

LAKE COUNTY NEWS-SUN

WEEKEND, JUNE 21-22, 2008 • READ AND RESPOND TO STORIES AT NEWSUNONLINE.COM

CHANGE OF THUNDERSTORMS

HIGH 81° LOW 59°

Today's drawing is by
Cara Carpenter, a student at
B.J. Hooper School in Lindenhurst.



DON'T FORGET!

Pick up Monday's paper to see how you can win your share of \$25,000 in the News-Sun's Gift Card Giveaway!



Sex abuse survivor urges victims: 'Keep talking'

'No Secrets, No Lies' author addresses Women Helping Women luncheon

By Judy Masterson
JMMASTERSON@SCN1.COM

GURNEE — Journalist and author Robin Stone was 9 when an uncle led her to a closet and, under the cover of darkness, groped her breasts and between her legs and whispered, "This is our secret."

For the next 11 years, Stone kept the secret, kept herself and her sister away from the offender, concentrated on "fading into the woodwork so I wouldn't be chosen again."

That's what sexual abuse does, said Stone, speaking Friday at the annual Women Helping Women fund-raiser for the Zacharias Sexual Abuse Center in Gurnee. "It tells victims 'Don't stand out. Don't step up. Don't shine.'"

At 21, on the verge of leaving her native Detroit, the former executive editor of Essence magazine and founding editor of Essence.com finally broke her silence. She told her parents.

But the edict handed

down by her elders, who banished the uncle from certain family functions, gave Stone little solace.

"His absence only reminded me of what had happened," she said. "Was this supposed to handle the situation? I only felt more isolated."



Stone

Years later, Stone sought therapy. Her 2001 Essence article "Silent No More" drew an overwhelming reader response. Her book "No Secrets, No Lies: How Black Families Can Heal from Sexual Abuse" was published in 2004. She urged friends of the Zacharias Center to "keep talking about rape, incest, sexual abuse."

"My challenge to you is to continue this conversation," Stone said.

The Zacharias Center, formerly called LaCASA, used the annual luncheon to celebrate 25 years of service. Nearly 800 guests toured the facility at 4275 Old Grand Ave., bid on more than 300 items in a silent auction, ate box lunches under a big tent and listened to



THERESA SCARBROUGH • SPECIAL TO THE NEWS-SUN

Jen Blockinger (left) and Jessica Czajka bid on items up for silent auction at the annual Women Helping Women luncheon of the Zacharias Sexual Abuse Center in Gurnee Friday.

the music of an African drum group.

Executive Director Torrie Flink was recognized for 20 years of leadership.

"I have heard all the stories," Flink said. "Child rape. Women tortured. Families broken apart. Sometimes I think I just can't hear anymore. But there is a silver lining. Stories of mothers, sisters, brothers, sons, who have been victimized and turned that around to be survivors, thrivers. That spirit — turning pain into power — is an incredible

thing to celebrate." Teresa Hall Bartels, CEO of United Way International and longtime Zacharias Center volunteer, recalled that the year before the

agency incorporated in 1983, it had \$50 in the bank. Today its operating budget is \$1.3 million, with \$1.5 million in major gifts secured. Services will be delivered to

ABOUT ZACHARIAS

The Zacharias Sexual Abuse Center provides confidential, nondiscriminatory and free services including:

- Counseling
- Children's program
- Parent support group
- Advocacy
- Professional training
- Community education

Call its crisis hotline at (847) 872-7799 or the main office at (847) 244-1187.

26,000 people this year. Bartels spoke about her own struggle with "anger, guilt and shame" after her younger sister revealed abuse by a school janitor, coach and "an older cousin who (also) tried it with me." "The Zacharias Center was a port in the storm for me, as it has been for many men, women and children over the years," Bartels said.

Zacharias

sexual abuse center

from here to healing