



Domestic Violence Victors Society

"The power of my voice was within me all along, but D2V provided a safe space to learn how to use it."

March 5, 2015

Donor Contact Name
Contact Title
Avon Foundation for Women
777 Third Avenue
New York, NY 10017

Dear Donor:

On behalf of domestic violence survivors across the country, the Domestic Violence Victors Society (D2V) respectfully requests your consideration of a \$100,000 grant to establish the Cultural Storytelling for Survivors Series. In an effort to generate awareness of domestic violence and to increase access to alternative and community-centric forms of victim recovery, D2V will collaborate with local stakeholders on the Meskwaki Reservation in Tama, Iowa to develop and implement a storytelling-based program for recovery services and bystander training. The two-year program will focus on bridging the domestic violence response gap between mainstream communities and tribally controlled lands, including implementation of therapeutic storytelling services for survivors and their families, administration of victim sensitivity training for bystanders, and dissemination of best adaptive practices. A grant from the Avon Foundation for Women will offer rural American Indians the resources necessary to create new community narratives around domestic violence, helping to break the current culture of silence that inhibits victims from speaking up and seeking services.

Organization Background

The Domestic Violence Victors Society was founded in July 2010 by a collective of domestic violence survivors, business leaders, community health professionals, and social activists concerned about the culture of denial that currently permeates our society's awareness of and response to domestic violence. An assessment of the domestic violence recovery services field showed a pronounced disparity in the response for victims and families in rural areas. It was also found that domestic violence in these areas was compounded through various socioeconomic circumstances prevalent in rural populations. D2V's mission is to provide alternative and community-centric recovery services and bystander training for rural communities as a means of generating a societal shift toward increased awareness of domestic violence and support for victims and their families.

D2V's core program, the Storytellers for Survivors Series, works with victims and their families to utilize storytelling as a therapy for healing and a method for generating awareness. Storytelling is accomplished in a way that is reflective of the community's customs, traditions, and heritage, in addition to remaining cognizant of the unique social structure of tight-knit and mostly conservative rural communities. Survivors and their families participate in a community-led storytelling series that promotes healing through an enhanced awareness of personal narrative and the connection of shared story. Therapists facilitate sessions alongside local survivors who have completed a specialized training. A second program track was recently added that offers victim sensitivity training to community bystanders of domestic violence as an accompaniment to the Storytelling for Survivors Series. Initial results demonstrate that bystander training helps to enhance the safety and power of the storytelling forums by working to create a new community-wide narratives regarding domestic violence.

Since 2010, more than 2,000 survivors, family members, and bystanders have participated in D2V's programming. D2V recently received full nonprofit status and is celebrating this achievement by establishing



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new partnerships with tribal communities in our focus areas. The Avon Foundation Cultural Storytelling for Survivors Series will serve as a pilot program for bridging the gap in services between the mainstream United States and Indian Country. In addition to D2V's dedication to providing critical recovery services and training for rural communities in the field of domestic violence, an equally strong commitment is maintained to donor accountability and transparency. D2V is a fiscally responsible organization and meets all qualifications as a member of the BBB Wise Giving Alliance, in addition to holding a four-star rating on Charity Navigator. As a result of support from donors like the Avon Foundation for Women, D2V is able to provide critical and life-changing programming, while helping to rewrite the narrative of domestic violence in the United States.

Statement of Need

In spite of increased attention surrounding domestic violence due to recent high profile events, survivors and their families still face a culture of denial in the United States that inhibits healing and recovery while perpetuating the cycle of violence for future generations. This culture of silence is even more pronounced in rural areas and, in particular, on American Indian reservations. Rural areas and reservations both face a dearth of first responders, service providers, and advocates due to social and physical isolation coupled with socioeconomic challenges such as high poverty, lack of health insurance, little education, less political autonomy, and increased rates of alcoholism and substance abuse. Survivors and their families are lucky to locate or access even the most basic of services, let alone alternative forms of therapy and training such as those offered by D2V.

The largest gap in rural domestic violence services is faced by those who are located on Indian reservations across the country. At best measure, American Indian women are assaulted at rates exceeding 50 percent more than the remaining U.S. population. (It is difficult to even offer a complete picture of domestic violence in Indian Country, as no agency has been charged with collecting this data.) Further complicating this reality is the fact that American Indians are most often victimized by members of a race other than their own and prosecution of non-tribal members for crimes committed on reservation land is just beginning to be taken seriously by the federal government. Given the multiple socioeconomic risk factors that are often present in American Indian communities, the prevalence of post-traumatic stress disorder is also substantially higher than in the general population.

In response to these disparities, D2V seeks to expand our service focus by partnering with reservation stakeholders to implement culturally relevant versions of the Storytelling for Survivor Series. Storytelling is becoming increasingly popular as a therapy for trauma. When survivors are allowed the space and support to give voice to their stories, these experiences become shared rather than theirs to hold alone. Storytelling is a traditional form of communication in many Native cultures and has been used as a methodology by tribes across the country to encourage economic, social, and cultural revitalization. In partnership with the Meskwaki Nation in Iowa, the Avon Foundation Cultural Storytelling for Survivors Series will work to bridge the gap in response services and training for rural reservation communities. In line with D2V's engagement philosophy, program development and implementation will be guided by members of the local community with advocacy and grant management assistance provided by D2V. Together with the Avon Foundation for Women, D2V seeks to change the narrative of domestic violence in the United States one community at a time.



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Budget

Budget Category	Amount
Storytelling Program Sessions 10 sessions per year x 2 years	\$50,000
Victim Sensitivity Training 2 trainings per year x 2 years	\$25,000
Evaluation & Assessment Consultant Fee	\$15,000
Administrative Fees (10%) \$5,000 per year x 2 years	\$10,000
GRANT TOTAL	\$100,000

If approved for funding from the Avon Foundation for Women, a total of \$90,000 will be dedicated to storytelling-based domestic violence survivor recovery services and bystander victim sensitivity training for American Indians on rural reservations. This grant will directly benefit the Meskwaki Nation in Tama, Iowa and will be administered in collaboration with tribal community members and local service providers. Of the total grant, \$50,000 will fund a total of ten community-led storytelling sessions per year, \$25,000 will fund victim sensitivity training for community bystanders, and \$15,000 will fund evaluation and dissemination of best practices. The remaining \$10,000 will be used to cover expenses inherent in administering the Avon Foundation Cultural Storytelling for Survivors Series. By providing funding for administrative fees, the Avon Foundation for Women will help ensure that D2V is able to continue offering efficient and effective services to survivors of domestic violence.

Conclusion

Storytelling helps us to understand our experiences and create meaning in our own lives and in those around us. By incorporating storytelling into domestic violence recovery services and bystander training, the Domestic Violence Victors Society offers survivors and their families the ability to help rewrite public narratives and break the culture of silence that permeates this deadly epidemic. The Avon Foundation for Women will make its own mark on this narrative by establishing the Cultural Storytelling for Survivors Series to develop and implement culturally relevant storytelling-based recovery services and bystander training on the Meskwaki Reservation in Tama, Iowa. Thank you for your consideration to fund the Avon Foundation Cultural Storytelling for Survivors Series. If you should have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me via email at natashadrakegrants@gmail.com or directly at 515/669-2922.

Best regards,

Natasha R. Drake
Executive Director
Domestic Violence Victors Society
"Not a Victim, But a Victor"