

# Womenews

Women's Center of Montgomery County



*The following article is excerpted from an article by Carl Hessler, Jr of the Time Herald*

## Montgomery County Officials Recognize Domestic Violence Awareness Month

Those on the front lines of the battle against domestic violence – victims' advocates, law enforcers and court officials – gathered on October 3rd to support survivors and to honor those who have shared their expertise to help victims.

“We’ve come a long way ... but there’s much more work to be done,” Michael R. Kehs, chairman of The Domestic Violence Legal Network of Montgomery County, addressed a crowd of about 125 who attended the organization’s annual ceremony recognizing October as National Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

“Education and awareness, that’s what Domestic Violence Awareness Month is about and that’s what DVLN is about,” Kehs added.

The DVLN was formed in 1986 by professionals from law enforcement, the judiciary and victims’ services agencies for the purpose of sharing resources and expertise to serve domestic violence victims more effectively. Kehs and others

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## The Economics of Caregiving

*“If I had paid family leave insurance ... I wouldn't have gone bankrupt ...”*

*Submitted by Donna Byrne*

This is how one local woman shared the economic impact of caregiving on her life. Sad Fact: Papua, New Guinea and the United States of America are the only 2 countries **IN THE WORLD** which don't provide for paid family leave for its citizens. Shocking! Isn't it?

If you think that caregiving financial strains won't happen to you, consider the following:

- **Workers in PA. invest 1.4 billion hours of unpaid time** caring for the elderly each year. Pennsylvania has one of the oldest populations in the nation and the state's aging population is expected to continue growing.
- **Only 40% of workers are eligible for unpaid leave under the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA)** but fewer than 50% of those workers eligible for FMLA can afford to take it.
- **21% of Pennsylvanians** do not have the resources to survive up to three months of sustained loss of income.
- Currently, **the majority of Pennsylvania workers** – union and non-union, part-time and full-time – have no access to paid family leave.
- Women who are family caregivers are **2 ½ times more likely to fall into poverty**.
- **Family caregivers provide 80% of all home care** without payment for their care.
- **\$303,880 is the average lost lifetime wages, pension, and social security benefits** for caregivers over 50; **female caregivers lose an additional \$40,000**. Estimated aggregate of caregivers' lost wages and benefits is \$3 TRILLION.

Employees who are caregivers have to balance their ability to be good workers at the same time they are struggling to take care of their own or a family member's needs. Recognition of this societal challenge for workers is gradually increasing, and some businesses are starting to address their employees' needs. While **Thirteen percent of workers now have access** to some form of paid family leave through their employer, **nearly 100% of workers will need time off** during their career to address their own serious health condition, or to care for a newborn or sick family member.

It is also important to remember that the **definition of family is expanding** and changing, therefore a broad definition is required for any changes to be fair and effective.

But ... Don't Get Discouraged! **A partial solution is on the horizon, and you can be part of it!**

Join the effort to establish a Family and Medical Leave Insurance Fund (FMLI) in Pa. California, Washington, New Jersey, and Rhode Island plus the District of Columbia already have paid family leave laws, and New York will be joining them in 2018.

An FMLI fund would provide **all** workers with the ability to earn a portion of their pay (50 – 67% of normal earnings) while they take time off work for up to a certain number of weeks to:

- Care for a family member with a serious health condition;
- Care for a newborn, newly-adopted child, or newly-placed foster child; or
- Address the worker's own serious health condition including a pregnancy-related condition.

Since FMLI **does not require employers to pay** for their employees' family and medical leave, the benefit goes with the employee if they change jobs. Existing FMLI programs are **financed through payroll deductions**. This especially benefits small businesses that often cannot afford to offer such a benefit to their employees on their own. National experts recommend that workers have the ability to take up to 12 weeks of partially paid leave in a 12-month period. Depending on income level, **payroll deductions can be as little as 1% up to a maximum yearly deduction of less than \$35/year**.

If you are interested in bringing FMLI to Pa., contact Donna J. Byrne, Outreach Coordinator at the Colmar office (215-996-0723) to help in gathering stories about the impact being a family caregiver had on your life or the lives of your friends. The first step in drafting law is gathering information about personal impact on Pa. families, so that the final law addresses as many concerns as possible. For more information, go to: [www.zeroweeks.com](http://www.zeroweeks.com)

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### **Children as Witnesses to Domestic Abuse: My Family Experience**

*Written by WCMC Board member Sandra Hyman*

This article is being told for all of the children who have been the witness and/or subject of abuse. It has been many years since my two daughters lived with their father but it amazes me every day how they have been and are still affected by our history.

Daughter #1 has washed her hands of the past. She was determined not to repeat her upbringing and made sure that she married a man that is a good husband, provider and father. You would think that the story ends there but it does not. I recently asked her "after all that you have seen and been through I am surprised that you have any kind of relationship with your father." Her reply to me was interesting, "He knows that I will not put up with his nonsense and told him that he had better be careful because she will be picking his nursing home."

She has created a much better life for herself and her family but cannot or will not participate in any of the function of the Women's Center. It brings her back to her past that she wishes to forget. It is also surprising to me her objection of my involvement with the Center. Her feelings are that I need to put it in the past and move on.

Daughter #2 has no relationship with her father because she is angry and resentful with his insensitivity to her daughter. My granddaughter is a special needs child needing constant supervision and has NEVER received any kind of love or financial support from her grandfather. When her daughter was born, she was 2lbs 14ounces at birth, they lived with me for three years until she remarried and moved to Maryland. She has now lived in Maryland for 11 years and not once has her father ever come to visit, yet he drives to the shore every week end. What bothers my daughter the most is that her father is a Shriner and is very active in helping strangers from playing Santa Claus, participating in parades and visiting the hospitals.

I have moved on with my life and so have my children but we are a product of all that we have gone through. My greatest regrets are that I did not leave sooner because I now know how destruction the situation was and how it affected them and that I did not choose a better father for them.

I wish to leave on a positive note by saying, "my children and I would not be who we are today if we had not gone through what we went through." My girls are grown women and I am very proud of the people they are today. They are excellent mothers, wives and overall good loving people.

Sandy Hyman, GRI, ABR, e-Pro  
Associate Broker; ReMax Action

## **Board of Directors Meeting Announcement**

The next meeting of the Women's Center of Montgomery County Board of Directors will be held on **Thursday, November 16th at 6:30 pm** in the Elkins Park office.

The December Board meeting will be held on Thursday, December 21<sup>st</sup>, in the Walton Community Room at the Colmar Office at 2506 North Broad Street.

As with all Board meetings, this meeting is open to current members of the Center. Additionally current members can also join most of our Board committees. If you have an interest on serving on our standing committees – Finance, Special Events, Planning, Governance or Development – please contact our Board Co-Presidents Amy Stern and Rosie Santulli c/o the Elkins Park office.

In order to ensure that our Board operates at its most effective levels, we also recruit prospective members throughout the year for prospective nominees for Board candidacy. If you or someone you know would consider serving our Center at this level, please feel free to discuss with a Committee member or our executive director at our Elkins Park Office (215-635-7340). We are at present seeking persons with expertise/interest in the areas of finance, development, market and/or strategic planning, as well as connections to local corporations.

Please remember this is YOUR board and its composition and service reflects your interests and concerns. Your input is of great value to those of us currently on Board. We appreciate and honor each of you for all that you do. We look forward to hearing from you!

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## **NEW SUPPORT GROUP FOR SIGNIFICANT OTHERS AT ELKINS PARK**

**When:** First Wednesday of the month beginning Wednesday, December 6, 2017  
7:00-9:00 PM.

**Where:** Elkins Park Office  
8080 Old York Road Suite 200 - Elkins Park, PA 19127

**Why:** To provide support for **Significant Others** struggling to help a friend or loved one living with or recovering from Domestic Violence.

**Contact:** Sue Pontoski 215-938-3711, Mon.-Wed. 9-2. May leave message.  
[spontoski@womenscentermc.org](mailto:spontoski@womenscentermc.org)

**Please call or email by Wednesday Nov. 29 to register.**

urged attendees to stand firm in condemning domestic violence and to support victims and law enforcers.

County Commissioners Valerie Arkoosh and Kenneth Lawrence read a proclamation declaring October as the month to raise awareness of the issue in the county.

“I wish that there was not a need for this effort to exist, but we know that domestic violence has been with us forever and will probably, sadly, continue to be with us for the foreseeable future,” Arkoosh said.

“It’s unfortunate that we need to have this awareness month but for so many people who struggle and are victimized I know that they are glad that we are here working for them,” Lawrence added.

During the ceremony, officials, acknowledging all forms of violence in society, also paused for a moment of “silent reflection” for those killed and injured in the shooting rampage that occurred in Las Vegas earlier this week.

“Evil and violence comes in all forms and ... we need to band together as a nation to stop the violence. Although domestic violence does not occur in one horrific tragedy, it occurs victim by victim on a daily basis,” county Judge Kelly C. Wall addressed spectators.

Wall, administrative judge of the county’s family court division, was honored by DVLN for her “outstanding efforts in the fight against domestic violence.”

“Judge Wall was instrumental in the creation of and is one of the stars of our 15-minute long protection from abuse courtroom orientation video, an informative video about the steps involving and obtaining a PFA order at the courthouse,” Kehs explained. “I can tell you the impact of a judge explaining the process cannot be understated.”

The video is available on the court’s web site and on the web site of the Women’s Center of Montgomery County.

Wall, Kehs said, also has helped instruct court officials and lawyers regarding new legislation that protects victims of domestic violence and sexual intimidation. Wall was instrumental in developing a so-called “Friend of the Court” program under which volunteer lawyers meet weekly in an attempt to resolve PFA issues and related issues involving custody, support and any special relief for victims.

“Judge Wall recruited 40 volunteer lawyers and those lawyers have provided, as of the end of August, over 280 hours worth of volunteer time to address this particular issue,” Kehs explained.

Wall also developed the “civil stay away order,” an alternative to a final protection from abuse order, achieving the same ultimate result in cases that might not quite rise to the level of a traditional protection from abuse order, Kehs explained.

“Getting people to the finish line so that the protection is there that they so desperately need,” Kehs said.

During the last year, the county office of prothonotary processed more than 1,600 PFA cases, according to officials.

## ‘A Week Without Violence’ Pottstown Commemorates Domestic Violence Awareness Month

Pauline McGibbon, left, legal advocate from the Pottstown office of the Women’s Center of Montgomery County, and Ashley Faison, advocacy and volunteer manager for the YWCA Tri-County Area, welcome visitors to their open house Thursday during the Week Without Violence. *Evan Brandt — Digital First Media*



**With Gratitude and Admiration  
We thank the **nxt2normal** Band for a Successful Event!**

On Saturday, October 7<sup>th</sup> our friends with the **nxt2normal** band held their 4<sup>th</sup> annual benefit concert to raise awareness about domestic violence and funds for the Women’s Center of Montgomery County.

Held at Chaplin’s in Spring City with more than 100 people in attendance, the band raised over \$5,200 for the Center, bringing their four year total to well over \$21,000.

Our warmest thanks to the band members – Thom McGowan, Jay Mitlas, Ray Tagliatella, Talia Schiff, Mark Betterley, and Dirk Externest – for their unwavering commitment and support for our mission. We are grateful for your generosity and for the support you and your fans bring to the Center!



**Montgomery County Commemorates  
October as Domestic Violence Awareness Month**

As part of a series of domestic violence awareness month activities, on October 3<sup>rd</sup>, the Montgomery County Bar Association led a domestic violence town hall meeting at the courthouse with advocates, survivors, judges, and lawyers leading a panel discussion. The town hall meeting was followed by a “Light the Courthouse Ceremony” during which the courthouse was illuminated in purple in recognition of Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

From Penn Live:

## Victims of Domestic Violence Honored In Ceremony at Capitol

The Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence, along with staff from the Women's Center of Montgomery County, paid tribute to the victims killed in the last year because of domestic violence during a ceremony Monday, Oct. 16, at the state Capitol.

October is national Domestic Violence Awareness Month, an annual campaign that honors victims and survivors, celebrates advocates, and brings attention to intimate partner violence.

State legislators read the names of the 100 victims while advocates from community-based programs displayed placards with the victims' names.

Included in the ceremony was the family of Olivia Maria Gonzalez, an 18-year-old Mercer County woman who was killed in February by her 21-year-old ex-boyfriend, according to the coalition.

The Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence Board of Directors member Gary Gregory, who is also president and founder of Every Great Reason Foundation, spoke about his family and domestic violence. His sister, Ellen Gregory Robb, was killed by her husband, a University of Pennsylvania professor, three days before Christmas in 2006.

In honor of Domestic Violence Awareness Month, the Capitol will be lit purple Oct. 16-22.

### THE CLARION PRESENT...

A fundraiser to support ending intimate partner violence

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NEW HOPE, PA 18938  
(215) 862-5221**

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\*SILENT AUCTION\*  
\*LIVE DJ AFTER 9PM\***

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Jenkintown, PA 19046

215-885-0651

Monday - Friday  
11:00 am to 6:00 pm  
Saturday  
10:00 am to 4:00pm

## Women's Center of Montgomery County

### Elkins Park Office

215-635-7344

FAX: 215-635-7347

Thrift Shop: 215-885-0651

### 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

FAX: 215-996-0725

[www.wcmontco.org](http://www.wcmontco.org)

1-800-773-  
2424

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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



United Way  
of Southeastern Pennsylvania  
Community Partner