

Womenews

Women's Center of Montgomery County



Executive Director's Report

All of us, in our lives, have defining moments and significant days upon which we can reflect and say 'this made us who we are today.' Those points in our history start us on a path, determining a direction, a destiny and a desire to become something more, something new, something different.

Organizations, like people, also have those critical points that forever shape them and create the driving force for their future. For the Women's Center of Montgomery County that pivotal moment was February 16, 1976, when a dedicated, passionate group of women came together at their local library to talk about what they could do to help others in crisis and need. From that first meeting at the Abington Library a movement in our county started, predicated on a commitment to empowering women, through volunteerism, to affect social change and to help others achieve safety, stability and personal excellence.

In the weeks and months that followed that seedling, that spark of a dream evolved as the women surveyed and explored their community, seeking input from police, doctors, family service agencies, hospitals and lawyers to create a resource center to support and assist victims of domestic abuse. They established a crisis hotline, conducted programs for women experiencing life transitions, created workshop opportunities on various topics including financial literacy, career planning, and skill-development. All of these services and programs had a common thread – women coming together as peers to help others in need, empowering themselves and others through their efforts.

Today, forty years later, as we celebrate that anniversary I am struck by how much we have accomplished and how closely we have held to our course and our values. We have remained steadfast and true to our commitments to volunteerism and empowerment. We are vigilant in our efforts to serve our community and to meet the unmet needs of women in crisis. And, as we share friendships, loyalties and respect strengthened through our years together, we continue to envision, strategize and dream of a future where positive social change is achieved for women.

To commemorate our 40th year our Board of Directors and staff have been working on a number of special events and activities that we hope will engage our members on a nostalgic yet visionary journey that explores our past while eager anticipating our future.

As an early step in that journey, our Strategic Planning Committee has begun their process of surveying and exploring – yes, just like 40 years ago! – our community to assess how we can grow and improve our organization to meet the changing needs of our volunteers, members and those we serve. Although this process may take us several months to ensure that it is as inclusive as possible, we will be bringing you periodic updates and we invite you to share your thoughts and your visions for the Center with us as well.

In addition to the strategic planning activities, we will also be hosting several events this Spring that we feel really capture our commitment to the role and impact of women.

The first special event is a brunch at the William Penn Inn on **April 3rd** celebrating the life and legacy of our beloved friend, the Honorable Toby Lynn Dickman. Many of you will remember Toby as a spirited advocate who, in her work as a judge, was a catalyst for change in our courts and an inspiring ally in our mission in end domestic violence. Although we lost Toby in 2008, her imprint on our work and our memories endures. We hope that you will join us, with her family and friends, as we gather to remember Toby's many accomplishments that embody our values and serve as model of what we as women can achieve.

Then, on **May 1st** we will again host our annual fundraising Spring Champagne Brunch will be held at the Meadowlands Country Club. This year we are excited to be celebrating our **40th Anniversary of Empowering Women** with our special honoree, **Michael Smerconish**, CNN Anchor and Commentator, Lawyer, Author and Satellite Radio Show Host.

We will also have a **distinguished panel of community leaders** including **Marcel Groen, Valerie Arkoosh, Farah Jimenez** and **Valentino DiGiorgio** who will be discussing issues affecting women in this election year. We are privileged to have **Larry Kane** once again as our program moderator. We will be including wonderful raffles and an exciting live auction as well as our traditional silent auction. And, as a special addition to our traditional program book, we will be including a supplemental tribute with ads honoring the special women in our lives, be they mothers, sisters, friends, partners or mentors.

Invitations to these events are on their way to you via the mail and email but are also available as links on our website (www.wcmontco.com) and our Facebook page. We hope to welcome you in celebration and friendship!

Finally, for our volunteers, we will be hosting another in a successful run of skill building workshops on Saturday, April 16th. Over the past few years, in addition to our two-hour in-services held in our offices, we have offered day-long workshops that feature presenters on topics, resources and issues that affect your work for the Center – such as experts in law enforcement, healthcare, housing, behavioral health. This year, in recognition of Volunteer Appreciation Week, the workshop will be held at the Doubletree Hotel in Plymouth Meeting and will be including a special luncheon during which we want to thank and acknowledge our wonderful volunteers.

So as we start this 40th year with a season of special of events we look forward to the many opportunities to come together and share our fond memories and our exciting visions for the next 40 years!!

A Fabulous Shoe Event Benefits the Women's Center of Montgomery County!

By Alison Rose, Community Education Specialist

Fabulous Shoe Night is a women's social group, opening chapters throughout the country, for fabulous women who love shoes... but who also see the bigger picture, and want to make a difference in the world. It's a girl's night out with a purpose.

Fabulous Shoe Night hosted a fundraiser in King of Prussia at Seasons 52 on January 29th. The venue was beautiful and the food was absolutely amazing. The venue even created a signature purple drink to advocate for the domestic violence focus of the event. The room was packed with 75 people having a great time eating, drinking, and socializing with friends; all while supporting a great cause at the same time. Baskets were raffled off including chocolates, wine baskets, and many others.

Survivors of domestic violence stood up and told their stories. Speakers included several volunteers from the Women's Center who described our role in helping victims of domestic violence. Additionally, one inspiring woman from the Fabulous Shoe Night organization told her story of surviving and overcoming physical, emotional, and mental spousal abuse.

Overall, the night was a tremendous success, and the Women's Center of Montgomery County received more than \$2,500 in donations while networking with a group of fabulous women in their fabulous shoes!

Thank you to Our Friends at Abington Friends School

Once again we are extremely grateful to the students, staff, faculty and parents of the Abington Friends School who selected the Women's Center as the recipient of the proceeds from their clothing drive and rummage sale conducted as part of their Martin Luther King Day of Service activities. This partnership, which began more than six years ago, is an inspiring opportunity to experience a genuine sense of community giving and caring. I am honored and humbled to join the students and families each year – their commitment, energy and passion for helping others is so powerful and motivating. Our futures are truly in safe and caring hands under their leadership!

In addition to a donation of clothing, the school raised and donated \$1,400.00 to support the Women's Center of Montgomery County. Please join me in expressing our sincerest thanks and admiration to the Abington Friends School community!



Beth McGowan Donates Purses with Emergency Supplies for Women in Crisis



Perkiomen Valley High School Students Help “Tie a kNOT in Dating Violence”

The Aequalis and Interact clubs, along with the Community Partner’s Against Abuse Committee of the TriCounty Community Network, are doing several activities throughout the month of February to promote awareness and prevention through a campaign called “Tie a kNOT in Dating Violence” #TIEakNOTinDV. Students from both clubs staffed a table outside the cafeteria during all lunches to give out orange shoelaces and request signatures on a Teen Dating Violence Prevention Pledge Banner. Students read the pledge to stand for healthy relationships, sign the banner and receive their lace. Students are encouraged to wear the lace to show they took a stand and are putting a “kNOT” in Dating Violence.

Interns and leaders from the Montgomery County Women’s Center helped with the effort. The school plans to hang the banner as a permanent display.



WCMC and Soroptomists Honor Pottstown Police Department



Pottstown Police Department Award Presentation 2/3/16
Speech given by Pauline McGibbon, Lethality Assessment Coordinator

WCMC has been around since 1976, and an office in the Pottstown area since 1989. We have a 24 hour Hotline, there is always someone available to assist.

Our relationship with law enforcement is our most important as we receive most of our referrals through them, because they are usually the first call a DVV makes. Having a strong collaborative relationship here in this borough is invaluable to providing comprehensive and effective services to DVV and their families.

Last year we received referrals 1,118 directly from the PPD alone, as part of the permission slip program (RASA), which they have collaborated with us on for almost 20 years, As first responders to a DV incident, and in addition to securing the scene, collecting evidence and making arrests, they also talk to victims about safety planning, PFAs, Victims Comp and the support they will get from WCMC. They urge every victim to talk to us.

In 2015 they collaborated with us to implement LAP, the objective of this program, is to prevent domestic violence homicides, serious injury, and re-assault, by highlighting to victims the level of danger they face as a result of the abusive incident. LAP requires officers to “go the extra mile” to encourage victims to speak to us and participate in immediate safety planning with them. This innovative partnership demonstrably saves victims’ lives.

PPD have also adopted and embraced other safety programs we use, for example , Cap Thomas suggested an addition to our DT program, which was adopted at all WCMC offices.

Because we are fortunate to have a police liaison officer at PPD, Jena S we can meet regularly to review practices and discuss any issues as they arise. Jena’s role and resilient personality get the job done. She also is Director of SAFE, the batterer intervention program, and a therapist at CHS, and collectively we encourage referrals to this program for DV abusers. In my opinion, as an advocate, it is the best there is, and we are fortunate to have it right here in the borough.

Ultimately, WCMC is an advocacy program, and there will be times when clients report to us that they feel they have not been properly supported by the PPD. Sometimes it can be a mis communication or a lack of understanding of what can or can’t be done through criminal prosecution. I can tell you that in the almost 2 years I have been in Pottstown, I have had to advocate on behalf of one victim to PPD. Through Jena and Cap Thomas we were able to assist the victim in filing a report, which resulted in criminal charges against her abuser. PPD took these charges to district court and pushed them through to county level. As a result, the client now feels empowered by the process of reporting her abuse, and more importantly, much safer in her home and with her children, because PPD responded effectively and robustly.

We also have a strong working relationship with Soroptimists International, who provide programs that particularly target clients who have issues with finances, education, and keeping their homes, because we all know that poverty and homelessness enable abuse. As well as asking for help with crisis situations, it is also my responsibility to update SI on successes and programs that work here in Pottstown. I am very pleased that they have chosen to recognize PPD for their efforts to bring safety and security to families affected by violence.

There's One Thing We All Can Do to End Domestic Violence

By Alexandra Ostrow Strategist & Marketer for Social Impact;
Founder – Why Whisper Collective

Reports tell us that one in three women and one in four men experience physical violence by an intimate partner in their lifetime. Tragically, this already high incidence doesn't even paint the whole picture. Abuse extends beyond the physical. It can be emotional, spiritual or financial -- and it often goes unreported, concealed by shame and fear.

When a survivor is ready to seek help, a new set of obstacles arises: How will they support themselves financially? What will happen with family members? And, most immediate, how will they remove themselves safely from the situation?

Recently, I wrote about Meathead Movers, a California-based moving company that provides free moving services to victims of domestic violence. Inspired by the company-wide commitment to helping those in dangerous situations at home, I wanted to help other businesses follow suit by sharing the steps involved. In the article, I explained the four main ways Meathead Movers is tackling the issue:

- Providing emergency services to victims of domestic violence
- Donating funds, to be used at the discretion of partner domestic violence shelters
- Educating and empowering their employees
- Leveraging press and events to urge other businesses to pledge their support

What I didn't share was how every single one of us can be an active participant in addressing -- and even ending -- domestic violence. The insight came after speaking with Genelle Taylor Kumpe, Executive Director of Marjaree Mason Center, a partner to Meathead Movers. Located in the Central Valley of California, the Center provides shelter and support to victims of domestic violence while working to stop the cycle of abuse through education and advocacy.

In talking to her, I came to understand that silence is one of the greatest contributors to the epidemic of domestic violence. Not only is it a barrier to getting help, it actually perpetuates the cycle in future generations. You see, children of domestic violence are two to three times more likely to repeat the very same cycle in adulthood.

As Genelle explains it, "So many kids in our schools are suffering from abuse at home. And when you're growing up, you're a product of your environment, so if you're around domestic violence, you start to think it's normal, it's just what happens to everyone."

So how do we combat silence? We speak up.

- We teach our children about healthy relationships, and set examples we would want them to emulate
- We learn to recognize the signs and stages of abuse
- We listen and provide support when someone makes the decision to confide
- We spread the word about domestic violence resources, and celebrate the strength of survivors

And if we need more ideas, we ask advocates like Genelle:

People are afraid to talk about domestic violence. That's what gives it such power... it's our silence. It's only when we start talking about it, launching conversations within schools, households, peer groups, and workplaces, that we help people to realize things can be different... We all need to spend more time talking about what constitutes a healthy relationship. Schools can implement anti-violence curriculum and counseling programs. Employers can educate their employees and put support mechanisms in place. And everyone, above all, can refrain from blaming the victim. There are so many times people ask why a survivor stays. Don't. It's never their fault. Not ever.

The following poem was written by Tracey Mason, in dedication to her friend, Kathleen Albertson, who coordinated the successful Fabulous Shoe Event, held January 29th to benefit the Women's Center. Tracey's reading captivated and touched the audience, moving many to tears. We thank Tracey, Kathleen and all of those who came out to support our mission!

You say you Love Me
But how could that be?
To control me is what you long for
your apologies I heard too many times before!
So many promises of never again
so in fear I live for the next strike to come for I never
know when!

I take the fault knowing it's none of mine
How can I do this time after time?
How can I make excuses and lie
when all I want to do is curl up and die!
I hear the words and feel the pain
the hurt it runs through my veins!

Behind a smile I hide the pain and fear
Oh God if anyone ever knew the danger I am living
here!
To tell them do I dare?
Would they believe? Would they care?

Everybody knows you from a different side
Nobody knows the monster you hide!
I pray to God to come to my assist
but the warm charming prince in you I can't resist!

I think my prayers are answered when forgiveness
you seek
I fall under your spell and become weak!
I want to believe or I want to pretend
That eventually this torture will end!

Lord I pray
to help this man in every way
give him the courage to fight
the demon in him day and night
Lord I ask you to give him some insight
To know that his actions and words are not right
Help him to understand
that no one deserves this abuse from his hand!

Lord I ask you to help him seek the guidance he needs
to learn to relinquish his power and greed!
Lord maybe some light on him you can shed
too straighten out the turmoil in his head!

Lord I also pray that you give me the strength
to get myself out of this I will go any length
I will do what I need to do
but I will need the help from you !

Please give me the courage to move ahead
to believe in myself and not be mislead!
Let me believe I have the power in me
to overcome this and live the way life was meant to be!
Allow me to feel free from all the shame
And all punishment and the blame!
Teach me to use the resources that you provide
to be my helping guide!

Enlighten me to know that I do not stand alone
to use the voice you gave me to defend my own!
Let me believe that I am not the only one
who has been through the torture and withstand the damage
it has done!
That if I opened my eyes I will see
this Violence has affected more than just me!

Thrift Shop Volunteers Needed

The Women's Center of Montgomery County Thrift Shop, located at 703 West Avenue in Jenkintown, is open six days a week from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. We have a need for volunteers to staff the shop, particularly on Saturdays. Whatever your talent we have a position to suit. We need sorters, merchandisers, decorators, and cash register clerks.

For more information, contact Donna B. at the Elkins Park office at 215-635-7340.



Now Open!

Second Chances Shoppe

201 Leedom Street,
Jenkintown, PA 19046

215-885-0651

Monday - Saturday,
10:00 am to 5:00 pm



Women's Center of Montgomery County

Elkins Park Office

215-635-7344

FAX: 215-635-7347

Thrift Shop: 215-885-0620

Norristown Office

610-279-1548

FAX: 610-279-7740

Pottstown Office

610-970-7363

FAX: 610-970-0705

Bryn Mawr Office

610-525-1427

FAX: 610-525-1429

Colmar Office

215-996-0721

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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



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of Southeastern Pennsylvania
Community Partner