

Spring 2011

AVA'S CALL

HOLDING ON TO HOPE



Yvonne DeVaughn

AVA'S CALL is a quarterly publication of the Department of Women Ministries' program Advocacy for Victims of Abuse.

AVA's Goals are to:

- Provide resources to bring healing to victims of abuse
- Equip the church to minister to victims of abuse
- Promote preventative measures to combat abuse

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AVA Website:

covchurch.org/abuse

National Domestic Violence Hotline
800-799-Safe (7233)



I was blessed to be in the field of education for 32 years. Every single year the schools I was affiliated with performed fire drills to prepare both students and staff for a safe exit in

the event there was a fire emergency. In addition we would perform disaster drills, and lock down procedures all with the intent of having students best prepared for any potential threat to their safety. In my 32 years I was never involved in an emergency situation where a student's life was in danger or was a student injured due to a fire or natural disaster. In fact, I am aware of few if any that have suffered injury from fire or other disasters. I am sure there are some, but I believe that number is very small.

In my years in education, never once did I hear about, or participate in a workshop, chapel, or assembly that prepared children for the dangers of childhood sexual abuse. Surely one may argue that it falls outside the schools jurisdictions and responsibility to teach abuse prevention or even awareness. And yet today there are over 40 million survivors of childhood sexual abuse in this country alone while the number is increasing more rapidly than ever before. So, if schools are failing to address this; and if churches are failing to address this; and if families where

it exists cover and hide it...to whom will the children turn? Therein lies the problem. Ignore and deny and maybe it will just go away. Or maybe we will just keep on keeping it a secret.

It requires great courage for a sexual abuse survivor to expose the shame. It will require great courage for churches and schools to address the issue in their communities. It will require patience and commitment to love well the wounded that will emerge. Open the door today in your heart and in your community.

Bill Harbeck is the founder and director of Holding on to Hope Ministries. He is a veteran of Christian Education and a survivor of childhood sexual abuse. Bill's story is captured in the book *Shattered: One Man's Journey from Sexual Abuse*. Bill is leading the way in exposing, training, and healing male survivors of childhood sexual abuse and those addicted to pornography.

He and his wife Jillian have been married for 35 years and live in Arizona. www.holdingontohope.org

"If you would like to be added to our Newsletter e-mail list, send your name and email address to devaughn3@gmail.com

AVA LIVE ONLINE TUTORIAL

In February 2011, AVA launched its new AVA online tutorial on domestic violence and childhood sexual assault on the Evangelical Covenant Church website, developed by the Department of Women Ministries.

The tutorial includes 10 lessons, each followed by a quiz. It is oriented toward the faith communities and includes a lesson on overcoming the spiritual roadblocks Christian believers have when dealing with their own abuse. It provides an alternative to the traditional seminar approach, allowing individuals to access the information at their convenience. Please visit the website at: ava-online.org.

In addition to the general public, the tutorial also was designed with Covenant clergy in mind—they can record successful completion of the tutorial through a link to the Department of the Ordered Ministry and have it added to their individual ministry profile. The training qualifies as continuing education. Those volunteering in the AVA ministry also have a link to the Department of Women Ministries to record their completion. It is anticipated that seminarians will soon have a specific link as well.

"In an effort to encourage vocational excellence for all those called and credentialed within the Evangelical Covenant Church (ECC), the Department of the Ordered Ministry recommends this thorough and foundational resource," states the department's web page. *"It is our hope and expectation that everyone holding a Covenant ministry credential will, in short order, complete this basic tutorial. For some this may be a review, while for others it will contain new information. It should become a goal that our entire community has common working knowledge and language for responding to this pervasive problem."*

"It is my prayer that this tutorial enables the community of faith to advocate for and encourage victims of abuse to break silence, and support them on their healing journey," says Yvonne DeVaughn, a sentiment echoed by Ruth Hill who adds, *"I believe this resource will greatly further our vision of all Covenant churches being safe sanctuaries and healing communities for victims of abuse."*

AVA IN SPANISH

On April 2, 2011, sixteen people (3 male pastors, 1 pastora, 4 missionaries, and Colombian women in leadership) gathered in Medellin, Colombia to begin working through the AVA (Advocacy for Victims of Abuse) manual that was translated into Spanish last year. According to Colombian Missionary Mary Lou Sander, they are *"learning a lot and also making some changes to the Spanish version so that the vocabulary and wording fits more into the Colombian context. The most exciting thing that is happening is that this group of people are committed to helping the people who want help, and they want to something with what they have been learning through AVA."*



Please keep praying for this group as they continue their time of training which will be in the first part of June. They also did a drama called *"Janet's Story"* using sheets which helps participants visualize the way in which the circumstances of a battered women's life limit her options and finished their time together wearing shirts that say *Tratamebien* (Treat Me Well). These tee-shirts symbolize the cry of all of our sisters and brothers who are suffering domestic violence.



**Domestic Violence
Awareness Sunday
October 2, 2011**

**(AVA)
Advocacy for Victims of Abuse**

Covchurch.org/abuse
AVA-online.org