

Strengthening Families **Success Story**

Many older adults believe that they are supposed to solve their own problems. This is particularly true when guilt and shame prevent them from disclosing to anyone victimization that they suffer at the hands of the people they love. That is why it is so important for the United Way to empower them to reach out by showing them examples of people who have done so.

Elaine (77) came to Catholic Social Services Family Counseling Program feeling fearful, depressed and overwhelmed because of the emotional and verbal abuse inflicted on her by her emotionally disturbed adult daughter. Her daughter had been diagnosed with a severe form of mental illness, but refused to take her medication. Although she received disability assistance, she maintained that she couldn't afford to live on her own. Her mother was afraid that the verbal abuse would escalate to physical abuse if she confronted her. Elaine lived in fear.

Her Catholic Social Services counselor reported the situation to Department of Social Services Adult Protective Services. At the same time, her daughter was helped to receive treatment through Catholic Charities' Intensive Case Management Services.

Although Elaine knew that she needed to learn to be more assertive with her daughter and that she needed to ask her to leave, she was not only afraid of her but also felt terribly guilty, as if she were being cruel to a little child.

With the help of her counselor, Elaine began to feel safer and stronger. One day she confronted her daughter and asked her to leave. Through counseling, Elaine's fear of her daughter disappeared and, she stated, it felt as if she had been "reborn."

For 2008, more than \$182,000 of United Way donors' contributions have been allocated to Catholic Social Services to help support its Counseling Programs.