

The Freeman Flash

FEBRUARY/MARCH 2016

ELIZABETH FREEMAN CENTER'S OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER

ISSUE XXXXII



Action of the Month: Protect the Best Interest of the Child

Right now, the Massachusetts legislature is considering a bill that poses an immediate threat to families affected by domestic violence.

The proposed "Act Relative to Child-Centered Family Law" (SB 834/HB 1207) would significantly change child custody laws, placing higher value on the rights of parents than on the well-being of children and inhibiting parents from raising concerns about possible child abuse.

Current custody law is anchored in the "best interests of the child" and recognizes that parents' rights are equal in the absence of misconduct. In cases where there is a prior or current restraining order against one parent however, the law requires the court to recognize and address the possibility of domestic violence in its decision.

Custody is a primary tool that abusers use to maintain control over survivors. For too long, courts believed that the abuse of one parent had no bearing on custody orders, flying in the face of years of research indicating that in the majority of households where a parent is beaten, the children are as well, and documenting the devastating effects on children of witnessing violence. We finally have a law that responds to these realities. SB 834/HB 1207 would undo these protections.

The proposed law downplays the role of abuse and removes any protections for the child around restraining orders, instead creating requirements for shared legal and physical custody that could endanger children.

Custody should continue to be determined according to the best interest of the child. Domestic violence should continue to be a factor considered in these decisions.

Please use this link to send an email, place a call, and/or write a letter to your legislator, urging them to oppose this bill:

www.custodyawarenesscollaborative.com/about. And then please ask everyone you know to do the same.



Sexual Assault Awareness Month

In the US, nearly 1 in 2 women and 1 in 5 men have experienced sexual violence. We say no more. This April, join us to speak out against sexual violence and the attitudes that allow it to continue, and to champion the work to prevent it.

- **April 2: Rally against sexual violence**
Park Square, Pittsfield, 4-6pm.
- **April 14: Forum on sexual assault myths & realities**
Berkshire Community College, SBA lounge, Pittsfield, 12:15- 1:15pm.
- **April 21: Rally against sexual violence**
Town Hall, Great Barrington, 4-6pm.
- **April 22: Trivia night fundraiser,**
Hotel on North, Pittsfield, 7-9pm.
- **April 28: Rally against sexual violence**
City Hall, North Adams, 4-6pm.
- **Anytime: call our free confidential Hotline, (866) 401-2425**
if you or someone you know needs support, advocacy, counseling, accompaniment at the hospital or police station, or just to talk.

Visit www.elizabethfreemancenter.org/events/ for more information.



24 hour hotline 1-866-401-2425

Pittsfield
43 Francis Ave.
(413) 499-2425

Gt. Barrington
401 Stockbridge Rd., Ste. 3
(413) 429-8190

North Adams
61 Main St., Ste. 202
(413) 663-7459

Supported locally by: Berkshire United Way • Northern Berkshire United Way • Williamstown Community Chest • City of Pittsfield • Verizon Foundation • The Mary Kay Foundation • The Green Foundation • Berkshire Bank Foundation • Town of Great Barrington • Berkshire Life Charitable Foundation • Coolidge Hill Foundation • Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation Funds including the William and Margery Barrett Fund and the James and Robert Hardman Fund • Guardian Life Insurance Company • TD Charitable Foundation • Many community members, groups, businesses, and towns •



Money School is booming



Money School, EFC's financial independence program, is in full swing. Series 1 began this month in Pittsfield – and is filled to capacity. Series 2 (Great Barrington) and series 3 (Pittsfield) begin in late April and are still open. Contact Donna L., our new Money School facilitator, for more information at (413) 499-2425 x613 or donnaL@elizabethfreemancenter.org.

And speaking of...we are very pleased to introduce Donna, our new Money School facilitator! She comes to us with a wealth of experience and a passion for economic advocacy, and we are thrilled that she is joining the EFC staff. Welcome, Donna!



With thanks to our Money School supporters:

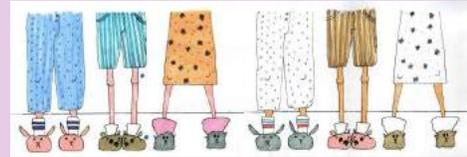
WITH ADDITIONAL IN-KIND SUPPORT FROM:



SUPPORT PROVIDED BY:



Our friends are throwing us a pajama party!



Our friend Carla is throwing us a pajama party fundraiser on Saturday, April 2nd, 7-10pm, at Riverbend Café in Great Barrington. Bring a couple of dollars to support EFC or a new pair of pajamas (kids and adult sizes) to donate to families arriving at our shelter. 50/50 silent auction and great prizes. Wearing your own pj's is optional but encouraged. All proceeds benefit EFC.

Visit [our Facebook event page](#) for more information, to RSVP, or to find out how to support the event even if you can't be there on April 2nd.

Thank you to Carla, Riverbend Café, the Great Barrington Police Department, and the many businesses helping to make this event happen!



International Women's Day

What a night! For the fifth year in a row, we marked International Women's Day on March 8th with our friends and community at a celebration hosted by Sabrina and Chin of Flavours of Malaysia. Thank you to everyone who came, danced, ate, and celebrated! Thank you to the many local businesses who donated prizes for the raffle. And a special thank you to Sabrina and Chin, whose support means so much to us. The event raised \$3,000 to help EFC continue to provide free and confidential counseling and advocacy to all those in Berkshire County impacted by domestic or sexual violence. See you next year on March 8th, 2017!



Welcome to our new volunteers!

Welcome to our latest class of dedicated volunteers! These incredible people completed our 40-hour training last month and will now begin offering their particular skills to EFC. Thank you to all of our community partners who presented during the training, and a giant thank-you to our volunteers (old and new), who bring so much to our organization.

Elizabeth Freeman Center is hiring a Finance Specialist

We are seeking a Finance Specialist to work within our finance department with special attention to: accounts payable, accounts receivable, payroll and grant billings; preparation/processing of invoices; and more. Must have degree in Accounting/Finance and/or significant job experience. Experience with non-profits, preparation of budgets, and audit requirements preferred. Email letter of application and resume to info@elizabethfreemancenter.org. For more information, visit www.elizabethfreemancenter.org/jobs.