

For Immediate Release
Contact: Vicki Thompson

January 23, 2013
(925) 667-2713

Battered Women's Shelter Needs Reliable Van for Client Safety

Tri-Valley Haven has provided safe shelter and supportive services to women and children escaping domestic violence since 1977. Families coming to the shelter are met by a Haven staff member at a neutral location to ensure that they have not been followed, and then transported to the shelter. Many of these families have spent over an hour on public transportation to arrive at the meeting site. Haven staff arrives with a van large enough to transport the family and their belongings, which often have been hastily stuffed into large plastic drawstring bags.

During a family's stay at the Haven, the van will be used to transport them to medical appointments in the Tri-Valley area and beyond. The van is also used to pick up donations from the community and supplies for the shelter that are purchased in bulk to lower the cost.

For over six years, the shelter has relied on a 1989 van donated by a member of the community. The van has been kept running by the Haven's maintenance coordinator and generous support from Olsen's Automotive Repair in Livermore, but the years of wear and tear have taken their toll. The van has electrical problems, and has repeatedly broken down. The Haven staff reports a chemical smell inside the vehicle. The interior roof lining is sagging. The sliding doors and windows are difficult to operate and often stick shut.

"To ensure the safety of our clients and staff, we need a reliable vehicle as soon as possible," said Vicki Thompson, Tri-Valley Haven's Director of Domestic Violence Services. "We have been as inventive and thrifty as we possibly can, but this van just can't do the job any longer. One recent Sunday the van wouldn't start when a case manager had to bring a new client to the shelter. She tried to borrow our homeless shelter's van, but it was in use at the time. Our case manager does not have a car of her own, and she had to call our back-up staff, the person on call for the week, to come in to pick up the client."

Buying a newer van is not an option for Tri-Valley Haven at this time. The nonprofit agency has felt the impact of reduced donations and foundation grants since the recession. All of the shelter staff works fewer than 40 hours, and the Haven may face further cutbacks if Congress does not enact a new Violence Against Women Act, which helps support agencies that provide domestic violence and sexual assault services. "If someone in the community is able to donate a used van in good working condition, in just a single year they would help more than 200 women and children to be safe from abuse. Those families and the Haven staff would be extremely grateful," said Thompson.

If you can help, please call Tri-Valley Haven's Community Building at (925) 449-5845, Monday thru Thursday.

###