



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

NEWSLETTER | JUNE 2023

Domestic Violence Isn't Unique to Heterosexual Relationships

By Heather Patterson
Grant Administrator, WRC

When visiting Traverse City in June, one can't help but notice that it's Pride Month. It's a time when we, as a community, celebrate our LGBTQIA+ members, acknowledge and remember the past, and work toward an equitable future. It's more than once-a-year colorful signage and rainbows on Front Street. It's an opportunity to reflect and renew our commitment to advocate, understand, and educate. It's an opportunity to look at issues impacting our community through an LGBTQIA+ lens.

According to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, nearly 44% of women who identify as lesbian and more than 60% of those who identify as bisexual have experienced rape, physical violence, or stalking by an intimate partner at some point in their lifetimes. That compares with 35% of heterosexual women.

This violence is not limited to women.

In the same study, 26% of gay men and 37% of bisexual men have experienced rape, physical violence, or stalking by an intimate partner, compared with 29% of heterosexual men.

The misconception that domestic violence is mainly a "straight" issue and doesn't occur often in LGBTQIA+ relationships is still believed by society. As common as that belief is, it's far from the truth.

The truth is abuse isn't tied to a person's sexual identity. Abuse doesn't have a cookie-cutter look because it can happen to anyone. It doesn't discriminate. Abuse is about the exertion of power and control. Period. Hard stop.

At the Women's Resource Center, we know LGBTQIA+ individuals are more likely to experience abuse than their heterosexual counterparts. This is due to societal discrimination, stigma, and a shortage of legal protections. Fear, lack of awareness, systematic discrimination, and absence of inclusiveness perpetuate the misconceptions surrounding domestic violence. These misconceptions further marginalize survivors who are already reluctant to report their abuse or access lifesaving services because they fear being further discriminated against.

The question is, "What can we do as a community to counteract these misconceptions not only during Pride



Heather Patterson

month but every day of the year?" Our neighbors who are survivors of abuse deserve our support, regardless of their sexual orientation. We must stand up for their rights, amplify their voices, validate their experiences, and point them to resources when they need help.

At the Women's Resource Center, we work at state and local levels to make sure LGBTQIA+ victims and survivors get the help they need. We are an ally, we are a safe space, and we advocate for policies that protect all individuals from abuse, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

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Now is the time to ask ourselves how we can help create change and bring greater awareness to issues impacting our LGBTQIA+ community. As a community, we can work towards the goal of breaking down harmful misconceptions and ensuring that all people, no matter their sexuality or gender identity, feel seen and believed and receive safe and inclusive support.

*Honorary Board Members
Pictured left to right:
Marylou Zaloudek, Ed Carlson,
Guest Speaker Susie Janis,
Dennis Piskor, and
Linda Smyka*



Honorary Board Members

“As you grow older, you will discover that you have two hands — one for helping yourself, the other for helping others.” “Life’s most persistent and urgent question is, What are you doing for others?” — Martin Luther King, Jr.

The WRC has had countless people walk through its doors since 1975. Many clients, supporters, volunteers, staff, and Board Members have all left a mark and made the Agency what it is today. It’s truly incredible when you meet someone who has shared

years with an agency. We know how much focus and energy that requires.

Last month we celebrated a newly established role to celebrate Board Members who have had a significant impact on the organization. Combined, these fine people have supported and helped propel Mission for over 60 years, AND during their tenure all of them held leadership roles on the Board. Cheers to our first Honorary Board Members.

Staff Spotlight

By Jamie Bell, Women’s Resource Center
Director of Donor Engagement

It is our pleasure to introduce Dana McCarthy, WRC Court Advocate.

During the COVID-19 Pandemic, the WRC, like many other agencies that provide free and confidential support to domestic violence survivors throughout the state, was on the receiving one-time, time-limited state and federal funding. The WRC conducted an internal analysis to determine what support was most needed by survivors and as a result, created a new position: Court Advocate.

Dana McCarthy, Client Advocate came to the WRC more than a year ago with a wealth of knowledge of helping people navigate legal systems after attending the Police Academy, working with the Department of Corrections and most recently working for the Prosecuting Attorney. Dana has studied psychology with a focus on addiction and mental

illness. During her time working as a WRC Client Advocate, Dana has assisted numerous survivors with Personal Protection Orders (PPOs), all of which were accepted and granted by the local court.

That’s why when the Court Advocate position was created, Dana’s skillset made her a natural and perfect fit for the job. Her skills, knowledge and empathy provide protection and peace of mind to survivors for an entire year each time a PPO is granted.

In addition to helping survivors write and file PPO petitions, Dana attends court hearings with survivors who may re-experience trauma by telling their stories again. She creates individualized plans for every survivor.

It’s an understatement to say that Dana does a great job, because she goes way above and beyond. I learned about a client that she recently advocated for. The client was struggling with substance use disorder and using drugs and alcohol to cope with the trauma that she had endured. Dana worked directly with the survivor and at the survivor’s request, contacted multiple in-patient addiction



Dana McCarthy, Court Advocate

treatment facilities to help her get into a recovery program and the WRC welcomed her as a guest at our emergency shelter. The care and follow-through that Dana provided was lifesaving.

When Dana isn’t here at the WRC advocating for survivors, she is spending time with her two sweet daughters: Rileigh and Amelia.

Cheers to Dana, the WRC’s new Court Advocate for the immeasurable difference she is making!

My Tribute to the Chairman: Ralph Soffredine (1937-2023)

The following tribute was written by Juliette Schultz in December of 2016 to celebrate Ralph's retirement and commemorate his legacy of leadership.



Ralph Soffredine

Some call him "The Chief,"
others know him as Dad.
To me, he's the Chairman,
fighting for good over bad.

He's a decaf man, who likes it plain.
A former cop,
he's disarming, not vain.

A phone call away,
that may take a while.
Imparting good wisdom,
that's just his style.

Though a man of brute strength,
he quivers at my plan:
of driving him anywhere,
in my mid-sized sedan.

He's loud and he's proud,
not one to run and hide.
And we adore him for it,
Cuz' he fills us with pride.

So my thanks to the Chairman,
for his humor and drive.
I'm happy to know,
you're always at my side.

Summer at WRC

By Jamie Bell, Women's Resource Center
Director of Donor Engagement

For many of us there is nothing better than summer in Northern Michigan. We get to take the time to adventure, relax, and soak up the best part of the year. For people fleeing abusive relationships, it's a very different story. In fact, we see both the need for our services and the urgency for them increase. Our phone rings endlessly, and more people stop in for help.

Summertime also exacerbates situations that the most vulnerable people in our local community face. Rentals available to families during the off-season are turned into short-term vacation homes, kids are home all day because daycares and camps are full and have long waiting lists. The price of nearly everything in the community seems higher. And on top of all this, our population explodes with an increase of about 78%. Visitors from other places want to enjoy our beautiful region.

Living in a tourist area presents challenges for agencies like the WRC. Advocates find themselves making many calls to surrounding shelters, and other nonprofits like Goodwill Northern Michigan. More domestic violence survivors become displaced in the summer and are at risk of facing homelessness and the dangers that follow.

According to a study by Georgetown University women experiencing homelessness are at an increased risk of becoming sexually assaulted. The study revealed that 97% of participants had been victims of sexual violence while homeless, and 28% reported a sexual assault within the month leading up to that survey.

We have made a commitment as an Agency to never turn a survivor away. But what do you do when the shelter is full? When nightly prices of hotel rooms hover around \$330- \$500 a night? You have to get creative, and you turn to your community.

Our Advocates operate daily with a sense of urgency. When our 22-bed emergency shelter becomes full, we begin reaching out to partner agencies in the area, if that

fails, we dig into our wallets and provide survivors with safe shelter in hotels until there is a vacancy at the shelter. Even that is tricky, with most hotels full. To make matters more complicated, hotel reservations and food delivery if it is needed must be handled with extreme care, because survivors are victims of a crime, and it is critical that we keep their location and identities private and protected.

It's hard work, but we are here for it! No one should have to face this alone.

We love the seasons of Northern Michigan. And we also know at the WRC it's not all sunshine. We are grateful to the local businesses and nonprofits who help us in this important work. It takes a community, and we are grateful for ours.





Become a Sustaining Member of the WRC: Give Monthly

Help support survivors by becoming a Sustaining Member. Receive special updates, be a part of our community, and make a lasting impact.



\$30 One month of financial assistance for a survivor staying in our safe shelter

\$50 One week of surveillance/security at our safe shelter

\$80 One day of covering basic costs to keep our shelter open

\$100 One day of answering our 24-hour crisis hotline

With Gratitude

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

Thank you for standing with us. Together we can continue to provide services with inclusion, integrity, compassion, respect and excellence. Together we can help survivors feel heard, understood and safe.

- Bubbie's Bagels
- Oryana
- Right Brain Brewery
- The Little Fleet
- L Mauby
- Yen Yoga
- Cherry Republic
- Miners North Jewelers
- Nolan's Tobacco
- Serra Toyota Traverse City
- Michigan State Federal Credit Union

- Edson Farms
- The Les and Anne Biederman Foundation
- Zonta Club of Traverse City
- Benzie Sunrise Rotary
- The Towsley Foundation
- A.A. Van Elslander Foundation
- Presbyterian Church of Traverse City
- Michigan State Police Traverse City Post
- Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians



Special thanks to Jerry Zezulka and Jim Tuohy



If you would like to know more about how you can support the WRC, please contact Jamie Bell at 231-941-1210 or jbell@wrcgt.com.

WOMEN'S RESOURCE CENTER

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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
Sunday 11am-5pm

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