

December 1, 2009

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Dear Friend:

Michael was traumatized when he arrived at the YWCA Evanston/North Shore's domestic violence shelter, both by the family violence he had experienced and by abruptly leaving his home and all he knew, including an abusive father to whom he also felt loyalty. He didn't know that his family interactions were not normal.

- *Michael is one of 8.8 million children who witness violence in their homes every year.*
- *Domestic violence is the single most common precursor to child death in the United States.*
- *Children who grow up in abusive households are more likely to repeat patterns of abuse in their adult relationships.*

At the shelter, Michael had his own counselor. He participated in drama, art, and music and dance therapy. He received swimming lessons in our aquatics program and he participated in parent/child counseling with his mother so she could understand the dynamics of their relationship and the effect family violence was having on her son. And he slowly began to heal.

We provide many services to women experiencing domestic violence, but children are, in many cases, even more vulnerable and often the "invisible victims." The YWCA Evanston/North Shore has resources to help children heal from the violence in their lives. In addition, we help prevent violence by working in schools and with community groups to help children learn to handle conflict in constructive ways. Our Building Healthy Relationships program helps teens understand what constitutes healthy relationships at a critical time in their lives.

Close to a hundred children like four-year old Michael, arrive every year at Mary Lou's Place. Your gift gives these children hope, and helps to end the cycle of abuse and violence:

- \$150 enables us to assist one woman in getting an Order of Protection so she and her children can be safe from her abuser;
- \$500 buys a week's worth of food for the 32 women and children who come to Mary Lou's Place seeking safety;
- \$1000 will help a woman like Michael's mother cover the cost of a security deposit and first month's rent for an apartment that may be her first stable home.

On behalf of Michael, and families like his, we thank you for your generous contribution.

Sincerely,



Karen Singer
Executive Director

P.S. Please make a gift today. You can give online now at www.ywca.org/evanston.