



ASAP consultants Susan Urban and Elaine Wolff.

CONNECT Explores the Intersection of Animal Abuse & Domestic Violence

CONNECT is at NYC's forefront in helping domestic violence advocates, human services professionals, and the animal welfare community understand the link between animal cruelty and family violence. In March of 2007, a grant from *A Kinder World Foundation* allowed CONNECT to create the *Alliance for Safety of Animals and People (ASAP)*, a new initiative to explore the link between animal abuse and domestic violence.

CONNECT then hired social workers Elaine Wolff and Susan Urban to convene a task force consisting of individuals, human service agencies, the criminal justice system, animal welfare, and community groups who meet regularly to find solutions to protect survivors of DV and their companion animals.

ASAP is proud to have produced a short documentary, *Tanya's Story*, in which ASAP member, Tanya McLeod, tells the story of her own abusive relationship, which she ended when her beloved dog was murdered by her husband. Before Tanya's pet was killed, no domestic violence shelter was prepared to accept the dog and there were no systems in place to ensure the safety of the dog if Tanya were to leave. ASAP is looking at several solutions, including exploring the possibilities of creating pet-friendly shelters as well as establishing a foster care program specifically for companion animals of domestic violence victims.

Knowing a pet is being abused within a family can be an indicator of other violence in the home. ASAP is developing training to assist service providers in understanding this issue and the importance of including questions about pets when interviewing family members for domestic violence assessments. Though there is still much work to be done, ASAP has made great strides towards assuring that companion animals are protected from abuse.

For more information about ASAP and ASAP members, visit www.connectnyc.org and click on Animal Abuse and DV, under Programs.

WHAT'S INSIDE



Tanya McLeod

- **CONNECT** works closely with local Food Pantries to identify clients struggling with family violence.
- ASAP member **Tanya MacLeod** shares her story of animal abuse and DV.
- **CONNECT's Quentin Walcott** answers the tough question, "What obstacles do women face when leaving abusive relations?"

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Letter from Exec

The prevalence of violence against women remains unabated and women continue to struggle for freedom inside the home, on the streets and in our communities. The complex interplay of factors that define and limit women's ability to seek safety is not sufficiently explored in mainstream discourse. Women who are victims of intimate violence may also be struggling with HIV/Aids, homelessness, children in foster care, immigration issues, abuse of their pets, substance abuse, issues of childhood trauma, etc.



CONNECT Executive Director
Kala Ganesh

Few organizations are equipped to deal with more than one of these issues, despite the fact that their relationships with each other imply an unexplored territory that can best be charted by intersectional collaboration. Our current, blame-based crisis response keeps women and children spinning on a carousel of discriminatory practices with no relevance to their real life experiences. More encompassing spaces need to be created where families can seek holistic help to deal with and heal from the multiple issues that keep them in unsafe and potentially fatal situations.

This issue gives voice to some of the different types of approaches to working with the diverse situations that affect women's lives. By exploring the nexus of intimate violence with other forms of oppression we create the possibility for productive dialogues and connections that address the combined impact of various forms of abuse that women and children struggle with. It is time we collaborate to create real possibilities for victims of family violence to reclaim their bodies, their minds and their lives.

Kala Ganesh

Credits

<u>Editor</u>	<u>Printing</u>
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<u>Articles</u>	<u>CONNECT</u>
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How To Donate

As you can see from CONNECTed's articles, our innovative programs are reaching communities throughout New York City. Your commitment to these issues and financial support helps CONNECT continue to advocate for the safety of New York City families.

We are very excited about our successes, which have attracted the attention of so many supporters. However, your assistance is still critical to us. We need your individual contributions to ensure the continuity of our work into the future. Please join in the effort of providing assistance and ensuring "safe families, peaceful communities" for all.

To donate online, visit www.connectnyc.org/donatenow or call us at 212-683-0015 x221 to learn more about how you can help.

You may also send a check or money order to:

CONNECT
P.O. Box 20217
Greeley Square Station
New York, NY 10001-0006

Your support will make a difference!

Contact Us

Main: 212-683-0015
Fax: 212-683-0016
connect@connectnyc.org
www.connectnyc.org

Legal Advocacy Helpline:
212-683-0605
Help in English and Spanish.
Monday – Friday, 9am - 5pm
(For 24 Hour Assistance,
Please Call 1-800-621-HOPE)





Spotlight on Our Programs

CONNECT Food Pantry Project



“ I’ve found the partnership between CONNECT and our food pantry to be an eye opening experience and a sense of relief! It’s helpful to know that there’s a lot we can do for a client who’s still with their abusive partner. Helping them stay safe to reduce the harm in the mean time is extremely important. Pantries are an important way to connect people in need to domestic violence services. ”

Heather Hargraves

Case Manager and Pantry Staff Member

Part of the Solution (POTS)

Social Service Agency and Food Pantry

Bronx, NY

It is rarely acknowledged that connections exists between homelessness, poverty, and domestic violence (DV), yet a large number of women become homeless each year due to violence in the home. In New York in 2002, “25% of homeless heads of household reported being homeless because of domestic violence.” * Another 2002 study by the U.S. Conference of Mayors stated that “44% of the surveyed cities identified domestic violence to be the primary cause of homelessness.” **

When a victim is forced to flee her home, either with children or alone, she often finds herself with little-to-no money, meager resources, and great difficulties finding safe housing. Many of these women seek out food pantries not only for food, but also for temporary security and emotional support. Food pantries are staffed by volunteers who provide exceptional service to their communities, yet are essentially untrained and unprepared to meet the specific needs of a DV survivor.

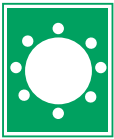
In order to provide education and support to local food pantries in assisting clients experiencing DV, CONNECT began to reach out to pantries to offer comprehensive training on the fundamentals of domestic violence as well as how best to respond to someone they detect may be experiencing violence or became homeless due to family violence. CONNECT has since been able to establish supportive partnerships with 13 New York City food pantries, providing them with services such as technical assistance, links to community resources, information on domestic violence, and access to CONNECT’s Legal Advocacy Helpline.

Due to the exposure of this issue within these pantries, CONNECT’s Legal Advocacy Helpline has received a significant upswing in calls concerning domestic violence victims seeking food pantry services as well as pantry staff seeking assistance for clients with DV situations. Through these partnerships, CONNECT has further enabled the dedicated food pantry staff to better serve their clients experiencing domestic violence.

**Institute for Children and Poverty, The Hidden Migration: Why New York City Shelters Are Overflowing with Families (2002).*

***The United States Conference of Mayors, A Status Report on Hunger and Homelessness in America’s Cities: 1999, December 1999, p. 94.*

Without the continued support of our community partners CONNECT’s work would not be possible. Thank you.



Meet Our Partners

ASAP's Tanya McLeod



ASAP member Tanya McLeod

CONNECT's ASAP has been very fortunate to work with ASAP member, Tanya McLeod, on a short documentary, *Tanya's Story*. Tanya hopes to save the lives of domestic violence victims and their pets by telling her story which details her experience with an abusive husband who murdered the beloved family dog, Brownie.

1) Why did you decide to make the film, 'Tanya's Story'?

With the goal of creating a model program to best serve the needs of women, children, and companion pets in families experiencing domestic violence, CONNECT and ASAP endeavor to work together to raise awareness among service providers and the larger community. This film is a result of their efforts and it gave me an opportunity to turn my pain into power.

2) In what ways did your abuser use Brownie to abuse you and your children?

My ex-husband used my dog, Brownie, to abuse my children and me by often withholding food and water as well as physically hurting Brownie by punching, kicking, and hitting him. He did not let us play with Brownie, often locking him in an enclosed area. This abuse hurt me and the children because we loved Brownie as he was considered part of our family.

3) What legal actions were taken against your ex-husband for his abuse against your family?

My ex-husband received two and a half years jail time for the abuse he inflicted on me and my 3 sons. He was not held accountable for murdering my family member, Brownie.

4) What work are you doing now?

I am a proud member and part-time organizer of the Voices of Women Organizing Project (VOW). VOW gives a voice to survivors of domestic violence, so that we can influence change and improve the many systems battered women and their children rely on for safety and justice. I advocate, organize, do public speaking, and overall help make positive changes.

5) Do you have any pets now?

I am happy to say that I am the proud owner of a Siamese cat who my daughter named, Nibbles. He is the joy of our lives.

Elaine Wolff and Susan Urban are social workers who work in the fields of domestic violence and child welfare, striving to encourage and build collaborative efforts between these two systems as there is so often an intersection of these issues within one family. Both are animal lovers and between them have a dog, two cats, and a parakeet. They are thrilled to work with CONNECT and ASAP on increasing awareness of the links between child abuse, domestic violence, and animal cruelty and finding collaborative ways of working on these issues.





Tough Questions

Posed by: *Quentin Walcott*



First of all, thanks to many of you who emailed responses to our first question, “*Why do men batter & abuse?*” Predictably, in the attempt to answer that question, many of the responses also led to this edition’s tough question, “*What obstacles do women face when attempting to leave abusive situations?*” This actually is the number one question people ask when attending CONNECT trainings, but it is usually posed as, “*Why Does She Stay?*” Part of CONNECT’s goal is to transform the way people view and respond to DV, so we reorder the inquiries to ask “*Why Do Men Batter?*” This is the starting point of our training. We encourage people to look at incidences of DV by focusing on where the violence begins: with the person who is committing the abuse, not with the person who is suffering the abuse. It is vitally important to hold the perpetrator accountable for the abuse and not blame the victim.

When we begin to consider what obstacles women face when attempting to leave their abusive situations, most people understandably jump to the victim/survivor’s response, or perceived lack of response, to the violence they are receiving. Many times we, as activists, advocates, or educators, respond to another’s abuse by saying, “If that happened to me, I would ...” or “When that happened to me, I ...”. However, there is not a one-size-fits-all approach to dealing with those experiencing DV; each situation requires action based on the specific needs of the domestic violence survivor.

Whether or not they leave at the point of the initial abuse, have made several attempts to leave in the past, or if they remain despite the fact that they are being abused, victims know the potential lethality of the consequences involved in leaving their abusive situations. Without answering the question for you, I want you to think about a few possible obstacles that a victim might face, such as their history with trauma, culture, religion, immigration status, sexual orientation, language, resources, and family and friend support networks. Considering all of these factors, see if you can answer this edition’s tough question:

What obstacles do women face when leaving abusive relations?

We encourage you to attend our trainings if you would like to be part of these and other transformative discussions about family and gender violence! Or you can email me your answers to qwalcott@connectnyc.org and I will give you some questions to think about!

Upcoming CONNECT Events

September 9, 10, 11 Author and violence prevention educator, **Paul Kivel**, will spend 3 days at CONNECT for a series of interactive workshop exploring race and working with young and adult men to end male violence.

September 15, 16 Author and activist, **Lundy Bancroft**, will be speaking at CONNECT about trauma, healing, and working with abusive fathers.

See website for full speaker bios and complete event information.

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UMA Peers at the International Women's Day March in NYC



Shakti Peers organized a Health Fair and Domestic Violence Awareness Day for South Asian women in Jackson Heights, Queens on June 28th, 2008.



"Imitadores de Cristo" Youth Theater Group

CONNECT Mission – CONNECT is dedicated to the prevention and elimination of family and gender violence and to the creation of safe families and peaceful communities.

CONNECT transforms the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that perpetuate family and gender violence and addresses these complex issues through prevention, early intervention services, and community empowerment.