

In the February 2nd Jefferson Post article entitled “Feud Develops Over Shelter” and in an opinion piece in the February 16th edition entitled “Support the Shelter, Answer Concerns”, there have been questions raised about A Safe Home for Everyone (A.S.H.E), the domestic violence and sexual assault program of the Ashe County Partnership for Children (ACPC). On behalf of the Partnership’s Board of Directors, I would like to take just a moment to clarify issues the two articles raised and to reassure the community about our services.

First and foremost, A.S.H.E. continues its work today as it did yesterday. Since its inception 14 years ago, our goal for A.S.H.E. has been simple: to provide quality services to the victims of domestic violence and sexual assault and their children in Ashe County. We are committed to this mission and continue to provide a wide range of services for our clients and for the community at-large.

Second, we are concerned about the confusion that both articles may cause for not only the public, but for victims of domestic violence who are looking for support and are not sure which way to turn. We want to assure those people who may need our services that we continue to be here to support and assist them. Our 24-hour hotline is offered to ensure that assistance is accessible at any time to any person. Our shelter is open and available to ensure a secure environment for people transitioning from often dangerous situations to a new, safer life.

As for the “questions” that were alluded to in the February 16th opinion piece, ACPC assures the media and, more importantly, our neighbors here in Ashe County that we invite any and all questions. ACPC’s finances, including A.S.H.E., are audited by the State of North Carolina on an annual basis. Last month, we received our latest clean audit and shared that with the Jefferson Post prior to publication of the articles.

Strengthening the procedures of A Safe Home for Everyone, with the overarching goal of ensuring the safety and security of our clients and staff is a constant priority for the Ashe Partnership for Children and our A.S.H.E staff. We continue to look at the security of our shelter and have made significant improvements to the facility, all with an eye toward safety and security. Yes, such safeguards are sometimes an inconvenience to our clients and enforcing them may occasionally mean that an arrangement other than the shelter must be made for a victim. However, enforcement of these policies is crucial for the safety of our clients and to remain in compliance with best practices established by the North Carolina Coalition Against Domestic Violence, the North Carolina Coalition Against Sexual Assault, and the Council for Women.

We invite the community to attend Ashe County Partnership for Children's monthly board meetings, held at 10 a.m. on the third Monday of each month at Family Central. Or give our staff a call at 982-4588. We encourage any questions you may have about A.S.H.E. or any program of the Partnership.

And most importantly, we remind anyone suffering from domestic violence or sexual assault that we stand ready to help. The Ashe County Partnership for Children and the A.S.H.E. staff are determined to stop this pervasive problem in our community, but until it does stop, we remain committed to ensuring a safe home for everyone where we can continue to create hope together.