderance of senior citizens served by the hospital. (Details have been changed to preserve confidentiality.)

“ We appreciate having the services of someone who is expert in this area to see clients.”

In the first case, a 91-year-old Greek-American woman, a resident of Astoria for 50 years, had been unconscious since her hospitalization. Her daughter, whose mentally retarded son sexually abused the woman, wanted to take her home. Thanks to a SAVI consultation that proved that the client was under the guardianship of the courts, the daughter’s request was denied.

In another case, a 76-year-old woman from the Philippines was brought in by her daughter after her mother fainted. The woman spoke little English, but the translating skills of Filipino staff members helped us understand her situation. She had come to the U.S. to visit her daughter. Much to her shame, the younger woman locked her into the apartment 24 hours a day, meted out a portion of food for the client, and told her it must last for three days (without refrigeration). The mother begged me not to intervene because this same daughter controls the funds of her nieces back home who care for her there. Reluctantly, we acceded to her decision. By the time of discharge, however, the client had decided to return to the Philippines within the week.

Demographically, besides the elderly, we see many people from the Balkans and Greece since they live in Astoria in large numbers. But we also see clients from all corners of the world—China, Japan, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Central America, the Caribbean, and South America. Fortunately, because the staff of this community hospital is so friendly and diverse, I have been able to locate resources that might otherwise have escaped me. For example, I was able to locate not one but two Christian Arabic churches in the area to help a domestic violence survivor who spoke only Arabic.

Although my first year passed quickly, it has had its rewards. According to Richard Rose, Director of Social Services, “ We appreciate having the services of someone who is expert in this area to see clients.”

Did you know. . .

Somewhere in America, a woman is sexually assaulted every 2 minutes, according to the U.S. Department of Justice (<http://www.rainn.org/stats.html>)

Approximately 68% of rape victims knew their assailant. (Violence Against Women. Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Dept. of Justice, 1994)

Approximately 28% of victims are raped by husbands or boyfriends, 35% by acquaintances, and 5% by other relatives. [Violence against Women. Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Dept. of Justice, 1994]

Ten Things Anyone Can Do To End Violence Againsts Women

by Jennifer Howard

1. Listen to women and believe them. When women tell you about violence they have experienced in their lives - believe them. Often we don't want to believe that horrible things happen to people we care about, especially when other people we care about are the perpetrators. It is extremely rare for a woman to make up a story about rape or abuse. You may be the first and only person she tells. Believe her and support her decisions, without being judgmental.
2. Heal the violence in your own life. Most of us are survivors of some type of violence. Almost everybody fears becoming a victim of violence. Take care of yourself and do what you can to help yourself heal - emotionally and physically. Get counselling. Join a support group. Most women's shelters offer some type of free counseling and support.

3. Break the silence. When you're ready, tell people your story of survival. Breaking the silence about our experiences reduces the shame that surrounds abuse and can empower others to talk about their experiences.

Encourage people who commit violence to get help. Don't judge. Let them know their behavior is unacceptable and that there are counselors and support groups to help them change.

4. Make violence your business. Most of us grew up with the idea that we're not supposed to ask questions about other people's families or relationships, especially if there seems to be trouble. Keeping violence against women private helps no one. If you believe that someone is being abused - ask them. They might not tell you right away, but it will send a signal that you are someone they can trust. If you don't know how to handle the news that someone you know is being abused, call your local women's shelter or crisis line for advice. Don't put yourself in danger by intervening in a violent situation. Call the police.

5. Raise non-violent children. Talk to your children about violence. Help them find non-violent ways of resolving conflict. Encourage imaginative, co-operative and non-violent play. Challenge socialized gender roles. Don't use violence (spanking) as punishment.

6. Use your time, energy and money to promote women's equality. Women make up the vast majority of victims of relationship and sexual violence. Get involved in organizations working to end poverty and violence against women. Make donations. Sit on your union's Women's Committee. Start a group dedicated to ending violence against women. Vote for political parties with concrete plans and policies to increase women's equality.

7. Speak out against negative media images. The media often uses images of violence against women to sell products. If you see an ad or commercial that you find offensive, write/ fax/ e-mail the company.

8. Help girls protect themselves. Help the girls in your life develop confidence and strong self-esteem. Let them know they're important as individuals. Talk frankly to them about sex and dating, stressing respect and their right to choose.

9. Encourage people who commit violence to get help. Don't judge. Let them know their behavior is unacceptable and that there are counselors and support groups to help them change.

10. Remember. Participate in acts of remembrance for victims of violence. Celebrate survival.

Reproduced with permission from the Network, the magazine of the Canadian Women's Health Network.

This article first appeared in The Network (Volume 3, Number 4), the publication of the Canadian Women's Health Network. More women's health information and articles are available on their website: <http://www.cwhn.ca>

Did you know. . .

Rape is up 4.4% this year compared to last year in New York City (NYPD CompStat Volume 9 Number 35).

Teens 16 to 19 were three and one-half times more likely than the general population to be victims of rape, attempted rape or sexual assault. (National Crime Victimization Survey. Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice, 1996)

Only 10% of rape/sexual assaults are reported, making this the most underreported crime in the U.S. (Congressional Caucus on Women's Issue, 1990; Harlow, 1991; Koss, 1990)

Walk to End Domestic Violence

by Carolyn Spector
Executive Director of New York Walks to End Domestic Violence

What : *DV Walk/Run 2002*, our Fourth Annual Event sponsored by **Walk to End Domestic Violence**, is a family-friendly, 5K walk/run in New York City. We welcome one and all to join us as we raise awareness and educate our communities about domestic violence. In addition to the walk/run, there will be an opening ceremony hosted by dignitaries and celebrities. Participating organizations will display their materials, counselors will staff a safety station, and there will be activities for the children, as well as music, and special treats throughout the day!

At the conclusion of the **DV Walk/Run** we will present a Wellness Fair where Tiger Schulmann's Karate will perform interactive self-defense workshops, Free Arts will do face painting for the children, bands will perform their original music, and Gina Gibney's Dance Company will perform and conduct workshops. Also, we will exhibit our Bravery Banner where participants can create a personalized ribbon in honor or memory of a victim as well as our Clothesline Project where walkers can design and display their work of art.

When: Sunday, October 6th, 2002, 10:00 AM, RAIN or SHINE!!!

Where: Main Lawn, Battery Park, New York City

Schedule of the day:

Registration: 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

Opening ceremony: 11:30 a.m. to 12:00 Noon

Walk/Run Kick-off: 12:00 Noon

Closing Ceremony: 1:30 PM

Wellness Fair: 1:30 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

How: Participants are invited to form a team or to walk/run individually. Participants collect pledges from family, friends, and co-workers. **For more information please call the Walk office at (877) 343-6338 or visit our website at www.dvwalk.org.**

Fall Advocate Training

Rape and Domestic Violence Survivors Need You Volunteer Advocates Needed

Until the day there is no longer violence in our society, we can all rest a little easier knowing that SAVI's caring volunteer team is there for someone in need.

The Mount Sinai Sexual Assault and Violence Intervention Program (SAVI) is looking for compassionate women and men to volunteer their time supporting victims in Manhattan and Queens.

Sunday October 20,

Saturday October 26

Saturday November 2, 16, 23

(10:00 am to 5:00 pm)

Wednesday November 6,

Tuesday November 12

Thursday November 21

(6:15 pm to 9:00 pm)

Mandatory 40 hour training program at Mount Sinai Hospital

Advocates are needed to be on call one shift a month on weeknights, weekends and holidays

Bilingual/bicultural men and women are encouraged to apply

No previous experience necessary

Come join our volunteer team and help someone begin to heal!

Space is limited. Find out more about our program or to schedule an interview:

212-423-2140 or 718-736-1288

Advice for Immigrants Who Are Assault Victims

by Maria De Santis

If you are an immigrant to the United States, and you are a victim of domestic violence or rape, here are some suggestions we hope will help you.

You deserve help, and as a crime victim, you have the same right to the crime victim services as any crime victim born in the United States. Don't be shy about calling police, using women's shelters, calling rape crisis centers, applying for victim assistance funds, or going to restraining or order clinics. You do not have to reveal your immigration status to receive these services, and it is very unlikely you'll be asked.

If you're still afraid to call for help because you fear that authorities might deport you, here's what you or a friend of yours can do. You can call police without giving your name, for example, and say something like this. "I have a friend who is a victim of domestic violence. But she's afraid to call police because she's an immigrant in the United States and she doesn't have documents. If my friend calls you for help, and you find out she doesn't have documents, what will you do?"

Remember, however, we only suggest this so you can convince yourself that you won't be deported. In the past, it is true that some immigrant women had this problem. But today, agencies that give services to crime victims do not require that you are in the United States legally for you to receive crime victim services. In a recent informal survey we did of victim advocates around the country, not one reported that they knew of a case in the last five years where a woman without documents was reported to the INS and deported because she had called the police for help or sought other victim services.

If the person abusing you says that he will call INS and get you deported if you call police or try to get help, don't believe him/her. It is important to take abusive partners' threats seriously. But in the case of this common threat, they simply cannot carry it out. So don't let this threat stop you from getting help.

If you're depending on your partner to petition for your green card and s/he threatens to stop the petition if you leave, remember that under U.S. federal law battered immigrant women have the right to leave an abusive partner and continue the petition on their own. The staff at battered women's shelters and rape crisis centers can tell you how to do it.

Remember that under U.S. federal law battered immigrant women have the right to leave an abusive partner and continue the petition on their own.

If you are still afraid to seek help, ask someone to make the phone calls for you, and to be with you when you deal with police and other crisis workers. In fact, it's a very good idea when you get help for domestic violence and rape to have someone at your side. Another person will make you feel safer, help you remember information, and greatly reduce the risk that officials might treat you badly or ignore your needs. This is true even if the person who goes with you doesn't speak English or have any idea how the system works.

If you can't think of anyone who can accompany you or make phone calls for you, don't despair. It's common for domestic violence abusers to isolate you from human contact. This is especially

easy for them to do if you are newly arrived in the United States. Here are some people you should consider asking when you need help making phone calls, help with transportation, or help with an afternoon of childcare: neighbors, ministers or priests, people at your church, co-workers, your children's teachers. Even if you don't know the person well, if your intuition tells you the person is kind, they will probably say yes, they will help.

And don't forget to call the telephone operator for the telephone number of your local rape or domestic violence center. These centers have crisis phone lines that operate 24 hours a day, and sometimes have staff members that speak other languages. Again, if you're afraid to call, ask a friend to call for you.

Remember, telephone communication in the United States is highly mechanized. Often, instead of reaching a human being, you'll get an answering machine or a voice mail system. It's very important to leave a message. Leave the information slowly. Say your name slowly and give your phone number slowly. Always leave complete information about the best time to call you back. And if you don't want them to call back when your partner is home, be sure to leave that information on the message too.

If you go to police or to crisis workers and they don't give you the help you need or they treat you badly, don't give up! It's true, there are incompetent people in every occupation, there are racist people, lazy people, and sexist people. It's also true that there are competent, respectful, and helpful people probably in the same office. So, call again on another shift, or ask a friend to call the person's boss. But don't give up. You deserve help! So keep asking until you get it. *

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October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month

Save the date and wear a purple ribbon in support of Domestic Violence Survivors

Conferences:

Domestic Violence Walk/Run

Sunday, October 6th, 2002

Battery Park City, Main Lawn

Contact Carolyn Spector to register

(877) 34END-DV, \$10.00

Mount Sinai Hospital –

“Violence Hurts”

Tuesday, October 8th, 2002

at 9:00 AM

Domestic Violence:

A Fresh Look at an Old Problem

Borough President’s Sexual Assault
and DV Task Force Members

Thursday, October 17th, 2002

at 8:30 AM

York College: Jamaica, NY

New York Women’s Agenda

7th Annual Corporate Conference
on Domestic Violence

Thursday, October 24th, 2002

at 7:30am

Grand Hyatt Hotel, New York City

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Visit SAVI’s web site at www.mssm.edu/SAVI

The Mount Sinai Sexual Assault and Violence Intervention Program (SAVI) is dedicated to assisting sexual assault and domestic violence survivors. SAVI provides free and confidential emergency room crisis intervention in nine hospitals in Manhattan and Queens, individual and group counseling at four sites, and a variety of public and professional educational and outreach programs.

Sexual Assault and Violence Intervention Program

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