# Rape Crisis Centre (Helderberg)




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In 1993, Felicity Bouwer started Rape Crisis Helderberg to address the desperate need in the community for a support organisation for victims of sexual violence. Since the start all our services have been provided free of charge to any man or woman over the age of 18 no matter when the rape or abuse took place. We believe that no one wanted to be abused and this is the reason we do not charge for our services. We do not turn anyone away and we are willing to help so long as the person wants our help.As time passed she felt the increasing need to train volunteers to help with this critical task. In 1994 the first training of volunteers took place. During this time the volunteers were helping rape victims at the casualty department of the Helderberg Hospital (then the Hottentots Holland Hospital). The circumstances were not at all ideal; a rape victim often had to wait for many hours together with all the other trauma patients. We had to find a spot in casualty to counsel and help these ladies each time a rape victim was brought in.Before Felicity retired in 1995 she trained volunteers and helped to set up Rape Crisis Helderberg. Reinette Evans took over from her and Rape Crisis continues under her dedicated leadership. During 1996 the present day crisis centre, which to this day is unique in the Western Cape, was conceived by the police, Rape Crisis, the community and the

Helderberg Hospital.Our crisis centre and offices are ideally situated next to the Helderberg Hospital which is the government hospital serving these towns. The hospital has made rooms available at no cost, supplies medication and covers all our telephone and electricity costs. An excellent working relationship between Rape Crisis Helderberg, the Superintendent of the hospital and the hospital staff continue to be the recipe for success.From this start working with the local police stations, Rape Crisis Helderberg has built a strong relationship with the police stations in our areas including the Somerset West SAPS, Nomzamo/Lwandle SAPS (who have our satellite counselling office on their property and work closely with us in many matters), Strand SAPS, Gordon's Bay SAPS, Grabouw SAPS, Eesteriver SAPS, Villiersdorp SAPS, Sir Lowry's Pass SAPS (who have made one of their rooms available for us to use once a week for a satellite counselling office), Macassar SAPS and the Family Violence, Child Protection and Sexual Offences Unit (FCS) of the SAPS for this area. We have done training for the police and they are happy to help us with various matters.As a result of the increasing number in clients we opened another counselling room/office in May 2000 in the same section of the Helderberg Hospital. In June 2001 we became a registered Non-profit Organisation (014-392 NPO).Our SIA (Survivors of Incest Anonymous) https://siawso.org support group was started in March 2002. The support groups are self-help group's and are a 12-step program successfully used in America. All literature used was written by incest survivors for incest survivors. We have translated some of this information into Afrikaans and Xhosa.The increasing numbers of clients led to a third counselling room/office opening in February 2003. In 2003 SARS also recognised us as a public benefit organisation (18/11/13/3085), exempt from taxes. A Wendy house was donated to us, which we are currently using as additional counselling room, for support group meetings and for training.In the beginning of 2007, Rape Crisis Helderberg, with the assistance of the very helpful team at Websurf built a web site. In 2007 we got our certificate as a 100% BEE recognised organisation (RCH 00771-REV 1). Our township project in Nomzamo and Sir Lowry's Pass opened on the 1st of November 2007. And another Wendy house was set up at the police station in Nomazamo / Lwandle as a counselling office. Counselling rooms are being

shared at the police station in Sir Lowry’s Pass and soon another Wendy house will be put up there also as a counselling office. Our township project is aimed at helping the poorest people in our communities where no other counselling service is available. The project works hand-in-hand with our crisis centre to provide a comprehensive follow-up service for survivors and their families as well as an easily accessible community counselling service. Interaction with the community has also been positive, and feedback has also been very encouraging. Recommendation has been wide from amongst others street committees, as well as some of the Shebeen / Taverns, the police, crèches, social workers, local clinics and schools.We regularly get positive feedback from the Helderberg Hospital management who continues to be firm supporters of our work here and we are often approached by hospitals, government officials and other rape crisis centers for help in modeling their programs after our successful model (including Karl Bremmer Hospital, Delft Hospital, Worcster Hospital and Thuthuzela Hospital, Rape Crisis Cape Town and various people from the Department of Health). In addition we have received commendation for our director, Reinette Evans, who has been honoured with various community awards during the years for her dedication and commitment to bring a much needed service to the community.The main communities that we serve include: Faure, Firgrove, Gordon’s Bay, Grabouw, Lwandle, Macassar, Nomzamo, Sir Lowry’s Pass, Strand and Somerset West. These communities are home to over 250 000 people. Within this area according to police estimates approximately 12 women are rape every day of the year. This of course does not include male rape, those suffering from previous abuse who have developed additional problems as a result of the abuse, incest victims, sexual assault that did not result in rape, domestic violence, and all of those exposed to some form of sexual violence or abuse.Much of our success is due to the kind volunteers who selflessly help us with our crisis centre, our fundraising and our various projects. We have a wide range of volunteers ranging from an 80 year old who runs our second-hand shop, ladies who visit and befriend victims at our safe house, ladies who tirelessly help with creating memorable fundraising events and of course the crisis centre volunteers who are on call 24 hours a day, 365 days a year to help any

member of the community who is raped. Two of our volunteers have been serving the community at Rape Crisis Helderberg for 10 years!There are still a lot of myths surrounding rape and sexual abuse. RAPE IS NOT ABOUT SEX…rape is a crime of violence, power and control that is committed through a sexual act – sex is used as the weapon to achieve this. Rape is a violent, traumatic and life changing experience that can happen to ANYONE in almost any situation. Rape and sexual abuse is NEVER the survivor's fault – RAPISTS AND SEXUAL ABUSERS MAKE THE CHOICE TO RAPE OR ABUSE and they are to blame.We believe that educating our communities about rape, sexual violence and abuse is very important.We are regularly invited to talk at schools and community organisations in the Helderberg Basin about rape, abuse and incest. This helps enormously in raising awareness in the community about our services and also about prevention. Over the years more than 30 000 learners in the Helderberg Basin and surrounding areas have been educated in this way. In addition we receive referrals from schools and businesses about problem situations that we are able to assist in.Rape Crisis Helderberg has managed to grow from a small organisation that operated out of the casualty of the Helderberg Hospital in 1993 to a dynamic and growing organisation today that is still a grassroots organisation, but is flourishing. With 26 years of specialized experience working with rape and abuse victims, we have sought out the best methods to treat survivors of rape, molestation, childhood incest and abuse. Sadly South Africa holds the record in the Guinness Book of Records for the highest rapes world-wide. Interpol estimates that over 1 million women are raped each year in South Africa. Reporting rape takes enormous courage – survivors do not take such steps lightly. Rape Crisis Helderberg is committed to provide an immediate service for rape and abuse victims. Our clients improved lives and faith in the programs testify to the extent of our work. We are committed to consistently providing the support necessary for healing to take place.

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