



# Possessiveness is not caring

## *It is time to talk to the Teens and "tweens" in your life.....*

*Note from SafeHouse Executive Director: This calendar hangs on my 16-year-old's bulletin board and I wanted to share the information. She spoke in class about dating violence and the violence against women portrayed in music. There IS hope!*

The pages in the 2010 calendar (hanging in Meg's room) are filled with smiling teenagers and snapshots of little girls, sitting on Santa's lap or dancing in a pink tutu. The sweet images serve as a stark reminder of the dangers that young women face in abusive relationships. All 12 girls, including three from Houston, were killed by abusive partners.

"I've had some people tell me that nobody will want these calendars hanging on their wall," said Olga Rodriguez of Houston, who created the calendar in memory of her 18-year-old niece, pictured on the January page. "But there are adults out there who can use these calendars to educate their young girls. I think anyone with a teenage daughter should want this hung in her room."

Rodriguez created the calendar after her pregnant niece, Daniela Huertas, was killed in 2007 by her husband. The man then took his own life.

"Three lives were lost that day. Daniela had wanted so much to be a mother," her mother, Mary Rodriguez, said with a strained voice. "I think about it every day. It still hurts. I thought he would be the perfect son-in-law."

Royalty aims to teach these young teens that they are "princesses who deserve respect," she said. Along with the girls' tragic stories, the calendar offers warning signs of abusive relationships.

Huertas, for example, mistook her boyfriend's possessiveness for caring when they dated, Rodriguez said.

"Whenever he would call late at night, he would ask Daniela where she was. She would tell him that she was at home. But then he would make her have her dog bark to prove it," her aunt said. "And another time when he asked where she'd been, and she told him the hairdresser's, he grabbed her hair and smelled it. He wanted to see if it had recently been shampooed."

The night in 2007 when she died — a little more than a month after graduating high school and getting married — she had an argument with her husband, went to her mother's house and refused to return.

"I remember he came to our door and asked to see her," she said. She did not know he had a gun until she heard the shots coming from a back bedroom of her family's Houston home.

"The last thing I remember was screaming after seeing him there with the gun in his mouth," she said. "I never in a million years thought he would do something like that."

Nineteen-year-old Casey Pelfrey, the calendar's June subject, had a similar obsessive ex-boyfriend. During their turbulent four-year relationship, he would dictate what she wore, thinking even a button-down dress shirt was too tight. He grew angry when any other men looked at her, recalled her sister, Shawna Mueller. ***Continued next page....CALENDAR***

## 2009 Success's

Is there any wonder SafeHouse, its advocates and services are so vitally important to the community we served? I leave you to ponder the question.....



Advocates you are God sent angels! I was so scared coming into shelter and you ladies made me feel at home. You have showed me it is possible to love again. Since being in SafeHouse I have become a stronger woman and mother. The SafeHouse made me feel safe and welcomed; every woman, who comes through these doors, has a testimony to share with others, to encourage them to walk away from the abuse and truly know there is a better life. I'll never forget the laughter of the children, knowing they are safe and that it's okay to be a child again. I am grateful for all the SafeHouse advocates as each of you has touched my life. I love all of you blessed ladies.....

I pray that the day you read these lines it finds you in good health. Many days have been highs and a few low; yet I thank God that I have been placed here. Each of you have been placed here, each of you has made an impact and an ever lasting impression on me. Thank you for giving me the tools to move forward and the empowerment to claim my life back. So many times I wanted to just stay down and out; yet I gained strength, from every woman in my situation. It became a place were the children felt safe, happy, secure and loved! I accomplished quite a bit....thank you so much! I have been blessed by SafeHouse advocates.

~Survivor letter to SafeHouse~