

BOOK DETAILS FAMILY'S STRUGGLE WITH ABUSE

By Gloria Russell - The Sun Staff

WESTERLY - Statistics indicate that 40 percent of all sexual abuse crimes against children less than 6 years of age are committed by juveniles. Even more difficult to believe that a professional, trained in recognizing signs of domestic violence and sexual abuse could fail to realize what was going on in her own home and happening to her own children.

But that's the demon author Claire Silva has known, wrestled with and openly discusses in her book entitled *A Child's Heart Speaks: Surviving Sexual Abuse* this evening at The Other Tiger bookstore.

Silva has worked in Massachusetts and Rhode Island providing substance abuse and violence prevention counseling since 1991. As executive director of the YWCA of Greater R.I. and a consultant for the Office of Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention she developed and implemented programs for minority and low-income families.

"I have over 15 years of experience working in the field of addictions. I have professional training in recognizing signs of domestic violence and sexual abuse. But, I ignored my own intuition because I did not know children were capable of such crimes. Most people usually concentrate on adult male perpetrators but (according to the U.S. Department of Justice) women and juveniles account for many of these crimes."

Silva writes about her family and the nightmare of sexual abuse against her child by another juvenile.

Limited resources and the gathering of information from national interviews with adult survivors is an intricate part of the publication. "This was my way of gaining knowledge - so I could be the most supportive parent possible to my two children who had been so horribly violated."

This information is used in her book to help parents recognize signs of a potentially dangerous person. She also exposes the tactics used by adults and juveniles to silence children. The survivors that Silva interviewed were sexually violated by people they trusted: mothers, fathers, neighbors or friends of their families, members of the clergy and other family members.

Passionate about raising awareness about sexual abuse by juvenile perpetrators, Silva has written a book aimed at helping to prevent the crime and provide resources to families and survivors to heal.

Readers of *A Child's Heart Speaks: Surviving Sexual Abuse* will learn how to prevent the crime, spot warning signs of adult and juvenile perpetrators, be alerted to signs that a child may have been violated and what to do if sexual abuse is suspected.

Silva also outlines the stages survivors go through in their own healing process and how to provide support to the victims and their families.

An article about her will soon appear in *She Shines Magazine* out of the YWCA of Northern R.I.

Silva will present a brief lecture and sign books at the Other Tiger bookstore at 90 High Street, tonight, from 5:30-7:30 p.m.