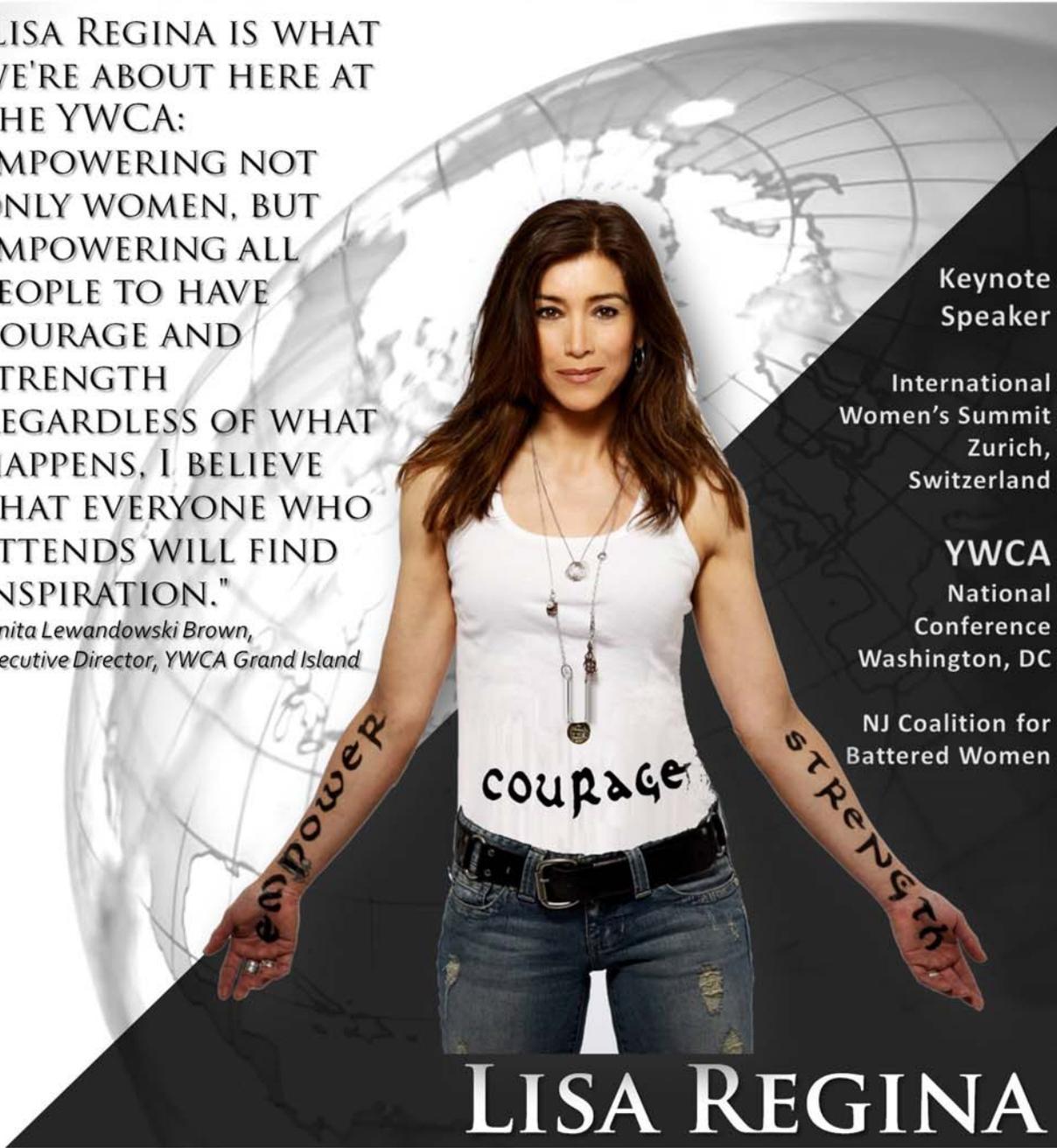


# A WRITE TO HEAL™

“LISA REGINA IS WHAT WE’RE ABOUT HERE AT THE YWCA: EMPOWERING NOT ONLY WOMEN, BUT EMPOWERING ALL PEOPLE TO HAVE COURAGE AND STRENGTH REGARDLESS OF WHAT HAPPENS, I BELIEVE THAT EVERYONE WHO ATTENDS WILL FIND INSPIRATION.”

*-Anita Lewandowski Brown,  
Executive Director, YWCA Grand Island*



Keynote  
Speaker

International  
Women’s Summit  
Zurich,  
Switzerland

YWCA  
National  
Conference  
Washington, DC

NJ Coalition for  
Battered Women

## LISA REGINA

### Actress. Advocate. International Speaker

“Her story and her presentation are a message of impact, survival and awareness”

A Write to Heal is a Registered Trade and Service Mark of Lisa Regina. All Rights Reserved.

# LISA REGINA

## ONE WOMAN ON A GLOBAL MISSION TO EDUCATE



2011 YWCA National Conference  
Photo by Moshe Zusman

### KEYNOTE PERFORMANCES

- International Women's Summit  
Zurich, Switzerland
- YWCA National Conference  
Washington, DC
- An Empty Place at the Table  
Kean University
- 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Women's Expo  
York, PA
- New Jersey Coalition  
for Battered Women
- Hope's Door  
Chappaqua, NY

### EDUCATIONAL ASSEMBLIES

- Grand Island High School  
Grand Island, Nebraska
- Amityville High School Awareness Weekend,  
Amityville NY
- Hope's Door Star Symposium  
Pace University, Westchester, NY

### YWCA SPONSORED WORKSHOPS

- Missouri Western State University
- Eastern Union County, New Jersey
  - York, Pennsylvania
- Grand Island, Nebraska
- Yonkers, New York

"What Lisa offers will not only help victims to heal and be empowered, but the rest of America to gain knowledge and understanding of such issues as abuse/violence and the ability to help others"

- Cheryl Wegner  
Domestic Violence  
Counselor

"Lisa is a wonderful example of someone who took a horrific experience and had the ability to touch the lives of others through creating something positive."

- Jaime Edwards  
Victims Assist Services  
of Westchester

### RADIO INTERVIEWS

[KRGLAM 1430 GRAND ISLAND NE](#)

[KSYZ 107.7 - THE ISLAND](#)

[98.5 THE PEAK](#)

# LISA REGINA – A WRITE TO HEAL™

Every day, in every state, in every city, in every town; it's happening. It's happening in our homes, in our schools and on our streets. It's happening to our mothers, our daughters, our sisters, our friends and on April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2005 it happened to actress, educator, Lisa Regina.

Domestic Violence; statistically incidences occur every eight seconds in the United States...but what about the stories left unheard?

Lisa's story of domestic abuse was publicized across all media and the details of her assault printed as front page news. Assaulted by her then fiancé, a celebrity actor; the story being told only focused on the tabloid gossip and never spoke honestly about the social epidemic of domestic violence.

## DAILY NEWS



“The writing activity that Lisa facilitated at our OutReach Center was most appreciated by the women who participated; the women felt a sense of healing and a great deal of support from one another when the writing was shared. I can honestly say that everyone there

– both survivors of domestic violence and those staff and volunteers who joined the experience – saw and felt the impact of writing about ones experiences, and the beginnings of healing from expressing thoughts and emotions associated with those experiences.

- Jan C. Lilien  
YWCA of Eastern Union County

It was this gross ignorance that led Lisa to find healing in what had always been familiar to her, writing. Her writings led her to rebuild her life, mind, body and soul.

Lisa's own ability to overcome and heal motivated her to share the mantras of *Empower, Strength, Courage* with others and create her non-profit organization, *A Write to Heal™*

Started as a grass roots writing group in her apartment, A Write to Heal became formally incorporated as a non-profit organization in 2006. Within the safety of the same walls that protected Lisa, women would come to A Write to Heal meetings, pick up the program's "tools" and write page after page, of their personal story, releasing the emotions that had been crippling them for so long.

## A MISSION TO EDUCATE.

Education has been Lisa's focus and the mission of *A Write to Heal* since its inception.

On July 13th, 2006, Lisa wrote, directed and produced the *first* educational staged performance of *A Write to Heal* in New York City. Following performances took place on March 16<sup>th</sup>, 2007, at Sterling High School as a community event in South Jersey. On July 8<sup>th</sup> 2007, Lisa staged the program's second performance at The Culture Project in New York City's SoHo district.



Successfully utilizing her performance and writing techniques is nothing new to Lisa Regina. As a student in the School of Education at New York University, Lisa's studies focused on implementing the "arts into education." As a professional of the arts in New York City for over the past 26 years, Lisa has always committed herself to creating educational projects from concept, writing, directing and producing. She takes great pride in educating others and raising awareness with projects that shed light on the stories that often go unheard. In 2001, she wrote, directed and produced an educational film, *Kenny*, which won the Manhattan Global Film Festival and a Humanitarian Award. In addition, Lisa's educational film project, *Kenny*, is distributed by The National Film Network. Lisa continues to be involved in the film industry as an actress and member of the Screen Actors Guild

(SAG), and the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists (AFTRA). Her Film/TV credits include *The Sopranos*, and most recently, *Family On Board* starring, Eric Roberts and *79 Parts* with Sandra Bernhard. She has also appeared in national commercial campaigns for Delta Sky Miles and Macy's.



In her new role as advocate, Lisa now educates and speaks at schools and organizations across the country and around the world.

As a keynote speaker, Lisa has presented at both the YWCA's 2011 National Conference in Washington D.C., as well as 2011 International Women's Summit in Zurich, Switzerland.

Lisa has also been a featured keynote speaker at prestigious Universities and High School's across the country. Including, organizations such as the Victims Assist Services of Westchester County , "An Empty Place at the Table" with the YWCA, A Child's View of Union County, New Jersey Coalition for Battered Women and the Hope's Door annual Teen Symposium at PACE University in Westchester, New York.



**"Lisa,  
I have not stopped  
talking about your  
performance!  
Wow, one word...  
Amazing!!!"**  
Erika N. Taylor, J.D.  
Chief Exec Officer  
YWCA Evansville

Committed to educating and raising awareness about the crime of domestic violence, Lisa's performance and public speaking engagements have already proven to help students break their own silence, by connecting them with teachers, counselors and community organizations that provide support.

Specifically, Lisa's Q&A sessions which follow her performance, help to stimulate thought and inspire conversations surrounding the sensitive subject matters of violence in dating, domestic violence and bullying. Most importantly, openly discussing the student's feelings, concerns, and opinions provides educators with an opportunity to learn more about what their students are dealing with at home, in school and within their community.



**I saw you  
speak at the  
STAR  
Symposium,  
you are a great  
motivation  
and  
inspiration!**  
-Jennifer,  
Alexander Hamilton  
High School



Students relate and respond well to Lisa as she shares her personal story. Often, it evokes a trust enabling Lisa to guide many students once they reveal their own hidden stories of abuse.



Dear Lisa,

SOMETIMES I YELL AT MY GIRLFRIEND  
I JUST GET SO MAD. BUT YOUR STORY  
MADE ME WANT TO CHANGE. I'M GOING  
TO TALK ABOUT IT... CAUSE I DON'T WANT  
TO BE LIKE MY DAD.

I have been through a lot since I was little. My dad abused my mom for years and I never had the nerve to tell anyone about it... But after seeing you up there and hearing your story, I think I'm ready to tell mine.

“Her message is one that grabs teens' attention and make them think”  
- Mary Berlie, YWCA Grand Island

“Lisa is so different from the typical presenters that are brought to my high school to talk about difficult subjects.

She is honest, relatable, a great motivator and inspiration for young women who may be seeing the signs of dating violence. Lisa's presentation is an outstanding and phenomenal way of spreading awareness. And I've already spoken to my high school and asked that she be able to present her performance there so all students can experience Lisa's inspiration.

She has really impacted my life and I know she will for anyone who sees her performance.”

Jennifer  
Student, STAR Symposium



Lisa Regina has turned her violent assault into a positive outcome, providing an educational tool for communities, schools, counselors, educators and advocates to educate and raise awareness.

# LISA'S PRESENTATION INCLUDES...

## OPENING VIDEO

The opening video presentation is approximately 5 minutes in length; it is a visual/audio introduction to Lisa Regina's journey.

## MONOLOGUE

Lisa's presentation begins with a powerful performance of her monologue "It's A Domestic Violence Thing" The piece immediately engages the audience and sets an open tone for the remainder of the presentation. This monologue speaks to Lisa's journey in finding her voice after her traumatic assault and immediately introduces how writing can be an alternate tool towards healing.

## LISA'S STORY

Now that the audience is engaged and open, Lisa follows the monologue by introducing herself and giving an honest depiction of her story of violence and how her assault impacted her life. The intro leads to how Lisa found writing as a tool in her personal healing and why she decided it was so important to share the tool with others who are surviving in similar situations by creating A Write to Heal, Inc.

## MONOLOGUE 2

This is a second performance piece which speaks from where Lisa is now in her journey of healing and empowerment. It completes Lisa's story through the medium of performance.

## Q&A

The Q&A, facilitated by Lisa and a member of your organization is used to stimulate thought, opinions; solutions etc.

## WRITING EXERCISE

During this time, Lisa facilitates the advocates and women through the writing program so they can both learn and implement it into their organizations, shelters. If they choose to share the writings developed from the "Write to Heal" exercise, readings then take place by those who want to share their writings. This is often the most powerful piece of the performance as it really enforces the concept of healing through words.



Lisa can tailor her performance, and the A Write to Heal™ Program to suit your school, universities or organization's individual needs.

Our Chief Executive Officer, had the pleasure of seeing your performance at the 2011 YWCA USA National Conference in Washington, DC and was quite moved. Currently, the Southeast region is not a partner, but

we are very **interested in finding out how we can become a partner.**

This production would really impact the lives of women here and we sincerely hope that we can partner to make this happen. I saw Lisa Regina's show at Sterling High School, Somerdale, NJ in 2007. At the time I was going through a difficult, wait, it was horrific marriage. Mine was emotional and mental abuse

More silent, and less understood by most. **It is with great respect that I write to support Lisa Regina** and the work she is doing to raise awareness for domestic violence. I got the chance to shake her hand that night and took home some much needed advice.

**We would very much like you to come to Hawaii** and present your story. We really feel you can make a tremendous impact on victims and survivors here on the islands and play an important part in their healing. **Lisa made the subject of dating violence very relatable** for an audience of **500 students** and it is my hope that **others around the world** get to experience her work.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION & BOOKING...

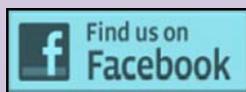
LISA REGINA

DIRECT: (609) 468-7474

[LISA@LISAREGINA.COM](mailto:LISA@LISAREGINA.COM)

[HTTP://WWW.LISAREGINA.COM](http://WWW.LISAREGINA.COM)

[HTTP://WWW.AWRITETOHEAL.ORG](http://WWW.AWRITETOHEAL.ORG)



[A WRITE TO HEAL](http://WWW.AWRITETOHEAL.ORG)



[@LISA\\_REGINA](https://twitter.com/LISA_REGINA)

# LETTERS IN SUPPORT.



HOPE'S  
DOOR

Embracing Life Free From Domestic Abuse

Lisa Regina  
A Write to Heal, Inc.

Dear Lisa,

We feel so fortunate to have had you speak at our 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Teen Symposium at Pace University on October 22, 2010. Our audience was spellbound! So many of our teen attendees were inspired by you and talked about your impact on them in small groups after your performance. One teen girl was heard saying "I want to be just like her".

We are well aware of how widespread domestic violence and dating abuse are in our society and expected that it would touch many audience members on a personal level. When asked in a survey "What did you like most about the day?", a 17 year old boy from Alexander Hamilton High School in Elmsford NY wrote " Lisa Regina's performance!! She is an inspirational woman indeed!" In addition, a 15 year old girl from John Jay High School in Cross River, NY wrote "I liked Lisa Regina a lot. She made me feel empowered!"



We thank you for providing encouragement, empowerment and a healthy outlet for teens searching for a voice. Sharing your story has undoubtedly inspired countless others to find strength during difficult times and to find compassion for others struggling with an abusive relationship. The Write to Heal Program Presentation and your performance were truly motivating and assist in "Breaking the Silence" about interpersonal violence.

Thank you so much!

Best Regards,  
Samantha Lee

Hope's Door  
STAR (Students Terminating Abusive Relationships)



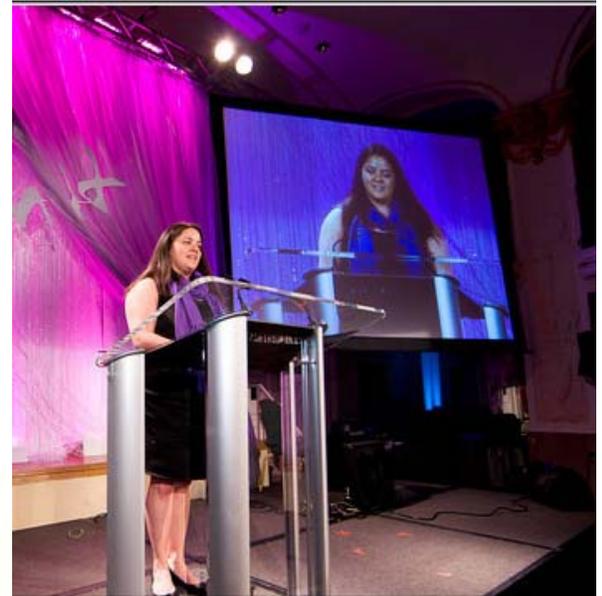
Dear Lisa,

I want to express my deepest appreciation for all that you have done over the last three years for the YWCA of Eastern Union County. I am so pleased that our relationship continued and is developing over the years with you. When we first met at your training, "A Write to Heal", at New Jersey Battered Women's Coalition I was so intrigued. When you spoke about your healing through journaling and how you turned your writings into your own monologue, I was truly inspired. That is why when we thought to hold our first Domestic Violence awareness event, "An Empty Place at the Table" in 2008; I thought you would be perfect to perform.

I loved seeing your kindness, willingness and openness to our organization. You were easy to contact and responded to emails right away, better than me at times! Through this, I knew your true dedication and commitment to the movement towards a world free of violence. Knowing this I was confident that you would be able to connect with the people in the audience.

When you performed at "An Empty Place at the Table" for the first time, I was right! People were so moved. They loved your monologue performance and your discussion on the program "A Write to Heal". After having you back for the next years, I was honored and humbled that you asked for our help with the new project "Highway to Healing". I was thrilled that you would be going into domestic violence shelters/programs across the country, meeting with survivors, teaching them the writing program "A Write to Heal" then taking their stories and turning them into monologues. I have to say I was even more thrilled that the YWCA of Eastern Union County was one of your first "stops" on your journey. I am so pleased that we have since continued our relationship with you.

eliminating racism  
empowering women  
**ywca**  
eastern union county



When you came in June of this year, the women were so excited to meet with you on a personal, intimate level. Many of them have seen you perform your monologue at "An Empty Place at the Table", but did not have an opportunity to be introduced to you. When you came and met with the women they were given an opportunity to talk with you, write their stories, hear you perform again, support one another and read their stories aloud. Another highlight was when other staff members that do not provide direct service work were given the opportunity to witness the power of healing through journaling, support and performance.

In October of this year, you were able to transform their stories and had them come to life on the stage during "An Empty Place at the Table". When the monologues were performed by the actresses at Kean University, this served as a tool to gain attention and also a cathartic experience for the women. The women were able to see their stories from a different point of view and appreciate their survival for not only them, but also their children.

I am very excited to see the program "Highway to Healing" develop using "A Write to Heal" program. I continue to support your work, as I know you support our work advocating for victims of domestic violence. Thank you again for all that you do for the movement through the medium of media, performance and television. I look forward to collaborating with you for many years to come.

Take care,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kris Silvestry".

Kris Silvestry, MA, NCC, LPC

## An Empty Place at the Table



Featuring...  
**Lisa Regina**  
&  
Monologues written by Lisa Regina  
co-directed by  
Brooke Campbell, MA, RDT, LCAT  
Performed by local actresses  
Inspired by true stories of domestic violence

An Empty Place at the Table consists of an art exhibition of dinner place settings, photographs, short stories and personal items, each of which represent a victim of domestic violence who has lost their life to a batterer. The idea of "An Empty Place at the Table" is to remember those who have passed away, increase awareness of the lethality of domestic violence, and to act as a catalyst for social change. Please join us!

Where: Kean University, Little Theater  
Date: Thursday, October 28, 2010  
Table Display: 11:00 am-8:00 pm  
Program with Lisa Regina: 6:00 pm-8:00 pm  
Lisa is an artist, educator and filmmaker who on April 2, 2005 was the victim of a domestic assault by her then fiancé. Through writing, she found personal strength and is inspired her to create, A Write to Heal. Lisa continues to educate others by way of writing, performance and filmmaking.

eliminating racism  
empowering women  
**ywca**  
Eastern Union County





## STERLING HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

501 S. WARWICK ROAD, SOMERDALE, NEW JERSEY 08083-2175

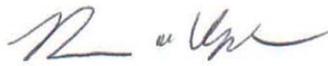
The therapeutic use of expressive writing allows individuals to confront upsetting topics. We know from research that writing deep thoughts and feelings about stressful events helps people to heal emotionally. Ms. Lisa Regina has provided a forum for victims of domestic violence to free up buried emotions and thoughts, develop self-awareness, reduce anxiety and increase self-esteem.

Ms. Regina has then taken these words to the stage to present to other victims of this most painful trauma as well as to a community at large in order to raise awareness of this tragedy that affects nearly one third of American women.

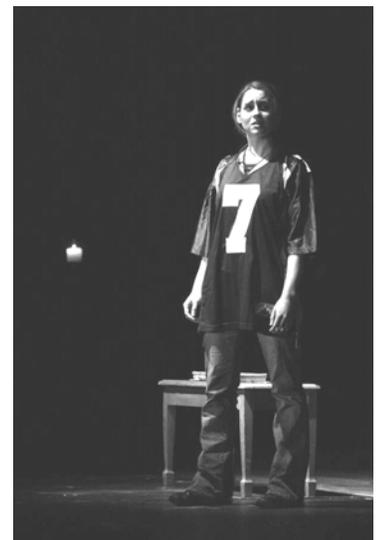
Sterling High School is extremely proud to host this very special presentation of "The Write to Heal." Ms. Regina has taken her own personal experience and those of others who are coping with the psychological aftermath of domestic violence and created a presentation of monologues that will open your heart with a renewed understanding of this nationwide crisis. In collaboration with Genesis Counseling Center provisions of services for those that may be touched by the presentation in a most personal way will be available during and after the presentation.

Please join us, as we listen, learn and support this very worthwhile cause. If you have any questions regarding this presentation, please feel free to contact Dr. Dennis Vespe, principal of Sterling High School or Pam Rowland, MSW, social worker of Sterling High School.

Sincerely,



Dr. Dennis Vespe, Principal



GRAND ISLAND  
**Senior High** ™

**In a combined effort between the YWCA and Catholic Health Initiatives Lisa Regina presented a dramatic presentation to over 1000 Sophomore and Junior students at Grand Island Senior High School on February 1, 2012.**

**Lisa presented herself to the students in an open and caring atmosphere and held the interest of all of the audience as she told her story and allowed students a means to think about not only their actions but the actions of others. Lisa has the skills to present to students and the true desire to make a difference.**

**Douglas Jensen, Principal  
Grand Island Senior High School**

# LISA IN THE NEWS.

## New York acting coach to tell personal story of Domestic violence

Carroll County  
**Times**

Posted: Sunday, September 25, 2011 8:00 am

New York acting coach to tell personal story of domestic violence  
By Brandon Oland, Times Staff Writer Carroll County Times

Lisa Regina's wedding was two months away.

She picked out her wedding gown, reserved the wedding location and selected the menus. She never got to experience any of it. She called off her wedding after her fiance pulled her out of a car in Manhattan, hit her and threw her on the street April 2, 2005.

After being physically abused, Regina said she called off the wedding and ended her engagement to Vincent Pastore, who played Sal Bompensiero on the HBO series "The Sopranos." Pastore pleaded guilty in 2005 to attempted assault on Regina and was sentenced to 70 hours of community service, according to a 2005 Associated Press story.

Regina used writing to cope with her emotional stress after the incident and started the nonprofit A Write to Heal to help women struggling with domestic abuse. She created a monologue of her story and those of other abuse victims that she will present at 1 p.m. Oct. 2 during the 2011 Women's Show at the York Expo Center in York, Pa.

Regina's performance is sponsored by Still Waters, a shelter for domestic violence victims in Hanover, Pa.

Regina said she felt compelled to share her story with other victims because it was so highly publicized, particularly in New York. "I'm really grateful to be alive," she said, "and I also felt that it's part of my responsibility to do this." Regina, a longtime acting coach and writer based in New York, put her feelings on paper after the assault.

"Writing was the only way for me to have a voice to express how much pain I was in emotionally and physically," she said. She shared her story with domestic violence groups in New York. Other women who were victims of spousal abuse were touched by Regina's story and started meeting at Regina's New York apartment, where they wrote their own stories.

Regina took the monologues and made a production out of them. Her own story is part of it. Regina said fear drove her to end her relationship right away. Not all women are able to do so.

"Some are stay-at-home mothers," she said. "The main source of monetary support is their partner, and it's an abusive partner. They are stuck in a situation where they don't have the means to move out of it."

Regina said everyone from concerned fathers of teenage girls to spousal abuse victims tend to be in her audiences when she performs her poems, monologues and music. She was a guest speaker at the Young Women's Christian Association World Council's 2011 International Women's Summit in Zurich, Switzerland.

"Her story and her presentation are a message of impact, survival and awareness," said Rick Azzaro, the Chief Services Officer of YWCA York in a press release. He did not return a phone call seeking comment on Regina's appearance.

Organizer Barbara Carbaugh said that the YWCA asked if the Women's Show would be interested in having Regina speak during Domestic Violence Awareness month. "We said, 'absolutely,'" she said.

Regina said she hopes to share her stories to help as many people as she can.

"It's a path of shining the light on the subject matter of domestic violence and using my case that was so highly publicized to show that this is very real," she said. "This is not a TV show. This is not a movie. This is domestic violence, and it exists."



## Actress Lisa Regina to speak at UMD about domestic violence

<http://www.heraldnews.com/lifestyle/x748715789/Actress-Lisa-Regina-to-speak-at-UMD-about-domestic-violence>

By Marcia Pobzeznik

Posted Sep 30, 2011

**Lisa Regina** has years of experience acting and performing in plays, commercials and well-known television series like “The Sopranos,” and “Bronx Paradise” but in July, 2006 she wasn’t acting when she took to the stage for the first time to tell her story about domestic violence.

Pulled from a car in April, 2005, onto a curb in the middle of New York City in the middle of the afternoon by her then-fiancé, Regina was hospitalized with contusions and a black eye. She spent six months in bed, afraid to leave her apartment. The assault by a man she had planned to marry in June of that year changed her life in many ways.

She’s spent the last five years traveling around the world sharing her story and hopefully empowering other women to get out of violent relationships. She recently returned from Zurich, Switzerland where she performed “A Write to Heal” for the YWCA World Council, using poems, monologues and music to tell her story.

Regina will perform “A Write to Heal” Tuesday, Oct. 4 at 7 p.m. at the College of Visual and Performing Arts at the University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth, Room 153.

(Parking

lot 7). Free and open to the public, the performance is sponsored by The UMass-Dartmouth Center for Women, Gender and Sexuality, and the YWCA of Southeastern Massachusetts. “It provides hope and lets others know you can come out stronger and move forward in your life,” Regina said of “A Write to Heal.”



A non-profit domestic violence organization created by Regina, also called “A Write to Heal,” facilitates writing groups for women as a healing tool. Writing helped Regina begin healing emotionally in the days after the attack.

“I had a pad and a pen next to my bed at the hospital. The pen and paper became my lifeline,” she said. Some of the words she jotted down on the pad those first few days, like “pain,” “blame it on the past,” are part of her first monologue.

“There were people who would say “it’s an ethnic thing, an Italian thing,” Regina recalled of them trying to find a reason her fiancé assaulted her. “I thought, what an excuse,” she said of domestic abuse that exists in all ethnic groups, in every social status, and every level of educational status. She’s met women over the last few years who have told her their stories. She’s met family members who have lost loved ones to domestic violence. “It’s hiding behind many doors in many communities,” Regina said of domestic abuse. “It holds no prejudice.” But the more it’s talked about, “the more we can impact change,” she said.

“I hope to visit every state and every country in my lifetime,” said Regina whose trips are often sponsored by companies and organizations. “That’s what it takes, people that really value the message and keep it moving forward.”

Regina is currently shooting a film in Brooklyn called “Family on Board” with Eric Roberts. Her character, ironically, is a victim of a crime.

She’s also writing a screenplay about domestic violence based on her experiences. She said she envisions actress Sandra Bullock playing the lead role. “I’ve been compared to her some ways,” said Regina. Bullock, she said, is a strong role model for women and she’d be able to bring her story to life on the big screen.

## The Write to Heal

September 29, 2011

### YWCA sponsoring nationally acclaimed performance during 'A Week without Violence'

April 2, 2005, is a date that changed the life of Lisa Regina. You may recognize her from the popular TV series "The Sopranos" or the daytime soap "All My Children." Talking with her on the phone, she reels off April 2, 2005, as if it were a Social Security or phone number. It's clear she's gone over this many times before. But as she tells the story about what happened that day, you sense she is still coming to terms with it all.

Lisa has been a professional actress and acting coach for more than 20 years, but nothing could have prepared her for the assault and resulting press coverage that took place that day. "It was the fifth season of 'The Sopranos,'" she says slowly, beginning her story. That's when she met the man who would become her fiance and the person who turned her world upside down. She states at the beginning of the interview that she does not want to discuss him by name. She's already given him enough attention, she explains. This is not about him; it's about domestic violence and how it can happen to anyone, rich or poor, educated, famous or not.

"When I look back at the signs of an abusive relationship, we had them all," she says. Her ex-fiance was charming and generous during the early days of their courtship, she says. Everything seemed perfect. They had so much in common including a love of the arts. But there were signs of abuse, she says. She just didn't see them at the time. Or maybe she didn't want to see them.

In either case, he had a bad temper, she says.

"I got used to defusing his temper and fell into the role of being able to do that successfully," she says. "But that day I wasn't able to." It was just two months before they planned to get married. They were getting ready to move to California for work and were going to see her parents before they left. But something was wrong. "I could see it in his face, the tension in his jaw," she says. They started to argue, and then she remembers how he grabbed her hair. It went downhill from there. Next thing she knew she was laying on the street, an ambulance had arrived and her ex-fiance had fled the scene. She had been thrown around like a rag doll.

"He weighed around 290 pounds, and I'm a size two," she says. According to a New York Times report, her ex-fiance "punched her in the head, knocking her into the gearshift of his SUV and drug her out by the hair ... Her face, according to well-circulated tabloid photographs, turned black and blue." He had never hit her before.

"It was the first and last time," she says.

Fortunately for Lisa, she did not give in to the promises that this would never happen again. Abuse is never a one time event — it is part of a dangerous cycle of violence. And it doesn't matter what the argument may be about, physical violence is always wrong and against the law. She knows this now, but it has not been easy. She went through months and months of counseling and soul searching to understand how such a thing could happen. She still wonders if she can totally trust again. But unlike some women, she has friends and family who continue to give her support. And like the ancient stone that could turn base metal into gold, she has used her talent in writing, acting and directing to produce something good out of the bad. In 2007, Lisa wrote, directed and produced an educational stage performance called, "A Write to Heal."

"I was so traumatized after it happened," she remembers. "All I had was a pad and pen." Over a period of year she wrote down her thoughts and feelings, which became the base of the performance which is a collection of monologues, poems and music emerging from the true stories of women who have been victims of domestic violence. It was such a huge hit after being performed originally in New York, that she has taken it on the road. In July, Lisa was honored as the keynote speaker at the YWCA World Council's 2011 International Women's Summit in Zurich.

"The executive director saw it and said it was excellent," says Kim Kempf, victim services director at the YWCA in St. Joseph. That is one reason why they have asked Lisa to bring the performance to St. Joseph as part of the YWCA Week Without Violence — a national initiative of the YWCA USA.

# Breaking the silence

Published: Thursday, March 08, 2007,

By Allegra Tiver

Gloucester  
County Times

Lisa Regina will never forget that afternoon in early April 2005 when a New York City ambulance delivered her to the emergency room at Beth Israel Hospital, where she was treated for injuries resulting from an attack by a violent man. This was no random act, however, and the assailant was no stranger. The man was Regina's boyfriend, and that day she became a victim of domestic violence -- the leading cause of injury to women between the ages of 15 and 44 across the United States.

Fear has long silenced many of these victims, mostly women but sometimes men, who suffer alone, feeling alienated and embarrassed by the trauma they've experienced. But Regina is giving the victims of domestic violence a voice -- a loud one. The South Jersey native and graduate of New York University's theater department is blowing open the doors on the overwhelming health issue in her stage performance "A Write to Heal" -- scheduled for 7 p.m. Friday March 16 at Sterling High School. "I was struggling with physical and emotional pain," said Regina, who couldn't move from bed following the assault and initially went to individual counseling three times a week. "As a writer and performer, it only made sense to use my writing as a way to articulate my pain."

Comprised of a collection of stories, poems and songs, the performance promises to educate the audience on issues surrounding domestic violence, describe why it's difficult for women to extricate themselves from their situations, raise awareness and offer resources. "It's really enabled me to speak out, not just for myself, but for all women who really don't have a voice, who are living in fear in an abusive relationship or marriage." The characters will be portrayed by working New York City actresses, donating their time and talent for a cause to which they are passionately committed. "People are going to be moved by the music and lyrics, feel uncomfortable, wiggle in their seats listening to stories and peeking into people's lives, and laugh, because comedy is a great way to address a serious issue," said Regina, who coaches acting in New York City. Several women who inspired the performance will be in the audience, said Regina, noting they would be impacted by the content as well as other attendees who have been victimized. "Sometimes you are so tangled in it, you don't have the clarity," Regina said. "When you step back and view it from a distance, it can enable you to make a change."

Many people question why women being mistreated don't just leave. But deciding to leave a physically, emotionally or verbally abusive relationship is not that simple. "There are many forms of manipulation," Regina explained. "Abusers use things as tools to keep a hold on or control over a partner." Women may be made to believe they can't afford to leave, worry they don't have enough education, wonder what it would mean for their children, feel nervous about their immigration status and most of all fear for their own safety. "When a woman does decide to leave, it's the most dangerous and frightening time. It's crippling because of the violence they're already experienced." Such intense feelings flowed out of Regina when she began stream-of-consciousness writing as part of counseling. As she added to it, the words began to take shape as a larger sort of spoken-word creation. Her protest poem was met with awe during group counseling sessions, where women were so moved they expressed their own desire to communicate their feelings on paper.

Regina was inspired to start the non-profit domestic violence organization "A Write to Heal." Each week, nearly a dozen women come together in New York City to write, share stories and give and receive support. It also serves as a resource to guide women toward health and legal services. The group's Web site presents an alternate venue for women to express themselves safely and anonymously. Still in therapy, Regina noted the creative healing program enhances, not replaces, professional treatment. "Meeting these women and hearing their stories, it has raised awareness for me personally," Regina said. "I started to see faces reflective of the great numbers, the diversity of women of different ethnicities, social and economic status." For Regina, the tremendous response both the group and performance have received represents an evolution of collective traumatic experiences into a powerful opportunity to educate the masses. Various groups, including the New Jersey Coalition for Battered Women, have not only shown support but expressed interest in integrating writing into their programs.

The show's July debut, at Center Stage Theater in midtown Manhattan, sold out and received standing ovations. "It was the first time I stood up and spoke out," Regina said. "It was difficult, but empowering." "That's why I'm bringing it home -- to my family, my friends, my community -- because this happened to me," Regina is working toward a domestic violence certification and is committed to spreading the word and changing the world. "Change can only come if we start to speak out," Regina said. "You can't put a blanket over it. It's here and it's real."

