



Petite, dark-haired Laura telephoned HELP of Cape Cod one evening, crying hysterically. Between sobs she spoke of "not wanting to live". The phone worker at HELP listened, talked to her, and eventually succeeded in calming her until she could tell about her problems.

Laura and her husband had just had a fight. He knocked her down and slammed out of the house, leaving her sobbing on the floor. Their two little girls, six months and three years old, were sleeping in another room.

The phone worker asked if Laura would be willing to talk with a counselor about how she was feeling. She agreed to this and came to the HELP office the following morning with her children.

"My husband would kill me if he knew I came to talk to someone," she told the counselor. She went on to describe her marriage as "rocky" throughout all four years.

Two years ago she left her husband for several months, but they reconciled because she "loves him". She sobs about her husband's treatment of her and how he reminds her of her own father, an alcoholic who once "threw me down two flights of stairs, and heaved a peanut butter jar at my head".

She shows the counselor scars to prove the assault.

Her mother, she says, "took a lot of pills" and was always fighting with the children and their father.

"Why me? Why do I always have to be treated so badly?" she weeps. For two years, she complains, she has suffered with migraine headaches. Her doctor gave her pills for these two years ago. She refills the prescription but doesn't know what the medication is.

In the course of the next six months, the following referrals were made for Laura: to an obstetrician and gynecologist because of menstrual difficulties; to welfare for medicaid application; to a neurologist for headaches; to Head Start for the oldest daughter; to the Mental Health clinic for marital counseling.

During Laura's relationship with HELP, she often called in "crisis". If her counselor was unavailable, she talked with the phone worker about what was upsetting her. The most common issue was her mental conflict.

In time, Laura began to understand what she was doing, herself, to create this conflict. She received constant support for her good feelings and, as she learned to control her behavior, for her progress.

Who are the people at HELP of Cape Cod who were able to offer enough support to Laura so she no longer wanted to die?

Mrs. Joan Gosselin, HELP Director since June 1973, is the program's coordinator. She supervises paid staff and volunteers as well as doing clinical work with individuals and families.

Joan, a graduate of Boston College School of Nursing and of New York University with a Master's degree, came to HELP as a volunteer in 1971. In that capacity she counseled adolescents, worked at crisis intervention and supervised group leaders.

Broad experience had prepared her for the job since she has worked with children in individual and group therapy at Bellvue Psychiatric Hospital in New York, had taught psychiatric nursing courses at Indiana University, and had served at Riverdale, N.Y., Mental Health Clinic as Coordinator of Aftercare Day Care Center Program. Joan has also taught psychotherapy and psychopathology at Boston College graduate school.

At HELP of Cape Cod, Joan is assisted by Karen Lyon, who holds a Bachelor's degree from the University of Maryland and has taken graduate courses at Bowie State College.

Karen, too, has had plenty of experience helping people who are disturbed and in crisis situations meet their problems in healthier ways.

Among several other activities, she has worked with children with "special needs", served as a volunteer at Passage Crises Center, and worked at the Institute for Behavioral Research in a juvenile

delinquency prevention program.

In Massachusetts she was a volunteer live-in teacher/counselor at DARE school in Mashpee.

What is HELP of Cape Cod doing for our community? Is the program one the Town of Barnstable should support?

Let's look at some of the history and base our judgement on some facts before we decide.

In the summer of 1970, Project HELP commenced as a store-front operation to deal with the growing drug crisis on the Cape. Many young people were drifting into Hyannis and other communities, arriving penniless, soon becoming disenchanted and getting into trouble in the community.

This was the year people began recognizing there's a drug problem on the Cape, one involving youngsters who live here, go to school here, children who belong, as well as youngsters from off-Cape.

Originally, Project HELP was sponsored by Cape Cod Council of Churches. Its early financial support came from the State Division of Drug Rehabilitation.

After a period of time Project HELP became HELP of Cape Cod, and although still concerned with drug abuse on the Cape, it now provides answers to people in any kind of crisis. Primarily, it serves young people; 88% of those who turn to HELP are between 12 and 18 years of age.

Of these, 60% come from Barnstable, 18% from Yarmouth, 11% from Dennis; the balance come from other Cape towns.

These young people represent every type of background, every economic and social level.

HELP is now funded by a Kelly Foundation grant, monies appropriated for its support at town meetings in Barnstable, Yarmouth and Dennis, a Family Planning Foundation grant, and private contributions. Its fiscal operation is under the direction and control of the Cape Cod Mental Health Association.

The 12% who turn to HELP in time of trouble, and who are not in the 12 - to - 18 - year group, are members of the Cape's adult population. Last year HELP received over 6200 phone calls for assistance.

Adult callers are primarily alcoholics who usually are referred to the Committee on Alcoholism or to an Alcoholics Anonymous support group. Some are ex-patients of Taunton State Hospital now living in the community; these are referred to appropriate people for assistance. A few are elderly and are usually referred to Home Care or other helping agencies in the area.

People seeking legal advice are referred to Legal Services. People needing foster homes for children are asked to call the Division of Family and Children's Services, Massachusetts Department of Public Welfare.

HELP has grown to meet needs on many fronts. It provides a women's health clinic, a gynecological clinic, a rape hot-line, as well as family counseling services.

Joan Gosselin reports that the young people between 12 and 18 fall into three primary groups of children-in-crisis. Last year 650 sought pregnancy tests. Ninety were suicidal. From January 1st through November, 1974, over 900 requested venereal disease tests.

The state average showing positive tests in this last category is 5%. At HELP the average showing positive is 9%.

(To be continued next week)