



# OUR INDEPENDENCE

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## Delaware's Voice For The Voiceless

### Untested Sexual Assault Kits Sit on Shelves Collecting Dust

By Amy Hopkins



Natasha Alexenko (left) speaking at the Powerful Partnerships Conference at the University of Delaware's Clayton Hall on April 24th 2014 alongside Dr. Rebecca Campbell from Michigan State University (middle) and Rebecca O'Connor from RAINN (right).

Across the United States untested sexual assault kits are sitting on shelves collecting dust. Each rape kit represents a person who has been sexually assaulted and is awaiting justice against their perpetrator.

Rape kits sit on shelves untouched leading some to inevitably expire under a law known as the statute of limitation, which states a person cannot be charged for a crime after a certain number of years have passed. The length of time allotted from the statute of limitation varies from state to state.

The backlog of rape kits cannot be linked to one particular problem rather it is the result of numerous inconsistencies in procedural processes and lack of resources.

"Every rape kit represents a human body that was a crime scene," said Natasha Alexenko, the founder and spokesperson for Natasha's Justice Project, an organization dedicated to ending the rape kit backlog.

The Delaware Coalition Against Domestic Violence held a Powerful Partnerships Conference celebrating the 20-year anniversaries of the Violence Against Women Act and the Coalition's founding. *Continued on page 4*

### Oxford House Initiative

By Don Keister, AtTAcK addiction

AtTAcK addiction is an organization founded in February of 2013, by Jeanne and Don Keister, after the loss of their son Tyler, to the disease of addiction. The main purpose of the group is to educate and to enhance awareness of addiction as a disease, rather than as a stigma that is suffered in shame by the person with the disease and their loved ones.

During initial meetings, the organization developed action groups that established pillars of concentration for work by the members. Each group has a leader and established goals, as well as a budget for completion of activities. These groups are: Marketing and Communication, Fundraising and Finance, Policy, Speaker Series, Education and Awareness, and Treatment and Recovery.

Today, I would like to describe one of the activities within the Treatment and Recovery pillar, which is to assist those in recovery who are living in an Oxford House. When we went to retrieve Tyler's belonging following his death, we noticed a need for assistance with accommodations. It was made known to individuals responsible for running the Oxford Houses that atTAcK addiction would be willing to assist those in recovery living in Oxford Houses. *Continued on page 2*



### Maria D. Cabrera Doing What She Loves

By John P. Clyne



Maria Cabrera - City Councilwoman.

Maria D. Cabrera is a Wilmington City Council Member At-Large. She was elected on November 6, 2012 for a four-year term and is the first Hispanic woman to serve on Council. Maria is an independent businesswoman, head of household, and mother of four. She previously worked in the Wilmington Office of Cultural Affairs under former Mayor James H. Sills, Jr. and was Director of Education and Community Relations for the Grand Opera House. Currently, Council Member Cabrera is engaged as a Certified Federal Navigator for the Affordable Care Marketplace entity, Chatman LLC, and is the owner of a local marketing firm.

For the past 25 years, Maria Cabrera has lived and worked in Wilmington. During that time, she has built strong strategic partnerships throughout Delaware and has demonstrated her leadership skills and dedication to the community through membership on more than 15 boards and committees. Maria Cabrera is a founding member and past President of the Hispanic Business Association of Delaware.

Community outreach and strategic, culturally-appropriate marketing are Maria's strengths. In her role on City Council, she continues to focus on economic development and empowerment opportunities for people and communities within Wilmington, and beyond. *Continued on page 5*

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# OUR INDEPENDENCE

By The Addictions Coalition of Delaware, Inc

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## Oxford House Initiative

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Our first assignment was to refurbish a new location designed to house women with children. This was a major undertaking: rooms needed to be divided to make additional bedrooms, the basement needed to be completely remodeled as living quarters, painting and cleaning was completed throughout the house. The outside was overgrown with weeds, trash, and other materials littered the area. Trees were trimmed while yard waste and other materials were removed. Carpenters plumbers and electricians volunteered there time to make numerous repairs to upgrade the house. Non skilled workers painted and helped with cleaning and yard work. Our group spent several thousand dollars on materials and supplies.

Since that undertaking we have focused on supplying assistance to those in recovery needing to find a place to live or already in an Oxford House. We have supplied Christmas gifts for residences and their children, bus passes, living supplies, food and clothing. Recently six residents were burned out of their house and *atTack addiction* sent out a call for funds and other donations to assist these young

men. The response was overwhelming as we gathered goods and services along with some needed cash.

Oxford Houses are supplying a much needed service to those in recovery. We will continue to support them as our members strive to assist and make a better life for those in recovery.



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## Cracking Down on PayDay Loans

By Brian O'Connell, BankingMyWay.com

If you think the interest rate on your credit card is high, how about one that is 400%?

That's the rate on some payday loans these days. Typically controversial, payday loans are short-term, often high-interest-rate loans where cash-strapped consumers can make a payday pact with a lender just to get their hands on some quick cash.

Payday loans are on the rise, with 22,000 locations across the U.S., compared to 200 payday locations back in the early 1990's. Altogether, it's a \$40 billion business, and both increasingly desperate consumers and skeptical federal regulators are taking notice.

The regulators seem to have the upper hand though. The Center for Responsible Lending says that a growing number of states, most recently Arizona and Ohio, have new laws in place to cap interest rates on pay day loans, to 36% and 28%, respectively - more in line with the higher ceilings on credit card rates.

By and large, payday loans work like this. A consumer looking for quick money visits a payday loan center, post-dates a check, gives it to the lender and in return, receives some up-front cash. But it's not a square deal, experts say. According to the Americans for Fairness in Lending, the typical borrower pays back \$793 for a \$325 loan, and APR's on two-week payday loans range from 390% - 780%.

Critics say that payday loans amount to a particularly potent form of predatory lending, which can lead to a sustained cycle of debt for debt-burdened consumers who can least afford it.



"These two citizens' ballots (in Arizona and Ohio) are really a mandate for cracking down on payday lending throughout the nation," said Policy Associate for the Center for Responsible Lending, Uriah King, shortly after the laws went into effect. "You can get no clearer message than a huge majority of voters rejecting 400 percent interest loans. A reasonable two-digit cap is sensible, fair, and it works to keep bad apples out of the consumer lending arena."

So that said, don't walk but run from payday loan operators. The current economy might be brutal, but it's not bad enough that consumers should have to resort to such tactics to get through the week.

## Housing as health care

By Joshua Bamberger, SF Gate

With the rollout of the Affordable Care Act in California, we have an unprecedented opportunity to provide the one proven treatment to improve the health and well-being of people living with mental illness, substance abuse, chronic medical problems and homelessness: housing. In San Francisco, the health care system that will partner with high-tech know-how and philanthropy to embrace this will not only deliver on our social responsibility to serve the urban poor, but will leave public funding on the table for other essential governmental functions.

For the past 20 years, I have been providing primary care for homeless people in San Francisco. Walking to my clinic in the Tenderloin each morning, it seems that little has changed over the years. I still see many of my patients in various states of consciousness, often lying on the cold pavement. At the beginning of the month, mornings are quiet, as many people are recovering from a night of drinking and drugging or paying back accumulated debts. At the end of the month, the sidewalk is crowded with people trying to pass the time until they can fill their empty bellies at their first meal of the day at Glide Memorial or St. Anthony Dining Room.

A year and a half ago, I had the opportunity to work on President Obama's homeless policy agency. During my time in Washington, D.C., I was able to see that the seeming lack of progress on homelessness in San Francisco is not the only narrative in the United States.

Some cities, such as Salt Lake City and Minneapolis, are on track to have sufficient housing and services targeting homeless people, so that they can legitimately claim to be able to end homelessness for the long-term, mentally ill, chronically frail subset of the homeless population.

On a national level, our one true single-payer health system in the United States, the much maligned Veterans Health Administration, is in the vanguard of making sure that the president's statement of, "After serving their country, no veteran should be sleeping on the streets," will become a reality.

What are these cities and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs doing right? How can San Francisco learn from their example, so that we, too, can start to move the needle on homelessness?

Veterans Affairs and these cities have recognized that the majority of homeless people, including most homeless families, become homeless because of poverty rather

than mental illness and chronic medical problems. The solutions for these episodic homeless individuals and families are no different than the solutions for all people living with poverty: affordable housing, a decent wage, a useful education and the skills to enter the evolving workforce.

The solution for those who have been on the streets for years and are living with mental illness and substance abuse is high-quality, low-threshold, beautiful housing with on-site or mobile services that are tailored to individual needs.

When I first started working at San Francisco General Hospital in 1989, there was little effective treatment for my patients infected with HIV. Yet, when combination antiretroviral treatment became available, the health care delivery system ramped up to help develop new and better medicines and to reimburse the pharmaceutical companies that sold these lifesaving treatments. What anti-HIV meds were to HIV in the 1990s, housing is to chronically homeless adults today.

With a system in place that assesses each homeless person's need for housing through a medical lens, San Francisco could help ensure people get the medical care they need while containing medical costs. How? Providing housing will reduce health care expenditures. There is a solid body of evidence that providing housing for the highest users of the health care system improves their quality of life and reduces the number of people on the street. It also reduces public health care spending and the overall size of government.

The influx of talented and wealthy high-tech investors to San Francisco could be an opportunity to reduce homelessness. The business acumen that comes with entrepreneurship can help guide the health care industry to develop measures that assess the success of providing housing to stabilize homeless individuals' health, and hold the health care industry accountable so that these claims of return on investment can be documented.

This partnership also could provide some funding outside of the heavily regulated health care sector so that services that are often hard to fund through Medi-Cal can be available.

The enormity of the homelessness problem is not dissuading leaders in our nation's largest cities. In New York, Mayor Bill de Blasio unveiled a plan to bring a half-million housing units to market in the next five years. In Los



Angeles, the Department of Health Services is committed to developing 10,000 housing units targeting chronically homeless adults over the next three years.

San Francisco was the first out of the gate to develop supportive housing, and now we need to use what we have learned to target our limited resources toward long-term homeless people with the greatest medical needs.

The need for supportive housing in San Francisco is much smaller than in New York or Los Angeles. The San Francisco Health Department has developed about 1,700 units of permanent supportive housing - about halfway to having every chronically homeless, single adult in San Francisco off the streets.

A big, bold investment will get us to that tipping point. Without it, little will change, and it will be just another day in the Tenderloin.

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## Untested Sexual Assault Kits Sit on Shelves Collecting Dust *Continued from page 1*

as well as the 40-year anniversary of the University of Delaware's Department of Women and Gender Studies, at Clayton Hall on April 24th and 25th at the University of Delaware. The conference allowed advocates and organizations to share successful ways of reforming public policy and approaching issues around sexual assault and violence against women.

During the session, *Untested Sexual Assault Kits: Diverse Perspectives from Survivors, Advocates, and Researchers*, Natasha's Justice Project presented.

Natasha Alexenko is a survivor of sexual assault. Alexenko was violently raped in her New York City apartment complex in 1993. She was 20-years-old and attending college. Alexenko moved out of the city following her traumatic experience.

Alexenko's rape kit was left untested sitting on a shelf for nine and a half years at the New York Police Department property clerk's office.

"It was sealed and nothing happened to it and that happened with 17,000 kits around the city and the seals were never broken," said Martha Bashford, assistant district attorney for New York City, in the HBO documentary *Sex Crimes Unit*. The documentary, directed by Emmy Award and Sundance Jury Prize winner Lisa F. Jackson, investigates the shocking legal history of injustice towards rape survivors such as Alexenko.

Alexenko's case was about to expire under the statute of limitation, which set the maximum time at 10 years for her attacker to be prosecuted.

In 2003, New York City attorneys urged Alexenko to return to New York to testify before a grand jury against the DNA that was found in her rape kit under the John Doe Indictment. The John Doe Indictment, prosecuting DNA under the pseudonym "John Doe," froze the statute of limitation, meaning Alexenko's attacker could still be charged without a time limit to his capture.

The DNA from Alexenko's attacker was entered into CODIS, Combined DNA Index System, a DNA database program the FBI uses in criminal justice. When DNA is entered into the system it brings up DNA matches that can link a perpetrator to other crimes, sometimes even giving a name.

Without the John Doe Indictment, Alexenko's case would expire under the statute of limitations and would ultimately disappear, meaning if the DNA in the rape kit was

matched in CODIS ten years and one day later it would not matter, her attacker would walk free.

"It doesn't take a genius to understand that you had to assign people to go through all those old rape kits and see if you can match it up with a perpetrator," said Robert M. Morgenthau, former district attorney for the County of New York, during an interview in *Sex Crimes Unit*.

"We were the first office in the United States to get a John Doe Indictment against somebody we only knew his DNA and nothing else," said Morgenthau.

On August 6th, 2007, the DNA from Alexenko's case was matched in CODIS to Victor Rondon. Rondon was arrested in Las Vegas, Nevada, for minor charges and was extradited to New York where he was found guilty to 8 counts of violent assault and sentenced to 44 to 107 years in prison. Rondon was arrested four years after the statute of limitation would have expired Alexenko's case if not for the John Doe indictment.

Natasha Alexenko formed Natasha's Justice Program in 2011 to expose and eliminate the rape kit backlog. NJP is active in research, public education, and media outreach. Alexenko aims to help other survivors of sexual assault seek justice and fair trails.

According to the appropriations bill that was approved by the U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee in June 2014, following a proposal by the Obama administration in March, Congress is expected to approve \$41 million to be committed to ending the rape kit backlog in their 2015 budget.

Congressman Steve Cohen stated, "We know that, if tested, these rape kits could have helped catch perpetrators and prevent additional attacks. We must do more to cut through this backlog."

"It's the least we can do to give victims the justice they deserve and it is imperative if we want to keep our communities safe from predators," said Congressman Cohen.

If passed, the grant will aid sexual assault victims in fair trials and prevent perpetrators from walking free. With a larger budget the money can be used to establish policies on processing rape kits to eventually end the backlog.

According to the Justice Department, there are 400,000 untested sexual assault kits sitting in storage across the country.



In order for sexual assault victims to reach justice, there needs to be a consistent process for testing sexual assault kits.

After someone has been sexually assaulted an exam should be conducted as soon as possible in order to increase chances of collecting evidence from the body of the victim. When a victim arrives at the hospital they must give consent for a sexual assault nurse examiner (SANE) to perform a full bodily exam along with a description of their experience.

A rape kit consists of oral, vaginal and rectal swabs, the victim's underwear, head and pubic hair combs and clippings, and any foreign material on the victim. Each piece of evidence is placed in a separate envelope that is dated, timed, signed by a SANE nurse and labeled with the name of the victim. A copy of the victim's chart, including other information gathered during the exam, is placed into the kit before being sealed. "From the beginning to the patient being discharged it can take anywhere from three to five hours," said Jen Holveck, a SANE nurse from Christiana Care.

According to Holveck, in Delaware a victim is given 30 days to decide if they want police involvement. After 30 days of inactivity their rape kit is destroyed. If a victim does want to pursue a case the hospital notifies the police. Rape kits are stored in a fridge at the hospital until they are picked up by a police officer.

Holveck described the transitioning of a rape kit as a "chain of possession" in which custody of the kit must be signed over from a SANE nurse to a police officer.

Detective Joseph Cooper from the Wilmington Police Department said, "After the kit is picked up it is placed in temporary evidence."

Detective Cooper said based on victims statements detectives work to identify a suspect. If a suspect is identified by a victim through a line up or picture, the suspect's DNA along with the DNA collected in the victim's rape kit

will be sent to the medical examiner's office to determine if the DNA is a match. Rape kits prove to be very useful if the victim and police can identify the suspect.

Detective Cooper said, "Linking the DNA together helps in the prosecution." According to the U.S. Department of Justice, about 2/3 of rapes are committed by someone known to the victim.

If a rape has occurred but no suspect is identified in regards to the rape kit, Detective Cooper said, "It would sit in our temporary evidence until we have a suspect to identify."

"You probably could take the DNA over to the ME's office and run it through CODIS, if there is a DNA sample on file. I've never done that," said Detective Cooper. "You pretty much have to identify the suspect and in most cases we do have a suspect to identify."

When asked why he doesn't think CODIS is a part of the process used to build cases for sexual assault victim's Detective Cooper was not certain.

Suspects have been identified in most of the cases Detective Cooper has worked on. Even then when turning a rape kit over to the medical examiner's office to be tested with a suspect's DNA, the results can take one to five months or more.

Entering data from rape kits into CODIS would aid trials where the perpetrator is a stranger to the victim, though it requires time and money some law enforcement communities lack.

"It would expedite things in all honesty with that DNA if the person is in CODIS. It could bring that person in," said Detective Cooper.

Laws surrounding sexual assault vary state to state. Often communication between medical, forensic, and investigative institutions is lacking or not present.

According to 11 Del. Code § 205, there is no [www.addictionscoalitionde.org](http://www.addictionscoalitionde.org)

statute of limitation for rape in the first degree. Prosecution for rape in a lesser degree must commence within five years. The five year limitation for prosecution can be extended to ten years if based on forensic DNA testing. Despite the statute of limitation, the backlog in Delaware still exists and it is unknown how many kits remain untested. Karen Owen, executive director for Natasha's Justice Program, said, "Go to your police chief and sit down with them in a non-combative way and say I know this is an issue nationwide but I am just curious about what happens here."

Owen said, "Often times police chiefs don't know." Owen suggests approaching the situation in a positive way to build open communication between institutions.

Advocates and community members concerned about the backlog of untested sexual assault kits can build relationships with their local law enforcement community to raise awareness and address the issue.

"You cannot do this in a vacuum and you cannot do this alone. The more people that get involved in this cause, the stronger we become," said Alexenko.

"You are going to get further when you develop relationships through face-to-face meetings and through beginning at a place of wanting to help and not a place of wanting to shame," said Owen.

"We are inspired every day because we know we are making a difference," said Karen Owen.

## Maria D. Cabrera Doing What She Loves

*Continued from page 1*

Councilwoman Cabrera explained that "At-Large" means that she represents the entire city as a whole, and not any particular electoral district. Accordingly, Maria and the other three council members at-large have jurisdiction all over the City. Any resident of Wilmington, regardless of where they live, can call her for help with any problem happening in any neighborhood. Maria pointed out that one of the key advantages of being an at-large member is that it has allowed her to zero in on a few critical concerns and concentrate more effort on those matters.

After the election, one of the first issues Maria wanted to examine was the proliferation of violence in the City. "What is causing this? Why all of a sudden are we having all these shootings and crime?" One circumstance that Maria observed was that neighborhoods have been taken over and transformed into pockets of crime. Then it hit her that it is the landlords who are indirectly driving all this illegal activity. It is the landlords who are knowingly or unknowingly renting their buildings to traffickers who need a place to stash their drugs and guns and base their operations. In Maria's view, landlords should police their own tenants and keep only quality, law-abiding renters on their properties. Absent that, one way to hold property owners accountable is by denying or revoking business licenses if they fail to adhere to good rental practices. Maria will be introducing legislation along those lines by the end of the year.

Another area where Councilwoman Cabrera is paying special attention is opportunities for small businesses and entrepreneurs. "We need to make certain that we are user-friendly." That means ensuring that it is easy for outfits to conduct business unencumbered within the City. It also entails seeing to it that all businesses are registered to enable them to be notified whenever contracts with the City at any level become available. Further, Maria thinks it is essential that small businesses be kept abreast of all the terrific assistance programs available to them. The Councilwoman regularly communicates and shares ideas with the City's Office of Economic Development.

Maria is also a great supporter of buying locally. "We have so many wonderful shops and restaurants." Maria really wants the word to spread that Wilmington is a great place to live and do business.

A third focus for Councilwoman Cabrera is promoting community and youth empowerment. Often, people sit back and say "we don't have any influence in decision-making and nothing is going to get better." However, from Maria's perspective, residents need to embrace that each and every one of them has the capacity to elicit change. Certainly, every person wants to live in a neighborhood that is clean and safe and drug and violence-free. The public needs to understand that they have the power to attain that. But, citizens have seemingly become complacent and stuck in a state of apathy where they feel that

circumstances are out of their control. People need to feel empowered again. "Our young people especially must know that they have the power to take charge of their lives and go to school and get an education and become leaders and productive members of society." To Maria, community empowerment signifies that individuals start making choices for themselves. It is disheartening to her when she glances around at City Council meetings and doesn't see a single person from the community who has contacted her about an issue on the agenda.

Councilwoman Cabrera expresses tremendous respect for her fellow members of City Council. All of them are genuinely trying to make a difference. Each one has their own forte and she loves that they can all unite to improve the City. "This Council has demonstrated excellent leadership and I am extremely proud to be a part of it." Maria believes that "One person can make a difference, but no person can do it alone."

Maria Cabrera strives to stay connected with her constituents. She describes herself as "from the people, and for the people." Through "hands-on" involvement, Maria Cabrera has persevered to make the City of Wilmington a better and safer place to live overall. Residents can count themselves fortunate to have such a vocal and articulate community leader in their court.

**Be Part of it All...  
Make The Call!**

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**Stop The Violence!**

## In memory of the man with no memory

By Esther Hofknecht Curtis, CBIS

Those of us employed in the human services field will always be able to tell you about that one client who impacted us the most. That one client who made our day or broke our heart. That one client who made us lose sleep or cry at our desk. That one client who needed more than we could give.

Sometime in November 2012, I was working at the Brain Injury Association of Delaware when he first called. His voice was robust, and belied his sad state. He explained he had been the victim of his own failed suicide attempt a year before, the result of clinical depression and tough life changes. He survived, but his resulting brain injury caused him to lose the ability to make *any* new memories.

His days were crazy. He would wake up, take a shower, and get dressed. He would cook breakfast. He would look at the time and think, *Wow, I need to get into the shower.* He'd take another shower. He would begin cooking breakfast again. He wouldn't remember that he had done anything, so he would keep doing everything over and over again. His morning routine was not the only portion of his life that was affected; this happened all day, every day.

He began writing everything he did in a composition book, and I mean *everything*. One day, someone ripped a page out. That happened to be the same day that his bank account was emptied. "That day is just *missing*," he said, his voice breaking.

He called the first time, hoping we could help him get food and regain a portion of his savings or investigate the loss. A local food pantry gave him a few bags of groceries, and I connected him with a state case worker, then got him started with Vocational Rehab. All that time, I had no idea how hard he was struggling to maintain sanity. We developed a camaraderie, and I would always take his call, no matter how busy I was.

Then came the phone call I dreaded.

I was alone at work later than usual. He called, we shared our usual small talk, and then it became obvious he was calling for a purpose. There was a grim pause on the line before he took a deep breath and said, "I'm sorry I have to ask you to do this, but..." He asked me to tell his children that he loved them, that he had become unrecognizable, and he didn't want to live this way anymore. I wrote down every word, at the same time looking through my notes for his address. I kept him on the phone, saying everything I could think of to dissuade him. I had taken a few classes on suicide prevention and one phrase came back to me: *Someone that tells another person they are going to commit suicide is asking for help.* After 20 minutes of allowing me to try and change his mind, he said goodbye and politely hung up on me. I called the police, crisis



intervention, and his case manager. I thought of driving to his house, but knew I couldn't get there in time. I had to let the experts handle it. I had a very restless night. The police called me the next day; someone found him in the ocean, nearly drowned. He was alive, conscious, and in the hospital. *And probably madder than a wet hornet*, I thought.

Having survived yet another attempt, he was admitted to an inpatient program on suicide watch. I spoke with him several times. He said he wasn't going to try anything, and he was discharged a few days later. We kept in touch for a while, then he just disappeared. In January, his son called to tell me that his father had borrowed a friend's gun and tried once more, finally succeeding. He was on life support at the local hospital. His family was coming together that evening to make the decision to end it. I still had my notes with his last words so I wrote a letter to his family.

I never met him in person. It didn't matter. He would emotionally come apart to me on the phone and I would try so hard to give him strategies, consolation, and hope. He was this sad, helpless mess, and I couldn't make one whit of difference for him. Turns out, no one could.

It took months of pondering and absorption, but after a while, I allowed myself to feel relief that he was no longer suffering. I could finally see this experience as a powerful (if sad) life lesson that I *really* needed to learn... that no matter how hard I try, I won't be able to help everybody.

*Esther Hofknecht Curtis, CBIS is the Community Liaison for Point of Hope adult day services program in New Castle and Smyrna, Delaware. She specializes in brain injury. She can be reached via phone at (302) 731-7676 or email at ecurtis@pointofhope1.com.*



### Charity Food Drive NEW CASTLE, DELAWARE

Point of Hope's New Castle ABI Community Re-Entry Unit is conducting a food drive for the West End Neighborhood House. Non-perishable donations can be dropped off by August 29th from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Point of Hope located at 34 Blevins Drive, Suite 5, New Castle, Delaware 19720.

For more information contact us at 302-731-7676 ext. 101. [www.point-of-hope.com](http://www.point-of-hope.com)

## 3 Common Things Women Leaders Are Afraid to Do

By: Antoinette Capri

### 1. Network with Colleagues

Networking is an organized way of supporting a group with shared information, services and strategies. Networking allows you to learn and grow your business; quickly and effectively. So, why are so many women leaders afraid to network?

My guess is... Uncertainty.

Here are just a few questions that may bounce around in your mind: What do you do? Who do you talk to? What do you say? When do you share your business card?

When you're uncertain of what to do, you tend to grow in fear. Instead of being fearful, embrace networking for the golden opportunity that it brings. Think about what your business can offer to the businesses that are presented to you and make an appointment with the owners to get together for new venture ideas. When effectively matching your business services & products with others, networking is one of the quickest and most credible ways to grow your client base platform.

### 2. Challenge Authority

What is challenging authority? It's when someone you consider to have more power than you shares an idea or a suggestion for which you don't agree.

For example, let's say one of your higher paying clients makes a demand for more time in their session, but you don't have the time to give them. You may be fearful that saying "No" may cause you to lose their business.

So, what do you do?

Do you explain your schedule and hope they understand? Do you ask them to wait until next week for the time extension? Or, do you give them different options to choose? Even though you may be fearful of losing their business, you must always stay in full confidence that your expertise will be respected whether you honor



their special requests or not. Be empathetic to their needs, while letting them know that you're not able to meet their request for more time, while making suggestions as to what you're willing to do. Challenging authority is not something to fear, it's an art to master.

### 3. Be Emotional

How many times have you heard, "You can't be emotional in business." Yet, how does that make sense? Feelings are a part of every decision you make, every problem you solve and every connection you make.

So, why are women leaders so fearful of being called "emotional?"

I believe it's because most women view emotions as a weakness or a vulnerability. I can understand how you might think this way, especially if you've ever lost control of yourself or haven't been competent in a certain area of leadership. However, the reality is, emotions are the nucleus of what makes women GREAT leaders.

WHY?

Women, especially mothers, have a strong capacity to nurture relationships to a higher level of trust and dedication. For example, if you're a mother in business, you tend to ask more questions than other women. Why is that? Because at home, you're reduced to question your family so much to get to the truth, that you tend to become a natural, homegrown investigator. Now don't get me wrong, there are men that have this capability as well, but they're generally the exception, not the rule. Nurturing relationships are important for developing long-lasting businesses and unique networking opportunities. Remember this: Being an emotional leader doesn't mean you're out of control, it means you have a strong sense of self with an ability to bring out the best in others.

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[www.addictionscoalitionde.org](http://www.addictionscoalitionde.org)

## EMPATHY... what's so funny about Peace, Love, and Understanding?

By Rob McCreary

I recently saw Elvis Costello at the Grand Opera House. I'm a fan of his songwriting, and to some extent, his stage antics when he was a bit younger. He's graced some with age, and it got me to thinking about one of his songs that I've always liked. In looking at the lyrics, it made me think about how people, our community, and our world could really benefit if we all could just show a bit more empathy towards each other.

And it was funny because a few weeks ago, I came across a bumper sticker that said: "I am not good at empathy. Will you settle for sarcasm?" The humor of that led me to think of the slight unease or self-conscious discomfort that many people feel when a term such as "empathy" is introduced in a business environment. Notions of "touchy-feely," spring to mind.

While empathy is a right brain activity, it is far from being a touchy-feely topic. At its core, empathy is the oil that keeps relationships running smoothly. Empathy's critical role in effective relationships has been proven in studies by Dr. Antonio Damasio where medical patients who had damage to part of the brain associated with empathy showed significant deficits in relationship skills, even though their reasoning and learning abilities remained intact.

Indeed, empathy is valued currency. It allows us to create bonds of trust, gives us insights into what others may be feeling or thinking, helps us understand others' reactions to situations, sharpens our "people acumen" and informs our decisions.

A formal definition of Empathy is the ability to identify and understand another's situation, feelings and motives. It's our capacity to recognize the concerns other people have. Empathy means: "putting yourself in the other person's shoes" or "seeing things through someone else's eyes."

There are numerous studies that link empathy to business results. They include studies that correlate empathy with increased sales, with the performance of the best managers of product development teams and with enhanced performance in an increasingly diverse workforce.

Yes, increasingly, the topic of empathy is encroaching on the business world. We are now even seeing terms such as "empathy marketing" and "empathy selling." Not long ago, I came across the term "user empathy," referring to user interface.

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Along those lines, in his book, *A Whole New Mind: Moving from the Information Age to the Conceptual Age*, Daniel Pink predicts that power will reside with those who have strong right-brain (interpersonal) qualities. He cites three forces that are causing this change: Abundance, Asia, and Automation. "Abundance" refers to our increasing demand for products or services that are aesthetically pleasing; "Asia" refers to the growing trend of outsourcing; "Automation" is self-explanatory. In order to compete in the new economy market, Pink suggests six areas that are vital to our success. One of which is Empathy; the ability to imagine yourself in someone else's position, to imagine what they are feeling, to understand what makes people tick, to create relationships and to be caring of others: All of which is very difficult to outsource or automate, and yet is increasingly important to business.

Empathy is also particularly critical to leadership development in this age of young, independent, highly marketable and mobile workers. In a popular Harvard Business Review article entitled "*What Makes a Leader?*" Dr. Daniel Goleman isolates three reasons why empathy is so important: the increasing use of teams, (which he refers to as "cauldrons of bubbling emotions"), the rapid pace of globalization (with cross cultural communication easily leading to misunderstandings) and the growing need to retain talent. "Leaders with empathy," states Goleman, "do more than sympathize with people around them: they use their knowledge to improve their companies in subtle, but important ways." This doesn't mean that they agree with everyone's view or try to please everybody. Rather, they "thoughtfully consider employees' feelings – along with other factors – in the process of making intelligent decisions."

Empathy, then, is an ability that is well-worth cultivating. It's a soft, sometimes abstract tool in a leader's toolkit that can lead to hard, tangible results. But where does empathy come from? Is it a process of thinking or of emotion? From my perspective, I believe that it is both: We need to use our reasoning ability to understand another person's thoughts, feelings, reactions, concerns, motives.

This means truly making an effort to stop and think for a moment about the other person's perspective in order to begin to understand where they are coming from: And then we need the emotional capacity to care for that person's concern; Caring does not mean that we would always agree with the person, that we would change our position, but it does mean that we would be in tune with what that person is going through, so that we can respond in a manner that acknowledges their thoughts, feelings or concerns.



So this leads me to a question that I am sometimes asked: "Can you teach someone to be empathetic?" We all know some people who are naturally and consistently empathetic – these are the people who can easily forge positive connections with others. They are people who use empathy to engender trust and build bonds; they are catalysts who are able to create positive communities for the greater good. But even if empathy does not come naturally to some of us, I firmly believe that we can develop this capacity.

Here are a few practical tips you might consider to help you do this:

- Listen – truly listen to people. Listen with your ears, eyes and heart. Pay attention to others' body language, to their tone of voice, to the hidden emotions behind what they are saying, and to the context.
- Don't interrupt people. Don't dismiss their concerns offhand. Don't rush to give advice. Don't change the subject. Allow people their moment.

• Tune in to non-verbal communication. This is the way that people often communicate what they think or feel, even when their verbal communication says something quite different.

• Practice the "93 percent rule". When communicating about feelings and attitudes, words account for only 7 percent of the total message. The other 93 percent comes from tone of voice and body language. It's important, then, to spend some time to understand how we telegraph our feelings and attitudes to others when we communicate.

- Use people's names and remember the names of their spouse and children.
- Be fully present around people. Don't check your email, look at your watch or take phone

calls when a direct report drops into your office. Put yourself in their shoes. How would you feel if your boss did that to you?

- Smile.
- Encourage people, particularly the quiet ones, when they speak up in meetings. A simple thing like an attentive nod can boost people's confidence.
- Give genuine recognition and praise. Pay attention to what people are doing and catch them doing the right things. When you give praise, spend a little effort to make your genuine words memorable: "You are an asset to this team because..." "This was pure genius"; "I would have missed this if you hadn't picked it up."
- Take a personal interest in people. Show people that you care, and have genuine curiosity about their lives. Ask them questions about their hobbies, their challenges, their families, and their aspirations.

Empathy is an emotional and thinking muscle that becomes stronger the more we use it. Try some of these suggestions and watch the reactions of those you work with. I believe you will notice some positive results.

Years ago, I came across a saying suggesting that the measure of a person is how they treat someone who is of absolutely no use to them. Empathy should not be selective. It should be a daily habit. If I were to create a bumper sticker, I would say: "Empathy: Don't Leave Home Without It!"

*Rob McCreary is an Organizational Development and Leadership Consultant and the Executive Director of the Family Counseling Center of St. Paul's. Contact him at (302)740-6400 or [rob@stpaulscounseling.org](mailto:rob@stpaulscounseling.org)*

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## The Delaware Center For Justice (DCJ) Announces A New Community Reentry Services Program (CRSP) Coordinator, Who Is Working Hard To Give Probationers A Second Chance

By Winona Simpson

DCJ recently announced that Jessica Alicea, former CRSP Case Manager, has been promoted to the position of Community Reentry Services Program (CRSP) Coordinator, replacing Anthony Jacobs, who left the nonprofit on July 31 to pursue his own personal entrepreneurial venture. In her new role, Alicea will supervise two case workers and lead the organization's community reentry efforts.

"As the new director of CRSP, my goals will be to continue efforts to reduce the social stigma of hiring ex-offenders, while providing our clients with supportive services via case management. I firmly believe in second chances, and I will continue to work diligently with our justice system and community to give our clients the opportunity to put their past behind them," said Alicea.

Alicea has made her mark while employed at DCJ, helping many probationers in the program to gain a fresh start, reclaim hope and commit to living a responsible, productive life.

One such former probationer recently praised Alicea, his case manager, publicly at the DCJ Annual Meeting Fundraiser in June. Andrew Sampson (due to concern for client confidentiality, we have not disclosed his real name) works as the banquet manager for a leading hotel chain in New Castle, DE and, after working there steadily for almost three years, he is up for a promotion. But Andrew wasn't always on track to succeed.

"I love every opportunity that my employer has given me. It has been a long journey for me, and I am pleased to share my story," said Sampson. "Before I was working and up for a promotion, I had a bit of trouble in my life, and was going down the wrong path. I was drinking excessively, partying, and doing things that were just not me. I did some things I would have never imagined doing, all because I never wanted the party to stop. This led me to get into trouble, which resulted in a criminal record, which I regret having to this day," he said, recounting his experience with the justice system in July 2010.

"Well, this little wakeup call made me realize that I had ruined my life and getting it back was going to be a task," he continued. "To my dismay, no one was hiring people with convictions, even if it was only a misdemeanor. It dawned on me that this was really going to

be hard, but I needed to keep going. I was always taught that God would never put more on you than you can bear, and then low and behold there she was, this angel sent from above to help me, more than I could have ever imagined."

"Andrew had a theft charge, but never did any actual level five (prison) time. He was sentenced to probation for his charge, and he was referred to the CRSP program through his probation officer at the Cherry Lane probation office," Alicea explained, indicating how Andrew came to participate in DCJ's reentry program.

"I remember it was a Tuesday, the first time I met Jessica, and even though I was nervous and didn't talk much, she was still very polite, helpful, and forthcoming. Well, after she and I finally cracked the ice, she helped me more than anyone throughout my journey for employment," said Sampson.

"My initial impression of Andrew was that he was a young man with lots of potential, but no hope. He was at his wits end, and had no support or guidance," Alicea says.

"Not only did she help me with my job search, but she encouraged me to be a better person," said Sampson. "She helped me, and encouraged me to go back to school to get my diploma, and in six months I had earned it."

"I was able to assist Andrew by providing him with the support he needed to set and achieve his goals," said Alicea. "As his case manager, I assisted him with housing, utility assistance, interview attire, free haircuts, and transportation to various appointments. I also got him connected and enrolled



Jessica Alicea has been promoted to the position of Community Reentry Services Program Coordinator.

with the Culinary School at the Food Bank of Delaware, where he graduated and soon after secured full-time employment."

The Culinary School at the Food Bank of Delaware in Newark, a Delaware Department of Education certified trade school, provides valuable job training to the unemployed and underemployed. The School's mission is to teach students skills that are highly desirable to employers in the food industry and which have the potential to lead to jobs that provide security and economic stability.

DCJ continues to support its former client, as he works with Alicea to navigate the APEX program, through the Delaware Department of Labor's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, to receive an expungement (which seals a criminal

record) or pardon, so that he can pursue future promotions.

"My relationship with Andrew continued and I remained in contact with him to help support and guide him through various goals after he completed probation. We are currently working on getting him a pardon through the APEX program. He actually called me today to update me on his new residence and employment," Alicea said.

"To this day, I really do thank Jessica and DCJ for all they have done for me. I never knew that people who really want to help you still exist, but they do. My journey is still not over. I really have to thank my new friends at DCJ for helping me to continue my journey. With their help, I can finally say that I am happy, and I can't wait to give back half of what DCJ has given me," said Sampson.

DCJ is a non-profit 501(c)3, United Way agency, dedicated to creating a safer, more secure Delaware by seeking to achieve and preserve a high quality of justice. Once known as The Prisoner's Aid Society, DCJ has been in existence since 1920, and promotes a better justice system through innovative programming and direct services for those who are involved in or directly impacted by Delaware's criminal justice system, including offenders and their victims, families and community. DCJ also focuses on public education, research and advocacy to help support rehabilitation, allowing for constructive criminal justice policy and ensuring victims' rights.

## Get Lost to Get Found

By Kristin Cosden

Let me tell you a secret.

Life is chaotic and can be incredibly overwhelming sometimes. This can make us feel worn down and about as grouchy as a baby without a binky.

Wait... You already knew that? You mean to tell me I'm not the only one who gets stuck inside my own funky little whirlpool of swirly thoughts, unable to see the cheerful flotation devices life is throwing right at my head? And here I thought I was so unique.

We all like to think that we know what we are doing. This is The Plan. For me, deviation from The Plan leads to maximum levels of grouchitude and causes me to dive deeper into my whirlpool of swirly thoughts.

Case in Point: On a recent workday, I had a Plan which involved going to the beach...for work. More specifically, Youth Camp #2 at a state park at the beach. No...seriously- I'm required to conduct periodic site visits to see how things are going with our projects. This was a particularly special project and I was looking forward to seeing how it was going.

As I set out, the day seemed unable to decide if it was going to throw a tantrum and spit out tornadoes worthy of a first-class ticket to Oz or just give up, roll over, play nice and be sunny. Having been sucked into the Email Vortex from Hell, I was running late. This was the first deviation from The Plan, and my grouch-ometer began creeping upward. The tune "Flight of the Bumblebee" buzzed in my head as I zoomed downstate to make it to the park in time for the presentation.

I screeched into the park with five minutes to spare. Good, I thought. How long could it take to find one small youth camp? Soon I spotted a huge white tent on the horizon with a sign that proclaimed the tent was the spot I was looking for. Certain that this was the place, I strolled in like I belonged there, wearing business attire and receiving curious glances from all assembled. Soon enough, I noticed that the presentation was not focused on the project topic that I had come to observe. Turns out I was at Youth Camp #1. \*Commence mega-embarrassment and awkward tent exit as all present wondered, "Who was that weird lady all dressed up at the beach while we're all in bathing suits, khakis and/or polo shirts?"

So I asked a young counselor for directions. Gesturing emphatically, she said, "well, you wanna take that road over there (pointed vaguely northeast) and you will run right into Youth Camp #2". "That road over there" turned out to have a gate with an extremely bossy

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sign indicating that it was accessible only to ATVs and 4-wheel-drive vehicles. Commence more zooming about and the discovery of Youth Camp #3, which was significantly less happening than Youth Camp #1. Despite my best efforts, I never found the mysterious Youth Camp #2 that day. I remain convinced that Youth Camp #2 is actually located on Pluto.

After all this, my grouch-ometer was nearing red line status. I had now missed the bulk of the presentation that I had come to see. I had driven all this way and not achieved my objective. I was hot, thirsty, embarrassed, tired and very aggravated. My beloved Plan had gone kerflooey.

Then it occurred to me. There was absolutely nothing that I could do about Youth Camp #2 moving to Pluto. There would, however, be other training sessions for the project that I could attend. I noticed that the only thunderclouds present were the ones swirling above my very own grouchy head. The actual weather had turned sunny and warm.

What was I doing feeling grouchy on a beautiful day like this?!? I decided right then and there to disengage the grouch-ometer. There may not be another opportunity to spend a few moments appreciating nature's beauty on a sunny day at the beach. OK, so this wasn't part of The Plan. This was better than The Plan!

A short while later I sat happily on a bench overlooking the ocean for a few minutes before heading back to my office. I soaked in the sunshine, listened to the wind whisper and breathed in the wonderfully salty ocean air. As I sat there happy as a clam at high tide for those few moments, I realized that sometimes the best things in life happen when you let go of your Plan. So whatever you're seeking has mysteriously moved to Pluto...stop and look at the good things that are right in front of you here on Earth instead. Appreciate small moments of serendipity. Let go of your Plan and realize that sometimes, you have to get lost to get found.

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"It is time for Congress to act," emphasized actress Susan Sarandon during a recent congressional briefing about violence against the homeless. "We can't allow these people to be invisible any longer."

On June 25, U.S. Representatives Alcee Hastings (D-FL) and Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX) co-chaired a congressional briefing in support of a proposed piece of legislation to include the homeless as a protected class under the Hate Crimes Statistics Act. Susan Sarandon, the actress and activist, David Pirtle, a survivor of violence against the homeless, and Thomas Morgan, the co-director of a documentary about homelessness, testified during the briefing.

Throughout her testimony, Sarandon stressed that sheltered members of society must recognize the humanity of homeless people in order to overcome their indifference toward that vulnerable population.

"Congress is a proxy of society," she said. "If society is apathetic, Congress will be, too."

Sarandon told the story of Carl Simon, a 50-year-old homeless man who was beaten, stabbed and tortured this past year. When his attackers realized he had not died they forced him into a large suitcase he used to carry his few possessions and then drowned him in a bathtub.

"Carl Simon is one of the thousands we need to remember as we fight to protect those experiencing homelessness right now," Sarandon said.

David Pirtle, a member of the National Coalition for the Homeless' (NCH) Speakers Bureau, described the unprovoked violence he experienced when homeless. He survived five attacks, including being beaten with baseball bats, being spray painted and being urinated on.



"Most [attacks] are done just for fun," Pirtle said. "I don't understand how a person can do that and laugh."

Although fatal attacks against the homeless occurred more than three times as often than those classified as hate crimes from 1999-2012,

violence against the homeless is not considered a hate crime by the federal government.

The proposed legislation, HR 1136: Violence against the Homeless Accountability Act, would amend the Hate Crime Statistics Act to make the federal government responsible for compiling data about crimes committed against homeless people. At the moment, the Hate Crime Statistics Act requires the Attorney General to collect information on crimes committed because of a victim's race, religion, disability, sexual orientation or ethnicity.

HR 1136 is sponsored by Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX) and co-sponsored by 23 other members of Congress, including one Republican, Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL).

Since 2007, several efforts have been made for Congress to have crimes against the homeless included in the Hate Crimes Statistics Act. However, all these bills died in committee.

Currently seven states and three cities recognize violence against the homeless as a hate crime. Opponents contend that homelessness should not be included as a protected class in the Hate Crime Statistics Act because homelessness is not a permanent condition, unlike the other classes protected in the Act.

An official from the Anti-Defamation League said in an interview with NPR that there needs to be a better definition of homelessness and an understanding of whether it is, like the other characteristics protected under hate crime laws, an unchangeable characteristic.

"What is the definition of homeless? What is immutable about homeless? Is it an immutable characteristic? Is it exactly the same as race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, gender?" asked Michael Lieberman, the Washington counsel for the Anti-Defamation League.

"It is different."

According to the NCH's new report, "Vulnerable to Hate: A Survey of Hate Crimes & Violence Committed against the Homeless in 2013," bias against the indigent drives many crimes against the homeless. Some crimes are opportunistic, a direct result of the vulnerability homeless people experience because they have no shelter for protection. The NCH only records crimes committed by housed perpetrators against homeless individuals in its report.

"A hate crime is one of the most despicable and prejudicial acts done onto another human being by a human being and surprisingly these acts affect homeless people in great proportions," wrote Congresswoman Johnson in an email. "It is imperative that we give this issue the serious attention that it deserves by including homeless people in hate crime statistics."

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## STAND DOWN 2014 HELP FOR DELAWARE VETERANS

By John P. Clyne

When veterans return home from war, they can end up feeling completely lost. Often facing PTSD and homelessness, many veterans have a difficult time navigating the myriad of services and benefits available to them. The organizers of the annual Delaware Veterans Stand Down event are trying to help veterans in Delaware become familiar with the housing, social services and other benefits available to them. This is the fifth year for the event in Dover. The event will be held on Friday, October 3, 2014 and is scheduled to run from 9:00 a.m. until at 3:00 p.m. at:

Walter L. Fox American Legion Post #2  
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The event is designed to bring all veterans who need a "hand up" together, in a single location for a day to receive access to government, community and educational resources. Veterans will have the ability to begin addressing their individual problems and rebuilding and/or strengthening their lives.

The original "Stand Down" for veterans started in San Diego and was modeled after the Stand Down concept used during the Vietnam War to provide a safe retreat for units returning from combat operations. At secure base camp areas, troops were able to take care of personal hygiene, get clean uniforms, enjoy warm meals, receive medical and dental care, mail and receive letters, and enjoy the camaraderie of friends in a safe environment. Stand Down afforded battle-weary soldiers the opportunity to renew their spirit, health and overall sense of well-being.

Vans and buses are scheduled to be deployed to pick up veterans from key locations in New Castle, Kent and Sussex counties and bring them to American Legion Post No. 2 in Dover on Friday, October 3, 2014. During the Stand Down, veterans will receive all kinds of help, including Community and VA services for ALL veterans, Housing, Medical and Dental Care, Flu Shots, Behavioral Health, VA Eligibility and Benefits, Haircuts, Legal Service, Hot Lunch and Warm Clothing. All in one place.

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