Who is Marissa Alexander? Marissa Alexander is a loving daughter and sister with a MBA; she is a proud, black mother of three from Jacksonville, Florida, who, nine days after giving birth prematurely, was forced to defend her life from a brutal life-threatening attack by her estranged husband. In 2010, Marissa fired a single warning shot into the wall that caused no injuries while defending herself from an attack by her abusive husband who strangled and threatened to kill her.

Marissa Alexander is a survivor who attempted to stop a violent attack on her life, in her own home, so that she could live for herself and her children; Marissa Alexander is a victim of one of the nation's most precarious crimes; Marissa Alexander is a mother who was incarcerated for nearly 3 years—stolen away from her children and her life. Marissa Alexander attempted to invoke Florida’s Stand Your Ground immunity but was denied, sent to trial, found guilty and sentenced to a mandatory minimum sentence of 20 years in prison. Today Marissa Alexander has chosen to accept a plea deal with the State of Florida that includes time-served (1,030 days) with an additional 65 days in Duval County Jail. Marissa Alexander is not free.

Listed below are a few of the facts on domestic violence and the criminalization of survival:

- Black women are three times more likely to die at the hands of a current or former intimate partner. Among African-American women killed by their partner, almost half are murdered while in the process of leaving the relationship.
- Violence perpetrated against women and girls can put them at risk for incarceration.
- 85-90% of women in prison have a history of being victims of violence. Rita Smith, the former executive director of the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence asserts that, “Most battered women who kill in self-defense end up in prison.”
- Black women and other marginalized people are especially likely to be criminalized, prosecuted and incarcerated while trying to navigate and survive the conditions of violence in their lives.
- Pregnant women or women who recently gave birth face a higher risk of escalating domestic violence.
- Mothers represent the majority of people in women’s prisons, creating a devastating impact on families, children, pregnancy and childbirth.
The Women’s Safe House Launches Young Friends

The Women’s Safe House launched the start of its Young Friends Group with an official Meet-and-Greet on Wednesday, October 15, 2014. Young professionals between the ages of 21 and 40 who shared an interest in the mission to end domestic violence gathered at Schlafly Bottleworks in Maplewood to hear first hand from key members of the Board of Directors and the Executive Director of TWSH speak about the new initiative. Wine baskets were auctioned off during the attendance raffle. Guests were presented with a purple ribbon in honor of DV Awareness Month.

Although the Meet-and-Greet was the official launch event, the up and coming group will jumpstart its membership with quarterly volunteer events scheduled for 2015.

To learn more about the Young Friends Group, contact the Community Relations and Volunteer Manager at: volunteer.coordinator@twsh.org

Golfers Land a Hole In One for TWSH Programs and Services

More than 100 golfers and putt-putters endured a day under the scorching sun to land a hole-in-one at The Courses at Forest Park in support of The Women’s Safe House.

Volunteers, committee members, and staff welcomed the group to a full day of play on the green at the 22nd Annual Golf Tournament held on Monday, August 18, 2014.

After a refreshing lunch, mulligans were purchased and golf carts were loaded just in time for the 1PM tee time.

More than 5 employees from a local Kohl’s Department Store and 15 employees from Hyatt Regency Downtown St. Louis at the Arch volunteered this year - assisting with registration, organizing the silent auction tables and delivering jello shots throughout the tournament.

Over 25 gifts and prizes were purchased through the silent auction as guests placed their bids in hopes of securing wine baskets, scarf sets, and gift certificates to experience St. Louis’ finest attractions. Nearly $40,000 was raised in support of TWSH programs and services. A complete list of sponsors is located on the last page of this Newsletter.

Avon Foundation Donates $20,000 to The House

The Avon Foundation for Women awarded a one-year grant to The Women’s Safe House to provide direct services to domestic violence victims. This is the first year that TWSH has received Avon Foundation funding to support its programs and services. The grant is an annual Avon Foundation for Women program that invites Avon regional offices across the United States and Puerto Rico to nominate local domestic violence non-profit organizations for funding, as part of the Avon Foundation for Women Speak Out Against Domestic Violence program.

Avon and the Avon Foundation for Women launched Speak Out Against Domestic Violence in 2004 to help end the cycle of domestic violence. Through the end of 2013, the Avon Foundation has provided more than $38 million for domestic and gender violence programs in the United States, including support for awareness, education, direct service and prevention.

DVAM: Give Domestic Violence The Boot

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month. And this year, The Women’s Safe House raised awareness in a way that was different from any other year. October 28, 2014, The Women’s Safe House launched its first community campaign to help raise awareness about an issue that affects one in three women nationwide. In response to the community campaign, supporters were encouraged to wear a pair of boots on October 28th as a stylish, yet symbolic expression to “Give Domestic Violence the Boot!”

Moving forward, The Women’s Safe House has officially marked the third Tuesday of October as the set date for the “Give DV The Boot!” campaign. To find out more about the community campaign, contact the Community Relations and Volunteer Manager or check out our website in Spring 2015. Mark Your Calendar for October 20, 2015 to make your fashion statement!
Staff Retreat: Getting To The Core

As you can imagine, working in an environment that is so fast paced and demanding, staff who provide the programs and services for the residents at The Women's Safe House are always in need of a getaway to serve as a refresher. Friday, October 31, 2014, TWSH staff gathered at the Brentwood Community Center for a much needed staff retreat—an event that has become a standard appointment every two years.

Retreat committee members dedicated the focus of this year’s theme to “Getting To The Core.” In hopes of preventing staff from reaching a burn-out zone, empathy training was provided to remind staff to redirect their energy and focus on the needs of the clientele, while also ensuring proper self-care. Newly inducted board member and police officer, Sergeant Catherine Dennis, provided safety training and self defense tips for employees to consider for both work and home environments.

Omega Psi Phi Fraternity Gives Reason for TWSH to Give Thanks

The holiday season can serve as a emotional trigger for many individuals, adults and children, who are experiencing trauma, grief, or a sense of loss. Of course, with Thanksgiving being such a traditional holiday that most families tend to gather together to break bread and give thanks, many women and families in shelter miss the opportunity to have the family experience. Women and families within the domestic violence sector may not have a safe place to return, or find that returning to a loved ones house for the holidays may not be the safest decision—considering that the abuser may use this as an opportunity to stalk or harass.

But with this in mind, along with having a generous focus to give back to the community, the Nu Chi Chapter of the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity made sure that even the women and children escaping domestic violence in shelter this Thanksgiving season still felt a sense of love, compassion, and family ties. On Thanksgiving morning, more than 15 volunteers brought “the works” to include all of the holiday trimmings of turkey, dressing, green beans and desserts galore, to calm the rumble in the tummies and quench the thirst of the residents of The Women’s Safe House.

Not only did the volunteers with the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity prepare the meal, pile the plates, slice the cake, and pour the beverages, they also took the time to mingle—engaging in conversation with the moms and little ones. The volunteers knew that Thanksgiving wasn’t solely about the soul food, but more importantly, bringing a smile to the faces of those experiencing tough times and showing women and children that men care, and that not all men are batterers. It was the Omegas' willingness to share their Thanksgiving Day with the residents of The House that made a lasting impression. And it was this lasting impression, that even after the meal was over, residents and staff remembered and appreciated the compassion and concern that this group of men showed.

Hyatt Regency Gives TWSH New Home

Hyatt Regency St. Louis at The Arch began the holiday season with a burst of creativity and excitement as customers divided into teams to build gingerbread 'safe houses' in honor of The Women’s Safe House. On Thursday, November 20, 2014, more than 40 “grown ups” connected with their “inner kid” and found a fun use for marshmallows and gumdrops again as they competed in their creation of the best gingerbread house contest.

More than 10 gingerbread homes were created and donated to The Women's Safe House where they later served as table top centerpieces during the holiday season. In conjunction with the gingerbread house donations, Hyatt also donated two complimentary gift certificates to The Women's Safe House to be used at its own discretion. Coats and other seasonal items were also collected during an employee drive for the residents in shelter.
Become a Volunteer!
We are currently accepting volunteer applications. For a detailed list and description of all volunteer positions, please visit the website: www.twsh.org
Email your volunteer interest, schedule of availability, and contact information to the Community Relations and Volunteer Manager at: volunteer.coordinator@twsh.org
Please note that volunteers who provide direct service to residents must submit to a background screening with the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services.

Donate Now!
If you are interested in hosting a third party event or a donations drive in support of The Women’s Safe House, please contact the Development Associate at: development@twsh.org
If you need additional information or would like to view the agency wish list, please visit the donations tab on the website: www.twsh.org
Please Note: Beginning January 2015, contribution statements will be mailed on a semi-annual basis.

The Women’s Safe House presents
Walk This Way IN HER SHOES
SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2015
The Chase Park Plaza
The Starlight Roof
232 North Kingshighway Boulevard
Saint Louis, MO 63108
For more details, visit: www.twsh.org

The Women’s Safe House
Providing Safety, Shelter & Support for More Than 35 Years
John & Natalie Alberici

A “Special Thanks” to the sponsors of The 22nd Annual Golf Tournament benefitting The Women’s Safe House!