

**To protect, shelter,
and empower people
impacted by domestic
and sexual violence.**

NEWSLETTER | WINTER 2022

Remembering Sally: Lessons from a Pretty Little Bench

By Juliette Schultz

Since 2013 I have been making my way up the long front walk to our office door. During that time I passed a hand-made bench that became so much a part of the environment, I started to not see it anymore. Most days, I am on autopilot when entering the office, not being wholly present. A human “doing” instead of a human being.

In the spring, flowers bloom around the bench. Johnny Jump Ups, Echinacea, and a variety of other brightly colored blooms. I often take and make calls outside, and at times, have found myself resting on the beautiful little bench with an inlaid mosaic glass heart, a cross, and the word “Mom.”

In all those years, passing and sitting on the bench, it never occurred to me why it might be there, until a month ago.

I was making thank you calls to people who support our Mission and as I was beginning to dial the next number, my phone rang. It was Debra Coburn, one of the people I had called to thank. She spoke softly and shared that the Mission was very important to her because her mom,



Debra Coburn pictured

Sally, had died at the hands of an abuser. The pretty bench out front was one that she and her husband Dennis had installed in memory of her mom. I felt my chest tighten, took a deep breath, and asked Debra if she would say more?

Debra's mom was a beautiful, tall, lithe, blonde woman. She was born out of wedlock to a mother who abandoned her and a father she never knew. There are no pictures of Sally in her childhood where she is smiling. Sally was introduced to Debra's father by a friend, and they married. That's when the abuse began. One of four children, Debra remembers her father's jealousy and rage well. “My mom was afraid all of the time. My dad would constantly accuse her of having an affair and would beat her.” She tried to

leave a few times but there was nowhere safe for her to go, so she returned. And the abuse continued.

During the time Debra and her three siblings were being raised, domestic violence was not a crime. It didn't become a crime until 1986, when it became an automatically arrestable offense, even if the victim did not want to press charges.

Sally and Debra's father ultimately divorced. And unfortunately, like many victims of abuse, it didn't end there. She continued to have relationships with men who abused her. And the last one took her life.

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WRC Hero Spotlight

April Putman

WRC Thrift Shop Assistant Manager



Q: How long have you been with the WRC?

I started in June of 2018. I had been in a bad car accident and could not work for months. I saw a posting for the Thrift Shop on Facebook one day, and I thought "I'm just going to walk in the door." Carol Rose basically hired me right there. The WRC has always been my favorite thrift shop in Traverse City.

Q: What do you love about working for the WRC Thrift Shop?

It's really what the agency stands for. I enjoy helping people, and if people are in need, we can give them vouchers to purchase essential things. The Thrift Shop helps support our shelter, and I believe in the Mission. I like what the agency does for the community and people in need, and I feel like I've made a difference in helping others through the Thrift Shop.

Q: What is something that is needed at the Thrift Shop?

We always need kids' winter coats. Even though the end of winter is coming, we never have enough. If they are donated in the off-season, we pack them up and bring them out during the winter. We are constantly asking for coats, and there is a great community need to keep kids warm this time of year.

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Debra's soft voice catches as she begins to tell me about how she intervened and tried to save her mom's life. "I haven't cried about this in so long" she sobs. I cry with her and wait until she's ready to continue.

"I was downstate with my husband and I had a sick feeling. I felt like I really needed to see my mom. So we drove over to her house unannounced. When I knocked on the door, my mom's boyfriend cracked the door open and peeked out. I pushed my way in and found my mom lying on the couch with burn marks on her arms and chunks of her hair pulled out. It was awful to see her like that," Debra said.

"We packed her things and brought her home with us to heal. She stayed with us and eventually, she moved into her own home. Within a year, she had returned to her abuser. I remember when she sat me down to tell me she was going back. "He loves me and wants me back."

"At that point I knew I would never see her again," said Debra. "My mother was my favorite person. Kind and loving. A really good person."

15 years ago, Debra got a call from a hospital downstate. Her mom had been brought to the hospital. Badly beaten and weighing 87 pounds, Sally had a heart attack and shortly thereafter a stroke. She was unable to talk.

"I don't share this with people very often," says Debra. "People don't believe me."

According to Barbara Gilin, a professor of social work at Widener University, "In my experience, having worked with a lot of victims and people around them, people blame victims so they can feel safe themselves. I think it helps them feel like bad things will never happen to them."

At the Women's Resource Center, our empowerment philosophy reads: "Abuse is a deliberate act of power and control by the perpetrator; the victim does not provoke, enjoy, or deserve it. All people have the right to live without fear."

Sally did not deserve to be abused. And she did not deserve to die. Her boyfriend made a choice to abuse her. And ultimately, he took her life.

Debra shared with me about how she and a community of friends built the bench and installed it just outside of the front door of the WRC. They gathered here, sang songs, planted flowers, and remembered Sally.

The next time you visit, I hope you notice the bench. Maybe take some time to pause and sit down for a minute or two and take it in. And remember Sally. I know I will.

Holiday Needs Program

A big Thank You to the members of our community who helped to make the Holiday Season magical for families in our area. This year the WRC served more families through the Holiday Needs Program than ever before. We were blown away by your generosity!



With Gratitude

We would like to thank these community members for helping to raise funds and awareness for the WRC through the holiday season.

You've taken a stand against domestic and sexual violence, and put your name alongside thousands of others who believe people deserve to live a life free from abuse. Astounding people, organizations, community groups, small businesses, and corporations stepped up to support our Mission and help survivors find safety in their time of need. Thank you for standing with us. YOU made a difference in the lives of others, and together we can continue to provide services with inclusion, integrity, compassion, respect and excellence. Together we can help survivors feel heard, understood and safe.

With Gratitude,

- DTE Foundation
- Consumer's Energy Foundation
- Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation
- Youth Endowment: Benzie, Kalkaska, Grand Traverse
- Campbell Endowment
- Genuine Leelanau Charitable Endowment
- Oleson Family Foundation
- House of Dank
- Zonta Club of Traverse City
- Michigan Broadband Services
- The Filling Station Microbrewery
- Cherry Hill Boutique

- Traverse City Country Club
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- The Little Fleet
- Oryana Community Co-Op
- Labadies Summer Place Casuals
- Common Good Bakery
- Taproot
- Spanglish
- Grand Traverse Resort and Spa
- Higher Grounds Trading Co.
- Benedict
- Earthen Ales
- Rarebird
- Structure and Function Chiropractic

If you would like to make a donation, please contact Jamie Bell at 231-941-1210 or jbelle@wrcgt.com.

Survivors Share Their Stories

Cat Muncey, Novum Productions

For the first time, the WRC has released PSA's using the voices of real survivors to tell their stories. We are grateful to partner with Novum Productions to create these powerful messages. Here is what owner, Cat Muncey of Novum Productions had to say:

"Abuse is a multi-headed monster. And each head has many faces. Some of them are easier to recognize than others because we've encountered them before. Through listening to survivor stories, we get a window to different types of assault and mistreatment. These testimonials not only increase awareness, but also create hope for those currently in destructive and dangerous environments.

When preparing to meet with the survivors we interviewed, we tried to create a safe space where these women could talk freely, candidly and be raw about their experiences. Whether we met at a kitchen table or at our office, we were



100% emotionally present. We asked open ended questions and listened intently. We left our preconceived notions of what abuse looks like outside the door and deeply empathized. Abuse doesn't look the same for each person, but that doesn't make it any less traumatic.

The subjects interviewed opened themselves up to relive the trauma. They were wildly vulnerable. Because they decided to share their stories, we are

able to learn from them, understand their human experience, and be more emotionally and physically supportive of survivors. Steps like this give me hope that we can get upstream to prevent these abuses from occurring in the future before they even happen.

We have to continue on in the sacred art of storytelling. It's the only way we can create generational change."

WOMEN'S RESOURCE CENTER

Conversation + Chocolate + Community Virtual Event

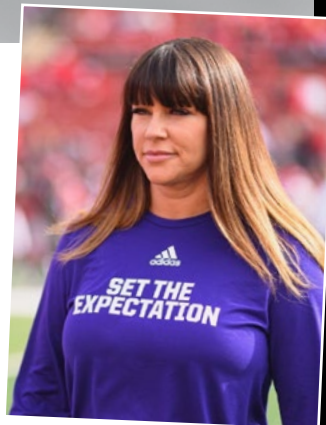
Mark your calendars:
April 27, 2022, 12pm-1pm

The WRC will welcome Brenda Tracy of **Set The Expectation**. **Set The Expectation** is a nonprofit organization dedicated to ending sexual and interpersonal violence through prevention work with men, advocacy, and engagement with agencies serving survivors and their families.

"We believe the work of ending gender-based violence and inequality cannot rest only on the backs of those most affected by it. We believe in the power and agency of men as the solution, and it is only when we partner with men as champions for change that we will make tangible progress toward safety and equality for every person, regardless of gender or gender identity."

—Brenda Tracy

Brenda Tracy is a nurse, speaker, activist, and survivor. In 1998, she reported to police that she was brutally raped by four men, two of whom played football at Oregon State University.



In 2014, she found the courage to come forward with her story and now seeks to make the world a better place for survivors. As a citizen lobbyist, Ms. Tracy has helped with the passage of eight laws in her home state of Oregon. She has won numerous awards and was named ESPN's top 25 women in 2016 and one of Sports Illustrated most powerful women in sports in 2020. Ms. Tracy is the creator of the "Tracy Rule," the most comprehensive serious misconduct policy in NCAA history. She is the founder of the national campaign and nonprofit **Set The Expectation** (settheexpectation.org). Her message of "men as the solution and not the problem" is transforming the landscape of sports and how we engage in gender-based violence prevention work.

WOMEN'S RESOURCE CENTER

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Collaborating with Our Neighbors to End Homelessness

"Homelessness is an overwhelming challenge in our community and domestic violence continues to be the third leading cause of it."

— Heather Patterson

Heather is the Grant Administrator for the WRC, and member of **The Northwestern Michigan Coalition to End Homelessness**. She is bringing light to the connection between domestic violence and homelessness. Recent statistics have shown us that 80% of unhoused women are survivors of domestic violence.* Patterson has been hard at work listening, strategizing, and asking questions as she participates and advocates for homeless survivors of domestic and sexual violence.



The Coalition to End Homelessness is made up of community members who share the Mission: "...to make homelessness rare, brief, and one-time throughout Northern Michigan."

Our friends at **The Northwestern Michigan Coalition to End Homelessness** provide a 24-hour crisis line for housing vulnerable people. The WRC operates a 24-hour crisis line and emergency shelter for survivors of domestic and/or sexual violence. Networking with local partners helps us properly advocate for those in our community who need it most.

Efforts like ending youth homelessness, supporting survivors fleeing abuse, health-care, and eviction diversion are among the focuses of **The Coalition**. The role of **The Coalition** in our community is vital. We are proud to stand with our neighbors.

To learn more visit endhomelessnessmi.org.

* (Safe Housing Partnerships from a study conducted by Yumiko Aratani)

WRC THRIFT SHOPS

Thrift Shop - South Airport

1331 W. South Airport Road

231-421-3033

Thrift Shop US-31

3030 US-31 South

231-946-4180

Monday-Saturday 10am-6pm

CONTACT

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Traverse City, MI 49684

Phone: 231-941-1210

Web: womensresourcecenter.org

24-hour Helpline: 1-800-554-4972

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