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Faith & Family

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A ministry of healing

Rachel's Vineyard leaders to visit Rochester Nov. 4-5

From psychologist Theresa Burke's perspective, the finality of aborting a fetus also represents a beginning — one that can involve many years of despair for the mother.

"People say they're fine for years, perfectly at peace. Then some event will come along and trigger a reaction — the birth of a wanted child, menopause, a death. It can be very debilitating, very painful," said Burke, who is one of the country's top experts on the study of abortion and psychology. "Fifty percent of women don't reveal that they even had an abortion. They repress their feelings for many years and when the feelings surface, that can create many problems."

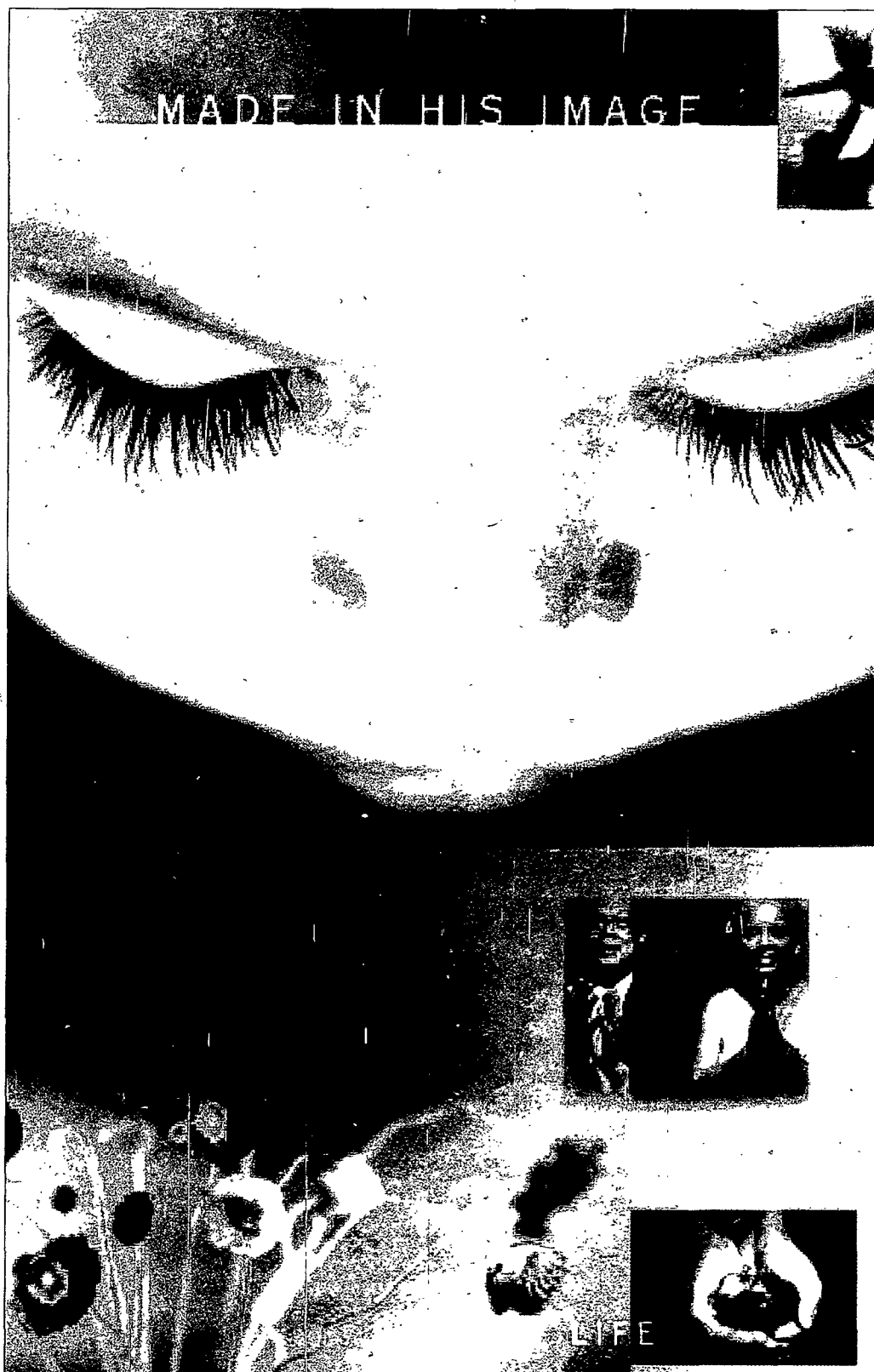
Burke contends that the effects of abortion are strongly linked to post-traumatic stress disorder, a syndrome most commonly associated with military combat veterans, where people suffer such deep trauma that they cannot cope with it in a normal manner. She cites alcohol abuse, eating disorders, anxiety and depression as signs of these repressed feelings.

Burke is a pioneer in the growth of Project Rachel, an international movement that offers support and healing for people experiencing post-abortion trauma. Folks in the Rochester Diocese will get to hear Burke's views in person when she and her husband, Kevin, make a public presentation Thursday, Nov. 4, at St. Anne Church, 1600 Mount Hope Ave., Rochester.

The lecture, "Pregnancy, Loss and Unresolved Grief — A Time for Healing," will take place at 7 p.m. It will give an overview of Project Rachel as well as Rachel's Vineyard — the retreats begun by Theresa Burke in 1995 for women and men affected by abortion. Father James Hewes, diocesan director of Project Rachel, said the Burkes' talk will appeal to a wide range of people — Stephen Ministers; parish staff members; people with Project Rachel training; and friends or family members of those who have had abortions.

In addition, the Burkes will conduct a daylong training Nov. 5 at the Rochester

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Story by Mike Latona