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Children's Art Therapy Program Highlighted in Domestic Violence Video Challenge

LAKE COUNTY, IL – “I think it’s important to provide a service for the children that I work with. (To) give them a voice, provide them with some hope, a way to express their stories, but also a way to rewrite their stories,” said Art Therapist Richard Flynn in the opening to the third place winning video of the Domestic Violence Video Challenge submitted by A Safe Place.

The video, titled “Children’s Art Therapy Program: An Innovative Strategy to Serve Children Exposed to Domestic Violence,” discusses an alternative therapy program at A Safe Place that consists of creative outlets for young people who have experienced trauma and violence.

“At A Safe Place, we offer art therapy because talk therapy is not a method that is appropriate for everyone. For children who have experienced domestic violence, and who learned to be seen and not heard, art therapy is a very effective method to help them express their emotions as they work through the trauma, helping them in their journey of healing,” said Pat Davenport, Executive Director for A Safe Place.

The Art Therapy program is a form of counseling, which encourages self-expression using a full-range of art media, including painting, drawing, and sculpture. The American Art Therapy Association reports that the creative process and resulting artwork in art therapy helps to explore feelings, reconcile emotional conflicts, and reduce anxiety. “What we try to provide here at A Safe Place, is a way for children to do that creatively at their own pace, at their own developmental level, at their own emotional level,” Flynn said.

The video challenge is an initiative of the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), during Domestic Violence Awareness Month, and open to organizations that support children and youth exposed to domestic violence. The ACF's goal is to bring attention to innovative and inclusive programs, activities, and strategies that improve safety, promote healing, and provide support for domestic violence survivors and their families.

In the winning video submitted by A Safe Place in October of last year, two counselors share their own innovative strategies to serve the children in Lake County who have been exposed to domestic violence. "The kids have shown me an amazing amount of resilience and hope, despite the lack of hope they had earlier in their lives. Now that they are here at A Safe Place, they are able to kind of be kids again," Flynn said of the kids involved in the art therapy program.

"Even in the face of trauma, children must be children. The Family Violence Prevention & Services Program is pleased to recognize the innovative work of A Safe Place's Children's Art Therapy Program, a model for providing opportunities for children to tell their stories in a supportive environment," said Marylouise Kelley, FVPSA Program Director.

A Safe Place is Lake County's sole provider of services exclusively focusing on domestic violence victims. Through multi-faceted programs, A Safe Place provides lifesaving services to victims and their children, assists the whole family in transforming their lives after domestic violence, prevents future abuse by addressing its root cause through abuser intervention programs, and educates the community about domestic violence and how we can all be involved in its end. Last year, A Safe Place served over 13,000 community members.

The \$2,000 third place prize will be used to continue providing innovative programs focusing on healing and enhancing the lives of children exposed to domestic violence.

"I believe if we had more funding, A Safe Place would be able to provide more time and resources to help the kids work together in a larger group," Flynn said. "They could create what we are calling a 'Wall of Hope,' a 'Wall of Resilience,' to help them express themselves as a group, because this is a community."

For more information about ASP's counseling program or services, call 847-731-7165 or visit www.asafeplaceforhelp.org. To watch A Safe Place's video challenge submission, visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VZCfoW3PIMg&t=10s>.

Photo 1"

Children stand behind one of the art therapy projects at A Safe Place.



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Founded in 1978, A Safe Place is the leading advocate for eliminating domestic violence in northern Illinois, and is Lake County, Illinois' only provider of services exclusively for victims of domestic violence. A Safe Place provides emergency shelter, permanent housing, a 24-hour crisis line (847-249-4450), court and non-legal advocacy, individual, group, and children's counseling, art therapy, family visitation services, batterer intervention services; and community outreach, prevention education, and professional training. Our service area includes Lake, McHenry, and northern Cook counties in Illinois; however, our clients come to us from across the state, region, and country.

For more information about A Safe Place, visit www.asafeplaceforhelp.org, [Facebook](#), and [Twitter](#).