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## Shelter coordinates small comforts for violence victims

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By Jill Thurston

There is a victim of domestic violence every fifteen seconds in the United States, according to Lisa Hannum, prevention and education coordinator with the Washington Women's Shelter Inc.

While the shelter provides safety, women often leave behind many of their small, personal necessities and comforts. To help fill in the gap, Sunny Bridge Natural Foods on Gallery Drive in Peters Town Center, Peters, will collect holiday donations for residents at the Washington Women's Shelter, which serves Washington and Greene counties.

Owner Gina Snyder said the store has collected donations for the past few years and had a generous response.

"We've been so blessed with the many things we have and we want to pay it forward," she said.

She suggests a shoebox to hold the donations, but any container will do.

The shelter has offered continuous service since 1984. Residents can stay for 45 days, and then request extensions in two-week increments.

"We never want to someone to feels they have to return to a dangerous situation because they have no other options," Ms. Hannum said.

The shelter's Fresh Start program offers transitional housing for women who choose not to return to an abusive situation. The shelter offers a 24-hour hotline, counseling, support groups and children's advocates. Last year, the shelter had nearly 1,500 domestic violence hotline calls.

"It's an uncomfortable subject, but we have to talk about it," Ms. Hannum said.

The shelter offered 188 programs to schools reaching 4,768 children last year, including "Hands are not for Hitting," designed for ages preschool to second grade; "Bullying is Bad" reaches third- through seventh-graders; and for eighth grade through college, the shelter offers a program on dating violence.

All services are free and confidential for the schools. There are programs for civic groups, business, law enforcement and "anyone who is interested in hearing about our services," Ms. Hannum said.

The shelter is funded by state and federal funding and private donations.

Sunny Bridge is accepting shoebox donations with items including toys, personal care items, non-perishable food items or gift cards for children, teens and their mothers until Dec. 10.

The shelter also offers an "adopt a family" program for the holidays. For more, call 724-223-5481, or visit the Web site at [www.womens-shelter.com](http://www.womens-shelter.com).

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