

SENIOR REPORTER

VOLUME 41, NUMBER 9

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SENIOR REPORTER

Online@www.Sunset-Publishing.com

SEPTEMBER 2015

Margaret Bayston Helps Victims of Domestic Violence

By Carine Nadel

Margaret Bayston is known in Orange County as a "game changer". As Chief Executive Director of Laura's House since 2001 she has made it her life's work to help victims of domestic violence.

Bayston started with Laura's House as a volunteer in their legal advocacy department shortly after moving to the states from England with her husband Richard in 1997.

A year later, Bayston was hired as legal advocate and developed the legal department, hired additional staff and was promoted to Operations Director from 1999 to October 2000.

Since finding her passion at the Ladera Ranch based non-profit, Bayston has seen the

organization help over 50,000 women and children and has made sure the programs include psychological, emotional, organizational, work life and so many more classes both in the safety of a shelter and out in the community.

In England, Bayston was a fellow of the Institute of Legal Executives at Leeds

University. Her work ethic is evident both in and out of the office. Besides being at the helm of Laura's House she has also seen the opening of not one but two resale stores and has raised \$1.5 million at the yearly gala plus received a \$50,000 grant from the Robin McGraw Revelation Founda-



Margaret Bayston

tion. Bayston has also linked a partnership with Wet Seal, a national clothing chain that brought about \$15,000 in donation.

"I believe that a positive attitude and a strong sense of curiosity are important to being successful at work. I believe in teamwork and building strong, trusting relationships with people.

"When it comes to domestic violence, we must take action and educate the community on how to prevent it from happening in the first place, I believe that Laura's House aims to be at the forefront of making sure this happens." Says Bayston.

One of the reasons Bayston wanted to work, even in a volunteer position with Laura's House is that "I cared deeply

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about changing the public's perception and beliefs about exactly domestic violence is all about and what it does to the victims. That it can happen to any person on any economic and societal level-it's not just the uneducated or poor!

"The behavior has to be addressed and it has to be an unacceptable way to have families go through their daily lives. No one should have to live in fear of being beaten, threatened or have to come up with excuses for their abusers.

"We need to stop minimalizing the effects of the violence on the children in the relationships as well. It takes amazing courage for these women to wait for the right moment and make the call to us and ask for help."

Bayston feels education is one of the most important keys to break the cycle of abuse.

After 18 years with Laura's House Bayston feels one of her proudest achievements has been the re-building of the emergency shelter 3 years ago. "We have a 10 bed facility with plenty of bathrooms and classrooms, it was many years in planning and we are so proud that we are now able to house and help so many women and children!"

After so many years, when asked if she had a story to share, Bayston immediately thought of Sebastian, who

was only two years old when he came to Laura's House with his mom, Denise. They came from another state because Denise had been told by an emergency room doctor to "go home and be a better wife" after showing up with a machete stuck in her head. This was the most recent and vicious attack on Denise by her husband. She knew he would kill her if she didn't leave.

At their arrival to The Laura's House emergency shelter, Denise was very afraid and trusted no one. Sebastian was timid and didn't play with the kids in the pre-school. However, after a couple of weeks, both settled in and started to make progress. One thing that was a mystery was that Sebastian wouldn't take off his shoes and socks to play. Denise avoided explaining.

After about three weeks of attending pre-school, Sebastian decided to take off his shoes for nap time and slept with them in his hands. This was seen as a breakthrough. A therapist decided to remove his socks to see if there was a problem with his feet. The staff saw marks across his soles and asked Denise about the injuries. They told her that a child abuse report would have to be made and it would be in her best interest if she did this with them. She was terrified, saying that she believed if she said what had happened,

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she wouldn't be allowed into the shelter because she had failed to protect her son.

Her husband had invited friends over for a barbeque. Sebastian was crying and when his father told him to stop, he kept crying. His father picked him up and stood Sebastian on the barbeque grill telling him "now you'll have something to cry about!"

A child abuse report was filed and Laura's House helped Denise get full custody of Sebastian. She learned that no one judged her and the goal was to empower her to take all the opportunities she could to build a better life for both of them. They successfully com-

pleted the classes and moved to a longer-term transitional program. Denise was able to find a job and they're well on their way to having the life they deserve.

In the next 5 years Bayston is looking forward to many things both personally and professionally including her daughter's marriage, scuba diving, Qigong and learning to relax. Another important item on her list of to-do's is opening up a low income residence in Laguna Hills and a graduate program for those who need some extra help.

And does Bayston have a quote or motto that spurs her on? "Yes, actually I do! I love Walt Disney's motto of 'If you can dream it, you can do it', after all, goals are really nothing but a dream accompanied by a plan."

Reality TV

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tain fans on even more screens with their new show. And what better way to do that than on the world's biggest video-sharing platform, YouTube?

The prelude episode to the "Talking Tom and Friends Series," "The Audition," debuted on The Talking Tom and Friends YouTube channel (over 1.4 million subscribers strong) at the end of December 2014, to a fanfare of over 18 million views to date.

Episode 1, "Untalking Tom," premieres April 30th on the YouTube channel and the YouTube Kids app, with new episodes airing weekly. The tribe has spoken; this show is one to watch!

For anyone who would like to know more about volunteer opportunities at Laura's House, either log onto: <http://www.laurashouse.org/lhteen/getinvolved> or call: 949-361-3775.(949-361-3775(949) 361-3775949) 361-3775949) 361-3775