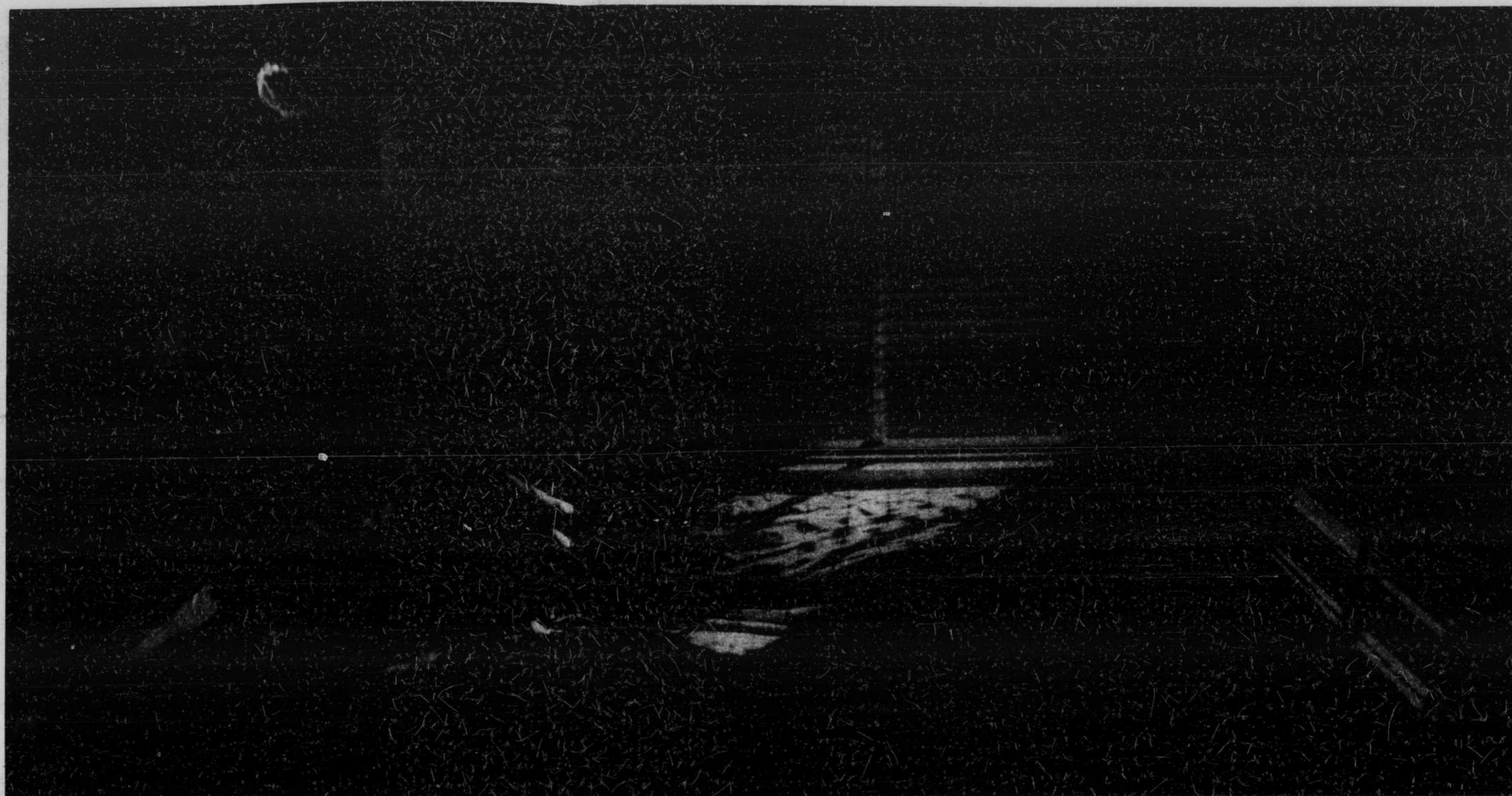
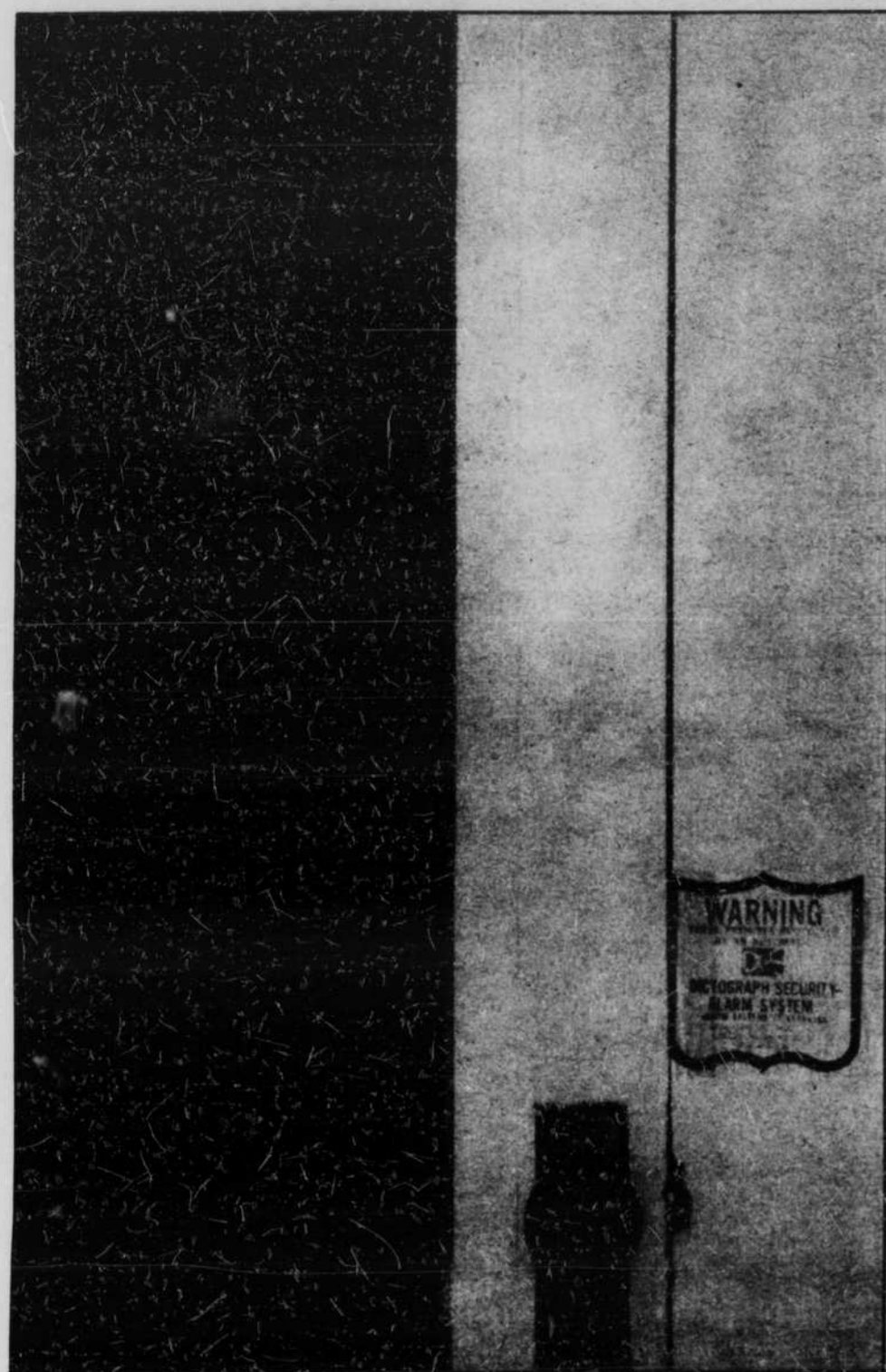
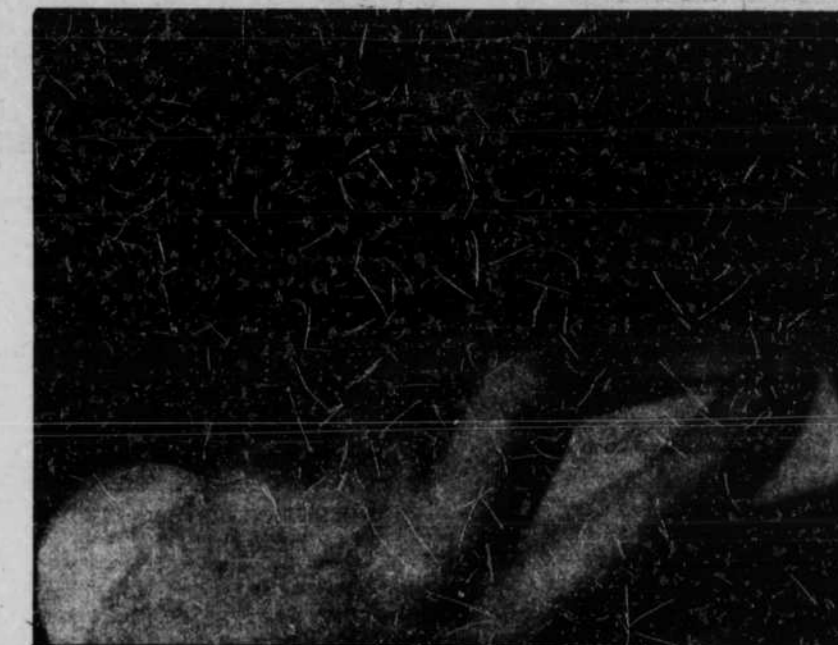


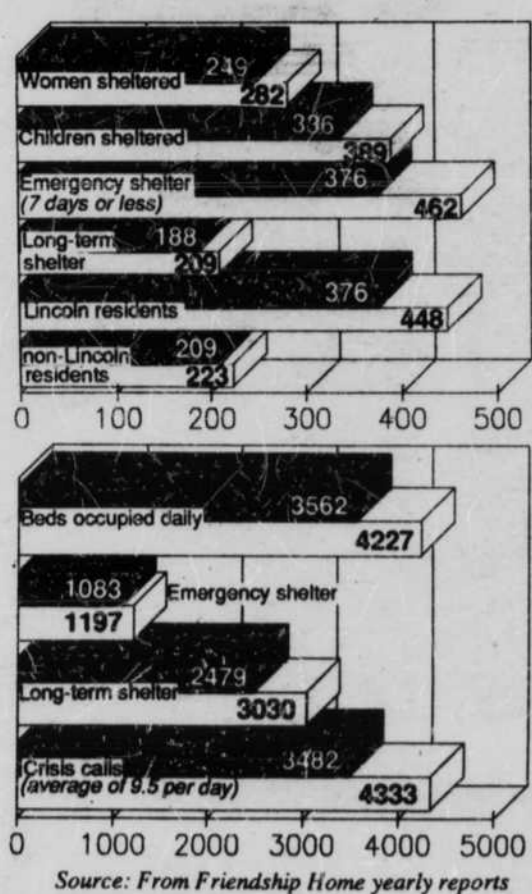
Friendship Home



Battered find refuge



Friendship Home Statistics



1986
 Total number sheltered--585
 .12% increase over 1985
 .40% increase over 1983
 Total number of beds occupied daily--3562
 .3% increase over 1985
 .93% increase over 1983
 Average daily occupancy--10

1987
 Total number sheltered--671
 .15% increase over 1986
 .43% increase over 1984
 Total number of beds occupied daily--4227
 .19% increase over 1986
 .29% increase over 1984
 Average daily occupancy--12

John Bruce/Daily Nebraskan

Clockwise from top left: Shari Rayburn, executive director of the Friendship Home, stands at one of the doors to the house. The building is protected by a security system and its address and phone number are unlisted; A former Friendship Home client sits in a bedroom in the house. "I think a lot of women are in the dark about where they stand on domestic violence. There's no need for that," she said; Case manager Jane Cogan talks on the phone with a Friendship Home client; The Friendship Home lends a helping hand to women in need of support.

Editor's note: Ellen is a victim of domestic violence and her name has been changed to protect her identity.

A high brick wall surrounds the house and trees shelter the grounds where the children play. Every window and door bears a warning to those who enter: These premises protected by an automatic security alarm system.

Counselors stand watch day and night, and although the occupants are free to come and go, they sometimes prefer the safety of the house to the uncertainty beyond.

This is the Lincoln Friendship Home. Its address and phone number are unlisted. Its occupants are battered women and children trying to piece their lives back together.

Ellen arrived at the Friendship Home May 1, 1987. At the time, she was on her way to Arizona to begin a new life for herself. Doing what, she didn't know.

"I had no concept of how I was going to live. I had been a wife and mother all my life."

When Ellen walked through the door of the Friendship Home, she was 53 years old. She had been married to her husband for 38 years, most of which had been torn by violence.

Ellen married young, and had no one to turn to when her husband started beating her.

"At first I went to my mother's, but she told me to accept it. I was raised in a different time."

Then the violence became a routine part of Ellen's life. Her life centered around raising four children and taking care of her husband. When her husband came home from work, dinner had to be on the table.

Ellen said the only time she relaxed was after her husband had gone to bed.

Because of her children, her upbringing and fear of being on her own, Ellen stayed with her husband.

"Every time he hit me, I told myself this was it, I was leaving him. But I never did. I told myself I would leave when my youngest son graduated from high school, but then he graduated from college, and I was still there."

Ellen said part of her problem was that she denied being abused. She said she thought every time would be the last, and after it was over, her husband swore it would never happen again.

"He always gave me things afterwards. And while it was happening, I would be thinking of what I would ask for when it was over."

The night before New Year's Eve, more than 20 years after the beatings began, Ellen's husband tried to kill her.

But Ellen stayed, because she thought there was nowhere she could go.

"I don't know why I finally left. I just decided that if I didn't leave then, I might not be able to leave later."

From Rape/Spouse Abuse Center Statistics

Nebraska statutes define spouse abuse as causing bodily injury to an adult in the same household or causing another household member to fear injury.

Spouse abuse occurs all over the United States. In the first five months of 1979, 134 domestic assaults were reported to the Lincoln Police Department. It is estimated that only 10 to 20 percent of all incidents of spouse abuse are reported.

"I had no idea places like the Friendship Home existed. When I walked through the door that night, I intended to be on my way the next morning."

Beth Orton, 26, a senior case manager, has met a lot of women like Ellen at the door of the Friendship Home. Orton said the first meeting is different every time.

"It always depends on the woman," Orton said. "A lot of times she wants to sit down and talk about all the abuse that has happened, but sometimes she isn't ready to talk and is exhausted from everything that has happened."

Orton said denial of abuse is something she helps the women deal with.

"A lot of times, the women will say, 'He didn't hurt me,' or 'It's not abuse, this is the first time.'"

But realizing they are abused is the first step women take in putting their lives back together, Orton said.

"Most of the abused women have grown up in abusive situations. Their mothers put up with it, so they think they should put up with it too."

Orton said validating their feelings helps women accept the fact that their situation was abusive.

"We question them about how they felt about the beatings, and then let them know that it is OK to feel that way. We let them know that they were not the ones in the wrong."

Recent studies indicate that more than 50 percent of all American couples experience spouse abuse including all physical violence from an occasional slap to a severe beating. Ten percent are said to inflict severe physical violence on their mates, leaving the United States with 4.7 million severely beaten women. Researchers call these figures conservative.

**Rape/Spouse Abuse Crisis Center
 Hotline 471-7273**

"We also try to validate their fears. They have to realize that their fears are real."

Orton said the women also have to be assured that the Friendship Home is safe, that no one can hurt them while they are there.

During their stay at the home, Orton and other counselors help women break away from their abusive homes and begin new lives.

Counselors provide information on job searching, apartments and help the women make their own decisions.

"We don't make the decisions for them. We give them options and listen to them, but it is their life, and they know best how to change their life."

When women are trying to change their lives and the affects of abuse, Orton said, it's hard for them to realize that their children also are affected by their abusive situations.

As the Children's Program Coordinator at the Friendship Home, Denise Ahl sees the trauma of domestic violence passed on to a younger generation.

Ahl, 24, said the cycle of violence is most evident in the children of abused mothers.

"The kids pick up on their parents' actions," Ahl said. "When their father doesn't respect their mother, they think it's OK to disobey her."

Without a stable background and a break from the cycle, Ahl said children are likely to be violent when they grow up.

Ahl's job is to break that cycle. Her programs include counseling and support groups where the children can talk in confidence about the problems in their family life.

"Sometimes this is the first place children can talk about violence without being afraid," Ahl said. "The most important thing for them is to know they have a friend they can talk to."

Ahl said that the first step in breaking the cycle and getting children back into a "normal" lifestyle is talking about violence and what they think of abusive situations.

But violent behavior can start at any age, and it often is difficult to explain to a child that violence is wrong, and violent homes are not "normal."

"It really strikes home when you see a three-month-old hitting his mother in the face," Ahl said.

Once the mothers and children have overcome their fears and accomplished their goals, they leave the Friendship Home to begin new lives, on their own.

Orton said continued counseling and support groups help women keep in touch with their feelings and help them gain self-confidence.

"They put their lives back together and the continued support helps them from going back to an abusive situation," Orton said.