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OPEN ARMS RECEIVES PART OF \$3 MILLION NATIONWIDE GRANT FROM THE MARY KAY FOUNDATION TO COMBAT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN FINDLAY

Domestic violence shelters receive much needed cash infusion in light of the economic downturn

FINDLAY, OHIO October 5, 2009 – Open Arms Domestic Violence and Rape Crisis Services has been chosen to receive a \$20,000 grant from The Mary Kay Foundation as part of the organization's annual \$3 million national domestic violence grant program. Open Arms is one of 150 domestic violence organizations participating in the program. The grant will be used for shelter operations.

“This grant is such a blessing to Open Arms,” said Beth Meeks, Executive Director. “It couldn't have come at a better time.” Open Arms realized last fall that the economy was about to create a deficit in its operating budget. They predicted about a \$60,00 hole. That amount doubled in the middle of 2009 through uncollectable client fees and state cuts that trickled down. “We have already lost two full-time positions, cut the hours of 38% of our staff and renegotiated everything from utility costs to health insurance. After all that we still had a gap.” In a sort of ‘hail Mary’ attempt Meeks applied for grant funding from several sources. “We’ve applied for the Mark Kay money in past years but the competition is so tight we never got it.” “We did receive some stimulus money which is helping but we still had a deficit. I was literally staring at the hole in the finances and trying to figure out what to do next when the email came from the Mary Kay Foundation.”

Besides the loss in income Open Arms has had to deal with increased expenses due to lost donations. Meeks explained that in 2007 Open Arms received \$22,000 in in-kind donations like cleaning and paper supplies and other household goods. This year that amount is less than \$7,000, meaning the agency has had to buy those things. “Its put a strain on our budget. But the Mary Kay money gives us hope that we can hold steady through this year and next if we can just maintain some local donations.”

The economic climate has not only caused a decrease in donations but can also be attributed to an increase in the need for domestic violence services. In May 2009, *Mary Kay's Truth About Abuse* survey

of domestic violence shelters across the country revealed some alarming results: three out of four domestic violence shelters report an increase in women seeking assistance from abuse since September 2008, a major turning point in the U.S. economy. The survey data directly connects the downturn in the economy to an increase in domestic violence.

“In light of the economic downturn and alarming increases in domestic violence, The Mary Kay Foundation’s mission is more critical than ever before. Open Arms has helped so many women and their families in the Hancock County area. We know they will use these funds to benefit even more domestic violence survivors and their children and help end domestic violence,” said Jennifer Cook, The Mary Kay Foundation board member.

Open Arms Domestic Violence & Rape Crisis services is a nonprofit agency supported in part by the Hancock County United Way. Open Arms provides six program services to those living and working in the greater Hancock County community. The six programs include Rape Crisis Services, Child Advocacy, Violence Recovery Project, Outreach Services, the Harmony House Visitation & Exchange program, and Emergency Shelter Services. The 24-hour Crisis Hotline is 419-422-4766. Join us at our blog at openarmsfindlay.blogspot.com for updates on our everyday life here at Open Arms.

About the Mary Kay Foundation

The Mary Kay Foundation was created in 1996, and its mission is two-fold: to fund research of cancers affecting women and to help prevent domestic violence while raising awareness of the issue. Since the Foundation’s inception, it has awarded nearly \$22 million to shelters and programs addressing domestic violence prevention and \$13 million to cancer researchers and related causes throughout the United States. To learn more about The Mary Kay Foundation, log on to www.marykayfoundation.org or call 1-877-MKCARES (652-2737).