



Generations home helps break cycle of abuse

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Published January 15, 2012 under Opinion in the Greenville News

Imagine being trapped in a hopeless cycle of self-doubt and despair brought on by the betrayal of a family member or close family friend — betrayal in the form of sexual abuse. Now, imagine you are a child in this predicament.

While the headlines of 2011 brought this very experience into the spotlight, the reality of this matter glares from the facts: One out of every four families in the United States is affected by sexual abuse. This number amounts to one out of every four girls and one out of every six boys in our community.

As astounding as this statistic is, what many of us don't realize is that sexual abuse stems from a cycle of hurt. Not only do the majority of sexually abused individuals know their abuser — the majority of abusers have been victims of abuse themselves. This cycle of abuse that entraps countless individuals, children and families must be addressed head on. While sexual abusers must be held accountable for their actions, they must also be given the opportunity of rehabilitation; especially when the abuser is a child himself. Only by addressing this issue at its roots can we break this cycle of abuse and create a world with "no more victims."

While sexual abuse is often an issue many "sweep under the rug," Generations Group Home has been tackling it head-on in Greenville County for over 20 years. To date, the nonprofit has offered hope and healing to over 800 boys ages 10 to 19 with a 98 percent success rate — meaning 98 percent of these once sexually aggressive teenagers have returned to their communities as well-rounded, contributing members of society, never to return to prison.

To put this number into perspective, studies show that between 50 percent and 80 percent of boys incarcerated in the juvenile justice system for this same offense will be incarcerated in adult prison within three years. This is where Generations' services play a crucial, intervening role. Through structured rehabilitation methods, Generations virtually eliminates the probability of repeat sexual offenders returning to our justice system and community.

The average boy who walks through the doors of Generations is 14 to 15 years old — emotionally tangled and psychologically unstable because of their experiences of sexual abuse; them being the abused and the abuser. A highly-trained and devoted staff ensures every child receives personal attention; most of these boys have been denied many precious boyhood memories which the staff and volunteers of Generations work diligently to help replace.

Boys that take part in Generations undergo a remarkable transformation through the CARE model concept developed by Cornell University. This model treats the "whole child," and is achieved through various opportunities at Generations.

On-site classes conducted under the auspices of the Greenville County School System encourage educational success. A Generations-based Boy Scout troop affords the opportunity to learn responsible citizenship and character development through outdoor activities and skill-building. In addition, boys are encouraged to take part in voluntary spiritual activities to build faith and self-worth. Volunteering within the community are essential elements to success at Generations as well. As part of achieving growth and stability from the past, whenever deemed appropriate, the boys' victims are allowed to confront their abusers to help with closure for both of them.

Generations has provided a unique, structured environment to at-risk boys since 1991 and has expanded exponentially. Today it hosts three campus sites that attend to different treatment levels but offer a second chance and opportunity for lasting change in every child.

I've come to realize that the reason I continue to advocate for Generations and the immeasurable work they do for the boys within our community, is because I experience a "defining moment" every time I volunteer. With each visit, changes within these boys are vibrant and noticeable.

These boys have been renewed with a new sense of life. They act as all normal, young boys would — to the point at which any outside person would have no idea of the abuse they've struggled with in the past. They are interactive, confident and determined to do better.

Without the support and love these boys receive at Generations, they would not have this second chance at childhood — and ultimately, this second chance for success in life. So thank you, Generations. Your dedication to this need and the impact you make for these boys, our community and our society does not go unnoticed.

If you would like to join the efforts to make a world with no more victims, go to www.generationsgroup.com.