

FEATURES

Healing Hearts helping heal lives

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The Healing Hearts Ministry of Kaufman County is gearing up for the Xcellence Unplugged general session by partnering with the Neill Corporation and Aveda for a celebration of talent in the hair industry.

Healing Hearts Ministry directors Mary Clemons and Susan White will be featured on stage at the interactive hair show Sunday at the Hilton Anatole Hotel in Dallas.

North American hair stylist of the year Marjorie Clarke has dedicated a portion of her presentation at this event to domestic violence awareness in the community.

Clemons and White, both survivors of domestic abuse, shared their stories on film with Clarke last Saturday. The video of the meeting will be shown to audience members at the event and the two women will be presented with makeovers courtesy of Clarke.

Clemons and White created the Healing Hearts Ministry with the intention of making Kaufman County an example of women's advocacy in the state of Texas.

"When we moved back to Kaufman, we were shocked to realize there weren't any programs in the area for women who have gone through what we went through," Clemons said. "So we started speaking women at high schools and churches in order to spread the word to people that we were here."

Through their public speaking, the duo said they are developing a state and countywide support network of resources to help women in crisis rebuild their lives.

They share their testimonies of overcoming domestic violence at seminars, luncheons, church groups and civic functions. They also give teen dating presentations, which deal with the responsibilities of being in a relationship and detecting early warning signs of abuse, at area high schools.

The goal of their seminars and classes is to dispel the misconceptions and stereo-types associated with domestic violence. They said their program promotes healing and victorious living in the women they help.

They hope to establish a witness advocacy program through their local court system so that every victim will have an advocate with them at court hearings. They said they want to see law enforcement officials working with their program to help witnesses feel safe through the criminal process because it's something they never had.

The women plan to travel to Michigan in the next few months to continue counseling women.

"We are working out the details and planning on doing a lot of traveling in the future," Clemons said. "The Michigan Center for Women in Transition is actually the shelter that housed me for a year after I got out of my abusive relationship."

Both women hope others will be saved through their efforts with the Healing Hearts program.

"It's troubling that without a strong support system, the chances of a woman staying out of an abusive relationship are minimal."