

*PASCH Member, Jamie Stonier,
Receives Award for Courage and Faith*

Despite ongoing domestic abuse and an attempt by her husband to hire a hit man to take her life, Jamie Stonier has seen God work miracles. Through a strange turn of events, that one might expect to read in a chilling novel, FBI agents learned of her husband's plans and set up a sting operation that resulted in his arrest. Federal agents captured on video tape her husband outlining possible scenarios in which his wife might be murdered. A storm of changes followed- Jamie and her two young sons suddenly found themselves needing housing, transportation, food, legal advice, and support from family, friends and their church community. As a Christian Jamie knew she could bring her needs to God, and to ask for help dealing with the fear and anger and pain that she felt so strongly. As she wrestled though her circumstances, Jamie became aware of other women who suffered in the aftermath of domestic abuse and violence, and, together with another woman, became a catalyst in the formation of a support group called Hagar Sisters, who meets on a monthly basis in the Boston-Metro area. It is Jamie's desire to help other survivors know they are not alone; that God sees the devastation resulting from domestic abuse and violence and wants to help those who suffer to rebuild their lives. At a ceremony held in Boston (September, 2005) the R.O.S.E. Fund, a nonprofit organization devoted to helping women regain their self esteem, invited Jamie to tell her story and honored her with an award for courage and faith, and for providing encouragement to other women—

Jamie Stonier, R.O.S.E. Fund Speech
September 21, 2005
Fairmont Copley Plaza, Boston, MA

“Domestic Violence...what is it? How did I end up in an abusive relationship? What am I doing wrong? How can I fix this? These are all questions we ask when our relationship is not working and we find ourselves in constant turmoil. I met my husband at our 20 year reunion. He was an attractive, Marine Corp officer, confident, successful, believable, intelligent, a loving father, dedicated son and convincing man. That was the image he worked hard to portray to the world. He invited me to fly out to the Marine Corp ball in Washington DC and this was one of our first dates. It looked like a fairy tale romance. Our first year together was exciting with a new baby and having someone to share in the responsibilities of raising two boys. I felt like I had met my Prince Charming.”

“We soon married and then things began to change. Life became more stressful as he had retired from 22 years in the military, finishing up a Master's Degree, looking for a civilian job and moving to Boston to begin a new chapter. He soon learned that a daughter from a former marriage was experiencing difficulties. He decided to hire an attorney and take custody of all three girls. I was not allowed to voice my opinion and since I disagreed I was now his enemy. I could not reason with him and my thoughts and feelings were not important. The verbal abuse began by yelling, swearing, blaming me and putting me down. The psychological abuse followed by telling me I was crazy, giving me the silent treatment, withholding finances, playing mind games, disabling the vehicle , rewriting history and bringing up the past to deflect the issue at hand. He always wanted proof of everything I said. The physical abuse was the last to follow, throwing things, scaring me with his anger and finally after one argument he threw a fan across

the room and it hit my ribs leaving me bruised for weeks. Why didn't I call the police then? I was afraid that I couldn't make it on my own. I knew I would have to deal with his controlling nature and court and custody battles. It would be an exhaustive endeavor. Did I have the energy left to fight? I didn't want to feel like a failure again. I thought if I just prayed and kept loving him that he would change back into the man I thought I married."

"We were living a lie. He came to me one day after two years of a troubled marriage trying to convince me to start over, put the past behind us. I told him that he had taken all I had to give and I had nothing left. I would be leaving when the school year was over and moving back home to family. That was a major mistake as he had time to reflect and make a plan to stop me. His life as he wanted portrayed was suddenly going to be exposed for what it was. He secretly met with a hitman to conspire a way to end my life. Fortunately for me and my children, he was meeting with undercover ATF Agents. They were able to tape him plotting the murder and arrest him. They came to my home that evening trying to find the words to tell me that my Husband was arrested for plotting to murder me while he was out of the country on business. They were concerned that I would not believe them but deep in my heart I knew he was capable of it."

"I began to rebuild my life as I dealt with depression, anger and confusion. I had to move to housing and find resources to help with food and bills. I was left with a huge financial burden. The local community helped, the police department helped to find housing and a victims advocate to locate resources. My church helped, prayed and supported me in many ways. A friend of mine at church opened up to me one day that she was in an abusive relationship too. We started meeting together and now have a group of women who meet regularly and have named ourselves "Hagar's Sisters". Hagar was a woman from the Bible who was abused. God has been my shelter from the storm. My faith in him has been my stronghold and my determination to not give up. I began to feel a purpose to all my suffering. He was using my life to inspire others, to give them strength and a kind word of encouragement. Forgiving my Husband was one of the first steps I needed to take to heal. Forgiveness does not make what he did right, it allows my heart to heal and to forge ahead with conviction."

"I challenge each of you this evening to make a difference. If you are aware of an abusive situation, be patient with them. Encourage that person to recognize the abuse. Don't tell them what to do, listen more, talk less and stay by them even when they make choices you don't agree with. Start by being an example in your own home. Find ways to show your children how proud you are of them and remember to tell people how much you love them. Volunteer at your local food pantry, support a shelter home or donate to your favorite organization."

"I want to thank the Rose Fund for believing in me and allowing me the opportunity tonight to share my story. I hope and pray that you will take some kind of action to make a difference in the lives of those affected by domestic violence."

Jamie continues telling her story through written interviews and television appearances. It is her desire for others to see God's ability to work toward good outcomes in the lives of those who suffer, even after domestic abuse and violence.

By Amy Fisch, PASCH Editor (November 28, 2005)