

Into the Light



THE VILLA VOICE

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DaySpring Villa
Women and Children's Shelter

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Rodney Carrington Foundation Selects DaySpring Villa as Featured Charity



Rodney Carrington

When nationally recognized entertainer Rodney Carrington decided in May of this year to form a charitable foundation, he had two criteria: First, he wanted to align himself with a not-for-profit organization that made a positive impact on Tulsa-area children; second, he wanted to support a worthy cause that didn't receive large corporate funding.

Carrington, a stand-up comedian, actor, and recording artist who makes his home in Bixby, tasked his foundation director with finding such groups. She returned with a list of candidates that were ultimately boiled down to two—The Little Lighthouse and DaySpring Villa. After reviewing the DSV website, Rodney's wife, Terri, phoned

DaySpring Villa and scheduled a tour. A short time later, Rodney himself walked the halls of the shelter with DSV Executive Director Wilma Lively. He was immediately moved by what he saw.

"You know, we all live in our own little worlds and many of us may not see the realities of domestic violence because it's not something familiar to us," Carrington says. "But DaySpring Villa really opened my eyes. You can't walk away unaffected after you've seen what goes on here."

As a child, Carrington says that he was exposed to domestic violence in his home. "Unfortunately, it is part of my past," he says. "My mother was married five times before I was 15. There was abuse there and I saw it, so I'm very aware how domestic violence can affect kids."

To kick off the foundation's efforts, the Carringtons hosted a private fundraiser September 13 at Wolfgang Puck Bistro in Brookside, sponsored by Sak's Fifth Avenue and Bobbi Brown makeup. Donated items from Tulsa businesses were raffled, netting more than \$1,152 for DaySpring Villa.

Carrington says that the foundation is also organizing a celebrity golf tournament to be held in May 2011 at the Cherokee Golf Course in Catoosa in association with the Hard Rock Hotel and Casino. "I envision next spring's tournament to be a real

success," Carrington says. "We're looking to create a big event that generates big awareness about domestic violence and how DaySpring Villa is literally changing the lives of women and children."

Ongoing support for the foundation will include Carrington's personal donation of \$2 for every ticket sold to his concerts this year. In 2009, he sold more than 250,000 tickets to his shows, making him the fourth highest-grossing comedian in the nation.



Born in Longview, Texas, Carrington has recorded eight major record label comedy albums selling over two million copies. Two of these albums have been certified gold by the RIAA. Rodney starred in his own TV sitcom *Rodney*, which ran for two seasons on ABC. He also co-wrote and co-starred with Toby Keith in the 2008 feature film *Beer for My Horses*. Carrington has been married 17 years to his wife, Terri, who is originally from Guthrie, Oklahoma. The couple has three sons. 

Guest Profile: Cassie

“After all I’ve been through there’s no way I can’t be something great.”

To hear Cassie’s story is like reading an epic novel that features a beautiful young heroine battling impossible odds to create a better life. In the novel, as in Cassie’s story, the heroine is born a victim of unfortunate circumstance who experiences unimaginable tragedy and loss throughout her youth. Love, she learns early, is tempestuous and temporary; a promise brokered then broken time and again. Still, she is determined to survive.

Articulate, poised yet vulnerable, Cassie is becoming the heroine of her own story and it’s impossible not to root for her. She arrived at DaySpring Villa in July with her four children—three boys and a girl—in a move she hopes will shape the first chapter of her new life. To understand all that she has experienced in her 27 years would boggle the minds of most, yet Cassie is less solemn about her past than she is matter of fact. She remembers her father as a violent man who beat her mother, a meth addict, constantly. He committed suicide when Cassie was three years old.

At age five, Cassie was placed first in an orphanage and later a foster home where she was molested for two years. Cassie says

her mother finally “got clean” from her drug addiction. The two reunited then moved from California to Oklahoma. “We had a good three years together,” Cassie recalls, “then she died when I was 12.” What followed was a series of short stays with distant relatives—a confusing mix of ministers and con artists—then with the parents of friends she made while attending Grace Fellowship Christian School. “My relationship with God was always important to me even at a young age,” she says.

At age 18, Cassie juggled a waitressing job and beauty college. Six months from graduating, she met Eric. The two fell in love and moved in together. But Eric held a terrible secret: He was already in a committed relationship with another woman. Once Cassie discovered Eric’s lie, she immediately moved out, finding refuge with an elderly aunt. A short time later, she learned that she was pregnant.

“He said that if I had the baby, it would screw up his relationship with his other girlfriend,” Cassie says. “First he tried to convince me to have an abortion then he’d claim the baby wasn’t his. Finally, when I was in my sixth month, he held up a knife and threatened me.”

But Cassie was undeterred in her decision to have the baby. After giving birth to a son, Cassie says Eric had a change of heart; he now wanted to be a part of his new family. The couple rented a small apartment and Cassie returned to waitressing. But Eric couldn’t hold a job for long and after awhile he stopped trying to find work. Cassie became the sole provider.

“Meanwhile, I was forming these friendships that helped me start to rebuild by self-confidence but he was threatened by that,” Cassie says. Eric started cheating and picked up a new habit that changed his personality for the worse. “He became addicted to Xanax, which made me angry because I was the one getting up every day to take care of the baby and go to work while he slept off his drug hangover,” Cassie says. “Then one morning, he started choking me for no reason. I walked around with his handprint on my throat for a week.”

The cycle of violence Cassie found herself in continued for years. Between the couple’s numerous make-ups and break-ups, Cassie had three more children with Eric, spending her

pregnancies essentially alone. Living back with her aunt, she went to work for a grocery store, started saving money, and says for the first time she felt happy. “I knew my circumstances weren’t great. The money I made wasn’t great. But I was discovering who I was for the first time,” Cassie says.

Then, the bottom dropped out. The house belonging to Cassie’s aunt caught on fire rendering it uninhabitable. Cassie and her four children found themselves suddenly homeless. “We did what we had to do,” Cassie says. “We set up a tent on Feyottee Creek and camped out. If it got too chilly, we’d pile in the car and huddle together.” This continued for two months until a spring microburst decimated Cassie’s campsite. “A tree fell on our car, crushing it and the storm destroyed everything we had,” she recalls. With few choices at hand, Cassie called Eric for help.

This time, Eric presented himself as a changed man—the hero to our heroine who had cleaned up his act, landed a steady job, and had seemingly grown up. Cassie and her children moved in with her grandmother and Eric soon joined them, but his new persona was merely

a façade. “He started doing drugs again and just became this monster,” Cassie says. “Then I found out he was stealing checks from my grandmother. That was the final straw.”

When one “googles” domestic-violence shelters in Tulsa, they will find there are two. Each has a website that offers information to help battered or abused women decide where they best fit. For Cassie, the choice was clear. “DaySpring Villa offers a very structured, disciplined and demanding environment that pushes you to change your life and not let the past rule your future,” she says. “I’m taking things one day at a time right now, but I think that in some way I’d like to be involved with ministering to other women. After all I’ve been through, there’s no way I can’t be something great. The worst is over.”



For purposes of anonymity, we’ve changed the name of this guest but her story is as true as it is inspiring.

Volunteer Profile: Sara Cox and Darlyn Glasgow

The old adage, *The apple doesn’t fall far from the tree*, never rang truer than in the case of high school juniors Sara Cox and Darlyn Glasgow. These two 16-year-olds are among the younger volunteers at DaySpring Villa and each has a special connection with the shelter. Sara’s mother is Assistant Director Susan Cox. Darlyn lived with House Staff Sheila Mitchell for 17 months. Both girls are in the National Honor Society.

Sara volunteers four to five hours a week, where she helps sort clothing in the donation room. “I enjoy getting the chance to interact with some of the women and kids,” Sara says. “It’s really opened my eyes to the realities of domestic violence and those who’ve been affected by it.”

Darlyn began her volunteer service as a sixth grader where she worked in the store room and helped organize food donations. She now volunteers every Thursday from 3:30 p.m. to 7 p.m., assembling intake packages that are used to admit and evaluate new guests, and working in the kitchen to help prep for dinner.

“I really like seeing the faces of the women here,” Darlyn says. “There’s such a difference between how they look when they first come here and how they look after they’ve been here awhile. For the first time they realize they can live in a whole new world.”

If you’d like to learn more about DaySpring Villa’s numerous volunteer opportunities, visit our website at DaySpringVilla.com.



Sara Cox and Darlyn Glasgow

The Long Road Back

Pain and Healing

After years of war, we’ve watched our soldiers return home forever changed. A lost limb, a disfigured face or a bandaged wound tells us this is so. What we never see are the scars that remain *inside* etched from the horrors they’ve witnessed or experienced; decisions made that can never be reversed; courage found at a life or death moment. It seems inevitable that the ghosts of their battlefield follow them home.

As we watch our brave men and women collapse into the arms of family and friends in an emotional surrender so palpable we can practically touch it on our television screens, we hope and pray they will soon return to

some normalcy of life. One without combat, the threat of IEDs or unseen terrors that lurk around the corner. A life filled with peace and time to heal.

Yet secretly we know that their greatest challenges have only just begun.

The Effects of Traumatic Stress

In her book *Trauma and Recovery*, author Judith Lewis Herman writes, “Traumatic events are extraordinary not because they occur rarely, but rather because they overwhelm the ordinary human adaptations to life. They generally involve threats to life or bodily integrity, or close encounters with violence and death. They confront human beings with the extremities of hopelessness and terror and

evoke the responses of catastrophe.”

Those who’ve survived domestic violence often emerge with the same symptoms of traumatic stress as our military men and women who’ve survived the intimacy of war. Their symptoms may include flashbacks, nightmares, depression, difficulty sleeping, hyper-awareness or avoidance of painful memories, and the past controlling the present. Their coping skills have all but disappeared. But unlike our soldiers, the theatre of war for domestic violence victims exists in a place most of us consider our sanctuaries—home.

At DaySpring Villa, Executive Director Wilma Lively and her staff work closely with women who exhibit signs of post-traumatic stress after leaving their abuser. Emotional scarring, Lively says, can be the most difficult imprint to heal.

Part I: Buy, Sell or Trade: The Invisible Industry of Human Trafficking

In early September, six job recruiters were indicted in federal court in what the FBI called the “largest human trafficking operation ever to result in charges in the United States.” According to the indictment, employees of a California-based company lured more than 400 Thai nationals to different parts of the United States with false promises of lucrative jobs. Most wound up laboring on farms under substandard conditions, had their passports confiscated and were threatened with deportation.

This news was just the latest to describe a growing, prospering industry that buys and sells humans for the purpose of indentured servitude, debt bondage, prostitution, and child pornography. According to

Mark Elam, coalition director of OATH (Oklahomans Against Trafficking Humans), human trafficking has become a \$34 billion a year enterprise driven by a rising resale value.

“In 2009, the United States became the number one destination for trafficking humans,” Elam says. “You can only sell a kilo of cocaine once, but humans can be sold again and again and again.”

Elam estimates there are more than 30 million slaves worldwide with 177 countries actively buying and selling people. More than two million of these are children sold for sex tourism. On a whole, Elam says, human trafficking has become the fastest growing crime on the planet.

In September’s indictment of six job recruiters, the recruitment

fees paid by the workers were reportedly as high as \$17,000 each. The case mirrors a similar event in Tulsa, when in 2002 the John Pickle Company was charged with enslaving 53 workers imported from India. The men were ill fed, packed into a cramped, unsanitary dormitory only yards away from industrial machinery, and forced to work 12- to 16-hour days, six days a week, at wages well below the federal minimum wage. When they complained about conditions within the factory, they were threatened with deportation, locked inside their barracks and patrolled by armed guards.

With two major interstate systems—I-35 and I-40—Oklahoma has become a huge “pipeline” state, or major human trafficking route. Elam says

that one-third of all trafficking victims come in through Texas where they are strategically transported throughout the country. Houston has become the number one city for sex trafficking closely followed by Las Vegas and Atlanta.

In June, a story in the *Santa Barbara News Press* escaped local attention when an Oklahoma pimp was arrested there for sexually trafficking a teenage girl. Detectives determined that Patrick Boughton, a resident of Oklahoma City, “used threats, coercion and physical abuse to force the girl to engage in prostitution and prevent her from fleeing.”

In 2004, the FBI’s program “Stormy Nights” rescued 13 Oklahoma children ages 12 and older from a prostitution ring operating out of Oklahoma City

truck stops. Elam describes these children as “throwaway kids”—those who are runaways, homeless, school dropouts, or victims of abusive homes. He says that more than 1.5 million runaways every year are targeted by traffickers for prostitution.

Today, the invisible industry of human trafficking touches virtually every state in the nation but Oklahoma plays an unwittingly vital role in its network. How can mere mortals put the brakes on a crime gone viral around the world? In the next issue of *The Villa Voice*, we’ll look at some potential solutions, including DaySpring Villa’s involvement with OATH and how a new joint task force is working to raise awareness of what can only be described as a global humanitarian tragedy.

Part one of a two-part series.

The Path to Recovery

Because domestic violence occurs in a relationship, the trust factor required for building new relationships is often distorted or even destroyed. Victims often avoid situations that involve meeting new people—whether socially or professionally—and may resort to isolation as a means of safety and self-preservation. The basic capacities for recovery from the pain of domestic violence includes trust, autonomy, initiative, competence, identity and intimacy—ingredients that take time to gather for those who’ve been indoctrinated by an abuser.

To help restore trust and re-introduce positive personal connections, Howard works with DaySpring Villa guests to build self-empowerment.

“Everyday things most of us take for granted like having a job, making a grocery list, and even driving our own car become new adventures and joyful baby steps in the recovery process for these women,” Howard says. “Positive reinforcement of a woman’s accomplishments and empowerment of her own ability to stand alongside other survivors are the first steps to recovery.”

If you or someone you know is involved in an abusive situation, don’t ignore the signs. Call DaySpring Villa at 918.245.4075 and start your own path toward recovery.

Part 2: Buy, Sell or Trade: The Invisible Industry of Human Trafficking

Oklahoma has become a pipeline state for transporting foreigners and U.S. citizens to labor farms and prostitution rings across the nation. How can we stop the world's fastest growing crime that relies on our interstates?

A Woman of Means

What does a battered woman look like? The old stereotype is quickly changing. DaySpring Villa takes a closer look at domestic violence from a wealthy perspective.

DaySpring Villa is a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) organization

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OUR MISSION IS **TRANSFORMING LIVES.**

DaySpring Villa provides food, shelter, clothing, transportation and vital life tools for as many as 55 women and children at risk. As a privately funded shelter, our ability to dramatically change lives depends on the volunteer services, financial gifts and in-kind contributions we receive from caring individuals and organizations.

918.245.4075
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Women and Children's Shelter

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