Celebrating Solutions Award
Nomination Form

Legal name of organization:  Bluegrass Domestic Violence Program

Year established:  2004

Name of program being nominated (if different):  Same

Year established:  Same

Address:  P.O. Box 55190

City/State/ZIP code:  Lexington, Kentucky 40516

Agency phone number:  1.800.544.2022

Name of contact person:  Darlene Thomas, M.S.S.W

Title of contact person:  Executive Director

Phone number:  859.519.1900

Fax number:  859.509.9645

E-mail address:  darlene.thomas@bdvp.org

Website address:  www.beyondtheviolence.org

Brief description of organization:  We are an advocacy agency committed to ending intimate partner abuse and its impact on families and in our community.

Geographical area served:  Bluegrass Area Development District (17-county region in central Kentucky)

Is the organization tax-exempt under IRS 501 (c) (3) guidelines or a public agency/unit of government?  Yes

Please check up to five descriptors that best apply to the program you are nominating:

-  Batterer treatment
-  Coalition/collaboration
-  Communication
-  Counseling
-  Dating violence
-  Elder abuse
-  Employment/training program
-  Faith-based
-  Health care setting
-  Hotline service
-  Legal aid/assistance
-  Prison-based
-  Public awareness/education
-  School/youth violence
-  Shelter-based
-  Stalking
-  Technology/Internet service
-  Transitional housing
-  Underserved population
-  University setting
-  Victim relocation
-  Workplace Intervention
-  Other ______________________
Release of Information

As one of the goals of the Mary Byron Project is to disseminate information about cutting-edge programs and best practices, we wish to post exemplary Celebrating Solutions Award nominations on our website (www.marybyronproject.org). Those posted will include the organization's website address, telephone number, and e-mail address. If you have concerns about this request, please address them to kathypaulin@marybyronproject.org, prior to submitting a nomination.

By my signature on this letter, I grant the Mary Byron Project permission to use the contents of my nomination for the Celebrating Solutions Award in the manner and for the purposes set above. I further affirm that I am fully authorized to grant such permission to the Mary Byron Project.

Signature

Date November 12, 2012

Director of Operations
Celebrating Solutions Award

1. Describe the work of the nominated program and explain how the mission of the program is accomplished.

Bluegrass Domestic Violence Program is an advocacy agency committed to ending intimate partner abuse and its impact on families and our community. Our provision of emergency shelter and concomitant services for victims of intimate partner abuse revolves around the operation of a community-sponsored farm situated on our agency’s 40-acre property in rural Fayette County. The mission of our farm program is to create an agriculture-based healing environment to meet the needs of intimate partner abuse victims as they strive to find healing and rebuild their lives as survivors. Our vision is for the farm to become an economically self-sustaining program that provides a reliable source of revenue for our agency while offering survivors small-business training and microenterprise opportunities.

Supported by research related to trauma-informed care for women veterans (most recently, U.S. Department of Labor, 2011), studies exploring the restorative and healing outcomes of therapeutic gardens (for example, Kirk, Karpf and Carman, 2010), and examinations of “social farming” as a means to promote healing, social inclusion, education, and social services in rural areas (as recently published by Di Jacovo and O’Connor, 2009), our farm program offers avenues for healing, nutrition, physical activity, and serenity for victims of intimate partner abuse; provides a source of nutritional and seasonal field-to-table food for emergency shelter residents; and emulates philosophies of self-sufficiency and microenterprise for clients.

Integration of farm programming with the delivery of our core victim services begins when an individual or family enters shelter or initiates a nonresidential service relationship with the agency. After establishing a safety plan and addressing immediate basic needs, clients are invited to take a tour of the farm led by our farmer and a family advocate. The tour addresses concepts of nature-based healing and invites clients to consider the farm as a space to explore, reflect, and participate. They are encouraged to seek respite and solace in the “healing garden,” a circular plot with benches scattered amongst flowering and fragrant herbs, and feel comfortable wandering through the farm and picking fruits and berries for healthy snacks. At the conclusion of the tour, clients are informed of regularly scheduled farm activities. Our weekly farm groups provide activities and impart skills related to nutrition, preparation of fresh produce, and field-to-table meal planning. Monthly “Make It/Take It” classes bring clients together to create homegrown and handmade value-added products such as jams from fresh berries, healing salves from herbs and honey, and fresh-picked flower arrangements from the farm’s garden. This year a work program was launched to provide a small stipend to clients in exchange for a few hours of work on the farm each week. The stipend project encourages clients to become involved in farm activities, develop new agriculture and horticultural job skills, and establish part-time employment in a safe and supportive environment. In turn, our farm staff serves as a work reference when these clients apply for other employment.

Our farm was recently accepted into the Kentucky Proud, an agricultural marketing program featuring food and products created throughout the state. This year we also began marketing cut flowers, fresh herbs, and select produce to the community through an online pre-order system. Although the farm’s mission remains closely connected to helping clients heal from the trauma
of intimate partner abuse through nature-based healing opportunities, our farm marketing efforts model philosophies of self-sustainability that are core to our agency’s mission. Further, the sale of value-added farm produce provides unique opportunities for community supporters to witness, understand, and support our mission and services.

2. Describe the most innovative aspects of the program you are nominating for consideration.

- Our farm program applies a trauma-informed care model based in the therapeutic benefits of nature-based activity. Studies of such models in the healthcare setting have demonstrated significant positive effects of gardening on an individual’s well-being, stress levels, and general health. This research has found that integration of activities such as gardening with traditional medical interventions results in shorter post-operative stays, decreases need for pain medication, and generally improved patient morale (Kirk, Karpf and Carman, 2010). When we consider the adverse health effects related to intimate partner abuse, including injuries, arthritis, chronic pain, and digestive issues (Archives of Family Medicine, 2000), the farm program provides victims with proven avenues to heal from the physical and emotional trauma of abuse.

- The farm program provides our emergency shelter residents with a sustainable source of field-to-table fruits, vegetables, and legumes. Beyond the health and nutritional value of this focus on fresh food consumption, use of farm produce in the preparation of daily meals in shelter has substantially offset our agency’s food expenses. In combination with in-kind donations of nonperishable food supplies, use of fresh produce from the farm has decreased our per meal cost to 60 cents.

- Marketing and sales activities related to the farm program mirror our agency’s commitment to empowering clients with information, resources, and access related to self-sufficiency options, including microenterprise opportunities. Clients who are engaged in the work stipend project develop agriculture-production skills related to seeding, harvest, and processing of produce. Our monthly “Make It/Take It” classes demonstrate how these skills can be applied to value-added agriculture production. Together, these experiences spark ideas and encourage clients to consider the possibility of small-business opportunities to augment income after exiting our program. Concurrent to encouraging client exploration of these possibilities, our agency is actively participating in a similar goals related to the economic self-sufficiency of the farm. To borrow from an informal phrase, the farm program enables us to "walk our talk."

- In much the same way the farm provides survivors of domestic violence with the opportunity to grow and heal through nature-based experiences, our farm program also provides a unique access opportunity for community supporters to witness, understand, and support the issue of intimate partner abuse. Considering recent research related to primary prevention of intimate partner abuse—including the critical role of involving men and educating by-standers—we believe the farm program engages the community in tangible, productive, and meaningful activities that contribute to fulfilling our mission to end intimate partner abuse in families and our community.

- Finally, a welcomed albeit unexpected effect of the farm program has been our agency’s shift to a more holistic approach to overall service delivery. The success of the farm program has inspired staff to develop other trauma-informed care projects to serve clients, including yoga classes, art-making groups, and a shelter book club.
3. Describe your program's implementation. What barriers did your organization have to overcome? How did you marshal the necessary resources for implementation?

Planning for the farm program began in 2005, soon after our organization moved from a small urban-based location to a facility situated on a 40-acre property in rural Fayette County, Kentucky. While the move to the new property provided us with much-needed shelter space and room to grow, we faced several immediate challenges related to our new location. How do we connect families to community partners when we are so far from the city core? How will we care for the land surrounding the shelter? How were families going to find us and connect to our programming? How do we engage the community when we are no longer a “visible” partner in the community? As we continued to settle in to our new facility, it became apparent that we could and should incorporate our new property with our mission and service delivery.

The commitment of staff and financial resources required to achieve this integration was daunting. But all around us—in community circles and national dialogues—conversations were beginning to explore topics such as whole foods, food deserts, and social entrepreneurship. We began to invite community experts to our facility to discuss how we might use the land surrounding our new shelter facility to address these social issues. Various options were explored during early dialogues: equine therapy, fields of grapes, and even a herd of sheep. These conversations confirmed the use of our land must relate closely to our purpose of helping victims of intimate partners heal from trauma while seamlessly integrating with our existing education and self-sufficiency programming. With this vision in mind, the decision was made to cultivate our land for agricultural production.

We started small. Our foray in farming involved only a few box gardens of seasonal herbs and vegetables to augment our food purchases for meal service in the emergency shelter. For the next two seasons, we honed our gardening skills, observed resident interest in the effort, and tested various means to relate the box gardens to shelter operations and client services. The next year we cultivated a plot of land and planted several beds of produce and fresh flowers. The opportunity to sell fresh-cut flower arrangements to local restaurants was identified, and this activity provided our first source of revenue to invest back into the farm. We continue to have meetings with regional agriculture professionals to develop our farm expansion and marketing strategy. These relationships have been critical to the continued growth of the farm program and our successful agriculture practices, land use, and marketing efforts.

Although we initially feared the community would not understand how the farm program was related to our agency mission, the connection quickly and easily resonated with the community. Several key partners committed to providing consultation and funding for the program. With the bolster of financial support, we were able to hire a part-time farm manager to focus on cultivation of the land, launch auxiliary production efforts such as beekeeping and honey harvesting, and integrate these efforts with the delivery of our core services for intimate partner abuse victims.

4. How do you know your program works? Please site two examples. Although anecdotal examples are helpful, at least one example must include quantitative data.

Quantitative evidence gathered through client surveys, statistical tracking, and program logs speaks to the effectiveness of our farm program:
• From January 1 to October 31, 2012, we harvested 4194 pounds of vegetables and berries and more than a hundred bundles of fresh herbs from the farm.
• From July 1, 2011 to June 30, 2012, we served 290 field-to-table meals featuring fruits, vegetables, and other produce from the farm.
• Of total emergency shelter residents from July 1, 2011 to June 30, 2012, 90% participated in the preparation and/or consumption of field-to-table meals.
• Of 66 adult residents surveyed on exit from emergency shelter from July 1, 2011 to June 30, 2012, 65% reported gain of new job skills and nutritious food preparation skills as a result of the farm program.
• From April to October 2012, 16 emergency shelter residents participated in the farm stipend program to contribute a total of 565 hours of work.

Although anecdotal evidence the farm program’s effectiveness has been captured in numerous letters and conversations, the following client story captures the holistic benefits of the farm program for one family. The name of the survivor has been changed and specific case information omitted to honor her confidentiality and safety:

“Maria” and her four children entered our emergency shelter last year after years of enduring physical and emotional abuse. While the family received court advocacy, case management, individual counseling, and group support to heal from the abuse, Maria was experiencing challenges in her job search. Like many victims of intimate partner abuse, her work history was marred by frequent job loss caused by absences resulting from the acute trauma of physical abuse. Although she had lived in the region for many years, she lacked a supportive network of friends and family to refer her to job opportunities. Her job search was further complicated by limited English proficiency. During a case management meeting with her Family Advocate, Maria identified the need for financial assistance to help her purchase gas to travel to and from job interviews. Her advocate provided immediate financial assistance and told her about our new project for residents interested in working on the farm in exchange for a stipend. Maria enrolled in the farm stipend program and began helping with the day-to-day tasks such as weeding, seeding, and harvesting the fields. She used the money she earned to pay for gas to travel to and from job interviews. Encouraged by her work on the farm, Maria developed confidence to talk about her skills and interests during interviews. After only a few weeks, she was hired for a position at a local factory. Maria and her family continue to live in our shelter while she works full-time to save money to establish and maintain safe, permanent housing. They are steadily moving toward their self-sufficiency goals and rebuilding their lives as survivors of intimate partner abuse.

5. Who are your key community partners? What are their roles?

From the beginning, our farm program has relied on the generous contribution of knowledge, strategy, funding, and supplies from community partners. Early partnerships with the University of Kentucky and other academic institutions provided research and experience to inform the development of our farm program strategy. Consultations with arborists, forestry experts, and local farmers such as the Kentucky Division of Forestry, Town Branch Tree Experts, Blue Moon Garlic Farm, have informed our land use plan and cultivation. A partnership with Grow Appalachia, an effort funded by John Paul Dejoria, co-founder and owner of John Paul Mitchell Systems and Patron Tequila, to address the problem of food security in Appalachian
communities has provided substantial funding and strategy direction for our farm program. With Grow Appalachia support, we have been able to hire a part-time farmer, launch the client stipend project, and become part of a community of agencies committed to the vision of social farming solutions. Further, the financial support we received from Grow Appalachia provided us with leverage to garner support from other grant partners, including United Way of the Bluegrass, KU (Kentucky Utilities), and Toyota Motor Manufacturing, Kentucky. Individual gardening enthusiasts and community garden clubs have provided donations of native cuttings and seeds for planting. Individual volunteers and corporate volunteer groups have provided an invaluable in-kind contribution to our farm program. Last year the farm program benefited from 200 volunteers who provided 800 hours of in-kind service.

6. Could/should your program be replicated in other areas of the country? Why?

We believe our farm program could and should be replicated in other areas of the country. The farm program’s basis in healthcare and horticulture therapy research provides an evidence-based model for social service agencies serving intimate partner abuse victims. Its close connection to the evolving discovery of the effectiveness of trauma-informed care for homeless, veteran, and other marginalized populations provides opportunities for research of these theories and practices in the delivery of intimate partner abuse services. The extensive and varied community support of our program speaks to the prevalence of interest in social farming solutions in varied communities throughout other areas of the country. Although our farm program grew from our agency’s move to a rural property, the principles and practices that inform the effort could easily be implemented in an urban setting via public space plots, rooftop gardens, and box garden methods. Finally, our agency’s concerted and intentional strategy to assure all activity of our farm program remain closely connected to the provision of our core services offers a “road map” for social service agencies to develop alternative programming that complements their mission while generating unrestricted revenue to invest in agency services.

7. Does your agency have a workplace policy that addresses domestic violence? If so, please include a copy.

Yes. Please see the attached policy.

8. Has the agency and/or nominated program received VAWA funding (yes or no is sufficient)?

Yes.

References:


THREAT ASSESSMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURE

PURPOSE
Threats and acts of violence have become a significant part of society in which we live. The impact of such acts can be far reaching, affecting not only personal lives, but working relationships as well. Reasonable efforts to prevent acts of violence from occurring within the workplace are necessary in order to provide a safe and secure work environment for employees, vendors, visitors and clients of Bluegrass Domestic Violence Program. To this end, the following procedure is issued regarding workplace violence.

DEFINITIONS
An act of violence is any behavior that is intended or likely to be perceived as intending to create a fear of bodily harm, actual physical injury, or damage to BDVP property.

Zero tolerance philosophy for violence means that an act of violence shall be deemed unacceptable in any form. This conduct shall include, but not be limited to, the following acts: implied, verbal, or written threats, intimidation, or physical assault. Those who engage in such behavior will be held accountable and dealt with in a manner consistent with maintaining a violence-free workplace. Alleged violations of this policy will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis, taking into consideration all available facts and circumstances.

IDENTIFYING AND RESPONDING TO RISKS

Threat Assessment
The Executive Director chairs a threat assessment team consisting of the Assistant Director and a Board Member. The Executive Director will appoint an appropriate designee if the person in the position is directly affected by the threat.

The purpose of this team is to assess BDVP's vulnerability to violence and determine the appropriate preventative measures. The team periodically reviews the workplace to identify existing or potential violence hazards. The work site review includes, but is not limited to, inspecting security measures, analyzing records of violent incidents and monitoring trends and conducting screening surveys to learn about employees' security concerns. The Assistant Director maintains records of all threats and incidents of violence committed against employees. Access to such records is on a need-to-know basis only.

Security Planning for At-Risk Employees
Some employees are known to be at risk for violence because of the nature of their jobs. Other employees can be at risk because they are subject to violence, threats, or harassment from a current or former spouse or partner or other non-employee. The Assistant Director will work with at-risk employees and their
supervisors to develop safety plans that address the specific risks the employees may face while at work.

PROCEDURE

Identification of Violent Behaviors/Acts

Prohibited conduct includes, but is not limited to:
- Injuring another person physically;
- Engaging in behavior that creates a reasonable fear of injury in another person;
- Engaging in behavior that subjects another individual to extreme emotional distress;
- Possessing, or using a weapon while on BDVP premises or engaged in BDVP business;
- Damaging property intentionally;
- Threatening to injure an individual or damage property; and
- Committing injurious acts motivated by, or related to, domestic violence, sexual harassment, or sexual assault.

Responsibility of Employees

- Take seriously the responsibility to maintain a safe workplace.
- Report immediately all violence within BDVP.
- BDVP will try to notify staff in all locations by E-Mail and Voice Mail or as location permits in instances where a weapon is involved.

Management of Violent Behaviors/Acts

General Considerations
- Do not make counter threats or humiliate the individual threatening violence.
- Initiate efforts to promote a safe environment for the individual threatened, as appropriate.
- Maintain appropriate confidentiality.

Managing Employees Who Exhibit Violent Behaviors
- Employees accused of violent, threatening, harassing, or intimidating behavior may be subject to disciplinary actions up to and including termination.

Managing Visitors Who Exhibit Violent Behavior
- Visitors exhibiting violent, threatening, harassing, or intimidating behavior will be asked to leave the premises and reported to the Lexington/Fayette Police Department.
Recommended Response to Violent Behaviors/Acts

- All employees, including management, shall take action to address all work-related occurrences involving threats of violence, implied or direct, by employees, vendors, visitors, and clients.
- Notify Executive Director for assistance in securing the scene and investigation of the occurrence.
- Take appropriate measures to reduce the risk of harm to persons and/or property and to preserve any physical evidence.

- Employees who sustain an injury as a result of a violent act should receive prompt medical evaluation/treatment. Psychological counseling through outside referrals is available regardless of the severity of injury. Additionally, debriefing sessions are encouraged for co-workers. When a work-related incident occurs, an Employee Incident/Accident Report form should be completed by the employee or her/his supervisor.

The Threat Assessment Team will investigate the incident as soon as possible. The investigation should include, but not limited to:
- An interview of the reporting party to obtain information regarding who exhibited the violent behavior;
- What was said or done;
- When/where this occurred;
- Name of witness(es) to threat or misconduct;
- Specific information to describe the event.
- At the conclusion of the investigation appropriate action will be taken which may be administrative or legal. Individual victims of violence may pursue criminal actions against perpetrators.

Support for Employees who are Victims of Violence

Victims of violent incidents might have to contend with a variety of medical, psychological, and legal consequences. BDVP accommodates current staff, students, and volunteers who become victims of workplace violence, rape/sexual assault or domestic violence by:
- Providing intervention services through BDVP as appropriate for the victim.
- Referring victims to appropriate community resources such as medical, counseling services, victim advocacy groups, and legal aid.
- In cooperation with the victim, outside agencies may be contracted to provide confidential intervention services.
- Providing flexible work hours in accordance with BDVP policies.
- Cooperating with law enforcement personnel in the investigation of the crime committed on BDVP premises and the prosecution of the offender.
- Providing a debriefing for employees after a serious violence occurrence to report what happened and what steps are being taken by BDVP to support affected employees.
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN THE WORKPLACE

Employees who are involved in relationships or situations which are violent, potentially violent, or abusive are strongly encouraged to seek confidential assistance through BDVP. Resources and referrals are available to employees involved in violent/abusive situations.

Employees who have obtained “Emergency Protective Orders” or Restraining Orders on another person are strongly encouraged to notify their supervisor and Executive Director of the situation. This information is for the protection of all employees.

- All employees who commit violent acts or who otherwise violate this policy are subject to corrective action or discipline, up to and including termination of employment per policy.
- BDVP will seek the prosecution of all those who engage in violence on its premises or against its employees while they are engaged in employer business.
September 9, 2013

Ms. Marcia Roth
Executive Director
Mary Byron Project
10401 Linn Station Road
Louisville, KY 40223

RE: Enclosed materials

Dear Marcia:

We were thrilled to learn our agency had been chosen as a semi-finalist for your Celebrating Solutions Award. On behalf of our staff and program participants, I have enclosed the requested additional information for the review committee. Should you have any questions or require further information, please do not hesitate to contact me directly at darlene.thomas@bdvp.org or 859-519-1900. We look forward to hearing from you.

Most sincerely,

Darlene Thomas, M.S.S.W
Executive Director
Mary Byron Project  
Celebrating Solutions Award  
10401 Linn Station Road  
Louisville, KY 40223  

Dear Award Selection Committee:  

It is a pleasure for me to write this recommendation on behalf of the Bluegrass Domestic Violence Program (BDVP) in support of its nomination for the Celebrating Solutions Award. A few weeks ago, I had the pleasure of visiting BDVP and touring its farm in Fayette County, Kentucky. The mission and activities of the agency’s farm program align with two of my initiatives as First Lady of Kentucky - helping victims of domestic violence rebuild their lives and promoting awareness about the benefits of locally grown produce.  

During my visit to the farm, I was impressed by the agency’s commitment to serving field-to-table meals in its emergency shelter. Two local chefs had stopped by the shelter on the day of my visit and were demonstrating the preparation of easy dinner recipes using ingredients harvested from the farm that morning.  

Many emergency shelters must often prepare meals from frozen, processed food sources because their budgets cannot accommodate the costs associated with the purchase of fresh produce. BDVP’s farm program circumvents the financial barriers to nutritious meals by growing the food just a short walk from the agency’s kitchen. By growing gardens in their backyard, BDVP is helping Kentucky’s most vulnerable families have access to fresher, healthier produce.  

When I consider the effects of domestic violence on the health of victimized adults and children, the importance of BDVP’s innovative farm program is underscored. The health ramifications of domestic violence extend far beyond physical and emotional injury. Long-term health consequences often include chronic pain, gastrointestinal disease, and eating disorders.  

BDVP’s farm program helps adults and children heal from domestic violence by modeling healthy eating habits, and perhaps more importantly, the agency is providing families with tools and resources to integrate these habits in their lives after they leave the shelter. In addition to the benefits of the field-to-table programming, I honor BDVP’s commitment to conserving the land that surrounds its shelter property and marketing products made from produce grown on the farm.
I look forward to witnessing the growth of the program’s marketing efforts as a Kentucky Proud producer, and enthusiastically support BDVP’s farm program. BDVP’s staff and residents are committed to the benefits of eating fresh, homegrown food. This program provides solutions that are worthy of national celebration!

Thank you in advance for your favorable consideration of its nomination.

Sincerely,

Jane K. Beshear

Jane K. Beshear
September 5, 2013

Mary Byron Project
Celebrating Solutions Award
10401 Linn Station Rd.
Louisville, KY 40223

Dear Award Selection Committee:

I am writing in support of the nomination of the Bluegrass Domestic Violence Program’s farm project for a Celebrating Solutions Award. I am a Professor of Sociology and Chair of the Sociology Department at the University of Kentucky. I also hold the Judi Conway Patton Endowed Chair in the Center for Research on Violence against Women (CRVAV) at UK. Along with my colleague, Dr. Diane Follingstad, a forensic and clinical psychologist and the Women’s Circle Endowed Chair in the CRVAV, I am conducting an empirical evaluation of the therapeutic impact of the farm project.

Our evaluation has two stages. We have completed the first stage in which we interviewed all full-time BDVP staff regarding the history of the farm project, their individual involvement in it, and their opinions about the farm project and its relationship to other programs for shelter residents, and their vision of the future of the farm. The second stage of the evaluation, which we expect to begin in January, 2014, will involve measuring the therapeutic impact of participation in various farming and farm-related activities on shelter residents. I will not go into the research design of this evaluation. Instead, let me emphasize that the BDVP administration invited us to conduct this evaluation so they could empirically assess the farm’s therapeutic effects. Through our interviews with staff, Dr. Follingstad and I discovered that staff members had anecdotal evidence that shelter residents who participated in the farm, either directly through farming activities (e.g., planting, weeding, harvesting) or indirectly by cooking harvested produce or using farm products in craft projects (e.g., making lip balm), experienced positive outcomes, such as decreased use of alcohol and drugs, increased self-confidence, a greater sense of self-efficacy, and reduced negative rumination and depression. As a result, even staff members who had initially been reluctant to endorse the farm project, enthusiastically supported it at the time of our interviews because of the positive outcomes they observed in farm project participants.

One specific aspect of the farm project that impressed staff as most beneficial is the farm stipend program, which provides shelter residents who participate directly in farming activities with a small wage. The goals of the farm stipend program are to offer residents economic support, build job skills, and increase independence and self-sufficiency – all of which have been shown in research to increase the likelihood that women who leave abusive partners will remain free of violence.
It is to their credit that the BDVP administration did not wish to simply reply on anecdotal evidence in support of the farm project, but instead has sought to better understand the psychological and social mechanisms by which the farm project improves battered women’s outcomes and improves healing from trauma. They initiated the evaluation we are doing; and they are true partners in the evaluation process. They not only want to know what about the farm project “works,” but also how the project may be improved for future generations of clients. Consequently, the evaluation Dr. Follingstad and I are conducting will provide empirically based data on psychological, social and economic outcomes, but also equip BDVP staff with the skills to conduct ongoing evaluation moving forward. From my perspective as a sociologist and criminologist, these are among the most outstanding characteristics of the project specifically, and of BDVP generally: the will to identify through rigorous empirical research the mechanisms and processes that best contribute to the program’s success and to ensure continued success in the future through ongoing evaluation. It would surely be far easier to accept the anecdotal evidence of success and keep doing what one has been doing. But BDVP staff and administration want to know how and why the farm project is successful, with the commitment to continuous refinement in order to best meet the needs of the women and children they serve.

In sum, I strongly recommend the BDVP farm project for the Mary Byron Project Celebrating Solutions Award. BDVP seeks solutions to a daunting, entrenched problem in our society – intimate partner violence and its effects on women and children – but does so not by doing “what’s always been done,” but rather by implementing innovative responses that are systematically and rigorously evaluated and refined. In my view, as a social scientists who specializes in violence against women, the BDVP stands as a model to battered women’s services nationally. They are exemplary and truly deserving of the Celebrating Solutions Award.

I thank you for your time and consideration of my remarks. Of course, if you have any questions or wish to discuss my comments further, please do not hesitate to contact me, either by email (claire.renzetti@uky.edu) or by phone (859-257-6424).

Sincerely,

Claire M. Renzetti, Ph.D.
Judi Conway Patton Endowed Chair for Studies of Violence against Women
Professor and Chair of Sociology
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PREVENTION BOARD

Mary Byron Project
Celebrating Solutions Award
10401 Linn Station Road
Louisville, KY 40223

August 29, 2013

Dear Selection Committee,

I have served as Executive Director of the Domestic Violence Prevention Board, Fayette County’s local coordinating council, since its inception in 1987. In this capacity, I have worked closely with the staff of the Bluegrass Domestic Violence Program (BDVP), as well as many victims/survivors who have been served by their programs. The BDVP farm program has proven to be, in my opinion, an extremely innovative and effective approach to helping victims negotiate the difficult path from victim to survivor. I am pleased to be writing in support of the program’s nomination for the Mary Byron Foundation Celebrating Solutions Award.

There are numerous positive and important aspects to BDVP’s farm program but I will only highlight a few to illustrate its value to victims/survivors and the Bluegrass Region. On a community level, the farm program helped to integrate the BDVP shelter and all of its programs into the communities it serves, most of which are rural and have a strong agricultural base. Many individuals and communities groups have connected with the BDVP and the victims/survivors it serves through the farm program by volunteering and working side-by-side with residents, by donating to the program or purchasing BDVP farm produce, and by attending educational programs hosted by the BDVP related to the farm program. By connecting with the community in these nontraditional ways, the BDVP has raised the awareness and understanding of many people it never would have reached through more traditional community outreach efforts.

Of course, the greatest benefit of the farm program is to victims/survivors. I have been an organic gardener for my entire adult life and know well the therapeutic value of digging your hands into the soil, planting seeds, nurturing small plants and then harvesting and preserving the fruits and vegetables they produce. The farm offers a nontraditional approach for victims/survivors to begin the healing process and often provides a segue to connect with support groups, nutrition and cooking programs, and other therapeutic and healing activities offered by the BDVP. In addition, many of the women who are served by the BDVP come from rural communities and gardening is something familiar and comfortable that can help to normalize their shelter experience and the fact that they and their children have been uprooted from their own homes and gardens.
The BDVP farm program sustains the residents while in-shelter, provides a tangible example of self-sufficiency and small enterprise, and increases community engagement and support of BDVP programs. It is a win-win program that is deserving of consideration for this coveted award.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Teri Faragher, Executive Director
tfaragher@windstream.net
"Today I enjoyed weeding in the strawberry patches. It felt good to be up
and in the morning air. This time gave me a chance to think."

M., Survivor and Farm Stipend Participant
“When you plant something from a seed and you’re able to watch it grow—and you know it’s not only going to benefit people in house, but people outside of here—it’s a really good feeling.”

-Donna Hill, Survivor & Farm Stipend Participant

**What is the approximate number of individuals served annual by the applicant or nominee?**

From July 1, 2012 to June 30, 2013, our agency provided emergency shelter and concomitant services for 277 adult and child shelter residents. At any given time, about half of the residents in our shelter are children. The average stay at our shelter is 53 days. During the same year, we also provided nonresidential advocacy services for 4,545 individuals and answered 5,389 calls to our 24-hour hotline.

**How many paid staff and volunteers are used to administer the nominated program?**

Our agency employs 16 full-time direct service, three part-time direct service, and four full-time administrative staff. Included in the agency’s full-time direct service personnel are two full-time staff with focus on the day-to-day operations of our farm program. Jessica Ballard, our Farm Advocate, manages planting, cultivation, and harvest. Jessica, who holds a degree in Agriculture from the University of Kentucky, also coordinates volunteer service groups, marketing, and order fulfillment. Christina Lane, our Field-to-Table Advocate, prepares meals featuring fresh produce from the farm. She also coordinates the farm stipend project and assists with maintenance of the fields. Both of the aforementioned staff also plan and provide regular support groups and education classes related to nature-based healing, nutritious food preparation and preservation, and job skills development.

Darlene Thomas, Executive Director, and Diane Fleet, Assistant Director, oversee the farm program’s strategic direction and ensure its integration in the agency’s programming, partnerships, and development. Alongside these staff, the agency’s Director of Operations and Director of Finance provide grant and financial management for the farm. Community volunteers and college interns provide an average of 61 hours of service on the farm each month.

**Are there past awards, accolades, and grants conferred upon the applicant or nominee that would further exemplify its success in combating intimate partner violence?**

As a member of the Kentucky Domestic Violence Association, we receive federal awards via the Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services and state funds allocated by the Kentucky General Assembly for support of or work. Further support of our emergency shelter and housing services are provided through the Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government and Kentucky Housing Corporation via the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Services. Awards for our nonresidential services and legal advocacy are provided by the Kentucky Justice and Public Safety Cabinet via the U.S. Department of Justice with funding from the Victims of Crime Act and Violence Against Women Act.

We receive local funding awards as a Partner Agency with the Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government; Heart of Kentucky United Way; and
United Way of the Bluegrass. Additionally, several local Fiscal Courts award annual funding to our agency. As a Berea College Appalachian Fund Affiliate Organization, we receive funding in support of our shelter services for victims from counties in the Appalachian Region.

Our farm program’s primary funding partner is Grow Appalachia. In partnership with Berea College and JP’s Peace, Love, and Happiness Foundation, Grow Appalachia is committed to supporting the production and sale of fresh, healthy food in the Appalachian Region of Kentucky. In addition to funding of our Farm Advocate’s salary and benefits, Grow Appalachia assists with marketing, training, technical assistance, and community networking for the farm. David Cooke, Director of Grow Appalachia, has said: “At no site have we seen a more dramatic or significant influence in the broader community than at [Bluegrass Domestic Violence Program].”

United Way of the Bluegrass provides an annual grant for purchase of equipment and seeds, and various private and corporate awards are designated for the farm program. For example, last year Toyota Motor Manufacturing Kentucky (TMMK) in Georgetown awarded a one-time project grant to the farm for purchase of supplies to prepare field-to-table meals in shelter and market value-added products such as jams, flower arrangements, and honey to the community. We have received two grants from LG&E and KU for the “Plant for the Planet” program, an effort to encourage nonprofit organizations and local government to plant trees in the community.

Past honors include several Best Practice commendations from the Kentucky Domestic Violence Association, including recognitions for a public theatre and discussion project; statewide work to protect dependent children of domestic violence victims; and implementation of a phased programming model that honors the journey of healing experienced by victims. We also have been recognized by the National Credit Builders Association for diligence and success in credit repair. This summer, an online public vote helped our farm and field-to-table programming efforts feature in Episode 7 of the kNOWMORE video series, an educational film project by Prosper Media Group. This video series raises awareness for Kentucky nonprofit agencies and challenges viewers to imagine a community without the services provided by the organizations. The resulting video was broadcast on Kentucky Education Television (KET).

We recently received notification of two additional awards for the farm. On October 2, the Center for Nonprofit Excellence in Louisville, Kentucky will award our agency with the 2013 Pyramid of Excellence in Social Innovation for integration of the farm program with traditional advocacy and services for domestic violence survivors. On October 23, during the annual Kentucky Nonprofit Leadership Forum, the Kentucky Nonprofit Network will award our agency with the 2013 Innovative Nonprofit Award for our farm and field-to-table programming.
If funding were not an issue, what changes or additions would you make to your program in the future? What are the practical and lofty long-term goals of your program?

If funding were not an issue, we would immediately invest in at least two, maybe three, full-time farm program staff; an online marketing and order management system to encourage sales and stay in communication with farm supporters; a van to assist with delivery of produce and products to purchasers.

Our practical five-year goal is to achieve $100,000 in annual sales and become a self-sustaining social enterprise. We have outlined our strategy to achieve this goal in the next section. Our lofty long-term goal for the farm is to establish a development partnership with a national manufacturing company to help us design, patent, and market value-added products from our farm. Such a partnership would provide expertise, connections, and funding necessary for a concerted, large-scale marketing effort.

In this lofty vision, the manufacture and distribution of our products could provide full-time employment for victims of domestic violence as they work to rebuild self-sufficient lives as survivors. We envision longer-term transitional housing units on our property where survivors and their children could reside while building job skills and current work experience on the farm.

Profits from the large-scale market of farm products would provide a sustainable source of undesignated funding to support our traditional shelter, outreach, and other advocacy services for victims of domestic violence, thus diversifying our funding model and mitigating risks associated with cuts in government-based funding.

How large is the stipend you provide to clients in the work program? How many hours per week must they work on the farm in order to receive the stipend?

Farm stipend participants agree to provide nine hours of work and one hour of reflection (through writing or photography) each week in exchange for a $40 cash stipend. Participants meet with farm staff to help design their stipend program experience. Although each participant's stipend experience is unique, all participants agree to "workplace" expectations such as reporting to the farm on-time, contributing to positive team environment, and assisting with the day-to-day activities on the farm.

Are non-resident clients eligible to participate in the stipend program?

Yes. Although non-resident clients are eligible to participate in the stipend program, the 17 counties we serve span several thousand square miles in central Kentucky. The expense that would be incurred by non-resident clients often exceeds the financial benefits of participation. With this said, we are currently creating a support group curriculum to further integrate the farm program in services provided to non-resident clients. The curriculum will include exploration of the benefits of nature-based healing; cost-savings related to growing your own food; and nutritional value of organically produced fruits and vegetables.

Do you currently have a strategic plan or direction for growth? What is the anticipated income from the farm program as it grows?

Yes. The past three years of the farm program have been dedicated to strengthening partnerships with funding and community organizations, thoughtfully integrating the farm with our existing model of program delivery, and exploring markets for production and sales. Our strategic plans for growth over the next five years include the following:

1.) Research empirical efficacy: In partnership with Dr. Claire Renzetti and Dr. Diane Follingstad, both with the University of Kentucky Department of Sociology, we have submitted application for funding to conduct primary research of our farm program. The resulting report will substantiate the program's effectiveness and areas for growth. Further, the findings will offer a best-practice framework to develop and share our farm program with domestic violence programs around the nation while providing empirical research to corroborate our statistical and anecdotal evidence of the farm's influence.

2.) Expand field-to-table programming: In the last year, our shelter kitchen has become a "no fry zone." Menus are planned to coordinate with the week's bountiful harvest from the farm. Instead of greasy and unhealthy foods, adult and child shelter residents prepare field-to-table dishes alongside our Field-to-Table advocate, such as vegetable lasagna, baked zucchini fries, garlic pesto tomato pasta, watermelon salsa, and butternut squash soup. Our goal in the coming year is to bolster this shift by further integrating nutrition education and healthy meal preparation in the shelter experience.

To this end, we recently forged a partnership with two local chefs to demonstrate, prepare, and serve simple recipes featuring produce from the farm for shelter residents. Based on the success of these pilot efforts, we are committed to expanding our partnerships with the culinary community to provide regular demonstrations and meal preparations in shelter. To integrate
nutritious meal preparation with our outreach clients, we are creating a plan to share baskets of seasonal produce with non-resident clients and engage chefs in demonstrations of easy-to-make recipes using shared vegetables, berries, and herbs from the farm during support groups.

3.) Re-name and re-brand agency to reflect trauma-informed care model: For the past year, we have been working with brand consultants to revise our agency’s branding and marketing to better align with our programming model’s emphasis on trauma informed care. We plan to launch our new name and revised brand effective October 1, 2013. Although our agency’s core mission, values, and services will remain the same, the way we talk about our work will change. Consider this example from copy of our new services brochure:

“The protection of a greenhouse nurtures plants so they grow healthy and strong, even in harsh weather or poor soil. In the same way, GreenHouse17 nurtures human beings, helping them grow and flourish and leave the trauma of abuse behind them. We are here to serve, support and shelter, in 17 counties.” Our new name also serves to situate the agency for growth of our marketing and sales of produce and products from the farm.

4.) Invest in value-added production and marketing: We recently received new funding from JP’s Peace, Love, and Happiness Foundation, earmarked existing funding from the United Way of the Bluegrass, and obtained commitments for match funding from Grow Appalachia to launch the first phase of our value-added marketing plan. This early phase of our value-added production plan includes the renovation of an existing outbuilding on our agency’s 40-acre property to create a commercial kitchen for the manufacture of consumable products for sale in the public marketplace, such as jams, pickles, salsas featuring fruits and vegetables grown on the farm.

The renovated building will also provide much-needed space to coordinate fulfillment of orders for our Kentucky-native flowers grown on the farm, one of our most successful farm products. The multipurpose space will also be used to facilitate gardening and production classes for shelter residents, nonresidential clients, and the general community; maintain an inventory of potatoes and onions, and other vegetables with long shelf-life; and dry flowers and herbs for use in salves and soaps.

Are resident children involved in any aspects of the farming?

Children are informally involved in all aspects of the farm program. They are introduced to the farm during the in-take process and encouraged to pick and eat berries and carrots from the community garden. It's not uncommon for a child to accompany a mother during a walk on the farm to pick tomatoes for a sandwich or flowers to decorate their room. Child residents also benefit from the field-to-table meals
prepared in shelter, enjoy healthy snacks of fruits and vegetables, and build a general appreciation of nutrition in the role of healthy decision-making during their stay in shelter. For many children in our shelter, the farm has provided the first beet, arugula, blackberry, or honey they have tasted. In a recent effort to engage children in the farm program, we grew popcorn on the farm. Many of the same children helped plant and harvest the corn they recently picked and popped to enjoy during a recent outdoor movie night in shelter.

**Is engagement in the farm purely voluntary on the part of the clients?**

Last year, 90% of adults residing in shelter more than a week participated in groups and other planned activities that applied farm-based perspectives. Although specific engagement in the farm is always voluntary for clients, all clients enjoy the tangential benefits of consuming field-to-table meals or just sitting on the back porch at dusk and gazing across beautiful farmland. The spirit of the farm’s trauma-informed care model has also inspired several support groups in shelter, including yoga, book, film discussion, tai chi, and drumming groups that provide clients with choices to determine their healing path.

**Did you have to purchase/acquire farming-related equipment to begin your program? How much of an initial investment did it require?**

From our early box garden endeavors through the launch of our farm program, we were fortunate to benefit from a groundswell of community support. This support was especially helpful in keeping our start-up costs quite low. University of Kentucky Department of Agriculture loaned us much of the necessary equipment, including a rotary hand tractor with attachments, which they later sold to us for a very affordable price. Another domestic violence program in our state gave us irrigation equipment that had been donated to their agency but they could not use. BB&T and Grow Appalachia donated materi-
Domestic violence programs and community-minded individuals from around the world—from Alaska to Australia and in urban-and suburban-communities—have contacted us with to discuss replication of our farm program. With modifications to scale, similar efforts could be launched in backyard, rooftop, and balcony gardens. Many urban governments have begun to partner with nonprofit and community organizations to maintain community gardens in vacant lots, an option that could provide a low-cost option for programs without green space of their own. Urban beekeeping, chicken cooperatives, and flower gardens could provide marketable production options for urban-based organizations. Community relationships, expert guidance (especially related to zoning regulations in an urban space), commitment to program integration, and exploration of marketable products connected to the specific region are key to replicating our farm program in any environment. We have begun development of a programming handbook to share with programs interested in modeling our program’s approach.

In what ways are diverse ethnic, cultural, and socio-economic populations served by your program?

Our agency and farm program serve a diverse ethnic, cultural, and socio-economic population reflective of the the Bluegrass Area Development District, a 17-county region in central Kentucky. Last year, an estimated 19% of our farm program participants identified as African-American; 13% identified as multi-race; and 5% identified as Asian, Pacific Islander, Native American, or other race. Approximately 18% of our clients are of Hispanic ethnicity. Nearly 99% of our shelter residents earn less than the median average income for the region. Approximately 22% of clients resided in rural communities directly prior to entering shelter. Of these rural clients, 6% were from Appalachian communities.

Further, we are committed to providing meaningful access to all services, including our farm program, for all persons regardless of their language of preference. To ensure meaningful access, the right to an interpreter is extended to all clients upon entry to our residential...
or nonresidential programs. All documents regarding expectations, rights, and responsibilities and/or requiring a signature are interpreted in full if a translated version in the client’s preferred language is not available. Four of our agency’s staff are native or fluent Spanish-speakers, and many more are able to converse comfortably in Spanish.

In a more general consideration, gardening and farming are activities that bridge cultural, ethnic, and socio-economic divisions. Adult clients from more urban areas fondly recall childhood memories of gardening with their grandparents. Many shelter residents from rural areas are from extended families with a history of cultivating and harvesting for a living. Perhaps, though, the strongest evidence of our farm program’s ability to address diverse populations happens in our kitchen. There’s nothing like the smell of a home-cooked meal to bring adults and children from different backgrounds together in one space. Preparing recipes in the same kitchen and sitting together around the table to enjoy the meal forges meaningful relationships for shelter residents. Shelter residents often prepare meals to celebrate cultural traditions with each other. When these same individuals have contributed to the planting, care, or harvest of the food being prepared, the cross-cultural bond is strengthened.

**Bittersweet**
*By R.L.*

I think it’s been amazing to see how wonderful all the plants, vegetables, flowers etc. have turned out in the garden lately. I have to admit that when it was twenty degrees outside and snowing and there I was planting seeds I thought to myself, “These people must be crazy…”

My favorite thing so far has been harvesting strawberries. They were so sweet and delicious. I sampled a couple as I went along. Anyway, even though the heat is crazy hot out there, I’ve still been enjoying learning all the new things about the garden and the different uses for all the types of fruits and vegetables. It’s been a really rewarding experience that I’m very thankful to have had a chance to participate in. It’s been very rewarding.

**Needing the garden**
*By K.*

When I got to the garden, I immediately liked it. The dew on the grass, the birds chirping, and the different colors. I gained a new appreciation for the food I eat. The love and dedication that it takes to produce this delicious food. I gardened with my great-grandfather until my teens, when hormones took precedence over soil, nature and hard work. I found that I loved it—everything. A fellow gardener asked me to help “rescue some flowers.” It was then that I saw them as living things. I appreciated that. I went on a spiritual journey the first day gardening and I look forward to going back…

*Please feel free to briefly share any additional information you may feel is helpful for our reviewers to know.*

We have selected a few reflections written by our farm stipend participants. They have given their permission to share these “field notes” with the public as a way of recognizing the meaningfulness of experiences on the farm.
**Keeping busy**

*By M.*

This week of gardening was a good week for observing finished patches after weeks and weeks of planting, watering, weeding, and composting. The whole garden was blooming and coming together nicely. The efforts of all the girls and their garden supervisors were never more noticeable or enjoyable to us than this week. The lettuce they harvested could have won awards!

We also had the opportunity to cut flowers from the garden and we did enjoy making arrangements for an event. We watered plants and picked peas too! I look forward to big, garden fresh spinach tonight! I also look forward to the medicinal effects of spinach too. Good stuff! Gardening was a good stress reliever.

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**Fresh just tastes better**

*By B.*

We harvested a ton of strawberries today and we have a ton left to harvest. We were going to harvest peas today but we didn’t have time, so we will probably do that tomorrow because they are ready to be picked. There is a chef coming tomorrow and she is going to teach us how to cook things straight from the garden to eat healthy.

I can’t wait because then we get to eat everything that is prepared. It is going to taste so good. I love using things fresh from the garden to cook with because it tastes so much better than things from the grocery store since it has no preservatives or pesticides. It would be great to see everybody go back to growing their own garden to eat from like the old days. When I was growing up that’s all I ate, even the meat came from the farm. It’s better for you and tastes better than what you get from a grocery store.

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**Having fun**

*By C.J.*

I had fun this week working on the farm. It was calming and exciting. I love learning new things. My dislikes this week snipping my finger while harvesting. Even though harvesting is my favorite thing so far. I love finding vegetables from last fall and feeding them to the horses. They enjoyed the carrots too. I am excited about next week can’t wait to see what it will bring.
BLUEGRASS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROGRAM
Farm Program Budget
FY 2013 (July 1 to June 30, 2013)

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<td>Indirect Costs - phones, computers, utilities, etc. (3%)</td>
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<td><strong>Total cash expenses</strong></td>
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Date: FEB 14 2005

BLUEGRASS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
PROGRAM INC
C/O KENTUCKY DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ASSOC
PO BOX 356
FRANKPORT, KY 40602

Employer Identification Number: 20-1965942
DLN: 17053026018025
Contact Person: JOHN J KOESTER
ID# 31364
Contact Telephone Number: (877) 829-5500

Accounting Period Ending: JUNE 30
Public Charity Status: 170(b)(1)(A)(vi)
Form 990 Required: YES
Effective Date of Exemption: NOVEMBER 3, 2004
Contribution Deductibility: YES
Advance Ruling Ending Date: JUNE 30, 2009

Dear Applicant:

We are pleased to inform you that upon review of your application for tax exempt status we have determined that you are exempt from Federal income tax under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Contributions to you are deductible under section 170 of the Code. You are also qualified to receive tax deductible bequests, devises, transfers or gifts under section 2055, 2106 or 2522 of the Code. Because this letter could help resolve any questions regarding your exempt status, you should keep it in your permanent records.

Organizations exempt under section 501(c)(3) of the Code are further classified as either public charities or private foundations. During your advance ruling period, you will be treated as a public charity. Your advance ruling period begins with the effective date of your exemption and ends with advance ruling ending date shown in the heading of the letter.

Shortly before the end of your advance ruling period, we will send you Form 8734, Support Schedule for Advance Ruling Period. You will have 90 days after the end of your advance ruling period to return the completed form. We will then notify you, in writing, about your public charity status.

Please see enclosed Information for Exempt Organizations Under Section 501(c)(3) for some helpful information about your responsibilities as an exempt organization.

Letter 1045 (DO/CG)
Sincerely,

Lois G. Lerner
Director, Exempt Organizations
Rulings and Agreements

Enclosures: Information for Organizations Exempt Under Section 501(c)(3)
Form 872-C

Letter 1045 (DO/CG)
Our records indicate that you were issued an advance ruling letter that treated you as a public charity, rather than a private foundation, during an advance ruling period that ends on the date indicated above. That letter required you to file IRS Form 8734 at the end of your advance ruling period to establish that you qualify as a public charity.

New IRS regulations changed the procedures governing your public charity status. You are no longer required to file Form 8734 at the end of the ruling period. The regulations also provide that donors can rely on your advance ruling letter with respect to your public charity status unless the IRS changes that status, based on the organization no longer meeting an applicable public support test, and publishes notice of the change.

If you have received Form 8734 from the IRS, please do not file it. Please keep your advance ruling letter along with this letter for your permanent records.

The regulations also changed the rules for computing public support, consistent with the redesigned Form 990, Return of Organization Exempt from Income Tax. For more information regarding those rules and the redesigned Form 990, please see the IRS website at www.irs.gov/oe.