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**The Refuge Domestic Violence Shelter
& Sexual Assault Center**
PO Box 853
Vidalia, GA 30475
912-538-9935

Serving Toombs, Montgomery, Emanuel, Treutlen, and Wheeler counties
Refuge Sexual Assault Center also serves Candler and Tattnall counties

ISSUE

70

August-
December
2023

The Refuge

Sexual Assault Center
Domestic Violence Shelter

this issue

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From the Executive Director's Desk Betty Dell Williams

I hope you have all had a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! It is hard to believe we are already in 2024, but before moving forward, I would like to tell you about some wonderful events we had over the last 3 months of 2023. As you know, October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month and we decided to observe it a little bit differently this year. On Purple Thursday, we held a large event at our local community center that we called "Real Men Rise Up." We had over 180 victims murdered in Georgia last year due to domestic violence. Three of those victims were from our local service area. We wanted to remember them all by saying each of their names at our event. We knew it would be a powerful statement if we asked the men in our community to stand up, stand against domestic violence, and say their names. We provided each man with a black t-shirt that had "Real Men Rise Up" emblazoned across the front and they each stood, walked to the microphone, said the name and age of the victim, then took a purple balloon to signify the life that was taken. After the names were read, we went outside and released the balloons. It was a somber moment as we all saw the number of lives lost represented as the balloons rose above the crowd and into the sky. After that, we went back

inside and heard from our state senator, Blake Tillery, our D.A., Tripp Fitzner, our Refuge Board Chairman, Roger Calloway, and a local man who experienced domestic violence in his household as a child. We shared a delicious meal together and were treated to some beautiful music by Sandy River Studios Band and Carmela Williams. It was a great night that encouraged our community to advocate for an end to domestic violence and we are grateful to all who attended. In December, we had two wonderful events to help our clients celebrate the season. The first event was a Christmas Carnival. Everyone had so much fun, and the kids left with bags full of goodies. The next event was held at our local movie theatre. It was a magical night, and our clients will never forget the love and care they were shown by these volunteers and through the generous donations made by our community. You can learn more about these events on the following pages. We are so grateful to be surrounded by such a generous and loving community of individuals and volunteers who take of their own time and resources and give to those who need it most. As I always say, we could not do the work we do without you! Please remember, we are always available to speak to your workplace, civic or church groups, or gatherings. Please give us a call at 912-538-9936 with any questions. Thank you so much for your continued support and God bless you all!

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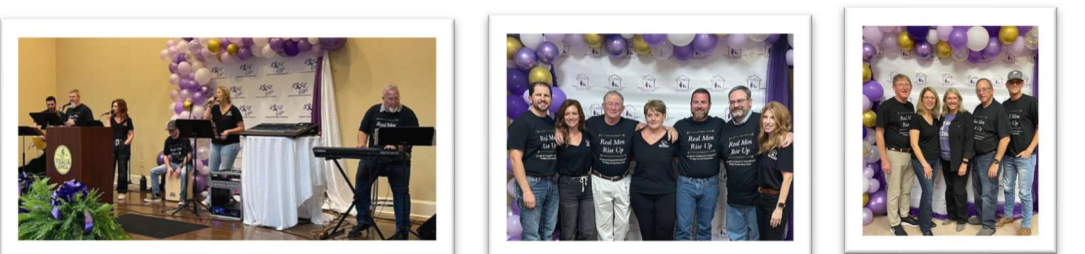
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REAL MEN RISE UP



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- Toombs Victims Assistance
- Vidalia Church of God
- Vidalia Cornerstone Church
- Vidalia First Assembly of God Church
- Vidalia High School Activities
- Ware's BBQ
- Wesley and Virginia Lyon



CHRISTMAS 2024

We may be a little biased, but we believe we have the best volunteers with the biggest hearts! Over the last few years, we have had a group of over 30 men and women who come together each year to plan two incredible events for our clients in December. The first event is a Christmas Carnival with every type of activity you can imagine. They had a hot chocolate station, a toy walk, cookie decorating, candy cane bingo, make your own Christmas ornament, nail painting, cookie decorating, create a stocking, elf bingo, candy cane fishing, edible Christmas tree decorating, games with prizes, popcorn, cotton candy, snow globes and many more. Santa was also in attendance and the volunteers made sure each family got a photo taken with him, then took the photos to be printed and framed, and gave them to the moms at the end of the event. This meant so much to these families as many of them did not have any photos of them with their children. The next event was a night at The Pal Theatre. Dinner was served, then the moms were whisked away for an hour of boutique shopping for themselves while the kids “shopped” for Christmas gifts for their moms from the large supply of items donated for the event. After the gifts were wrapped, the moms returned, and the families got snacks from the concession stand and then watched a Christmas movie together as a family. Tears of joy were shed due to the love and generosity these volunteers showed to our clients who sorely needed it. It was indeed a Christmas miracle, made possible by our wonderful volunteers!