Domestic Harmony Foundation (DHF) is truly a grassroots organization. It was initiated 23 years ago by a group of dedicated and concerned women of the Islamic Center of Long Island to address the problem of domestic violence. Twenty-three years later, the committee has since developed into a not-for-profit foundation run mostly by volunteers. DHF continues to work with South Asian and Middle Eastern communities and collaborate with other mainstream – as well as faith-based – communities to support and empower survivors of domestic violence.

Domestic violence, however, is not the only problem our communities face. At DHF, we are often referred to when conflicts arise between teens and their parents. These conflicts usually stem from parents’ lack of understanding of their children’s struggles, or parents’ inability to help their children as they negotiate a bicultural identity, attempting to assimilate into a mainstream American culture that their parents do not fully embrace. We’ve had cases where children have been removed from their homes and taken to shelters because of allegations of child abuse, and in some cases, domestic violence. Now, we’re also seeing more cases of marital discord and higher divorce rates among the newly married.
These issues don’t negate the significance of the problem of domestic violence, which remains pervasive in our community – much like the denial that we have a problem or our lack of commitment to address it. We all know that domestic violence exists globally and affects individuals in every country and at all levels of society. Although both women and men can become victims of domestic violence, women are more likely to be at the receiving end of abuse. Women comprise about 85 to 90 percent of all cases of domestic violence.

When we talk about domestic violence, we do not mean day-to-day couples’ conflicts that may arise as a result of disagreement over everyday situations. When we speak of domestic violence or abuse, we refer to the kind of abuse in which the perpetrator takes complete control of the relationship and violates the rights of the other partner. Besides physical abuse, there may be intimidation, emotional abuse, blaming, threatening to divorce or take away children, economic abuse, coercion and isolation. Unfortunately, in many situations religious teachings are misinterpreted and used as justifications for the abuse. Very few imams, priests or members of the clergy are trained to help these women. Although things are slowly changing, some are still advising women seeking help to pray and continue to be patient!

For too long, many communities throughout the world have considered domestic violence as a personal issue or a private concern, but the truth of the matter is that the impact of violence in the home reaches far beyond the victim; it affects the vitality, resilience and well-being of all family members, and weakens communities from within. If a woman is deprived of peace and tranquility in her own home and faces the constant threat of abuse, it negatively affects her ability to work, contribute to her community, create a stable home, nurture her children or guide them properly. Children who witness domestic violence are also not immune from its adverse impact, which is felt inter-generationally; they are more likely to fall into the cycle of violence, either as a victim or a perpetrator.

Within immigrant communities, this problem is often compounded by other obstacles, such as language barriers, isolation, racism, discrimination, poverty and lack of knowledge about available resources. Immigrants that are far from their extended families often lose family support that might protect a woman from being abused, allow family elders to resolve issues of differences between the spouses, or hold the husband accountable to the larger community. If an immigrant seeks help from a mainstream agency, her religion or culture might be blamed for domestic violence. Unfortunately, such stereotypes can discourage a battered woman from seeking help, as she may be conflicted and choose to protect her community from racism at the cost of her own safety. Some women who seek help from outside agencies are labeled as traitor and her own family members might be unsympathetic to her plight, so she may prefer silence in the face of ongoing abuse rather than seeking safety for herself and her children.

The awareness of domestic violence is gradually rising in the immigrant communities even though there is still considerable resistance and denial. In promoting change and healing in men who have been abusive, it is important to understand oppressive social structures and cultural practices that perpetuate violence against women, and take a collective stance as a community to acknowledge and take responsibility for community actions. Social norms within the community also need to be changed. Abused women or man should be supported, not blamed or ridiculed! For religious communities, it is important to understand the implications of male guardianship and emphasize that this entails a higher level of accountability and fairness rather than permission to perpetuate injustice or violence.

Fathers play a very important role in modeling a healthy mutually respectful relationship with their
When I started at DHF in January of 2016 as a mental health clinician, it was my first time conducting trauma-related therapy. I had received extensive training in trauma-informed therapies and working with women affected by domestic violence. I understood the issues I would be targeting as a therapist.

Although I knew that this new clientele was going to be a whole new chapter for me as a therapist, looking back nine months later, I realize just how much each client has shaped and transformed me as a clinician. Starting out, all I could do was give all my strength and effort on a daily basis to help every client as much as I possibly could. It turned out that working with domestic violence and trauma-affected clients was been the most inspiring experience for me as a therapist.

One client at DHF, Mary (name has been changed), started counseling in March 2016. She is originally from East Africa and was granted political asylum in the United States a few years back.

Worldwide, more than one-third of women will experience some form of gender-based violence in their lifetimes, making it one of the leading causes of death among women ages 15 to 44 worldwide. In the U.S. one in four women will experience gender-based violence! It is likely that someone’s sister, mother, daughter, or friend – one of the most important people in their lives – may have experienced some form of gender-based violence firsthand! Can we seek a better future for our children and family members if this continues?
She was granted political asylum after witnessing extreme political violence by her homeland Government against her and her family. Through the years of her marriage, both in her country and then here in the U.S., she has been a victim of extreme physical and verbal abuse by her husband. The domestic violence only worsened when they left their home country and came here. After about a year of living in the U.S., Mary filed for an order of protection and sought safety for herself and her children. She proceeded to file for divorce shortly after. Because he held a political position back in their homeland country, her husband completely left her for fear of his reputation being tarnished. Although she has not seen him for about six years now and he isn’t causing issues for her in that sense, he is also completely absent from Mary’s life and that of her children, providing no support morally, emotionally, or financially.

What he has left for her is a trail of damage that she has not been able to rectify for six years, as hard and as long as she has tried. All three of her teenage daughters have been diagnosed with PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder) and several other mental illnesses derived from it. Although she brings all three of them on a weekly basis to qualified therapists, to this day they are experiencing emotional stress in both their academic and social lives. When Mary came for her initial intake session at DHF, she said she felt the burden was weighing her down to the ground everyday. She had no time to sit and relax. She was constantly running between her full time job and all of the medical appointments of her children, on top of running the household. She said, however, that if she didn’t seek therapy for herself she was soon going to be burned out beyond repair!

Therapy sessions with Mary have continued for the past six months on a weekly basis, and through trauma-focused CBT we have been able to help her stabilize to a certain degree. Her self-doubt and insecurity as a single mother, her lack of self-confidence after having gone through years of abuse, and the list of problems she was facing with her children drove her to see a therapist as a last resort. Mary now says that therapy provided her a supportive backbone, helping her come back to her own self-awareness and re-define her goals, which were lost in her struggles as an abused wife and a single mother.

Client stories such as this one are what drive DHF, its board members and staff to strive for their cause on a daily basis. It isn’t easy to face trauma on such an intimate and personal level with the clients who come and go from our office on a weekly basis, but it is most definitely worth it. It is worth it on both micro and macro levels. Helping the survivors of domestic abuse to be relieved of the slightest of burdens on a daily basis and enabling them to function one day at a time with their head held high: DHF deems that as success!
A study in New York City found that 51 percent of intimate partner homicide victims were foreign-born, while 45 percent were born in the United States. It is estimated that anywhere between 3.3 million to 10 million children witness domestic violence annually. Nationally, domestic violence has become the number one leading cause of death among women.

We have to recognize that violent behavior is a choice, and that both men and women can be the perpetrators of abuse. Statistics show that three to four million women are abused each year and every 15 seconds a woman is abused in her home. This means that the most dangerous place in the world for them is their own home.

Domestic Harmony Foundation believes in utilizing both prevention and intervention strategies to reduce the occurrence of domestic violence, and providing culturally relevant services when it does occur. We do active and continuous safety planning with callers and clients, keeping in mind that clients often may not have the option of immediately leaving their abusive partners. Our goal is to empower women, and provide them with the tools they need to lead an independent and safe life free from abuse.

Our support group has been running successfully for the last 5 years, and continues to do so. This is a group where women talk about everything and anything. Because this group is so diverse, the dynamics are so different that it makes everyone feel that they are not alone and shows that this can happen to anybody. It gives them the sense of belonging and safety from judgment. Women feel supported while supporting each other. Hearing about someone else’s experiences motivates them to chase their own happiness – a dose of positive reinforcement. Having positive role models is imperative as it is inspiring for them, and shows them that there is light at the end of the tunnel.

Donations given to Domestic Harmony Foundation are mainly going to provide direct services to our clients. Our operational costs are very minimal and we are under-staffed considering all the direct services we provide to clients, our outreach and educational initiatives, fundraising, the Summer Youth Leadership Program etc. But with a qualified Assistant Program coordinator/counselor and a team of dedicated volunteers and board members DHF has accomplished great things the past year.

I would like to remind all of you that when someone donates to DHF, they are donating to a greater cause: future generations. You are not just supporting women who are survivors but investing in the future of their children and generations of families to come.

Helping one person might not change the world, but it could change the world for one person!
This year’s annual gala was centered around the theme of Restoring Hope and Celebrating Courage. The event was a grand success as the speeches and performances were very well done and applauded. The presentations and videos shown were centered around the documentaries of keynote speaker Sharmeen Obaid Chinoy, a world renown film maker. The speech by the keynote then followed by an expressive dance performance, various awards presented to community leaders, and the raffle prizes in the end; the fundraising gala this year had a strong and positive message to send to its’ attendees.

The beautiful Sunday afternoon started with the cocktail hour, guests joining the cocktail reception room and having time to socialize, making initial introductions with others, and meeting old friends and colleagues. Many guests who were familiar with the main speaker Sharmeen had their initial chance to speak with her and take pictures. Sharmeen was very forth-coming and kind in introductions, opening up with her overall positive energy. Those who were familiar with her work were commending her efforts, sharing their personal ideas for similar causes and taking pictures. Hors-d’oeuvres and drinks were being passed around the room as it quickly became full with incoming guests.

As the grand reception room opened up guests slowly poured in and took their seats at the 20 or so round tables set up in the ballroom. Some time was given as everyone took their seats, and shortly after the initial invocation was made. Program coordinator Ms. Jasia Mirza then took the stage and made opening remarks informing the audience about the history and background of Domestic Harmony Foundation. It was a very informative and inspiring speech highlighting the importance of the role of its board members, the passion and strength that is portrayed on a daily and weekly basis for clients by those who run the organization, and the power and strength that is
returned to the organization by those who attend its programs. Ms. Mirza then gave us the honor of opening up about her own drive and energy towards the cause due to her own personal experiences, and that disclosure in itself made a very positive and inspirational difference as part of the gala's opening speech. To have someone who has so clearly succeeded and overcome her circumstances, further, with such an accomplished position within the organization itself is enough for the audience to understand the profound effects of organizations such as DHF.

Speeches by the mental health clinician Zuhal Khwaja and psychologist Dr. Rafia Hamid followed that of the program coordinator, mainly addressing the therapeutic sector of the organization and its efforts on an individual and group therapy basis. A short power-point presentation giving informative background on the goals, causes, and community events DHF provides throughout the year was given. To finish it off a brief synopsis video was incorporated into the presentation on Chinoy's most popular documentaries. Psychologist Dr. Rafia Hamid then presented her speech and gave a brilliant and in-depth introduction to the keynote speaker Sharmeen and all of the work she has accomplished so far towards such a vast variety of humanitarian causes over the years. As Sharmeen Obaid Chinoy took the stage, applause was rampant amongst the guests.

Chinoy was welcomed warmly and gave a speech nothing short of inspiring about her humble beginnings as a first-time documentary maker never having experience in the film industry before. She spoke about the encouragement and drive that was propelled by her family, most significantly by her father, despite societal lash back and how she took it as a positive sign towards working uphill for a cause she believes in. She spoke about her successes and failures starting out and it was very powerful seeing someone who has had such massive success yet simultaneously kept her true character and genuine personality to this day. What was most convincing about her success for the younger generation present at the event was the sincerity and humility she portrayed in her personality. The purpose she put behind her work was clearly symbolized by the character she personally portrayed. Those who can maintain their true selves even despite the fame and fortune are the real role models in society.

Following Chinoy was the well-known county clerk, Ms. Nasrin Ahmed. She spoke about the time she has
spent working with DHF and the drive and success she sees from this organization as stellar. She applauded and commended the keynote speaker for her brilliant efforts towards such causes, and gave an overall political perspective on the significance of humanitarian organizations such as DHF. Thereafter, the dance performance and award ceremony followed. The dance performance was very much an art piece in itself, observing the depth and meaning behind the symbolic dance of a new bride and all of the emotions that come with it.

The award ceremony was also very heartening. The award of community service was then presented to the personal assistant of the town clerk Ahmed, Farrah Mozawallah. Then the recipient of the changemaker award was introduced, Dr. Kishore Kuncham. Thereafter, the raffle prizes were announced as guests enjoyed desserts served to their tables. The gala ended with a sense of awareness, accomplishment and greater realization by all who attended.
Rediscovering Self Through Creative Art Process
AMAL WAHIB

This year’s art project by the support group is the continuation of our project from last year. Art therapy is a way of dealing with hardship in a creative way. Last year, clients drew pictures of the hurtful and painful situations they have endured in their relationships and this year their work shows progression, growth and hope.

Our clients have learned how to take challenges, become proactive and show their commitment to their family and children. Single moms go through many hardships, but with support and assistance they become more resilient and find ways to define their vision and purpose in life. Once they set goals and keep an end goal in mind – often the well-being of their children – they learn to adapt, becoming providers for their families and focusing on the upbringing of their children.

Healthy and happy families need the participation of both parents. Good fathers can create secure lives for their children that lead to happy and productive adulthoods. But what if the parental relationship is unhealthy, with power struggles and conflicts that turn into abuse? It becomes toxic for children, and they are the ones who suffer most. At this point mothers need to take charge, focus on things they can do for their children and fill the void by shifting their roles.

Our art therapist uses art to solve everyday problems. The artwork becomes a handmade visual aide to understanding; it provides a framework for viewing and solving the problem. The therapist’s role is to become the partner and facilitator in the process; she becomes the partner in leading the client to play with her created metaphors and create new situations and approaches to meet client’s immediate needs (https://artsu.americansforthearts.org).
What I Learned at Summer Youth Leadership Program

SHAINA ZAFAR

Domestic Harmony Foundation’s Summer Youth Leadership Program was an incredibly unforgettable experience! The program has been active for five years, but this was my first time being part of the project. As a youth facilitator, I was able to engage in thoughtful and introspective discussions with people both older and younger than me.

Every Saturday since mid July, I spent time with the girls and boys of the program, who all introduced opportunities to learn something new. The first week was an orientation led by Anika and me. It was a relaxed atmosphere with icebreaker actives and coloring sheets. Everyone bonded over small discussions and the connection between different food and our names. We spoke about what it meant to be a leader and what we as young participants in a global society hoped to seek out. The youth program was a platform for the younger generation, us, to speak out and discuss personal and external ideas without any judgement or discernment. After we all were acquainted, Week 2 was focused on bullying and social media. In this discussion, we touched upon social media with its pros and cons, and the technological age in our present time. Everyone spoke about their opinions and experiences to create a holistic overview of the tech age of 2016. We had this session with guest speaker Juvaria Magsi, a high school student!

Rohini Ramanathan, spoke of an eternal light and our conscious in the buzz of a chaotic society. Regardless of a race, religion, or the color of our skin, we all are bonded by a spiritual light. Hearing Ms. Ramanathan speak about her beliefs was truly inspiring. She gave a dimensional view to the way life is seen, especially by younger people. She was also a professional musician, and we even got the chance to hear her serenade us in the hymns of classical Indian music.

The next week, the subject of positive communication taught us what it meant to speak your mind, remaining assertive not aggressive. Positive communication is something that anyone, regardless of their age, can improve and is required as a life skill. Through positive communication, negativity and misunderstandings are eliminated. For example, the detrimental effects of lashing out and getting furious with your parents stems from a lack of positive communication, as Dr. Lopez stated.

Week 5 was titled the “Paradigms of Leadership” with Dr. Isma Chaudhry, President of the Islamic Center of Long Island. Although I was unable to attend this session, everyone thoroughly enjoyed the ideas presented in the workshop. As a woman in a leadership position – and especially as a Muslim woman – Dr. Chaudhry spoke volumes about the idea of acceptance and perseverance.

The final session was my personal favorite! As an anxious high school senior it was refreshing to hear Farhath Feroz and Rubab Rehman speak about their first-hand experiences in college. Their advice was like a reassuring gesture of faith. College is daunting to think about after years of rigorous school work. High school is the stepping stone to college, and hearing Farhath and Rubab talk about the college process was not only informative and engaging, but calming.

Each session was a piece of bigger picture. Each session was the opportunity to connect with someone new. Each session was a unique experience for every individual. I met some incredible and ambitious people who make me proud to be affiliated with DHF. I had the chance to listen to thoughtful speakers, meditate, laugh, and eat free food! DHF’s Summer Youth Leadership Program, simply put, was… empowering. I can’t thank everyone who put the program together enough! I know I’ll be coming back next year!
Why Do We Need Such Programs?
ANIKA AMIN

My name is Anika Amin. I am currently a junior at Stony Brook University and this past summer, I had the privilege of being one of the facilitators for the DHF Summer Youth Leadership Program. I had participated in the program when I was in high school about four years ago, and it was the first time I had been to a youth leadership conference of any sort. It opened my eyes to new ideas, led me to meet new people, and helped me learn ways in which I could improve myself as a leader and person. When I found out that the program was looking for a facilitator for this summer I applied without hesitation. I wanted to help be a part of something bigger and contribute to a program that I myself was once a part of and learned so much from.

When I met the program’s coordinator and Shaina, my co-facilitator, I quickly learned how passionate and talented they both were through the way they spoke about topics they cared about and how they carried themselves. I felt eager to start working with them but I also felt a bit nervous. I questioned whether or not I would be capable of keeping the students engaged or what would I do if they didn’t participate.

However after the first day, all those doubts and questions quickly dissipated. As the students filed into the room one by one, happily greeting me and one another, I knew things were going to be okay. They were all excited to be there, engaged, and eager to learn right from the beginning. Through icebreakers, I was quickly able to see everyone’s personalities shine through. Through discussions, I learned more about what each person was passionate about and who they were as people.

I ended up learning so much by the end of the program, after meetings went on week after week and new speakers joined us. Each speaker had a unique message that I, along with everyone else, could take away by the end of the day. Whether it was about confidence, control, happiness, leadership, social media or bullying, the messages were always very clear and they are definitely lessons I apply to my daily life. One particular lesson I remember and use very often was by Dr. Jessica Lopez. Her method, called “straw breath,” is a deep breathing exercise she taught us, and to this day it helps me calm down and relax in stressful and tense situations.

But the best part of the entire program was being able to watch the students grow from week one all the way to week six. Right before my very eyes I saw the shy boy who always sat in the back speak up in front of the entire group. And I saw the quiet girl in the corner make friends with all the other students who were there. By the end of the program, everyone was friends and they were all comfortable speaking up in front of a crowd, unafraid to voice their opinions without the fear of being seen as wrong because of the supporting and safe environment that DHF Summer Youth Leadership Program had built. In the future, they will be able to take the things they learned and apply it to their lives. It truly was a beautiful thing to witness and I will never forget this Summer Youth Leadership Program! ■
Project Niyyah
ZYNUB BHATTI

Project Niyyah hosted its second annual toy drive during the month of Ramadan. The initiative started last year with the intention to establish a toy drive that would provide toys for children in need on the occasion of Eid. This year we had an overwhelming response and collected close to 700 gifts. With approximately 80 volunteers, many hours of behind-the-scenes work and two wrapping events later, we collected, wrapped and distributed toys to DHF, ICNA, Islamic Relief and local families in need.

Project Niyyah gained tremendous momentum this year through an Amazon wish list, a joint effort with Mubarkville in Hicksville and a collaboration with ICNA, as well as the support and generosity of our local mosques and community. Project Niyyah is humbled to support DHF and give back to a foundation that does so much for those in need. We will continue to help DHF and its families through our toy drive and others means of support. For more information on Project Niyyah and our future goals and drives, find us on Facebook @Project Niyyah or on Instagram at #projectniyyah

We would like to thank DHF for giving us this opportunity and we hope that Project Niyyah will continue to make a lasting effect for all those in need.
Project Niyyah Presents

2nd Annual EID TOY DRIVE

Abu Huraira reported: The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said, “Give each other gifts and you will love each other” [Al-Bukhari]

FOR MORE DETAILS!

LET’S SPREAD SOME EID CHEER!

New & Unwrapped Toys Only
For Boys & Girls, Ages 1-15 years

Purchase ONLINE - ships to us directly!

Last day to deliver items:
FRIDAY, JUNE 24th

For any questions please contact Sisters
Zynub Bhatti: zanco123@gmail.com | Sumer Khan: sumerserrail@gmail.com | Tasmia Khalid: ktsrma@gmail.com

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WALKATHON 2016

Domestic Harmony Foundation will be holding its fifth annual Run/Walk to End Domestic Violence, on Saturday October 15, 2016. Women continue to be attacked and violated in many different ways, in their homes, on the streets, on public transport and places of work. We as a society are not actively addressing such a major issue, and at times are even placing the blame onto the victims.

If you think we need a change in these repetitive and harmful cycles, then come and join us.

Run/Walk to End Domestic Violence

This event will be held at:
Eisenhower Park, Peach and Pear Picnic area
(adjacent to Parking Field #2)

Saturday, October 15, 2016 from 9:30am –1:00 PM.

This walkathon is co-sponsored by SEPA Mujer, HAB bank and The Safe Center of Long Island.

The question is: why should we mobilize both men and women on this issue? The answer is: so we can empower those who have been victimized and terrorized in their own homes and help them live healthy and productive lives.

DHF strives to end domestic violence on a day-to-day basis. This walkathon is one of our most interactive outreach approaches; with the hope that it may reach a victim’s awareness or even change attitudes which perpetuate violence. Only with the help of our supporters and funders can we strengthen and unite. Together we will become more resilient; as the voices of many are louder than a voice of one. Bring in your family, friends and co-workers and walk with us to end this epidemic.

For more information about Domestic Harmony Foundation (DHF) and the Walkathon or to get involved, please visit www.dhfny.org or call (516) 385-8292.
DOMESTIC HARMONY FOUNDATION

RUN/WALK TO END DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Join the cause! Bring your friends and family to raise awareness with a 5k Run/Walk. Register as an individual or group or make a donation as an Individual or corporate sponsor.

*DATE*
Saturday
October 15, 2016

*LOCATION*
Peach & Pear Picnic Area
Eisenhower Park, NY
(Parking Field #2)

*SCHEDULE*
Registration/Check-in 9:30AM
Welcome/Acknowledgements 10:30AM
Race 11:00 AM (sharp)

*REGISTRATION FEE*
Regular: $15
Senior: $10
Student: $10

5K RUN: 1st PLACE: 2013 Official All Star Game Baseball – Autographed by David Wright – Captain NY METS.
2nd PLACE: Gift cards from Simon Mall & GNC – Value $110

www.dhfny.org | 516-385-8292 | Jasia@dhfny.org
DOMESTIC HARMONY FOUNDATION

P.O. Box 35, Syosset, NY 11791

Helpline: (516) 385-8292

Help is available in several languages: English, Urdu, Arabic, Farsi, Hindi, and Bengali

E-mail: info@dhfny.org