

Help us keep our shelters safe

# Support the Millie Almore Shelter Revitalization Act

Victims of domestic violence and their children are among the most vulnerable in our society. An estimated 1,200 abuse shelters are located around the country. But are these shelters helping victims break the cycle of abuse? And are they keeping their residents safe?

Two tragic incidents at a Stuart, Florida shelter show much more needs to be done.

## **Millie Almore, 26 years old**

Millie Almore, 2 months pregnant, took refuge at the SafeSpace shelter. But on October 31, 2007 she was stabbed in the neck with a pocket knife by another shelter resident. Marilyn Hooks was charged with second-degree murder.

*Almore's death was caused by a "failure of the entire agency to satisfactorily assure the health, safety, and welfare of both its clientele and staff."* – Report by the Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence



Marilyn Hooks, charged in the October 31 slaying of Millie Almore

## **Myliak Dale, 16 months old**

Almore's death occurred just a week after another tragedy when a car struck and killed toddler Myliak Dale as he played in the SafeSpace parking lot. Myliak had wandered out of the shelter just minutes before the accident.



Myliak Dale, run over by a car at the SafeSpace shelter in Stuart, Florida

## **True Victims Can't Get the Help They Urgently Need**

RADAR recently released a report, "Are Abuse Shelters Helping the True Victims of Violence?" The in-depth report reveals that abuse shelters are filled with persons who are homeless or have substance abuse problems. So when true victims of violence seek help, the shelter may already be full.

*"In all the time that I volunteered there, I saw only one woman who showed signs of physical abuse."* – Former Oklahoma shelter worker

The full report can be viewed here:

<http://www.mediaradar.org/docs/RADARreport-Are-Abuse-Shelters-Helping-True-Victims.pdf>

## **Mistreatment of Children**

The RADAR report also reveals child abuse and neglect are commonplace. One survey found one-third of shelter residents had engaged in severe physical aggression against their children during the previous year.

Many incidents occur within the shelter itself:

- At Another Way in Florida, a 5-year-old was sexually assaulted by an older girl. Shelter staff failed to promptly report the incident to law enforcement, despite requests by the mother.
- A 12-year-old boy was sexually assaulted by a female resident staying at the Brewster Center shelter in Tucson, Arizona. But staff barred police from interviewing the suspected perpetrator, saying that would violate the center's confidentiality agreement with its residents.
- A woman kidnapped a two-month old baby and fled to the Hubbard House in Florida. Three weeks later the woman was apprehended by police.



Former site of SafeSpace shelter, where Myliak Dale was struck by a car on October 21, 2007 and Millie Almore was stabbed 10 days later. The shelter had been previously slated for demolition.

## **Victims Need the Millie Almore Shelter Revitalization Act!**

RADAR urgently calls on lawmakers to support passage of the Millie Almore Shelter Revitalization Act. The bill will assure that shelters:

1. Strengthen intake procedures to assure true victims receive priority.
2. Establish policies to assure a safe and secure environment for shelter residents, including doing background checks on all staff.

3. Employ qualified staff, including professional counselors who are trained in crisis intervention, alcohol and drug abuse, and the mental health needs of children.
4. Respect residents' confidentiality and the right to make autonomous decisions.
5. Assure accountability of services, finances, and client outcomes.
6. Be licensed under state daycare requirements and report incidents of child abuse, as required by state law.
7. Cooperate with law enforcement and refrain from engaging in illegal activities such as suborning perjury.
8. Avoid discrimination on the basis of sex, race, or disability status.

In addition, the bill will assure that state agencies do their job to provide necessary oversight and monitoring.

*"One night, a drug-addicted woman came into my room while I slept...She held a pocketknife to my throat and told me that if I didn't give her my phone card she'd slit my throat."* – Former resident at the First Step shelter in Harrisonburg, Virginia

## **An Indispensable Resource**

Abuse shelters are an indispensable resource to our communities and victims desperately need our help. We must assure that shelters help the true victims of domestic violence and provide a safe place to be helped and healed.

**(((RADAR**

**Respecting Accuracy in Domestic Abuse Reporting**

*A coalition of over 80 organizations around the country has come together to assure VAWA-funded programs help the true victims of violence:*

[www.mediadar.org/docs/VAWA-Reform-Coalition-Declaration.pdf](http://www.mediadar.org/docs/VAWA-Reform-Coalition-Declaration.pdf)

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