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Breaking the Mold

By [Christina Caldwell](#)

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MonaLou Callery never set out to be an advocate against domestic violence and sexual abuse and she never intended to make a cup of coffee either – life just took her in that direction.

A former victim of domestic violence herself, Callery is the executive director of the National Advocacy and Training Network. NATN offers victims of domestic violence and sexual abuse a helping hand by offering job training and counseling.

Mesa coffee shop Cup o' Karma brews more than a good cup of coffee. Proceeds from the volunteer-run shop go directly to NATN to rebuild the lives of victims.

College Times: What's the vision behind Cup o' Karma and how did it come to be?

MonaLou Callery: I worked in the domestic violence field for 25 years, and all too often I saw that women didn't fit the perfect mold (of a recovering victim.) (They would) get thrown out of shelters and would not be accepted into shelters because of the other issues they had, like substance abuse. I wanted to do a home where that "perfect survivor," could break the mold. Other shelters only allow women to stay 45 days. How we expect women to put their whole lives back together in 45 days and live happily ever after is beyond me. We decided to do this other kind of project and meet women where they're at instead of where we think they should be at. The other piece that was missing in it all was job training. Multiple ideas were generated by the (victims) themselves and we came up with the idea of a café retail shop.

How many people currently work at Cup o' Karma?

No one is employed as an actual staff person. It's run by volunteers who volunteer with our agency. The women who live in our residential homes actually work here and we provide them with on-the-job training skills.

How did you obtain the coffee shop?

I had some phone conversations with (Luis Prado), the former owner, who said he'd be willing to donate the whole shop to us for a dollar. You know, just to make sort of a real business deal. He donated all of the assets that you see here. Bank of America selected Luis ... as a local hero and he'll be honored at a breakfast. (He) gets to select a local charity to receive \$5,000. Guess who his favorite local charity is? Us!

What percent of the proceeds go toward helping victims of domestic violence and sexual abuse?

All of our revenue after expenses (like) the coffee and the goods. We don't pay (volunteers).

What would you say keeps people coming back to Cup o' Karma?

I think our cause is a big one. I hope we have a good cup of coffee (since) Luis gave us two whole weeks of training. I never made an espresso before. I only ordered them at Starbucks. But Starbucks better watch out because in a few



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