

Sistercare offers refuge for women

BY JOHN HUIETT
ASSISTANT NEWS EDITOR

The children hid in their bedroom. The 32-year-old housewife and mother ran for cover, hiding behind chairs and doors. But he found her.

He held her down and punched her in the face, and he did it again and again.

Her husband of six years pummeled her soft white face into an almost unrecognizable mass of purple bruises.

She could have just taken it, endured the pain and blamed herself like she had so many times before.

But this time she broke free. She locked herself in the bedroom long enough to call the police. They responded quickly, taking the husband into custody and offering her and her children the chance for a new life.

This is just one example of domestic abuse Sistercare counselor "Mary" can vividly recall. It's her job to reach out to battered women from the organization's Richland County shelter, helping them realize the danger of being in an abusive relationship and giving them the confidence to break away from their abusers.

And Mary's a victim herself. She was hired as a counselor this past July after breaking free from an abusive relationship.

But she's still hiding from her abuser.

Sistercare is the only organization in the Midlands that provides

help exclusively to victims of domestic violence, a problem that has increased dramatically in the past several years.

According to statistics from the South Carolina Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, four million women are physically abused in the United States every year.

In 1996, nearly 55,000 domestic violence reports were filed, an almost 35 percent increase since 1992.

Sistercare received more than 4,000 crisis calls in 1998 and took in nearly 1,000 battered women and their children.

And in the first nine months of 1999, the shelters had already received almost 4,000 crisis calls.

Mary said that while men are often the abusers, consistent personality traits of the abused add to the problem.

Because the majority of battered women rarely work outside the home, she said victims become reliant on their abusers as the household's sole source of income, while others have addictive attachments to their abusers.

As a result, the abused frequently feel powerless to stop what she called the "cycle of abuse," or repeated physical attacks followed by a "honeymoon" period when the abuser is forgiven and free to attack again.

"A lot of the women, their self-esteem is low, and they become very [financially and emotionally] dependent on their abusers," Mary said. "It could be they stay in the situation for the children's sake,

or they use that as an excuse."

Mary added that the only way to break the cycle of abuse is for victims to become self-sufficient.

She said while Sistercare can't provide miracles, victims can free themselves from an abusive situation through counseling.

"I don't expect to really solve any issues, just plant seeds," Mary said. "To educate women ... is really the goal, to educate them about abuse, to empower them."

But according to Linda Davis, Sistercare's assistant to the executive director, it's sometimes difficult for victims to remove themselves from abusers because of constant mental trauma.

"You're always tense," Davis said. "If you set dinner on the table, you don't know if [the abuser] is going to throw it on the floor and go on a tirade."

Davis added that 85 percent of domestic violence victims have been threatened with weapons, and it's not uncommon for Sistercare to provide shelter for a woman who has been stabbed or shot.

Because an abuser's reaction to a victim's cry for help could be more violent than the initial abuse, Davis said many are reluctant to find a way out.

"Typically, we might have a number of conversations with them before they decide to seek shelter," Davis said.

However, once a victim makes that decision, Davis said Sister-

SISTERCARE SEE PAGE 9

Professor to speak at Last Lecture Series

Jim Stiver's address for the Last Lecture Series, sponsored by Carolina Scholars and Carolina Productions, will be at 7 p.m. today of the Gressette Room in Harper College. The name of the lecture is "Wisdom: It ain't what it used to be (But there is still hope).

Clemson/Carolina Blood Drive continues

The Carolina/Clemson Blood Drive will continue from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. today and Thursday in the RH Ballroom. Carolina Productions and LoU's Crew giveaways will be held all day.

USC Football to hold final practice

Support the USC football team at their final practice at 5:30 p.m. Thursday at Williams-Brice Stadium.

Great American Smoke-Out to be held

Pamphlets and Quit Kits will be given out for the Great American Smoke-Out from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Thursday. Tables will be set up today and Thursday on Greene Street and in the P.E. Center Lobby. For more information, call the Open Door-Drop In Center at 777-8248.

Mainstage Productions to be held

Auditions for "Heartbreak House," "Voice of the Prairie" and "Arcadia" will be held at 7 p.m. Sunday, in The Golden Spur. Those auditioning need to prepare two contrasting monologues with total time not exceeding three minutes. Sides will be available to those without a monologue.

Briefs for Campus Notes can be submitted to RH 333. Please include a contact name and phone number. We can't promise to print everything, but we can promise to try.

Brett Butler to speak about 'beating the odds'

BY CHARLIE WALLACE
SENIOR WRITER

Cancer. The mere mention of the word is strong enough to scare anyone.

It is a word synonymous with sadness, hopelessness and failure.

It is a word that could bring the strongest person to his knees without a hint of mercy.

In a world filled with illness and disease, cancer is a demon that comes in many forms.

It can affect almost every part of a person's body and often times can't be cured.

But, for former major league baseball player Brett Butler, cancer couldn't defeat one part of his body — his soul.

Butler, now since retired, will speak at a Fellowship of Christian Athletes meeting tomorrow at 8:30 p.m. in the Sol Blatt P.E. Center in Gym 307.

Since he was in first grade, the California native dreamed of being a major league baseball player.

It's the only thing he wanted to do. While many kids have that same dream, most of them have some semblance of reality and can decipher fact from fiction.

Butler, however, knew in his soul that his dream was going to become a reality. His determination would carry him there.

"Ever since I was six years old I wanted to be a major league baseball player," Butler said without hesitation. "I even remember standing up saying it in my first grade class."

Butler even wrote an autobiography that he called "I Want to Be a Major League Baseball Player."

However, Butler was not a star baseball play-

er growing up.

In fact, he made only 32 appearances at the

ferred to tiny Southeastern Oklahoma State.

In his three years at the school, from 1977-

1979, Butler

amassed 31

home runs, a

school record at

the time. For a

guy who is 5-

feet-11-inches,

160 pounds, that

was quite an ac-

complishment,

especially for a

guy who didn't

play much high

school baseball.

When the Atlanta

Braves selected him

in the June 1979

Free Agent Draft,

Butler's dream

finally become a

reality, as he had

predicted way

back in first grade.

BUTLER SEE PAGE 9

"When I got cancer, I stopped thinking about fame, success and money, all of which were important in the eyes of the world."

Brett Butler

Former centerfielder for the Los Angeles Dodgers

plate his senior year in high school, his first as a starter. But he had a dream he wouldn't let his soul relinquish.

Butler's dream carried him to Arizona State University as a walk-on freshman. His determination paid off, as he was one of eight out of 209 walk-ons to make the team.

However, unhappy with the program, he trans-

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