

# Sherrie Schwab of Domestic Abuse Shelter of The Florida Keys to be Featured on Close Up Radio

MARATHON, FLORIDA, UNITED STATES, July 12, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ --

“Nationwide, one in every three women, and one in every seven men will be a victim of domestic abuse in their lifetime,” expresses our guest. “It’s also the most under-reported crime in America. However, this issue touches everyone. It is an uncomfortable conversation for folks to have that have not been exposed to it.” Our guest is not afraid to tackle the tough questions regarding domestic, intimate partner abuse, and has made an unwavering commitment to provide support for those enduring these atrocities. “Things will change when people get more comfortable talking about it,” she declares. This is the story of Sherrie Schwab, and her facility, the Domestic Abuse Shelter of The Florida Keys (DAS).



Sherrie Schwab is the CEO of DAS, where they offer services to those individuals, both women and men that are the victims of intimate partner domestic violence. It’s part of a larger network of forty centers in Florida that are certified by the Department of Children and Families in Florida.

The Domestic Abuse Shelter, which services all of Monroe County, Florida, maintains three outreach locations – Key Largo serving the Upper Keys, Marathon serving the Middle Keys, and Key West serving the Lower Keys. While the Florida statute definition of domestic violence includes blood related family members, such as children or siblings. The Domestic Abuse Shelter specializes only in intimate partner violence.

They provide emergency shelter and a 24/7 crisis line, to which all services can be accessed. For instance, an individual would call the crisis line and we find out about their situation – Why they called? Are they safe? Do they need shelter? What is their situation? If the victim is in imminent danger, they will make arrangements for shelter. If they don't require emergency shelter they are referred to Outreach Services.

With all individuals they do safety planning, risk assessment, counseling, support groups, and advocacy. They even accompany individuals to court hearings for moral support, although they aren't able to give legal advice. As the Florida Keys are a very expensive place to live, they assist with rent and transportation if needed and if there are funds available. Domestic violence involves trauma and as such all services are empowerment based are provided in a trauma-informed approach.

All services provided at the shelter are also provided at the three outreach locations in the Florida Keys. All employees and volunteers go through a special training process that gives them victim-advocate privilege. This means that nothing related to domestic violence can be revealed to others who may request it, due to Florida statutes on confidentiality. "We provide a level of confidentiality and safety that others are not able to provide," explains Sherrie.

In the event that children are involved, there will be a safety and needs assessment, but they ultimately will be referred, with parental permission, to other appropriate facilities and services if



## Domestic Abuse Shelter of the Florida Keys



needed.

“Domestic violence and intimate partner violence is a power and control issue,” explains Sherrie. “It’s pervasive situations that are ongoing which keep control of the intimate partner. It doesn’t necessarily have to be physical violence, although it could be. It can include financial abuse, intimidation, name calling, and threats. Even the threat of physical harm is enough to keep someone under the abuser’s control.” Very often, the abuser will shift blame to their victims – “If you didn’t do this, I wouldn’t have done this.” Sadly, there isn’t a lot of awareness, with many not directly involved having the false sense that it doesn’t happen in their community, while it can and does. “It’s often kept behind closed doors, where people cannot see it,” summarizes Sherrie.

A common misconception is that the victim should just simply leave, when it’s not all that simple. According to one statistic that Sherrie has referred to, “individuals may leave up to seven times, before they leave for the final time.” The two biggest reasons that victims go back to their abusers are fear and financial.

Having herself been a victim of domestic violence, she ultimately left that relationship in 1979. Years later, in 1998, she received her Master’s Degree in Mental Health Counseling. She

started as an intern at a domestic abuse shelter called Women is Distress, in Broward County, Florida. She eventually was hired and stayed there until 2012. She left to work in another certified center that served Polk, Highlands, and Hardee Counties. In 2017, she moved to the Florida Keys to become the CEO of Domestic Abuse Shelter, which already had been established



in the 1980's. "I have done this work for a long time, and it has been very rewarding," explains Sherrie. "I was always interested in mental health counseling. After becoming an intern, I wanted to help domestic abuse survivors become safe and successful due to my own experiences."

As for the future, Sherrie has two current objectives. First, she plans to rebuild a twenty-five-bed shelter that was lost in 2017 due to Hurricane Irma. She also plans to add a pet kennel as part of those new facilities. "I have to bring safety back to our community," states Sherrie.

"You are not alone," encourages Sherrie. "There are places where you can go to find safety, and to learn ways to continue toward a life free of domestic violence. Someone cares about you."

Close Up Radio will feature Sherrie Schwab in an interview with Jim Masters on Tuesday July 16th at 12pm Eastern.

Listen to the show on [BlogTalkRadio](#)

If you have any questions for our guest, please call (347) 996-3389

For more information, please visit <https://domesticabuseshelter.org/>

If you or someone you know is experiencing domestic violence, please call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1 (800) 799-7233 / 1 (800) 799-SAFE

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