

**VICTORIOUS WOMAN ESSAY CONTEST**  
**SHEILA CARUSO**  
**Second Prize**  
**Stand Tall**

My story starts with my Mom getting a divorce when I was only nine years old and one year after the divorce was final married my step-father. The physical abuse started almost right away. He dragged me across the floor by my hair. He went after me with a knife. On my birthday he almost shot me, but I got away and stayed at a friend's house. He picked me up upside down and banged my head against the refrigerator about ten times after my older sister told him he cut pie like a cake. I was only 18. I was in the hospital for 21 days, 14 in intensive care and 7 days in the hospital room in April. I had an ovarian cyst that broke. I died and they put the paddles on my heart. I remember floating with a bright light and someone saying it was not my time.

I got home from the hospital and one night I did not pick up my dog's mess. He threw me down the stairs. That was in May.

I went back to San Bernardino Valley College and took my term tests, I graduated with an AA Degree in June.

He kicked me out of the house because someone turned on the pool pump. I did not know where to turn it on, so it was not me.

My youngest sister was showing me how to sew on a sewing machine, He came upstairs, threw me down the stairs and kicked me out of the house with only \$2.00 in my wallet and my Mother remembered that I owed her \$2.00 for some nylons. I left the house with no money.

Thank goodness my boyfriend, now husband gave me \$30.00 to stay in a hotel. The next day I got a job at Pacific Telephone Company with six months wage credit because I had an AA degree. I found a roommate, I bought myself a new car for only \$1965.00. I paid cash. I soon got my own apartment. Lived on my own, never lived back home again.

In the meantime I had not seen my biological Dad in seventeen years. I had a dream that he was in Ohio, I called information and got his number. He and my step-mom came to California to visit all five of us. I never told my Dad what my step-dad did to me. I kept a relationship with my Dad. My husband and I visited them in Ohio every other year for twenty years. He passed away on December 4, 2009. My Mom passed away July 4, 2009.

When I was older I did get a relationship back with my step-father. He went on Prozac, which he should have done a long time ago. By the way after he did the physical abuse he got all nice. When he was older and I talked to him he never mentioned the abuse at all. I think he must have repressed it, or just did not remember. He died June 2006.

I came out of the physical abuse by not looking back. I triumphed over that. I got married and have been married for almost forty years, we have a thirty four year old son which I never abused at all. I did not continue the cycle. I am an Independent Sales Representative / Leader / Beauty Consultant for AVON. I am self-employed. I have a thriving business. I volunteer at my Church and have a wonderful group of friends. I believe in God and I pray daily that another child does not get abused. We should not be hurting our children. No child should ever be abused. I am fighting that never happens. It takes a toll on you, "Stand tall it should never happen at all." That is my slogan.

I am a member of For You Network , which is a division of the National Association of Female Executives (NAFE). Also, a member of Relationship Building Network (RBN). I will be volunteering for the Marketing Expo with Linda Hollander in Hawthorne Ca on April 27, and volunteering for the Goddess Festival in Laguna Beach, Ca on April 30.

I won the 2010 Emerging Leader for the For You Network (FYN)