Becky Dutton
Harvard Club of Southern Connecticut
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This summer, I worked at the Center for Family Justice, an advocacy center for victims of child, domestic, and sexual abuse. My time at the Center was unique and I will draw from my experiences for the rest of my life. I began the fellowship by completing an independent study of a state-mandated, 40-hour certification course. The completion of this course allowed me the opportunity to interact with clients. Upon completion of this course, I spent two days every week as a crisis navigator. The role of the crisis navigator is to welcome all walk-in clients, complete their intake form, bring them any food or beverage that they may need, and fill out any necessary paperwork, which included restraining orders and forms for the food pantry. This work was extremely demanding, as I was the first person to hear client’s story and the first person to let them know that they had come to the right place for help and that their decision to do so was the right decision. One of the biggest challenges I faced this summer was hearing the stories of these women. Although the trauma they experienced is far greater than my own from hearing their stories, I often found myself feeling helpless— all I wanted to do was to help these women, but I had little words to offer that seemed as though they would have a truly positive impact on their lives. With this in mind, I had to learn that I didn’t need to offer words of wisdom— just being there, listening to their stories and reassuring them that they made the right decision to get help, was enough.

The rest of my time at the center, I helped prepare for an upcoming luncheon, featuring Olympic Gold Medalist, Aly Raisman. I was tasked with writing ask-letters to various audiences, including local gymnastics centers and doctors. Each letter was crafted specifically for the particular audience, urging them to contribute in any way possible, whether that was buying a ticket, donating money, purchasing an ad, or sponsoring the event. I took great pride in these letters, as they were approved and signed by the President of the Center. In addition to my time preparing for this event, I worked on smaller projects. One project in particular was preparing for a media campaign for Domestic Violence Awareness Month. For this campaign, I researched different facts and myths about domestic violence. Once I gathered this information, I went around the office and
asked all of the advocates and staff members to choose a fact or myth that resonated with them. After picking their fact or myth, they wrote it on a small white board and I took their picture. These pictures will be posted sporadically throughout the month of October, which is Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

This fellowship exceeded my expectations for many reasons. The first reason being that I had the opportunity to improve my business skills while I prepared for the luncheon. However, the second reason is much more important - I had the opportunity to improve myself as a human being. The stories I heard allowed me to learn how to be more empathetic and to have a larger awareness for the child, domestic, and sexual abuse that occurs in society every single day. Increasing my self-awareness of this important topic has led me to take the Junior tutorial “Sports and Violence”. Within this tutorial, I plan to explore domestic violence in professional sports, and I hope my findings will evolve into a foundation for my senior thesis.