



JUSTICE IN ACTION

VOLUME III, NO. 6



NEW DIRECTION *for* Mary Byron Project

As supporters of the Mary Byron Project you are well aware of our many, many accomplishments after 22 years as a national thought leader and innovator in the area of intimate partner violence.

Over the last 2 years, MBP has had the opportunity to reflect on the need to make our impact even greater. The board and founding members believe it is time to build on our work and on our vision by becoming partners with a national organization or entity in order to expand.

As we focus on finding the right partner, we recognize that the search will take some time. How long this takes is less important than getting it right. Victims and their families are ill-served by poorly thought through solutions, done in haste.

We will maintain our public facing web presence, and our local voice, while we pursue this exciting and groundbreaking future.

You will be hearing much more from us, and we hope to hear from you. You can find us through our website, and we expect to be in touch via email and social media too.

DO stay tuned. And thank you for ALL your support.

Meet Our Outstanding Volunteer

AN INTERVIEW WITH ABBY ASFAHL

This month, we are highlighting Abby Asfahl, who leads the Mary Byron Scholars Program at Assumption High School with such energy and brilliance; we don't know what we'd do without her. We're so excited to introduce her to all of you.

Occupation: School Counselor at Assumption High School

How long have you been involved with the Mary Byron Scholars Program? 10 years! I worked alongside Beth Hicks my first year at Assumption and took over the program when she retired a few years ago.

How did you get involved with the program? In college, my senior honors thesis project was on the topic of teen dating violence. When I started working at Assumption, I knew right away I wanted to be involved with the Mary Byron Scholars Program and Green Dot, our other violence prevention program.

What inspired your passion with the cause of ending dating violence? As I mentioned, teen dating violence was an area of study for me in college. I learned a lot about the topic while doing my research. Then, while I was in grad school, my cousin's very close friend was murdered by a former dating partner. That really hit home.

Why do you think the work of the Scholars is important? Every year that I work at Assumption, I am more passionate about the work of the Mary Byron Scholars because I think education is one of the most powerful forms of prevention. I love our students and want them to find relationships that are safe and respectful, and that bring them joy. While education on this topic is certainly not a guarantee that our students will not experience an abusive or unhealthy relationship, it increases the likelihood that they will be able to recognize early warning signs and seek support in safely ending relationships that aren't healthy. I hope that talking openly about it also decreases the stigma for people who find themselves in unhealthy relationships and need support.

What is your favorite memory or accomplishment of the Scholars in the past? My favorite program that we do is the Mission Week presentation for our sophomores each year. The Scholars do a wonderful job providing information, and we are so grateful to the two guest speakers who add so much to our program: Mary's mother, Pat Byron, and Jillian Nethery.

Tell us about your family: I have been married for ten years to my husband, Jeff, and we are the parents to two wonderful girls, Julia (4) and Emerson (10 months). We also love our fur baby - our orange tabby, Queso.

What is your favorite book? I love to read and find it impossible to pick just one favorite book. However, one of the books I read within the last couple years that I still think about it (and highly recommend) is *The Book of Longings* by Sue Monk Kidd.

What do you like to do for fun? Read, spend time with friends and family, listen to podcasts, and enjoy the outdoors with my girls

What are the best toppings for a pizza? Pepperoni and banana peppers!

Anything else you want to tell us about your involvement with MBP, your other work, or yourself personally that you think our readers might be interested to know? I feel really fortunate to have the opportunity to contribute to creating a safer world, and working in a high school certainly lends itself to some incredible opportunities to do so. However, I always like to remind people that we all have the power to change the world we live in. We don't have to (and shouldn't) just stand by and wait for someone else to do the work. Perhaps our change won't be on a grand scale, but it makes a difference to the people in our sphere of influence. Imagine what could happen on a grand scale if we all owned that responsibility. I find that idea inspiring and it keeps me energized for the work I do.

SURVIVORS SPEAK

Testimonials from MBP Clients

“ Thanks as always for your time and support. Being able to reach out to you is such a great resource and gives me a sense of hope that we have those in our corner. ”

-J.D.



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