

Crisis Center Marks its 25th Year

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NEWBURYPORT - The Jeanne Geiger Crisis Center this year is celebrating 25 years of helping victims of domestic violence in the lower Merrimack Valley.

It all began at St. Paul's Episcopal Church and that is where the agency's first quarter century will be celebrated. On Sunday, Sept. 23, from 4 to 5 p.m., tea and refreshments will be served. This celebration is free and open to the public.

In 1982, parishioners Anne Smith and Carol Abbott presented a list of suggestions for use of space at St. Paul's, including a plan to help the growing numbers of women in crisis. After considerable groundwork and planning, the Women's Crisis Center was formed.

Its general purpose was "to work toward the creation of a society in which domestic violence, as part of the larger problem of violence against women, will no longer exist, and to help individual women and children rebuild their lives."

Support began to build from the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts and volunteers from both the parish and the community at large. The center provided a 24-hour hot line, free legal services and safe homes.

Smith and Abbott, the Rev. Roger Cramer, members of the vestry and the first board of directors of the Women's Crisis Center were committed to supporting families in crisis. Their vision and hard work have enabled this organization, now the Jeanne Geiger Crisis Center, to continue its mission "to empower members of our community to live free from fear, intimidation, violence or the threat of abuse by providing support, advocacy and education."

Services now include a confidential 24-hour crisis hot line (978-388-1888), one-on-one counseling, children's counseling and support groups, legal and court advocacy, and community outreach and education.

The crisis center serves Newburyport, Newbury, West Newbury, Salisbury, Amesbury, Merrimac, Groveland, Georgetown and Rowley. For more information, visit www.jeannegeigercrisiscenter.org.