



**WELCOME TO THE JUNE 2010 EDITION OF THE  
LAUREL HOUSE NEWSLETTER**

The Laurel House Newsletter will be produced and circulated amongst clients, service providers and the community to raise awareness of the services available at Laurel House.

It is also a venue to give advanced notice of upcoming groups and projects for survivors. There will also be a number of articles about Sexual Assault, stories from survivors, and links to other services for your information.

You can also view this newsletter on our website:  
[www.laurelhouse.org.au](http://www.laurelhouse.org.au)

**During 2010 we are hoping to provide you with an ongoing theme about child sexual abuse and the effects and the impacts on the child, family, friends and the community. We will include information about how to best support the child and their family and also offer services to the professionals who come into contact with the victims/survivors.**

**In this edition we discuss the importance of ensuring that Laurel House remains a safe place for all Victims and Survivors who attend.**

**Laurel House Waiting List**

Over the past years Laurel House has seen a steady increase in the number of clients accessing the Service. This past 12 months has resulted in clients being placed on a waiting list, however, they are able to access telephone and/or face to face crisis appointments. We ensure that all persons accessing receive an immediate service, therefore, please do continue to refer your clients to Laurel House.

The recent service provider evaluation highlighted that a number of workers are referring victims/survivors of rape, sexual assault and child sexual abuse to other Services due to the waiting list, but please be assured we will continue to offer services to all those who contact us.

**OUTREACH TO RURAL AREAS**

EAST COAST (includes Bicheno, St Marys and St Helens) First Monday and Tuesday of the month.

WEST TAMAR One Friday per month

GEORGETOWN Second Friday of the month.

If we receive requests from other areas within the 63 telephone regions we will negotiate with Service Providers within these areas.

### ***A Tribute to the Counsellors at Laurel House***

Your innocence lost, your childhood torn, feeling sad, alone, forlorn  
Which way to turn but to young, you couldn't know  
A predator instilled your fears, break the bonds and shed no more tears  
Today in strength, it's time, for you to grow

You are not alone, there are those who care, the problem halved is the one you share  
You know its time to start your life anew  
Rebuild the chain link by link; don't be confused by what others think  
Seek out the help, you know it's overdue

From the shackles you can be freed, make the call you have the need  
A Counsellor there is waiting to help you through  
Don't be afraid, they know their stuff, though the first time is a little rough  
Remember now this is really all about you

Hard to explain just what I mean, it's like the sea has washed me clean  
The warming sun has driven out the cold  
The fears, the tears, the angers gone, my time is now life's moving on  
Please listen to these words you're being told

No longer a child, it's time to grow, the path in life to you they'll show  
Take their advice and turn your life around  
Just can't let the predators win, we must fight back through thick and thin  
With the Counsellors help, use the strength you will have found

You did nothing wrong, no need to hide, stand up tall, feel the pride  
As time passes you will be feeling stronger  
Make the start, don't stop now, Laurel House will show you how  
Be a survivor just like me, "Not a Victim any Longer"

Brian

## ENSURING A SAFE ENVIRONMENT AT LAUREL HOUSE

*'Safety is the experience of being protected from danger and hurt. Within a safe environment, we can relax and be ourselves because we know that our well-being is secure. We feel free to take manageable risks toward growth and change. When you begin to talk honestly about your life in a safe environment, healing naturally begins to happen'* (The Courage to Heal Workbook: Davis, L. 1990).

*'... when a child or adult is terrorized, regardless of whether they are harmed physically, something does indeed happen. Psychological trauma can and does occur in the absence of physical injury and brings with it changed notions about the safety, reliability, trustworthiness and predictability of the world ... trauma appears not only to change the way people feel, but the way they think as well'* (Transforming Trauma: Salter, A. 1995).

*'Until an individual undergoes a traumatic event such as sexual assault, they generally feel relatively safe in their surroundings and in their world, believing that they are 'invulnerable, that the world is orderly and meaningful, and that they are good and strong people' (Trust after Trauma: Matsakis, A.1998). Trauma robs the victim of a sense of power and control ... the guiding principle of recovery is to restore power and control to the survivor. The first task of recovery is to establish the survivor's safety. This task takes precedence over all others ...'* (Trauma and Recovery: Herman, J.1992).

Laurel House believe that being sexually assaulted is a deeply distressing experience and always disempowering. We acknowledge that the pain, problems and difficulties – both personal and social, which people may suffer as a result of being sexually abused, can influence their lives in many negative ways. The above statements reinforce for us the importance of providing a safe environment for Victims and Survivors of Sexual Violence.

Laurel House places great emphasis on the need to ensure a safe place for people when coming to the Service. The doors at Laurel House are locked at all times so that our clients can feel safe and secure when they are in the building.

Not only is the physical environment an important element to the Client feeling safe but to ensure the emotional and psychological safety is paramount as well. This is supported by the Victim/Survivor Policy within the Service that states that we do not work with perpetrators of violence, including sexual assault, physical, emotional and psychological violence.

In making the above statement we acknowledge that some victims of sexual abuse can become perpetrators of sexual and other forms of violence, however, all victims have choices in whether they become perpetrators. When you look at the statistics where one in three girls and one in six boys will experience some form of sexual violence by the age of 18 years and these statistics would indicate that the majority of perpetrators would be female. They are not, the majority of perpetrators of sexual violence are male. This is a universal statistic.

This policy has caused some distress among a few Service Providers over the past months, where Laurel House has been receiving negative feedback for not see some male survivors who are also sexual offenders. Our policy also states that we will make individual decisions about providing services to these people, but certain conditions must be met. They include that the offender has taken responsibility for the crime they have committed, that the Victim of that crime is not currently using the Service, that the offending must have occurred in the past and that there are no current AVOs against the person.

We have received overwhelming feedback from clients for the past 21 years about how 'safe' they feel when coming to Laurel House and that the physical environment is calming and conducive to healing. These are the people we strive to continually improve our Service for so that their healing journey is a 'safe' one.

## **10 WAYS TO BEAT THE WINTER BLAHS. Thoughts from an article by Nicole Nichols: Health Educator**

Winter is in full force. As the days get shorter and the nights get colder, even the most cheerful of us can get a little down. The "winter blues" are characterised by the mild depression, lack of motivation, and low energy that many people experience during this cold season. Luckily, there's a lot you can do to both prevent the blues from coming on, or feel a lot better if they're already here.

### **1. Exercise**

Exercise isn't only for maintaining your weight and staying healthy. It's great for relieving the stresses of life. Plus, the effects of a good workout can last for several hours. You'll have more energy throughout the day, and your metabolism will stay elevated too. Exercise also helps your mind by releasing those "feel good chemicals" that improve your mood.

### **2. Eat a Healthy Diet**

What and when you eat has a great affect on your mood and energy. Avoid refined and processed foods (like white breads, rice, and sugar). These foods are not only devoid of the nutrients your body craves, but they zap your energy levels and can affect your mood—causing depression, lack of concentration, and mood swings. Try to incorporate more complex carbohydrates (whole wheat breads, brown rice, veggies, fruit) and get your daily 8 cups of water. These healthy foods provide your body (and mind) with nutrients, and stabilize your blood sugar and your energy levels. A bit of comfort food can lift the spirits as well though!! (see next page for Trace's Choc Pudding recipe)

### **3. Get Some Sun**

Most people know that sunlight provides us with Vitamin D. But did you know that it also improves your mood? Winter days are shorter and darker than other months, and because of the cold weather, a lot of people spend less and less time outdoors. Lack of sunlight can cause many people to become depressed—without knowing why! Similar to exercise, sunlight exposure releases neurotransmitters in the brain that affect mood. Try to spend a little more time outdoors. Keep your window coverings open during the day to let more light in and sit in sunny spots when you're out of the house.

### **4. Act on your Resolutions**

A recent study showed a strong link between healthy behaviors and depression. Women who exhibited healthy behaviors (like exercising, not smoking, etc.) had less sad and depressed days than those whose behaviors were less than healthy. Although researchers studied women, the results are likely similar in men.

### **5. Avoid Binge Drinking**

Staying in with a cold beer or a nice glass of wine may seem like the only thing to do in the winter months, and many people who feel down also tend to turn to alcohol when they're feeling down. But alcohol is actually a depressant, and rather than improving your mood, it only makes it worse. Avoiding alcohol when you are already depressed is a good idea. Moderate drinking is fine for most people, but binge drinking (defined as having 5 or more drinks in one sitting) is never a healthy choice. The morning after will have you feeling sick, depressed, and even more tired, which will affect many aspects of your life. This will make your low energy and bad mood even worse.

### **6. Treat Yourself**

Having something to look forward to can keep anyone motivated. Winter seems endless! But if you plan something exciting, your mood improves when you're anticipating it and when the event actually comes. Plan something that's exciting to you—a weekend trip, a massage, a party, or special event like a girls (or guys) night out, or sporting event.

### **7. Relax!**

Work, class, family, friends, appointments, meetings—even if you enjoy being busy, everyone needs some time off. Don't be afraid to say "No" to extra opportunities (covering a shift for a co-worker, bringing food to your son's class party). Try to spend a few minutes each day doing nothing! Read a book or magazine, sleep in on the weekend, go to bed early, try some meditations, or take a yoga class. Relaxation can alleviate stress and leave you with a calm energy. Mental exercises like meditation and positive thinking can help keep depression at bay.

### **8. Embrace the Season**

Instead of always avoiding the cold—look for the best that it has to offer! Take up a winter sport like hockey, netball or skiing. Enjoy these opportunities while they last—after all, they're only here a few months per year. Staying active will boost your energy. Seeing winter in a positive light, with all the fun activities that it has to offer, will keep your spirits high.

### **9. Get Social Support**

Don't underestimate the power of friends, family, mentors, co-workers, and neighbors. Who can you turn to when you're down and need a pick-me-up? Keep a mental or a written list of these special people and don't be afraid to ask for help or encouragement when you need it. Something as simple as a phone call, a chat over coffee, or a nice email or letter can brighten your mood.

### **10. Catch some Zzzz's**

People naturally want to sleep a little bit more during the winter. But with all we have going on, sometimes sleep is the first thing to go. With a little time management, and some self-discipline, you can meet your shut-eye needs. Aim for 7-8 hours each night, and try to keep your bedtime and waking time consistent. That way, your sleeping patterns can normalise and you'll have more energy. Try not to oversleep—those 12-hour snoozes on the weekend can actually make you MORE tired. Don't forget naps! A short (10-30 minute) afternoon nap may be all you need to re-energize midday.

## TRACE'S SOFT-CENTRED CHOCOLATE PUDDINGS

200g good quality dark chocolate, chopped  
100g unsalted butter, chopped  
3 eggs, lightly beaten  
115g (1/2 cup) caster sugar  
2 tablespoons plain flour



- ◆ Preheat the oven to 200° C.
- ◆ Place the chocolate and butter in a heatproof bowl over a saucepan of simmering water, making sure the bowl does not touch the water, and stir until melted.
- ◆ Place the eggs, sugar and flour in a bowl and mix until just combined.
- ◆ Gradually mix in the chocolate mixture.
- ◆ Pour the mixture into four 250 ml (1 cup) ovenproof ramekins and place on a baking tray.
- ◆ Bake until the edges are set, about 15 minutes.

Serves 4.

### To Serve

Thick (double/heavy) cream or creamy vanilla ice-cream

### **“Take a candy bar and call me in the morning”**

**Those of us who have been self-medicating with chocolate for years have had it right all along...The Benefits of Chocolate!!!**

Incase anyone needed more convincing, here are some health benefits that come from eating good quality, dark chocolate:

- ◆ Dark chocolate is rich in vitamins such as iron and magnesium. The vitamins and minerals found in chocolate have been proven to be helpful in lowering cholesterol, lowering blood pressure, and alleviating some of the symptoms of PMS.
- ◆ Chocolate also contains serotonin; those suffering with depression will often have lowered levels of serotonin in the brain. While we wouldn't suggest eating a block of chocolate every time you're feeling a little down, a little bit may help lift your mood.
- ◆ Dark chocolate has also been proven to be helpful in those suffering from anemia, poor dietary habits, or with lowered immunity, due to the antioxidants and flavanoids found in chocolate, which help boost immunity, and can assist in staving off chronic ailments.
- ◆ The antioxidants found in chocolate can also help in the fight against ageing, and heart disease.
- ◆ Eating chocolate has also been found to stimulate the production of endorphins in the brain, which can produce a happy feeling, and possibly even reduce stress levels.

While the benefits of chocolate are definitely there, it is still recommended that your intake of chocolate remain moderate, rather than high. Chocolate is high in sugar, calories, and fats, which can lead to other complicated health issues if not taken in moderation. Unsweetened chocolate is always good, and has great, positive health benefits for your body and mind.

For more information, see:

<http://www.lifemojo.com/lifestyle/health-benefits-of-chocolate-479460>

<http://www.prohealth.com/library/showarticle.cfm?libid=8326>

<http://longevity.about.com/od/lifelongnutrition/p/chocolate.htm>

<http://longevity.about.com/od/lifelongnutrition/p/chocolate.htm>

<http://www.lifemojo.com/lifestyle/health-benefits-of-chocolate-479460#ixzz0uBeL8QBt>

## **QUESTIONS YOU HAVE ALWAYS WANTED TO ASK BUT WERE TOO AFRAID TO.....**

### **Q: What is Laurel House?**

**A:** Laurel House is the Northern Sexual Assault Support Service for the north and northeast region of Tasmania. Laurel House was established in 1989. The service receives State/Federal government funding. Laurel House is managed by a voluntary committee made up of local people with a commitment to supporting victim/survivors of sexual assault, raising community awareness and working towards the elimination of sexual violence.

### **Q: What services are provided?**

**A:** Services include: confidential counselling and support for victim/survivors of rape, sexual assault, child sexual abuse and sexual harassment.

24-hour coordination of the Police, forensic and crisis response to immediate rape and sexual assault.

Support through the Police and court system.

24 hour phone crisis service.

Group work.

Visiting outreach services to major population centres in 63 region.

Community education and professional training.

Debriefing and professional supervision for other professionals.

Resource/educational materials for individuals, groups and families.

### **Q: Does Laurel House work with men?**

**A:** Laurel House works with women, men and children.

The service is not funded to work with perpetrators of violence, including sexual assault.

Adults who have been both victims of sexual assault and perpetrators who wish to access Laurel House are assessed on a case-by-case basis.

### **Q How do I access these services?**

**A:** Anyone can contact Laurel House by phone, email, website or letter. Referrals come direct from individuals, from GP's, schools, Police, Child Protection, private mental health practitioners, anyone concerned about a child, adolescent or adult who is a victim /survivor of any form of sexual assault.

### **Q: Who works at Laurel House?**

**A:** Laurel House employs a small team of counsellors with professional qualifications in Social Work or equivalent tertiary training. Counsellors are required to have relevant professional experience and detailed understanding of the dynamics and impact of sexual assault on children and adults. Counsellors undergo additional training in Narrative Therapy and participate in professional supervision and education. The team of after hours on call crisis workers is made up of practitioners already working in the health/welfare sector or who are undertaking further study. The after hours on call crisis workers also participate in professional supervision and training.

### **Q: How much does it cost to access Laurel House services?**

**A:** Laurel House is a not for profit organization. All services are free of charge with the exception of some professional training and community education programs. Fees to cover costs of delivering these services are negotiated with the requesting organization.

### **Q: How do I find out more?**

**A:** Laurel House can be contacted by telephone on 63342740; by email [counsellors@laurelhouse.org.au](mailto:counsellors@laurelhouse.org.au); via the website [www.laurelhouse.org.au](http://www.laurelhouse.org.au) or in person by appointment Monday-Friday 8.30am to 5pm. The street address is kept confidential until an appointment is made.

There are a range of brochures, posters and information packs available on request and easily downloadable from the website. The brochures and posters can also be found distributed widely throughout the region. Laurel House produces a quarterly newsletter and contributes feature articles to the Tasmanian newspapers and the newsletters of other organizations and community groups. Laurel House provides speakers for groups and community organisations throughout the region.

**Q: How can I provide feedback about Laurel House services?**

**A:** In addition to all of the options listed above, Laurel House also conducts annual surveys of service users. These feedback forms are distributed widely to the health/welfare/legal/education sector via the Laurel House electronic mailing list.

Paper copies of the feedback forms are regularly given to clients of the service.

Evaluation forms are provided to all participants of training and community education programs conducted by Laurel House staff.

A number of important changes to services and service delivery have been made in response to suggestions and feedback provided by service users.

## **After Hours Crisis On-Call Team Vacancies**

Laurel House is looking to recruit more workers to join our after hours team.

The on-call service operates between 5.00 p.m. and 8.30 a.m. through the week, and 24 hours throughout the weekend. The service provides a crisis phone service, as well as support through the medical, forensic, and police processes, for victims of recent rape and sexual assault.

If you or a colleague are interested in being part of this service, or would like more information, please phone or email Laurel House.

## **Additional Funding**

Laurel House was recently successful in obtaining additional funding in order to be able to meet the increased demands on the service.

This will mean that extra counselling hours will be available and areas of the service that have been particularly stretched will soon have additional resources.

Thank you to everyone who has supported Laurel House during these challenging times.

## Useful Websites and Contact Numbers

### Children

Bravehearts Inc. [www.bravehearts.org.au](http://www.bravehearts.org.au)

Australian Childhood Foundation [www.childhood.org.au](http://www.childhood.org.au)

### Attempted Suicide and/or Self harm

Safe in Oz Pty Ltd. [www.safeinoz.com.au](http://www.safeinoz.com.au)

Time Out timeout. Email: [timeout.tasmania.net.au](mailto:timeout.tasmania.net.au)

Kids Help Line [www.kidshelpline.com.au](http://www.kidshelpline.com.au)

Beyond Blue [www.ybblue.com.au](http://www.ybblue.com.au)

### Crisis Counselling

Laurel House [www.laurelhouse.org.au](http://www.laurelhouse.org.au) [counsellors@laurelhouse.org.au](mailto:counsellors@laurelhouse.org.au)

North West Centre Against Sexual Assault Telephone 6431 9711

Sexual Assault Support Service Hobart Telephone 6231 1811

Lifeline [www.lifeline.org.au](http://www.lifeline.org.au) Telephone 131 114

Samaritans Tas Launceston 6331 3355 Rest of Tasmania 1300 364 566

### Contact details Laurel House

PO Box 1062, Launceston 7250

Phone weekdays 8:30am – 5pm

**(03) 6334 2740**

After Hours Crisis Line

**0409 800 394**

Fax: (03) 6334 4234

Email: [counsellors@laurelhouse.org.au](mailto:counsellors@laurelhouse.org.au)

Website: [www.laurelhouse.org.au](http://www.laurelhouse.org.au)

### Would you like to contribute to the Laurel House newsletter?

Laurel House is looking for people to contribute stories, poems and artwork to the newsletter to share with survivors of sexual assault, family members and service providers. Items can be published anonymously if requested. If you would like to contribute something to the newsletter please send to [counsellors@laurelhouse.org.au](mailto:counsellors@laurelhouse.org.au) or PO Box 1062 Launceston, 7250. All items will be carefully considered and published in upcoming newsletters.

We would appreciate any feedback or suggestions that you may have as we continue to develop our newsletter. Please call us on 6334 2740 or email [counsellors@laurelhouse.org.au](mailto:counsellors@laurelhouse.org.au)

We would also like to thank all the Clients, Service Providers and Members of the Community for their continued support of Laurel House.