

## Surviving the Family Breach by Tamika Vinson

When one woman discovered that her daughter was living with the erosive wounds of a deep seated family secret, she turned to the Sexual Assault Response Network (SARN) at HelpLine to help her family get through it all.

In 2005, Vivica Bethel\* unearthed a parents' worst nightmare. Bethel learned that her 7<sup>th</sup> grade daughter, Janine Bethel\*, had been molested by her husband since she was five years old, and it had gone on for more than four years. She also learned that her stepdaughter inherited the same fate. Right under her nose, her daughters had endured years of painful, paternal insanity from the hands of their father who operated under the contradictory guise of protector and violator.

A devastated Bethel parted from her then husband and sought out both distance and a new life for her girls. She soon began working with a Morrow County Victim Services Advocate, who suggested the girls get involved with the HelpLine It's a Girls' World! empowerment group. Unsure of the group requirements, Bethel decided to pursue the idea but would table it until the girls were enrolled and settled into their new school district. While visiting the new school, Bethel spotted a flier announcing the empowerment group; she believed it was a sign. Hoping to regain a sense of normalcy for the girls, she made the call to HelpLine.

During her initial call, Bethel learned that the girls surpassed the age requirement. Nonetheless, SARN Coordinator Ruth Reeve determined that the girls were in dire need of counseling and that a seminal course of action was warranted. Consequently, Reeve worked around the limitations of Bethel's night shift work schedule and met with the girls for day-time counseling at their school during study hall.

Reeve's willingness to accommodate and respond to Bethel is something she still upholds

when describing her experience with SARN. Bethel believes that the trauma-informed counseling came at a critical time.

"I can't emphasize how important Ruth has been to us," said Bethel. "She validated the anger and helped us move through everything."



According to Bethel, her daughter Janine suffered from episodic anxiety attacks, especially during the times when they would have to go to court and face the perpetrator. Bethel vividly recalls one particular incident when her daughter cried uncontrollably to the point that her breathing became unstable.

"I sat there, rocking her in my arms," recalled Bethel. "After she became non-responsive, I called the hotline and they paged Ruth immediately; Ruth called and talked with Janine until she responded."

"I don't know what we would have done," said Bethel. "It was the most wonderful thing she did, and that is a night I will never forget."

Prior to the SARN intervention, Bethel said that she often felt like a failure as a parent because of her perceived inability to protect her child. However, after working through the guilt, Bethel stresses to other parents dealing with the same situation the importance of seeking help.

“You need the support of someone,” said Bethel. “You need the help to live through what your child has been through because you feel so much guilt.”

Today, Bethel reports that Janine is coping well and leading an active life. She also says that once she got passed the court proceedings, her daughter seems to have closure.

Since the legality of the situation reserved supervised visitation rights of the father, Reeve has left the door ajar for the Bethels and hoping they walk through it whenever they need support or a listening ear.

“The wonderful aspect of therapeutic counseling is that it’s there when you need it,” said Reeve. “This family has endured great emotional and physical trauma, and they deserve to have someone who will stick with them and get them to healthy a place.”

Bethel believes that through SARN, she’s found a supportive, safe place for her and her family.

“People really seem to care,” said Bethel.

“And, sometimes that makes all the difference in the world.”

*\*all names have been changed to protect the identity of all parties.*



**SARN**  
Sexual Assault Response Network

Call the 24-hour, confidential hotline for free crisis support, counseling and advocacy services.

24-Hour hotline Dial: 211 or 1.800.684.2324  
Hearing Impaired Dial: 711 or 1.800.750.0750  
*Language services available.*

SARN is a HelpLine program offered at the following locations:  
Delaware County: 111 N. Franklin Street, Delaware, Ohio 43015  
Morrow County: 950 Meadow Drive, Suite B, Mt. Gilead, Ohio 43338  
[www.helpinedelmor.org](http://www.helpinedelmor.org)

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