



A Community For Peace

seeks a more loving
world by addressing
social injustice and the
generational causes of
domestic violence

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A Place for Peace

Committed to Social Justice

A Community For Peace serves domestic violence survivors while working to end social injustices that perpetuate the cycle of abuse

BY ELAINE WHITEFEATHER, Executive Director, A Community For Peace

For those of us who have lived the nightmare of domestic violence, intimate partner violence, sexual assault and family violence, our stories are the foundation that help us to speak the truth, gather strength from that truth and find the courage to use that truth to escape the bonds that bind us to our abusers.

But those of us coming from marginalized communities face another obstacle: institutions and systems in our country that still struggle with racism, sexism, homophobia, religious and cultural oppression, which create additional barriers for getting help. Without addressing the backdrop of the social injustice caused by our nation's history, there is little hope that we can end violence to women and girls, and subsequently men and boys. Marginalized communities will continue to be underserved because our systems and services — from our national leaders at the White House and Congress to our local law enforcement, schools and county welfare departments — are designed to serve from a dominant cultural perspective, which does not support or even address the dynamic challenges of people of color, immigrants, and LGBTQ communities.

A Community For Peace differs from a traditional domestic violence agency in that our perspective is transformative

justice. Our backdrop is always the context with which the domestic violence takes place. For marginalized peoples, it is the backdrop of oppression and historical trauma: an inherited learning of violence in intimate relationships that is passed on as a family legacy.

These contexts often contribute to individual and societal beliefs that these abuses are normal — to be expected — and the responsibility of the victim to handle. It is normal to have little to no trust in the justice systems because of consistent responses by systems that fail to provide trauma-informed response to domestic violence. The result: violence is hidden — silent — and abuses are tolerated to the detriment and suffering of children and families as the cycle repeats itself over and over again.

This trauma-informed understanding requires us to do those extra things to ensure that our clients receive culturally relevant and sensitive services. A Community For Peace ensures that victims, survivors and their families choose how and what kind of assistance they will receive. We advocate for both victims and the systems they must access. We hold systems accountable when their approach doesn't incorporate truths from victims and survivors.



As Executive Director of A Community For Peace, Elaine Whitefeather is helping survivors find transformational justice.
COURTESY PHOTO

“We advocate for both victims and the systems they must access.”

Elaine Whitefeather
Executive Director, A Community For Peace

Our services are all free and unlimited because we know that victims and survivors can only take steps they are ready to take. We know that they must try it, fall and try again. And no matter how many times they return for services, they are always met with understanding and support. Why? Because most of us have been there; and we know and remember what we needed and what it took for us to get free and stay free.

Keep reading to learn more about A Community For Peace's programs and its unique approach to ending domestic violence.

Domestic violence by the numbers

Domestic violence can have lifelong — even generational — impacts on survivors and families. Violence can affect people of any race, sexual orientation, age or economic status.

In California, nearly



1 in 3 women

and



1 in 4 men
experience domestic abuse.¹

3:

The daily average number of women murdered by a husband or boyfriend in the U.S.²

11.8%:

percentage of all California homicides that are domestic violence-related.³



Domestic abuse costs survivors nearly 8 million days of paid work annually, with productivity losses estimated at nearly \$1.8 billion.⁴



Boys who witness domestic violence are twice as likely to become abusers as adults.⁵

Sources: (1 & 4) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, (2) American Psychological Association, (3) California Department of Justice, (5) Strauss, Gelles, and Smith, “Physical Violence in American Families: Risk Factors and Adaptations to Violence”



Ezekiel Goodwin confronted his own trauma while training to be a Credible Messenger with A Community For Peace.
COURTESY PHOTO

'I am not broken'



A Credible Messenger tells his story of survival and uplifting others

BY EZEKIEL GOODWIN, Credible Messenger, A Community For Peace

The trauma-informed model

As a trauma-informed transformative justice center, A Community For Peace operates with three key elements of social justice in mind:

- 1 Ensuring survivors are comfortable speaking their truth:** Physical and emotional safety are paramount. Not only is ACFP's facility a spa-like sanctuary, staff and volunteers strive to stay well-informed and to keep our partners equally informed of intersectionality issues like gender, race and sexual orientation to better understand and support survivors.
- 2 Accountability:** Staff and volunteers work to earn the trust and cooperation of those served, by being transparent, consistent and accountable for any failures; while holding systems accountable for any barriers, prejudices and lack of education/understanding or compassion that breaks that trust.
- 3 Addressing the underlying societal conditions that contribute to domestic violence:** ACFP partners with other nonprofits, government agencies and community groups to increase trauma-informed responses through customized training, coaching and consulting/collaborating on cases, and to encourage policy or procedural changes that support understanding, so transformative justice solutions can be found.

My first connection to my trauma came after a home visit with a client when I worked in HIV care. I was sitting in my coworker's vehicle on the way back to the agency where I previously worked. I was covered in cold sweat and shaking. My colleague told me that I was not responding normally during a home visit that we conducted together. I had gotten the basics of the visit done, but she could tell that I was distant. I told her that I really wasn't feeling well, and I needed to go home.

What she did not know is that I was having a panic attack triggered by the memory of my childhood home where I was raped and tortured by an older sibling. This home was similar to that same house where my mother and siblings were brutally beaten and emotionally abused by my father.

I did not seek help after that event. I buried myself deeper into my work, and remained in a same-sex relationship with someone who had a major drug addiction. He was predominantly verbally abusive and manipulative, with a few moments of physical assault. I pushed the feelings about my part in the relationship deep down with the trauma that I experienced in my childhood. It amazes me, the lengths that I would go to in order to run away from my problems.

The first time that I was raped, I was told that it was because something was wrong with me, and I deserved everything that happened to me. I was 3 years old.

Those experiences led me to make choices that were not good for my health. As survivors know, you have to

do whatever you can in order to make it out alive. What shape you are in after you have made it out is something that you don't think about. At least I didn't.

I showed up 13 years later at A Community For Peace as a member of the LGBTQ community for the Tapestry For P.E.A.C.E. project. Each participant was told that there was an experiential training in order for us to become domestic violence advocates/credible messengers. I hadn't yet addressed my childhood trauma and subsequent failed relationships, with the exception of the healthy and loving relationship that I

was currently in. I agreed to come to the training to gain capacity to help my patients. Little did I know that the training was meant to heal me.

The training breaks you against the rocks, and pulls you "into the river." You are forced to face yourself, and the past that you have run away from. The training also asks you to forgive yourself, and meet your inner child with a fierce love and understanding that you are not broken. You are

already fine. There are things that have damaged you, but you can heal them. You can travel beyond survival in order to thrive.

Now that I am an employee with A Community For Peace. As a Credible Messenger, I am able to apply empathy and my knowledge as a survivor to our clients. Who better to help someone know that they can make it than a person who has walked a similar path and has emerged on the other side?

I am not broken. As a survivor, my pieces have come together to make me whole.

"Who better to help someone know that they can make it than a person who has walked a similar path and has emerged on the other side?"

Ezekiel Goodwin

Credible Messenger with A Community For Peace



SOROPTIMIST
HOUSE

Someplace Safer

Woman shares how she found ACFP housing services

AS TOLD BY A RESIDENT OF CONTINUUM OF CARE HOUSING SERVICES

A Community For Peace is a sacred place I always dreamed of as a child. I always wanted somewhere I could go where I knew I was safe from harm's way. It is a family of people who accept my imperfections and flaws and still love me unconditionally. It's an environment where I can go to be myself, to be free of all burdens and the chaos of the world without being judged.

As an adolescent, this place only existed in my mind. I would lose myself in this imaginary community for weeks and months, numbing out all the pain I felt daily from the environment I was surrounded by. By the time I came back to reality everything had fallen apart around me — my home, my family and me. I found myself building boundaries so high that I couldn't recognize me anymore.

I have been running away my whole life trying to find these communities that only existed in my dreams. I have been in some of the biggest warehouses, drug houses and worst streets of St. Louis trying to find this safe haven for me and my child. I couldn't find it. But I didn't give up on my vision of this "Community for Peace."

I knew it existed somewhere, I just didn't know where. I asked God to lead my feet to where I'm destined to be. On May 25, 2017, I boarded the Amtrak headed to California with my baby on my hip, one suitcase and my baby girl's albuterol machine. We landed in downtown Sacramento on May 27. I was scared for me and my daughter. I didn't know my way around. I saw all the homeless people and got so discouraged about this mission of finding this dream of mine because I had just

traveled thousands of miles to see the same pain of St. Louis here in California, but it was worse.

That night I called 211. They gave me a list of resources. The last resource 211 gave was a place called A Community For Peace. I marked a star by it immediately. I called the resources one by one. It being a Saturday, they all denied me and my daughter shelter. I started crying and praying as I dialed the last resource. I received an answer from a lady telling me to stay calm, and she would have someone call me.

This complete stranger, who I didn't know from a can of paint, reassured me that I wasn't alone and my daughter and I would be OK. I started panicking again when 24 hours had passed. Then the phone rang. It was another woman who helped me navigate and come up with a plan for my next step. She met with me and my daughter. I was scared. I didn't trust her. When we drove to a big building, I got even more nervous: Is she about to body

traffic me and my daughter, as had been done in my past?

As we stepped foot into ACFP, and I got to read and see all the artwork, I realized instantly that I had nothing to fear. The energy that greeted me was welcoming, full of real love and empathy, and very secure. This was it. This was the place I dreamed of as a child. It really does exist.

We have been here for seven months. A Community For Peace has been by our side the whole way. I have moved from the crisis shelter into transitional housing, and now we have our own townhouse! Sometimes I still wake up, like ACFP is too good to be true. Like, what's the catch? There isn't one. If you asked what ACFP is to me ... ACFP is unconditional love.

"This was it. This was the place I dreamed of as a child. It really does exist."

Housing services resident

Women escaping violence can struggle with finding housing and coming up with money for down payments and rent. One of many housing services ACFP provides, Soroptimist House offers a place to go for women and children for six to 18 months while they work toward becoming self-sufficient.

PHOTO COURTESY OF A
COMMUNITY FOR PEACE

Housing services

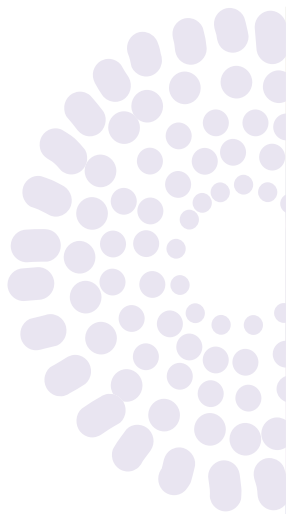
ACFP offers a continuum of care that addresses the holistic needs of every client. One of those most basic needs is housing.

ACFP housing services range from emergency crisis shelter, short-term respite, transitional housing and master leased apartments for long-term self-reliance. ACFP programs and services mirror this same continuum, endeavoring to be a one-stop service for residents in the Sacramento County region.

The Soroptimist House is a three-bedroom, 2.5-bath home where women and their children can stay for six to 18 months. At the end of their term, women get a "starter kit" that includes household items such as bedroom furnishings, bedding and kitchen utensils to help her and her family start new lives in permanent housing.

Looking toward confronting the geographic challenges and lack of public transportation for folks seeking services at our center, ACFP is now developing mobile services and a second site more centrally accessible for many clients who come from the south area of the county.

You can help "adopt a room" at the Soroptimist House. Visit www.acommunityforpeace.org/Soroptimist-house, or call 916-728-5613.



“We need to be out there ... so that [survivors] know we’re here to help them and support them.”

Charlotte Martin
Certified domestic violence advocate with
A Community For Peace’s DVRT
First Responders program

Responding with Compassion

BY ANNE STOKES

Advocates can provide support and emergency response alongside law enforcement to serve domestic violence survivors

As a witness to domestic violence, Elaine Whitefeather remembers thinking, “I wonder what would happen if they would just talk to her, instead of talking to him in front of the victim. Maybe something would be different.”

In 2009, Whitefeather, Executive Director of A Community For Peace, created the innovative Domestic Violence Response Team (DVRT) First Responders program, which partnered domestic violence advocates with Citrus Heights police. Advocates regularly responded with units to domestic violence calls and followed up with every single victim referred to them by investigators.

“DVRT was created out of all these years working and thinking how law enforcement responds to domestic violence ... and how that very way of responding is a barrier for victims being able to tell their truth to law enforcement,” Whitefeather says.

The same commanding presence that officers use to control a situation can intimidate survivors, preventing them from offering important information. Sometimes their triage-style

investigative approach is construed by survivors as blame.

According to David Cropp, Director of DVRT services and a law enforcement veteran with nearly 40 years of experience, partnering with advocates affords units a better understanding of domestic violence trauma and enables them to respond more effectively.

“It can help with the officers’ skill level in being able to interview victims, children and witnesses and deliver a better quality of service in terms of reporting and prosecution of domestic violence cases,” he says.

Charlotte Martin, A Community For Peace Assistant Deputy Director, certified domestic violence advocate and survivor, has partnered with Citrus Heights police DVRT First Responders since 2013 and has responded to countless domestic violence scenes.

“We need to be out there ... so that [survivors] know we’re here to help them and support them,” she says. “We don’t judge them, we don’t tell them what they should do ...

we give them what they need to make an informed decision about their own lives.”

Advocates like Martin help survivors create unique safety plans, which include follow-up resources like:

- Emergency housing
- Counseling
- Legal services

Citrus Heights Chief of Police Ron Lawrence credits the DVRT First Responders program with a decrease in repeat domestic violence calls for service. He says that the way domestic violence cases are handled today is remarkably different than when he was a patrol officer.

“There were absolutely no long-term solutions or follow-up to make sure people got the help they needed,” he says. “When you’re looking at it from a systemic viewpoint, it’s important that the police departments break that cycle of violence and get families the support they need.”

Innovative service brings help to survivors

While traditional Domestic Violence Response Team (DVRT) models rely on the victims to reach out for help, A Community For Peace’s innovative program brings the help to survivors and families by responding directly to domestic violence-related calls for service alongside police.

A Community For Peace’s DVRT program has been recognized by the California Police Chief’s Association and the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council, and was recently commended in the Sacramento County Grand Jury’s 2016 annual report for its innovative collaboration with law enforcement.

“A Community For Peace, really has set the bar high,” Citrus Heights Chief of Police Ron Lawrence says. “Our model here is really a model that can be replicated in other communities. It would do dramatic things for domestic violence across our state and country.”

50%

Percent of domestic violence victims who accessed police-referred services in the 45 days after the DVRT First Responders program was launched. Prior to launch, just 8% of victims accessed these services.



Since 2013, Citrus Heights has seen a 20% reduction in domestic violence-related calls for service, including repeat calls — a potential homicide indicator.

More programs for youth

EMPOWR U: Our youth are exposed to violence every day, whether inside or outside of the home, at school, or on social media. Youth are often forgotten until they get “in trouble.” EMPOWR U provides support for these young women and men that helps them understand the impacts of violence and learn how to find healthier ways of managing daily stressors.

Smart & Strong™ — ACFP’s violence prevention program teaches young women (18-26) and girls (12-17) how to be more aware of their surroundings, identify potential perpetrators and abusive relationships, and protect themselves through self-defense training.

Juvenile Diversion Educational Program (JDEP) — Partnering with local law enforcement, ACFP offers this service to give teen offenders the tools to manage life’s challenges and abstain from problem behaviors. The programming includes parent support and education, group counseling sessions, opportunities for volunteering and writing assignments that encourage them to reflect.

For Kids’ Sake — For Kids’ Sake offers trauma-informed programming for parents and their children. All kids services are provided daily by a highly skilled children’s advocate team while parents are accessing services. Children ages 12 and younger can play games and participate in fun educational activities designed to address the violence these children have witnessed and/experienced. Parenting Classes that specifically address the unique challenges and victories of parenting children who have been exposed to domestic violence also take place weekly.

Children’s Advocates & Foster Grandparents — As a child advocate, volunteers provide nurturing support that helps mitigate the exposure to trauma at home. Seniors and retired community members serve as “advocate foster grandparents” to traumatized youngsters ages 12 and under in ACFP’s For Kid’s Sake program.

Showing Them

Love

Play therapy can address
trauma and break the
cycle of violence



Katie Huemer is Director of Children’s Services, including For Kid’s Sake, which uses art and play therapy to teach children to express emotions in healthy ways.
PHOTO BY MELISSA UROFF

BY GAIL ALLYN SHORT

Katie Huemer’s job is to help children who have witnessed horrific family violence to heal. As ACFP Director of Children’s Services, Huemer oversees For Kid’s Sake, a program that provides trauma-informed therapeutic play care for children who have experienced and been exposed to domestic and family violence.

**“We help to model what
it is to live in a world
that’s kind and loving.”**

Katie Huemer

Director, A Community For Peace Children’s Services

The consequences of domestic violence can have a profound impact on children, she says. The younger a child is when they are exposed to domestic violence, the greater the impact it has on the child’s brain and their development. In fact, research shows that children as young as toddlers often begin identifying with either the abuser or the victim.

“So their behaviors will either be that of aggression where they’re forceful and demanding, or they may become completely withdrawn and isolate themselves and allow other children to take things from them,” says Huemer.

Children exposed to domestic abuse are at risk to learn that violence is an acceptable way to release anger or exert power in relationships, which can have a lasting effect on the child’s social interactions throughout life.

For Kid’s Sake is comprised of trained child advocates — both staff and volunteers — who understand the impact of violence on children, and implement therapeutic play techniques to help heal children exposed to family violence.

“Throughout all of the activities, we help to model what it is to live in a world that’s kind and loving, where people care about you, where you have choices and where if you make a choice that isn’t safe, or isn’t kind, there aren’t punishments, but opportunities to choose differently,” Huemer says.

For Kid’s Sake serves children up to age 12 whose parents are taking part in ACFP’s services. The youngest children play with toys and create art using clay and paints. The older children play board and card games to practice taking turns and working cooperatively with others. Through art and play, says Huemer, the children are encouraged to express their feelings and share their thoughts with the child advocates.

Huemer remembers one of the first children she worked with, a highly impacted 3-year-old boy who often yelled and snatched toys away from other children.

Week after week, while his mom was receiving her own services, she and the other child advocates taught him about kindness, choices and safety. Then one evening, another child bumped into him while reaching for a toy. The boy’s first inclination was anger.

“But, then his face shifted, and he looked up at me again and said, ‘He bumped into me. Maybe it was an accident.’ My heart melted, and I said, ‘Yeah. Maybe it was,’” Huemer recalls. “That was a huge experience for him, where his world turned from everyone is against him to understanding that people care about him, that accidents happen, and that he gets to choose how he wants to be.”



Members of the LGBTQ community help staff Tapestry For P.E.A.C.E., which delivers culturally specific care to this community.
COURTESY PHOTO

Serving All Communities

Tapestry For P.E.A.C.E. offers the first culturally specific mainstream DV services developed by and for the LGBTQ community

The LGBTQ family is as rich and diverse as the community members that the rainbow is meant to represent. There are countless LGBTQ members that have made major contributions to society as a whole. As is the theme for most marginalized populations, those contributions to society are co-opted, and the blood, sweat and tears that make movements happen get erased. Among the things that are also erased or ignored within this vibrant and strong community are domestic and intimate partner violence situations.

There are currently no known LGBTQ-specific housing assistance programs or emergency shelters for domestic violence survivors in the Sacramento region. Statistics show that 44 percent of lesbian women and 26 percent of homosexual men experience intimate partner violence at some point in their lives. There is a lack of both research and resources available for same-sex domestic violence assistance. Of the current resources that exist, there is a need for increased cultural competency so that the systems can respond to a domestic violence situation with empathy, knowledge and accuracy to create a holistic approach to assisting victims.

Statistics show that 44 percent of lesbian women and 26 percent of homosexual men experience intimate partner violence at some point in their lives.

Victims who are most at risk of abuse include queer people of color, specifically black transgender women. There is abundant evidence that LGBTQ people, in particular LGBTQ people of color, are more likely to be targeted for multiple forms of violence and abuse, in multiple contexts (family, partnerships, community) over the course of their lifetime. LGBTQ people are disproportionately subject to childhood sexual abuse, bullying by peers, sexual violence in adolescence and adulthood, intimate partner violence, hate crimes and police brutality.

Tapestry For P.E.A.C.E. offers the same proven effective DV services of A Community For Peace in culturally sensitive ways. The program's 14 core services include, but are not limited to: legal services, education and training, and childhood development.

An area that was identified that needs strengthening is the understanding of domestic violence and response to same sex and polyamorous relationships in the LGBTQ family.

Tapestry For P.E.A.C.E. has the privilege of accessing a network of survivors in the field who understand that peace is necessary for all of us to succeed. A Community For Peace is enabling LGBTQ individuals a chance to transform a system that was not made for them. With a greater understanding of the needs within this community, the hope is that can move forward with a plan for transform the hearts and minds of others in society.

In the words Executive Director Elaine Whitefeather: "No matter who you are ... no matter where you are ... no matter what you have done or what has been done to you... there is hope for a better tomorrow."

More Than A Language Barrier

Spanish speakers navigating the world of immigration, domestic violence, and other court proceedings are up against more than just a complicated and hard-to-understand legal system. Often, they naturally mistrust systems because of experiences in their country of birth. Or, sometimes cultural traditions stand in the way of victims accessing the help they need.

Additional barriers faced by Spanish speakers can include:

- Constant fear of being taken into custody or deported
- Cultural lack of understanding among systems workers
- Lack of awareness of rights and services

- Required forms that aren't available in Spanish
- Family and cultural opposition to seeking and receiving services
- Language phone lines may be available, but success depends on English-speaking staff person's ability to facilitate

Sophia* came to A Community For Peace because her husband had repeatedly beaten her and threatened to take her children. But Sophia was too terrified to file a restraining order. Her religion, culture, and her own family had convinced her that her problems were her own fault.

When she arrived at ACFP, she was broken down and lacked trust in their ability to help her. It took several sessions to help her feel safe and accept help from the ACFP legal staff, which helped her organize the story of her abuse for court. Sophia was terrified of going to court for fear of getting deported. However, she persisted and was able to articulate her story in front of the judge. As a result, she obtained full physical and legal custody of her children and was granted protection from her abuser.

**Name has been changed*

A Community Effort

A Community For Peace was founded through the efforts of many dedicated volunteers. Today, the need still remains. Whether your passion lies in working directly with survivors and families or behind-the-scenes operations, with ACFP, you can put your skills to good use.

How to help

Volunteer for direct services:

- 24-hour crisis hotline, DV counseling, AOD support
- DVRT First Response, legal advocacy
- Shelter and housing advocacy, transportation
- Child advocacy, youth advocacy care

Volunteer for indirect services:

- Administrative and office support
- Marketing and social media, fundraising/event planning
- Outreach services/social justice messaging

Volunteer with youth:

- Homework help
- Children's storytelling and infant rockers
- Leading creative arts activities

Donations are welcome:

- Monetary
- Diapers for infants and young children
- Healthy snacks and juice boxes for children's programs
- Art supplies
- And more!



What community leaders are saying



"CPS is so pleased to partner with A Community For Peace on this very important effort. Young people in foster care are at increased risk for sexual exploitation and are in need of family-based placements with access to trauma-based services and supports. ACFP has been a long-standing partner in serving victims of domestic violence and we are grateful for their partnership on this new endeavor."

Michelle Callejas

Deputy Director, Sacramento County CPS



"The Citrus Heights Police Department is proud to stand shoulder to shoulder with A Community For Peace in their cause to provide loving support for survivors of domestic violence, sexual assaults, and children of human trafficking. A Community For Peace has proven countless times that they are a valuable resource to humanity."

Ronald A. Lawrence

Citrus Heights Chief of Police



"A Community For Peace sets an example for the domestic violence movement in innovation and comprehensive services for victims and children. Executive Director Elaine Whitefeather understands the cycles of family violence and has built an agency that responds to every need a victim and their family require in a time of crisis."

Christopher W. Boyd

*Citrus Heights City Manager
Former Citrus Heights Chief of Police (2006-2016)*



"A Community For Peace's innovative partnership with the Citrus Heights Police Department goes beyond responding or treating and it strikes at the heart of cause and effect to break the generational cycle of domestic violence, sexual assault and social injustice. They are working tirelessly to empower women, children and men to a peaceful life without violence, abuse or discrimination. For survivors, ACFP is a bridge to a brighter future and the entire community benefits by their work."

Sue Frost

Sacramento County Supervisor

Contact ACFP



916-728-5613



acomunityforpeace.org



If you're in crisis, call A Community For Peace's 24/7 hotline at 916-728-7210.