



San Francisco SafeHouse is a safe and sober transitional housing program for women who have been sexually exploited.

Message from the Executive Director

By Jessica Li

Earlier this year, San Francisco SafeHouse marched alongside our sisters to show that women's rights are essential. Over the past few months, we have had internal discussions with SafeHouse women and staff about President Trump's actions and the impact it has on our community. In less than a month, he has managed to take away some of our basic human rights and freedoms. He reversed the protections that President Obama afforded transgendered individuals. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raided one of our partner agencies. They continue to search for and arrest undocumented immigrants - including women who have been abused and sexually exploited in the U.S.

Let us not forget that 100% of SafeHouse women are survivors of sexual assault and 70% also survived domestic violence. Last year, 20% of SafeHouse women were immigrants, and 80% had better access to healthcare because of the Affordable Care Act, including women living with HIV. These are not just numbers in a vacuum. They represent the women that Rev. Glenda Hope and the Sisters of the Presentation founded SafeHouse to protect.

In this time of uncertainty, there is often little to celebrate. But last month, we held a graduation party for a SafeHouse woman. Two years ago, she escaped and found sanctuary at a church. The pastor later referred her to us. During her graduation ceremony, she spoke about how SafeHouse gave her the space to heal and to find her inner strength. She talked about how the SafeHouse Client Internship Program allowed her the opportunity to intern with a local church that reflected her beliefs. It was a heartwarming celebration and a reminder of the space that SafeHouse continues to hold during this tumultuous time.



Photo by Arwa Safdari, SafeHouse Woman Journaling

My Road to Recovery

By Reilly, SafeHouse Graduate, Mother, College Student, and an All Around Amazing Woman

I'll tell you, before I reached SafeHouse, my life was in shambles, and waking up in cockroach infested motel rooms was the daily norm. Then again I wouldn't always wake up, because I never went to sleep in the first place. I was a user of methamphetamines and a prostitute. In the beginning, I thought prostitution was going to be a great jump start into the life of riches and success that I truly wanted. I thought it was going to be the beginning of the life that every person who grew up poor ever wished for. It wasn't. Instead, I found out that everything you make in that life goes away just as easy as it shows up. It's like a trap. The more you make, the more of yourself you lose. Eventually, I could barely remember my real name. Eventually I was lost. I had nothing, nowhere to go, and no one left to call on. I reached the point where I undoubtedly believed that there was no further options for me. I didn't think I would ever get out of that life.

I was somehow able to put down the drugs, but I'm not sure I would have been able to stay clean any longer on my own as I was still involved heavily with prostitution. A series of what seemed like universally designed events brought me to SafeHouse. I don't think I can even put into words how much of a miracle it was to be accepted into the residence.

"I thought it was going to be the beginning of the life that every person who grew up poor ever wished for. It wasn't."

Refuge of Hope

By Toni Eby, Operations Manager



The women of SafeHouse come from a variety of different backgrounds and often come to us with horrific stories of neglect, abuse, and sexual violence. The world outside has not been kind, and SafeHouse serves as their refuge and place of safety. However, the human spirit is resilient and within a safe environment, the women flourish. You hear their laughter as you enter the building and are greeted by their smiles and their joy; they know that here they are accepted. You go upstairs and in one part of the living area two women are giggling over a comedy while another woman studies for college in the kitchen. You smell the wonderful smells of dinner being cooked as one of the women smiles and eagerly offers you a taste. The atmosphere in the house is one of safety and hope.

Photo by Arwa Safdari, SafeHouse Woman Cooking

SafeHouse is not a facility, but rather it is a home and a refuge. For eighteen months, women are empowered to be themselves and encouraged to achieve their goals. After health and safety, two of the most important things women work on at SafeHouse are increasing self-esteem and learning new life skills. The women often go to groups in the beginning but are eager to go to college or gain employment. Our greatest hope is that we are preparing them to re-enter the world as strong, healthy women who are ready to reach for their dreams.

“SafeHouse is not a facility, but rather it is a home and a place of refuge.”

My Road to Recovery Continued

It was amazing! The timing was perfect! I could not have been more desperate and lifeless then I was while I was being interviewed. They took me in that night. I was then given the opportunity to freely relearn how to be a functional member of the world again. SafeHouse taught me how to improve in every aspect of my life. I learned about things like meal planning, saving money, and proper ways to emotionally respond to different situations. It was not the easiest place to live, but changing habits is never easy. I feel so incredibly blessed to be one of the few women in the world that have gotten to be part of this program. It changed my life.

Today, I have an amazing little girl that always keeps my spirits up, and I am a college student attending the local college where I live. I

have a life; better relationships, better habits, and I feel like a better person. I have found interest in exercise, healthy eating, meditation, photography, and spirituality. I have continued to carry out many of the skills learned through SafeHouse such as realistic career goals, keeping my home clean, cooking healthy meals, and making it on time to my appointments. I am more able to handle challenges, and I have developed a new love for life itself.



Photo by Reilly

“I feel so incredibly blessed to be one of the few women in the world that have gotten to be part of this program. It changed my life.”

Empowering Choices

By Kristen Moore, Program Director

All of the women living at SafeHouse took different paths to get to our doors. Their journeys may have overlapped, but their stories are unique. It makes sense, then, that each woman who lives at SafeHouse has different needs and goals for her time here. While the things that women hope to achieve vary, there is always a common thread: they hope to feel safe and to take control over their futures. Most of our residents have had the ability to make choices about their lives, actions, and bodies taken away from them through experiences of exploitation and abuse. There can be no healing until these choices are firmly back in their hands.

SafeHouse has always offered a range of programming for our residents, and we feel passionately about connecting participants to services in our community that will support healing and recovery. In the past, because we have seen the benefits of this programming, we have required participation in on-site and off-site groups and classes as a stipulation for living in the house. Women did not have much flexibility within this structure and, ultimately, did not have a choice about whether or not to participate. Inevitably, some women succeeded in hitting our benchmarks while others felt like the programming we chose was not a good match for their individual needs. As our staff worked toward creating individualized plans for each of our residents, we realized that an important element was missing: in our attempt to structure a meaningful and helpful program, we did not fully consider the healing power of giving each participant back the control over her own life. Current research, particularly within the field of domestic violence work, affirms that this approach is the best practice when working with survivors who have been deprived of control over their own lives. With that in mind, we made the decision to transition from mandating services to supporting the women in choosing voluntary services.

Initially, some staff and community members were concerned that without mandating activities that women would not participate in groups or activities that would ultimately benefit their recovery. What we have learned is that the opposite is true: today, women are participating actively in a wider range of activities than ever before. The Case Managers meet with women to listen to their ideas and assist the residents in finding services and activities that are a good match. This means the women are invested in participating fully. Similarly, instead of staff choosing what kind of groups to bring on-site, we have regular conversations with the women about what they would like and need. The result is that we are bringing in services that are relevant and that the residents are excited to participate in. Currently, in partnership with W.O.M.A.N., Inc., we are offering a domestic violence support group at the house which is attended by 80-90% of our residents each week. Additionally, an Acupuncture/Qigong group has been added which has an average participation rate of 75%. In addition to these groups, our current residents are involved in off-site substance abuse relapse prevention groups, LGBTQ+ support groups, adult basic education, ESL classes, meditation courses, self defense education, college coursework, therapy, and much more.

There is no question that the women who come to SafeHouse are wise and capable. The more freedom residents have to make decisions that shape their lives, the more motivated and confident they become. We look forward to supporting our residents in accessing the services and support they choose at this stage of their life, and we know that they are the experts on their own experiences. We will continue to support their decisions with our resources so that we can work together to make the next leg of the journey a positive one.

Message from a Board Member

By Carola Shepard



In February 2009, I arrived at San Francisco SafeHouse, newly hired as their first ever Development and Business Manager – and my first job in 20 years. I had plenty of

fundraising experience, but mainly as a volunteer and for a variety of large, well established institutions as compared to a small nonprofit on the cutting edge of women's social justice issues. I was, frankly, amazed to have found employment in the worst economy in 80 years and grateful for the chance to prove my worth.

I am not sure that my first "100 days" at SafeHouse were particularly accomplished by anybody's standards – but what kept me going was the amazing women I met there. Their courage, sense of humor, and eagerness to move forward in their lives was tangible and inspiring. They called me "**Ms. Money**" and cheered my first successes at bringing in the grants that paid for their dental work, internships, and continuing education – all tools to support their own hard-won life changes and independence.

I worked at SafeHouse for 5 years and am now continuing my connection by serving on the SafeHouse Board (responsible for fundraising, naturally!). I especially appreciate that such a small program can offer such personalized care and make such a big impact on individual lives. My own contribution to SafeHouse is overshadowed by what was given back to me: a chance to meet and work with an incredible group of very brave, very determined and unique women, each taking change one step at a time.

I've set myself a "high bar" in terms of making a personal donation. As government funding becomes more and more precarious, individual giving becomes increasingly important. I am proud to continue working with a group of women whose value and suffering have been overlooked and marginalized by our society. For me, they will always be the real "winners".

DONOR SPOTLIGHT: REV. KEENAN KELSEY

What social justice issues are important to you? I was a pastor at Noe Valley Ministry for 14 years. During that time, the church and I were very involved in homeless issues. I was a member of Religious Witness with the Homeless for many years. Homelessness and its related problems (food, housing, mental illness, health care) are still close to my heart, and I still participate with the Interfaith Winter Shelter. But with retirement 3+ years ago, my interests have shifted to women's issues, education (tutoring), and political activism.

Do you have a personal connection to the work we do? I have tremendous respect for anyone who wants to change their lives. As an active AA member for 10 years and NA member before that, I have seen (and experienced!) the miracles. I have had my personal resurrection. That is part of my strong respect and support for women climbing out of prostitution and its accompanying challenges. The other is an understanding of how and why women get caught in prostitution to begin with, and how it might serve them before it destroys them. SafeHouse is one of the few very successful and committed avenues to salvation and resurrection. SafeHouse success stories are beyond inspirational.

How did you get involved with SafeHouse? When I was called to Noe Valley Ministry, a group of members were tutors at Network Ministries. "Have you met Glenda?", they asked. "You must meet Glenda", they insisted, so I became a fan of Glenda Hope, as she so fully lived into her name. We had many cross-over connections, and I often felt I would "follow her anywhere!". When she founded SafeHouse, I saw it as a unique and powerful ministry.

You have contributed to this program for the past 10 years. Why do you continue to give to SafeHouse? Financial support is the best way I can contribute to your success. I would have jumped into volunteering, but privacy and trust are critical, as well as the specialized work. Your success is my reward. Why wouldn't I continue supporting an organization that is working? And your work is never done. Graduates need support and the incoming application list is, I suspect, never-ending. So yes, I support this profound, compassionate, and effective ministry.



TAKE A VIRTUAL TOUR OF SAFEHOUSE



Photo by Arwa Safdari, SafeHouse Bedroom

Ever wonder what the inside of SafeHouse looks like? For many women, SafeHouse is the start of a new beginning and a new place to call home for 18 months. In addition to sharing a bedroom, they also have access to their own bathrooms, a large communal kitchen, a living room, an on-site fitness gym, and quiet areas for study and reflection. We welcome you to take a virtual tour of SafeHouse by visiting our website:

<http://www.sfsafehouse.org/tour-of-safehouse.html>

As safety of SafeHouse women is our top priority, our location is confidential and the house is not open for visits.

How Can You Help?

Become a monthly supporter!

Send a gift card to Home Depot, Amazon or Costco.

E-mail info@sfsafehouse.org for volunteer opportunities.

Hire a SafeHouse woman as an intern at your organization or business.

Raise awareness about sexual exploitation and homelessness in San Francisco.

Your donations go to support SafeHouse women. Please make checks payable to:

**San Francisco SafeHouse
P.O. Box 40369
San Francisco, CA 94140**

Or donate online:
<http://www.sfsafehouse.org>