

Dove IS NOT Blind

By: Carlie Thornton

"It's valuable to honestly think about how many people experience domestic violence. People don't talk about it—but Dove, they're talking about it," says Julia Mlynowski, a junior at Millikin, and a member of the Alpha Chi Omega sorority. Mlynowski and other members of Alpha Chi Omega devote their time to volunteering with the Dove Shelter, a local nonprofit organization that works to raise awareness for domestic violence and provide shelter to victims. However, Dove does a lot more than just providing shelter—and all of this work is more important than ever.

Mostly volunteer-based, Dove's main focus relies on community outreach, spreading awareness being a key factor. The shelter offers a myriad of resources for the community, including programs for children in local schools. "It's important to start teaching younger people now," Mlynowski explains. "There's value to teaching what a real and loving relationship is. This applies to all relationships in our lives." As Mlynowski

Dove's Dream: A look into the mission of Decatur's Dove Shelter.

Julia
Mlynowski



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notes, any relationship can become an abusive situation, which makes their outreach even more important.

When it comes to resilience, those who seek out the shelter are not the only ones who come to mind. Dove shelter staff have also had to remain resilient through the pandemic. Unsurprisingly, COVID-19 resulted in a rise of domestic violence cases. With everyone being trapped indoors, situations were quick to escalate. The Dove shelter only has so much space, and they had to resort to providing motel rooms for survivors of domestic violence. The shelter also tried to provide aid through Zoom calls, but it is hard to handle a physical situation from behind a screen.

As of now, they have reopened the shelter and all of its provided groups to full capacity, but they still need help from the community. As

a nonprofit organization, Dove is reliant on donations from the community. Thankfully, these donations have helped them survive the worst of the pandemic.

But the community can help in more ways than just monetary donations. Alpha Chi Omega often holds clothing and supply drives for the shelter. Those who are interested can also attend training at the Dove Shelter to become certified in Domestic Violence Response. Those who are trained will be able to respond to domestic violence situations and give valuable resources to anyone in their lives who may need them. Mlynowski believes that this is extremely important. "You learn it once, but you keep the skills forever," she says. "It's all about teaching those key steps so we can inspire those around us to go. It's a resilient process, because no one is forced to seek out help. They have to be ready."

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