

# A JOURNEY FOR WOMEN

*to Help Women:*

*The 13th Annual*

*Wilderness Heals Pledge Hike*

*Supporting*

**The Elizabeth Stone House**

*in Boston*

By Susanna Hargreaves



The mission of the Elizabeth Stone House (ESH) is to prevent institutionalization and further victimization of women in emotional distress through the provision of safe, confidential, residential, and community support services for them and their children. In an environment that fosters peer support, program participants define and work toward the accomplishment of practical goals that will enable them to re-enter the mainstream of society.

This July 18–20, approximately 50–70 women will participate in a healing wilderness hike through New Hampshire’s White Mountains to help other women in need while they challenge themselves physically, mentally, and spiritually.

Through Nature and women’s unity, this three-day journey helps women heal and raise money to support programs for women and their children at the Elizabeth Stone House.

Danielle Piscatelli, ESH event director of Wilderness Heals and individual giving manager, has planned this healing event for the past five years and participated in it three times. She explains how each year has been a shared learning experience: “What you find on the actual three-day event that you don’t find hiking alone in wilderness is the supportive network the hike offers. Women are extremely supportive of other women. We share our experiences and build on each other’s strength. I believe this quality is innate in all of us. The Wilderness Heals event really captures that.”

## HEAL AND FIND STRENGTH

Since 1996, women have made the journey to promote healing and experience personal empowerment. According to Mary Crotty, ESH public relations specialist, Wilderness Heals brings women from different backgrounds into Nature to heal and find inner strength. The women are not only challenged by the unpredictable weather of the White Mountain region, including Mount Washington, but also by the physical, emotional, and personal goals they have set for themselves.

“This wilderness experience offers an uplifting opportunity for women to reward themselves while helping other women. Anyone can hike and feel rewarded; there are four different level trails of physical intensity to choose from. The hike is a challenging, nurturing, and empowering experience for women,” Crotty explains.

## TAKING THE FIRST STEP OF THE JOURNEY

A survivor of domestic violence, Mary Walsh has donned several pairs of boots for the past seven Wilderness Heals. She will proudly make the journey again this July.

Reflecting back through the years, Walsh shares that accomplishing the hike, enduring the physical challenges, and raising the money were things she wasn’t sure she could do at first. Now, preparing for her eighth hike with Wilderness Heals, she has a built-in group of hiking buddies she looks forward to seeing every year. “Each year is a different experience,” she says.

“The first year I started I was just out of my relationship and doing the hike for myself,” Walsh continues. “For me, it was a chance to turn a negative experience into a positive one. Now that I’ve healed, I feel more fortunate and do this to help others and the cause.” Furthermore, she explains how the entire experience is made possible because of the incredibly supportive group and environment provided. “Hikers are completely supported, both emotionally and physically, for the challenge.”

## BE A PART OF THE JOURNEY

Danielle Piscatelli conveys that hikers not only help by raising funds, they also inspire women who face challenges in their own healing work and personal journey.

“Many times I come across women who have shown interest in participating in the hike. Their faces really light up with excitement,” she says. “Then as I start to explain the event and give more details, I’m confronted with the comment, ‘Oh, I could never do that,’ and the idea that because something sounds difficult or feels daunting means it can’t be done. In my four years as event director, I’ve seen many women

*Making a Difference continued on page 40*



