

## VICTIM

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1C

hopes to share what she's learned and help others through a newly formed nonprofit, Precious Hearts Foundation.

Her foundation's services currently are limited to providing hotel vouchers to victims seeking to escape from their abusers. In the future, Thompson hopes to offer workshops and seminars on surviving abusive relationships and spiritual counseling to both women and men through the foundation.

Men are often forgotten in domestic-violence circles, said Thompson, author of "Battered Secrets: MEN of Domestic Violence."

"There are a lot of men out there who are abused, and there are not so many resources to help them," she said.

Diane Christen, director of Family Life Center in Bunnell, said assistance for domestic-violence victims on any level is a necessity, especially now in the midst of the recession.

"There's always a need to work," she said. "There's always a need for individuals (to help)."

Thompson said it's important for victims of domestic abuse to know there is a way out — something Thompson said she herself didn't always believe.

When confronted by a friend about the bruises on her face, Thompson was urged to report

the abuse. But Thompson — by then a mother of three daughters — said she was scared to contact the authorities or even members of her own family.

"I said, 'Tell who?'" she said. "If I tell, it's going to get worse."

Despite almost constant violence and stalking, Thompson said she was resigned to staying in her marriage. If the union was to end, her husband would have to be the one to go, she said.

"I had it in my mind that, if I left my marriage, I would be in trouble with God," she said.

Thompson's marriage ended in 2001 when her husband announced he was leaving — right in the middle of their 11-year-old's birthday party, she said.

Thompson said she tells victims not to wait for their abusers to leave them and, instead, urges them to find help.

"Anyone in that situation, I would say tell someone," she said.

Shortly after her husband left, Thompson relocated to Atlanta and, six years later, came to Palm Coast — where she has family — and became a mother to twins. Today, the two are in contact — a decision Thompson said she made as part of "a healing process for me."

Looking back, Thompson said she thinks her husband's alcoholism and his disdain for the success of her medical-transcription business were the impetus behind the abuse.

Thompson said she doesn't shy away from sharing her experiences.

"It made me strong and who I am today," she said. "All of this is a blessing."

## SNAPSHOTS

Portraits of Local Lives



News-Journal/DAVID MASSEY

Elva Thompson is the founder of Precious Hearts Foundation, an organization that helps victims of domestic violence.

# Victim turns experience into help for others

By KENYA WOODARD  
STAFF WRITER

**PALM COAST** — Elva Thompson says she didn't recognize the early signs of domestic abuse when she began dating her husband at the age of 15.

The "playful fighting" and "anger-testing" shoves inflicted upon her, along with isolation from her family, didn't immediately ring any alarm bells for Thompson, now 39 and living in Palm Coast.

It wasn't until after the couple married when she was 18 and moved away from their home state of Pennsylvania to Virginia — where he had relatives, but she didn't — that Thompson realized she was in trouble.

**"There are a lot of men out there who are abused, and there are not so many resources to help them."**

After surviving 15 years of abuse, she said she's much wiser.

"Now, I know the signs of an abuser and a user," she said. "I know from a conversation from a gentleman if he's OK."

Thompson, a poet and owner/operator of book publisher Esquire Publications, said she

SEE VICTIM, PAGE 4C

kenya.woodard@news-jrnl.com