

Remembering Sheelah Ryan

The framed photo of **Sheelah Ryan** has graced the walls at SafeHouse of Seminole since 1996. The inscription on the frame reads: **“An early advocate of SafeHouse of Seminole, Sheelah was committed to establishing a shelter where victims of domestic violence could rehabilitate with dignity, ultimately become self-sufficient, and live purposeful, happy lives.**

Her message: “Be the best you can be”.

There are many articles out there about Sheelah as a lottery winner. In 1988 Sheelah Ryan, a real-estate broker from Winter Springs, Florida, won \$55 million, the largest lottery prize ever awarded to one person. In January 1989 Ryan announced the formation of the Ryan Foundation, a nonprofit organization to benefit the poor, the elderly, and abused women and children.

The best article that connected Sheelah with SafeHouse was by Orlando Sentinel Editor, Don Boyett, entitled: *Lottery Winner's Legacy Of Love Lives On In Safehouse*, dated March 31, 1996.

The article documented the dedication of SafeHouse of Seminole, in Sheelah Ryan's honor. Boyett noted in his editorial that “...it had been 18 months since she (Sheelah) died, and she was sorely missed. But everyone wore a big smile and seemed truly happy..” He said, “Sheelah Ryan affected people that way - even in death.” Thirteen years later, we smile and wonder what Sheelah would think about the path SafeHouse had followed in its new 15,500 sq. ft. safe haven.

Sheelah was an inspiration to make SafeHouse a reality. Sanford Mayor, Linda Kuhn, then chief victims' rights advocate in the office of the state attorney, told Boyett that Sheelah “didn't know the word quit” and kept them on task to make SafeHouse a reality, inspiring other philanthropists to give, as well, from 1989 until SafeHouse opened its doors in 1995.

Sheelah Ryan helped many people with her good fortune, just as she had helped people most of her life, and her Ryan Foundation will continue to do so far into the future. More important than that, though, is that Sheelah has inspired the community as to how to give and to live. That's as she showed us all how to live. And that's a powerful legacy.

“She was a remarkable woman,” said Pamela Ohab, president of the foundation, during a tour of the new SafeHouse. “She would have loved to see what you have done here.”

Sheelah's inspiration lives on in the lives of the hundreds of woman and child residing in the SafeHouse each year who pass her photo and her words every day.



Making the “Case” for Violence Prevention Education...

- Approximately 3.3 million children witness domestic violence occurrences in their homes each year.
- 90% of children from violent homes witness their fathers beating their mothers.
- Children in homes where violence occurs are physically abused or neglected at a rate 1500% higher than the national average.
- Nationally, 75% of battered women say their children are physically or sexually abused.
- Child victims of severe violence have two to four times higher rates of trouble-making friends, temper tantrums, failing grades in school, having problems in school and at home.
- **Abused children are arrested by the police four times more often than nonabused children.**