

# Luminaries

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Indian River Co., St. Lucie Co., Martin Co.



## SafeSpace recognizes October as **National Domestic Violence Awareness Month**



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## COVER STORY

# Community campaign to help SafeSpace re-open shelter

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SafeSpace, the only certified domestic violence agency on the Treasure Coast, is working to secure the funding needed to reopen an emergency shelter in Vero Beach which serves Indian River County residents.

SafeSpace is committed to offering high-level services in the tri-county area. The increased number of domestic violence incidents fueled by the pandemic have made this need urgent.

Although the nonprofit agency provides outreach programs, more are needed. The services currently being provided include:

- Legal assistance
- Safety planning
- Lethality assessment
- Relocation and housing assistance
- Financial literacy
- Transportation
- Advocacy
- Prevention

Counseling is based on an empowerment model that helps survivors to recover the autonomy and freedom of choice which victimhood took from them.

The goal is to provide survivors with the skills to make personal choices, to manage the ways in which they make these choices and to evaluate their effectiveness.



**SafeSpace CEO Dr. Teresa Albizu**

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The 19-bed shelter being funded will bring the scope of SafeSpace to the next level, as victims and their children will have a safe haven to which to escape abusive situations.

To reopen the shelter, \$100,000 is needed for capital improvements and \$246,000 to finance the first 12 months of operation.

An intense Vero Shelter Campaign will be undertaken by current and past SafeSpace board members and community stakeholders. It is anticipated that with the support of the Indian River County community, the shelter can be

## On the cover

SafeSpace holds a number of fundraisers and outreach programs to provide awareness about the problem of domestic abuse, including participants in the 2019 Walk a Mile in Her Shoes fundraiser, the SafeSpace board of directors at a county commission meeting proclaiming October as National Domestic Violence Month, the Treasure & Space Coast Radio team at a Walk a Mile in Her Shoes event and the 2019-20 SafeSpace board of directors celebrate the organization's 40th anniversary. All photos contributed by SafeSpace.

reopened by June, 2021.

Although victims can travel to the Martin County shelter, it's not an ideal situation.

"Some think that getting far away from an abuser is a good thing. However, many of these battered adults have ties to their community through employment, children's schools and extended family – and need that continued network of support," said Dr. Teresa Albizu, CEO of SafeSpace.

"We were experiencing a domestic violence pandemic way before the COVID-19 outbreak. Social isolation brought forth by public health issues re-

lated to it have exacerbated the incidence of violence and aggression in homes," said Albizu.

Members of the public are asked to reach out to anyone they suspect of being in an abusive situation and encourage them to seek help.

According to Albizu, "If we continue to allow domestic violence incidents to remain secretive and go unreported, it will remain just that We need the assistance of our community-at large to remind victims of domestic violence that SafeSpace is open, fully operational and ready to provide the assistance they need. Victims have to know that they are not alone."

The nonprofit serves more than 2,000 victims and children annually and is dedicated to saving lives, offering hope, healing and change to those who seek services.

"Please accept this heartfelt plea to financially support our effort to reopen our Indian River County Emergency Shelter. Our goal is to achieve a strong presence in the community and make services more accessible to its residents," said Jennifer Ferrari, director of Ddevelopment for SafeSpace.

The SafeSpace Crisis Hotline 772-288-7023 is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to all those seeking support services and shelter.

For information or to make a donation, call 772-223-2399 or visit [www.safespacefl.org](http://www.safespacefl.org)