

THE SUPPORTER

FROM THE DESK OF CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, ELIZABETH SANTIAGO

WINTER / SPRING 2024

FORTIFYING OUR 45TH YEAR

Center for Safety & Change is celebrating its 45th year of dedicated service to victims and survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking. This incredible journey would not have been possible without the unwavering support of compassionate individuals like you.

Over the past four and a half decades, Center for Safety & Change has been a beacon of hope for countless individuals facing the harrowing challenges of domestic violence, sexual assault, human trafficking, and other crimes. Our commitment to providing a safe haven, comprehensive support, and raising awareness remains steadfast, thanks to the generosity and support of donors like you. Your dedication to helping those affected by violence and working towards a safer community is truly commendable.

It has been said that to move forward we have to be willing to reflect on the past. For over four decades our approach at Center for Safety & Change has been to prioritize victim and survivors' well-being without politicizing any issue. Whether you still say violence against women and girls or gender-based violence, both are interchangeable; the issues remain the same, they are human rights issues. Understanding the use of women and of their bodies for rape as a weapon of war is a complex dynamic that for centuries has not been resolved primarily because of misogyny, but one that is crucial, requiring a comprehensive approach in addressing power dynamics, gender inequality, and societal breakdown during conflicts.

For the first time in over four decades on October 13, 2023, Center for Safety & Change released a statement because of Hamas's attack on Israel in support of all of the victims, reinforcing that no one should live in fear and that terrorism should be condemned across any land. The full statement read: "No one should be a victim of violence. No one should be a victim of hate. No one should live in fear. Center for Safety & Change condemns all forms of terrorism and stands in solidarity with all victims and communities impacted by the recent attacks. We send tremendous healing and heartfelt sympathies to all the victims and their families near and far that are impacted by these recent attacks. You are not alone. Center for Safety & Change advocates for victims of all crimes and firmly stands against any form of violence. If you or someone you know needs to speak to one of our advocates, we are here for you 24 hours a day, 7 days a week; call our (24- Hotline) 845-634-3344 or text: 845-286-4997."



Elizabeth Santiago, CEO

(CONTINUED)

THE SUPPORTER

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What the terrorist group Hamas did to Israel on October 7th is inexcusable, unforgivable and unforgettable, and in the aftermath of October 7th there are still people being held hostage, murders ripping families apart and the rape of women continuing to be used as a weapon of war. Highlighting global instances of violence against women and girls over the past decade underscores the urgent need for international efforts to address and prevent such atrocities. From the Democratic Republic of the Congo to Syria, Nigeria to South Sudan, and Yemen, and most recently Israel and Palestine, women and girls have tragically suffered amid conflict zones, necessitating concerted efforts to ensure justice for victims and survivors and accountability of their perpetrators. As usual misogyny continues to be at the fore front where the use of the bodies of women and children are seen as pawns, interchangeable objects that can be used and negotiated globally and within the United States.


The Center is deeply committed to supporting victims of violence and advocating for their rights. And, while the Center recognizes the importance of global solidarity and acknowledges the diversity of perspectives within our communities, we must prioritize and primarily focus on domestic issues of violence against women and girls in the United States and more specifically in Rockland County, the county we serve, and the ramifications of any policy, law, legislation, or act across the United States that impacts victims and survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, human trafficking and other crimes.

As an agency, the Center has received criticism and critique that a lapse in communication and support was felt across communities impacted by international crises and war. While global solidarity is important, we know the gravity of sexual violence, domestic violence and human trafficking issues and recognize the pain and challenges victims and survivors endure both near and far.

In our county the Rockland community experienced the ripple effects of domestic violence within the first 81 days of this year. There were four domestic violence femicide murders at the hands of their intimate partners including two children. We emphasize our unwavering commitment to continue supporting victims and survivors by creating safe spaces and while continually striving to improve our programs and services to meet the evolving needs of victims and survivors in Rockland County.

Your belief in our mission has not only transformed the individual lives of victims and survivors we serve but has also contributed to fostering a community where everyone works together to end gender-based violence. The Center cannot do this work successfully without you. In honor of our 45th year, we invite you to join us in celebrating the impact we've made together.

Respectfully,


Elizabeth Santiago

THE SUPPORTER

Four and a half decades of service to Rockland County and beyond; providing safety and changing lives every step of the way for all victims.

SEMI ANNUAL NEWSLETTER

Project Tikvah

Services for Orthodox Jewish Women

Where there is *help*, there is *hope*.



WE OFFER A WEEKLY SUPPORT GROUP FOR VICTIMS & SURVIVORS OF THE ORTHODOX JEWISH COMMUNITY

The mission of Project Tikvah is to eliminate and prevent domestic violence and to foster healthy relationships. Project Tikvah focuses its work in the Orthodox Jewish Community. For more information, call (845) 634-3391.

FROM OUR FOUNDERS



As one of the founding women of Center for Safety & Change, it is important to share that we continue to reassess and meet the growing needs of our community. In doing so we have saved so many lives.

-Diane Sussman

Founder, Center for Safety & Change

FORTIFYING OUR 45TH YEAR

As part of our 45th Legacy Year we need **YOU!** For our momentous year, we are asking you to pay it forward by "donating a cup" and/or "donating as many cups as you can" to help us reach our goal of \$450,000! Your \$4.50 fortifies our 45 year legacy. Every cup matters.



GET STARTED

SCAN ME

💰 **Participate Today:** Gift a cup or many cups

💰 **Start a Fundraiser:** It's easy to do, and it's fun! Rally your family friends, and colleagues to start a fundraiser to raise money for the Center. We give you all of the tools you need to make a difference.

THE SUPPORTER

Four and a half decades of service to Rockland County and beyond; providing safety and changing lives every step of the way for all victims.

SEMI ANNUAL NEWSLETTER

Rockland Women Leaders
HALL OF FAME

JOIN US IN
CONGRATULATING
AND CELEBRATING
THE 2024 INDUCTEES
ON OCTOBER 5, 2024



BETH CHAMBERLIN



DR. RAMAN KAUL



KATHY PERROTTE



LYNN SHEINKIN



SABRINA VARGAS-GRECO



BARBARA WILLIAMS

[CLICK HERE](#)

**CELEBRATE THE CENTER!
CELEBRATE WOMEN!**

45th Celebration: Join us for an evening of inspiration and reflection as we honor and support champions of our cause who stand in solidarity with all victims and survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, human trafficking and other crimes.

Rockland Women Leaders Hall of Fame Induction: an honoring of women who have not only helped advance Center for Safety & Change's mission to end gender-based violence and empower survivors of domestic violence and sexual abuse, but who have also effected meaningful positive change in our community through contributions in the following categories: Public Service, Arts and Culture, Not for Profit, Business, Public Health, Philanthropy, Equal Rights, Sports, and Education.



2024: A GLIMPSE AT 180 DAYS OF IMPACT

IN 6 MONTHS WE SUPPORTED

**1,404 VICTIMS AND SURVIVORS OF WHICH
365 WERE CHILDREN A TOTAL OF
20,986 TIMES WITH 120,048 SERVICES**

NUMBER OF VICTIMS SERVED

180 DAYS

JAN. - JUNE 2024



**DOMESTIC
VIOLENCE: 1,064**



**SEXUAL
TRAUMA: 331**



**HUMAN
TRAFFICKING: 34**



**LEGAL
SERVICES: 850**



**OTHER CRIME
VICTIMS: 124**

365 DAYS

JAN. - DEC. 2023

**DOMESTIC
VIOLENCE: 1,369**



**SEXUAL
TRAUMA: 447**



**HUMAN
TRAFFICKING: 76**



**LEGAL
SERVICES: 927**



**OTHER CRIME
VICTIMS: 144**



180 DAYS OF IMPACT

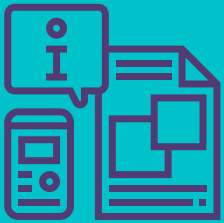
IN 6 MONTHS WE PROVIDED



7,212
SAFETY
PLANNING
SERVICES



5,384
CRISIS
INTERVENTION
SERVICES



24,265
INFORMATION
AND REFERRALS



3,781
TRANSLATIONS
FOR VICTIMS IN
25 DIFFERENT
LANGUAGES



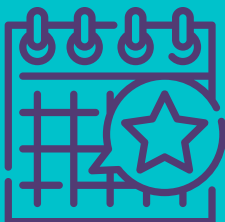
**SEXUAL ASSAULT FORENSIC EXAMS
(SAFE) TO 33 RAPE VICTIMS**

IN 6 MONTHS WE RESPONDED TO



3,464 HOTLINE CALLS

IN 6 MONTHS WE REACHED



34,974 PEOPLE DURING
812 PRESENTATIONS AT
COMMUNITY OUTREACH EVENTS

THE SUPPORTER

The realities behind every victim and survivor we serve comes with the simplicity of "start by believing" and "everyone knows someone."

SEMI ANNUAL NEWSLETTER

1 in 3 women are victims of domestic violence.

Did you know that domestic violence abusers who have access to a gun increases the potential of a domestic violence homicide by **500%**?



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE & TRUTH IN OUR COUNTY

Domestic violence/ intimate partner violence are not isolated incidents. Domestic violence is manifested as a pattern of coercive and abusive behavior towards an intimate partner, where the abuser exerts power and control over the victim.

WITHIN 81 DAYS:

Between December 30, 2023 and March 19, 2024 there were four domestic violence fatalities - six murders in Rockland County.

Center for Safety & Change continues to provide services to victims and survivors and their families while sending our heartfelt condolences to the family and friends of the women and children who were murdered by their intimate partner within the first 81 days of this year.

We remember the victims murdered by their intimate partner this year.

- Ornela Morgan (43), Gabriel Morgan (12), and Liam Morgan (10), from Clarkstown on December 30, 2023; murdered by gun.
- Rosezella Munroe (56) from the Town of Ramapo on January 31, 2024; murdered by gun.
- Carolyn Canela from the Village of Spring Valley on February 23, 2024; murdered by gun.
- Colleen Williston (35) from Stony Point on March 19, 2024; murdered by knife.



THE SUPPORTER

"Fight for the things that you care about. But do it in a way that will lead others to join you."—Ruth Bader Ginsburg

SEMI ANNUAL NEWSLETTER



TAKE MY ADVICE

ANDREA PANJWANI

CHIEF LEGAL OFFICER

**ANSWERS YOUR QUESTIONS ABOUT
LEGISLATION, POLICY AND COURT CASES**

**THIS ISSUE: GUN VIOLENCE AND THE
SUPREME COURT DECISION OF
U.S. V. RAHIMI**

Under state law, domestic violence survivors can ask local courts to issue protection orders requiring abusive former or current intimate partners to stay away from the victim and surrender their firearms, among other things.

Quick Facts:

- 8 in 10 murders in the US involve firearms.
- Gun violence is the leading cause of death for children ages 1 – 19.
- 80% of pregnancy-related homicides involve guns.
- 4.5 million women were threatened at gunpoint by an intimate partner.
- Over 1 million women were (not fatally) shot by an intimate partner.
- Every month 70 women are fatally shot by an intimate partner.
- Access to firearms makes it five times more likely that a woman will be murdered by her partner.
- Of the 1,500 murder-suicides that take place each year, 90% involve firearms.
- More than half of mass shootings have a domestic violence connection.
- Firearms are the leading cause of police fatalities, a notable percentage of which take place at domestic violence-related calls.
- The Surgeon General has characterized gun violence as a public health crisis.
- Domestic violence advocates must be prepared to address many of the economic issues that victims face, and facilitate opportunities for victims to learn how they can improve their economic situation. Issues such as budgeting, identity theft, banking, predatory lending, violence in the workplace, housing, and credit, all play a role in ending domestic violence.

THE CONTEXT

So long as the abusive intimate partner had the opportunity to be heard in court and the court found that they had used or threatened to use serious violence, a federal law is triggered which prevents the person subject to the order of protection from possessing, transferring or purchasing firearms or ammunition anywhere in the nation. (18 U.S.C. 922(g) (8)). If they access a gun, they may face criminal penalties. The state protection order laws and the federal law work together to keep firearms out of the hands of abusive parties while the order of protection is in effect and have resulted in a 12% decrease in domestic violence murders in states that have domestic violence-related firearms restrictions.



Zackey Rahimi, the petitioner in *U.S. v. Rahimi*, was subject to a qualifying domestic violence protection order, which prohibited him from accessing firearms. In violation of that prohibition, he unlawfully obtained firearms and used them, shooting at another intimate partner, as well as conducting a shooting spree around Houston. He was then arrested for violating the federal domestic violence firearms prohibition (18 U.S.C. 922(g)(8)). Mr. Rahimi challenged the federal law through an appeal, saying that it was unconstitutional, because it limited his right to self-defense. Not long afterwards, the Supreme Court decided a case called *New York State Rifle & Pistol Association, Inc. v. Bruen* (June 23, 2022). In that case the Supreme Court held that the Second Amendment right to self-defense extended outside the home, and that any laws restricting gun usage must be similar to laws the Founders were familiar with in 1791.

Did You Know?

Power and control are the primary functions of domestic violence. Domestic Violence abusers with access to guns can intimidate victims without ever firing a bullet.



Mr. Rahimi updated his appeal in light of this new Supreme Court decision and argued that the federal domestic violence protection order firearms prohibition had no historical precedent as the understanding of the dangers of domestic violence were not understood by the Founders. The 5th Circuit (federal court of appeals) agreed with him and declared the federal domestic violence protection order firearms provision to be unconstitutional. The U.S. Dept. of Justice appealed to the Supreme Court. [The Decision\[2\]](#) and [Why It Matters](#).

U.S. v. Rahimi was decided on June 21, 2024. In a decision authored by Chief Justice Roberts and joined by every justice, with the exception of Clarence Thomas, the Court held that “An individual found by a court to pose a credible threat to the physical safety of another may be temporarily disarmed consistent with the Second Amendment.” In a welcome narrowing of previous holdings, the ruling emphasized that “the [Second Amendment] right was not a right to keep and carry any weapon whatsoever in any manner whatsoever and for whatever purpose,” noting that “From the earliest days of the common law, firearm regulations have included provisions barring people from misusing weapons to harm or menace others.”

Specifically, the Court held that the federal statute that prohibits individuals subject to a domestic violence restraining order from

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possessing a firearm is Constitutional on its face.

Specifically, the Court held that the federal statute that prohibits individuals subject to a domestic violence restraining order from possessing a firearm is Constitutional on its face. Because the law applies only to those found by a court to pose “a credible threat to the physical safety of another,” and the restriction is limited to the time that the restraining order is in place, the Court had “no trouble concluding” that the statute survives Rahimi’s challenge to its Constitutionality.

This ruling has been met with resounding approval from domestic violence prevention organizations and legal experts across the country. Elizabeth Santiago, the Center’s CEO, opined that “this ruling reinforces essential protections for domestic violence survivors and helps to prevent a significant rise in fatalities and to ensure that victims are not placed at greater risk. Safety of survivors must be paramount over an abuser’s ability to access firearms. We urge law makers to continue strengthening gun control laws because everyone deserves to live with dignity and in safety”.

The data[3] certainly provides ballast for the decision and confirms the link between removing access to firearms from the hands of abusers and significant decreases in gun fatalities. An analysis of 45 different states revealed that intimate partner fatalities decreased by 12% and that dating relationship fatalities decreased by 13% when abusers were denied access to firearms.



This decrease in intimate partner fatalities increases to 23% when those convicted of violent misdemeanors are denied access to guns. Between November 1998 and February 2024, the federal background check system stopped 80,000 individuals with active orders of protection and 195,000 individuals with domestic violence-related misdemeanor convictions from purchasing firearms. The injuries and lives saved as a result of the domestic violence firearms prohibitions cannot be overstated.

We must also remember that relationship violence is not confined to the four walls of a home; it impacts the entire community. Over half of all mass shootings are related to domestic violence, Zackey Rahimi being a prime example of someone who used firearms against past and current intimate partners, and engaged in a shooting spree in his community. The Center stands behind statewide and national efforts to support and strengthen laws that protect survivors, communities, and first responders when addressing domestic violence incidents.

[1] <https://bwjp.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Research-at-the-Intersection-of-Intimate-Partner-Violence-and-Firearms.pdf>

[2] <https://www.scotusblog.com/case-files/cases/united-states-v-rahimi/>

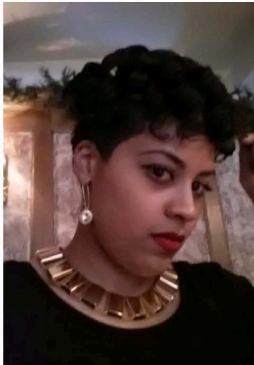
[3] <https://bwjp.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Research-at-the-Intersection-of-Intimate-Partner-Violence-and-Firearms.pdf>

Shannon's Story

CURATED AND WRITTEN BY JESSICA WAHLSTROM

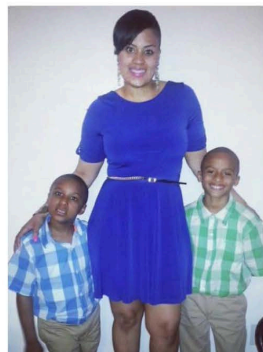
If you or someone you know is a victim or survivor and needs help, please reach out to us, we are here 24-hours a day.

THIS STORY CONTAINS IMAGES AND DESCRIPTIONS OF ABUSE THAT CAN BE TRIGGERING.



Shannon was magical. She found her way into the heart of everything good. She was the “centerpiece” of her family, born the third of six siblings, and often surrounded by friends. She was confident and very smart. She was beautiful and fun, with an infectious laugh. According to her

parents — Donna and Rudy — Shannon seemed to “live life with roller-skates on.” The stories and images of Shannon that they share outline the shape of her magic. When looking at pictures of her, it is easy to imagine her animated — she almost appears to be moving in the still shots. Her style is colorful. She looks directly at the camera; her eyes are bright. You get a sense of her energy from accounts of her work in the pediatrician’s practice where she was a patient before being hired. Shannon — explains her younger sister, Simone — was able to calm young patients who were afraid of a test or a needle. She danced for and joked with kids and colleagues — sharing joy and putting folks at ease — just as she had as a child when she looked out for her younger siblings and neighbors. Shannon’s family describes her dedication to her two young sons, how she loved to watch them try new things. She modeled fearlessness for them as she dreamed big dreams for herself and her family. She didn’t miss anything that was important to her boys while she moved closer toward those dreams — whether it was a baseball or soccer game, or a nightly bedtime routine. Shannon turned to coursework for her master’s degree after they went to sleep before she woke up early the next morning to drop them off at her parent’s house on her way to work.



The boys were still wearing their pajamas when they were dropped off at Donna and Rudy’s house a few hours after their mother was murdered. Donna remembers grabbing for them as they walked through the same front door that the sergeant had entered a couple of hours before. After her son Jordan let him inside, the sergeant stood near the door — at the bottom of the staircase — patiently waiting as

Donna slid down each step slowly toward him. She was recovering from an achilles repair surgery and couldn’t walk. She knew, as she struggled to descend, that he and the other officer who accompanied him would tell them that someone had passed away. It felt cruel that she had to work so hard to get to them and the news that they brought. When the sergeant told the family that Shannon had been murdered at the hands of her boyfriend and the father of her youngest son, Donna remembers screaming “with every bit of breath” that was in her body. She screamed, she says, for the whole world to hear.

Even when whole worlds are turned upside down, there are ordinary things that eventually must happen in them. Donna remembers thinking — after the scream, after she and Rudy and Simone and Jordan held each other tightly while they slowly caught their breath, after the knock at the door telling them that the boys had arrived — that her grandsons would need to get dressed the next day. When Child Protective Services left the house that night, Donna struggled to close her eyes and rest. She worried that there were no clothes for the boys to change into when they woke up to a world without their mother.

On the morning after Shannon was murdered, staff from Center for Safety & Change showed up at Donna and Rudy’s front door. They brought clothes for the boys and food. Donna remembers clearly the way that a social worker, Jean, stepped forward and embraced them, asking what the Center could do to help. Donna knew that the kids needed clothes. She wasn’t sure what to do after they were dressed. Grief and shock can sometimes feel paralyzing.

Though it hadn’t occurred to them to be hungry, they ate. Center staff invited the family to their office to think through their next steps together. With the family’s permission, a child therapist talked to the boys about what had happened to their mother. Donna and Rudy were grateful to not have to try to find the right words alone. In the hours and days that followed Shannon’s murder, Center for Safety & Change anticipated and met many ordinary and extraordinary needs of her family.

The practical matters of dealing with loss and the effects of grief are complicated and enduring. To the bereaved, it can sometimes feel like the world has moved on without them. While the initial response from those in their community and beyond was

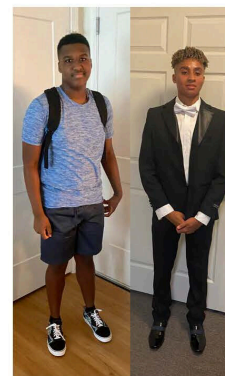
strong — immense and full of love — in the months after Shannon’s murder, the volume of calls and visits and meals from others diminished slowly. [Center for Safety & Change continued to show up for her family with welcome support.](#) The boys were placed in the legal care of Donna and Rudy. When they moved to a new home that would allow the boys to have their own bedrooms and an outdoor space to play, the Center paid for movers, brought supplies to the family, and even helped to pack and move boxes. For each holiday and birthday in the months after their loss, the Center made sure that the boys had what they needed to feel celebrated. [As the family prepared for the trial of Shannon’s murderer, the Center again offered support to the family.](#) The months anticipating and going through the trial were deeply painful for Shannon’s family as they visited and revisited the events that led to her murder. Shannon’s five siblings were present in court each day. Their testimony was brave and essential to the case, which resulted in a conviction. Later that year, when Simone’s son was born prematurely, the Center also showed up to offer support while he was in the NICU and eventually transitioned home. Through these difficult times, Donna cried with Jean so that she “didn’t need to cry in front of her children or grandchildren.” She felt that the Center picked her and Rudy up so that they could pick up others in their family who needed help.

As they talk about their daughter, about how much they miss Shannon, Donna and Rudy assert that “grief is long.” During a recent call, Jean told them, as she has before, that “the Center is with them for life.” The Center staff understands that grief is ongoing — it returns in waves, it tremors. [Loss is felt in quakes.](#) They understand that the impact of violence and loss ripples far beyond direct victims and specific times. The Center recognizes the significance of small gestures of support. Through the years, they have consistently reached out with these gestures in the forms of financial and therapeutic support, legal counsel, birthday and holiday gifts, and calls checking in on the family. Importantly, the Center makes it clear that they have not — and will never — forget about Shannon.



Shannon would have turned forty this July. She has been gone for nearly a decade.

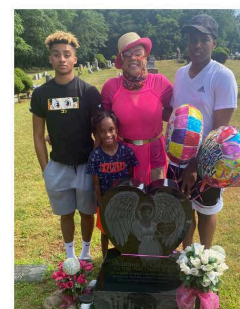
Before her life was cut short, Shannon had big plans. She wanted to move to Virginia and to continue building her career with the master’s degree that she completed in medical administration. She wanted to travel. Donna and Rudy moved to Virginia a few years ago; it was important to them that the boys live where their mother planned to settle. The family explains that a picture of Shannon, in a bright outfit with a huge smile, hangs in the pediatrician’s office where she worked. When Donna and Rudy visit the practice on their trips to New York, patients and colleagues still recall their daughter’s laugh and kindness. At Shannon’s high school, a scholarship has been established and awarded in her name, given each year to a student committed to their future. Shannon’s oldest son will apply to PhD programs when he graduates from Virginia Tech this year, and her younger son is making plans for after his high school graduation in June. The boys



look forward to seeing new places. [Their family knows that they are getting ready to soar.](#) Donna hears Shannon’s voice sometimes in things that they say. She sees how they serve as role models for their younger cousin who watches them dream and work. When the boys — now young men — talk about missing their mother, Donna tells them that their mother grew in her, so when they look at her, “they are also seeing their mama.” Some days, she wears Shannon’s perfume, smelling her daughter on her wrist and in the fabric of her clothes when she inhales, moving through the world. “Shannon lives on through us,” Simone says, “she is guiding us as we move forward.”

Shannon’s family will gather together at the cemetery where she is buried on her birthday this year as they do every year, with cupcakes, to celebrate. They will sit around and alongside her gravestone, with Shannon at the center. The family will read the birthday cards that they bring to her.

[They will remember her life, not her passing.](#) They will recall her energy, her dreams, her talents, her style, and the profound love that she gave to her sons and showed all of her family and friends. Shannon’s family will reflect on how she lives through them. They will see how they continue to grow around the shape of her magic. They will honor her again and again and always.



THE SUPPORTER

The families we serve and the staff who deliver life-saving services to them will find renewed inspiration through your support, affirmation, and belief.

SEMI ANNUAL NEWSLETTER



JANUARY IS HUMAN TRAFFICKING AWARENESS & PREVENTION MONTH

Reaching hundreds of thousands nationwide, The Center, along with community partners, educates and empowers children and adults in their lives to keep them safe from abuse, bullying, online exploitation, and human trafficking.



EDUCATION, PREVENTION, COLLABORATION

The chilling numbers cannot be ignored: thousands of children in the United States are victims of human trafficking, a third of them innocent infants. Every minute, two children fall into the clutches of this cruel trade. Each year, 2,000,000 children are trafficked worldwide and more than 100,000 are trafficked in the United States. The reality is stark.

In partnership with Goya Cares and WonderGirls, Center for Safety & Change is focused on providing schools with free access to preventative education curriculum and school assemblies where young adults can learn the warning signs and risks of human trafficking.

COMMUNITY DAY & WORKSHOP RECAP



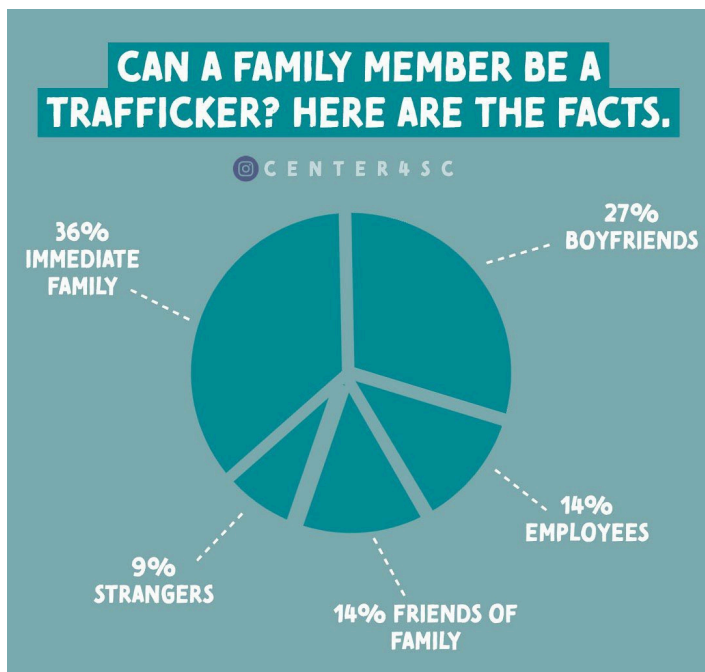
HUMAN TRAFFICKING AWARENESS

Human Trafficking facts and statistics show us that immediate family and intimate partners are the largest number of family members who traffic other family members.

In 2023, we served 76 victims and survivors of human trafficking. 37 were under the age of 21.

Many survivors have been trafficked by romantic partners, including spouses, and by family members, including parents.

From Jan - June 2024 we have served 34 victims and survivors of human trafficking.



Human trafficking occurs when someone exploits a person or people using force, fraud or coercion for the purposes of commercial sex or forced labor. Our Human Trafficking Program is designed to provide advocacy, safety planning, crisis intervention, mentoring and counseling to adult and youth survivors and those at risk for human trafficking or commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC). Adult services include advocacy, information, referrals, safety planning, counseling, criminal justice support and community linkages. Center for Safety & Change's Anti-Human Trafficking Task Force is a coordinated community effort to focus on what the various systems within Rockland County can do collectively to combat human trafficking. The task force is focused on eliminating institutional barriers to victims and survivors getting the help that they need when they need it.

In 2023 we worked with 16 labor trafficking cases and 22 sex trafficking cases.

The Center is committed to preventing trafficking, serving victims and educating the community about human trafficking.

THE SUPPORTER

Dating abuse is common and the effects are extremely damaging - ranging from depression to alcohol and drug dependency to engaging in violent relationships, even suicide.

SEMI ANNUAL NEWSLETTER

YOUTH CAN CHANGE THE WORLD

#STUDENTACTIVISTSENDINGDATINGABUSE



FEBRUARY IS TEEN DATING VIOLENCE AWARENESS MONTH
1 IN 10 HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS EXPERIENCES DATING VIOLENCE.

CENTER FOR SAFETY & CHANGE
Providing Safety, Changing Lives

TEEN DATING VIOLENCE AWARENESS MONTH

FEBRUARY

Each February, we raise awareness about teen dating violence through **Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month (TDVAM)**. This annual month-long push focuses on advocacy and education to stop dating abuse before it starts.

24 HR HOTLINE 845-634-3344
24 HR TEXT 845-286-4997

YOUR IMPACT, OUR STORIES @center4sc

SAEDA (Student Activists Ending Dating Abuse) is an innovative youth-led education and prevention program dedicated to celebrating diversity, challenging oppressive social norms, promoting leadership and inspiring youth to ultimately end gender-based violence.

SAEDA training is our flagship initiative held each winter and summer, bringing together high school youth from all over Rockland County for five days of interactive peer-to-peer leadership training. Discussion topics include stopping and preventing teen dating abuse, sexual violence prevention and anti-oppression issues with a focus on equipping young leaders to affect social change.

TEEN DATING VIOLENCE PREVENTION AWARENESS

Each February, we raise awareness about teen dating violence through Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month (TDVAM).

This annual month-long push focuses on advocacy and education to stop dating abuse before it starts.

Did You Know?

📖 1 in 3 U.S. teens will experience physical, sexual, or emotional abuse from someone they are in a relationship with before the age of 18.

📖 81% of the students who had been the target of digital dating abuse had also been the target of traditional dating abuse (i.e., they were: pushed, grabbed or shoved; hit or threatened to be hit; called names or criticized, or prevented from doing something they wanted to do).



How Can You Help Your Teens?

We can help you help them. How would you respond?

📱 When you're with your child and they are very concerned about having their phone near them at all times and responding immediately to text messages. You see that they are getting repeated, back-to-back texts from their partner. They seem stressed and say, "If I don't respond right away they will get mad and think I am cheating."

🎬 Your child is talking about a movie they saw this weekend. They say, "The couple ended up happily together in the end, but at first the guy was putting notes in her locker, and sending her unwanted gifts. Initially, she thought it was creepy and told him she didn't like it, but then she realized how romantic these gestures were and they ended up together."

👁️ Your child says that they saw someone in the hallway touch their partner inappropriately after they already told them to stop. Your child seems upset about watching this encounter.

THE SUPPORTER

“Every great dream begins with a dreamer. Always remember, you have within you the strength, the patience, and the passion to reach for the stars to change the world.”

—Harriet Tubman

SEMI ANNUAL NEWSLETTER



BLACK HISTORY MONTH & WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH HIGHLIGHT

The Center was able to bring acclaimed writer and social commentator Roxane Gay to Nyack with community partners Nyack Center, Nyack NAACP, and Phyllis B. Frank Pride Center of Rockland County.

ROXANE GAY: ACCLAIMED AUTHOR & SOCIAL COMMENTOR

Roxane Gay is the New York Times bestselling author of *Hunger* and other books and publications, a professor, editor, and social commentator.

Gay joined us for an intimate evening of discussion around her memoir **Hunger**, a deep and intimate exploration into sensitivity about food and bodies, using her own survivorship, emotional and psychological struggles as a means of exploring our shared anxieties over pleasure, consumption, appearance, and health.

She spoke about oppression and sexual violence, life and marginalization, racism and truth. Gay facilitated a special, private discussion with SAEDA students after the community event.



THE SUPPORTER

Sexual Assault Awareness Month is an opportunity to listen to and honor survivors in our community. Show support to those who have been impacted by sexual violence so that they are not alone.

SEMI ANNUAL NEWSLETTER



APRIL IS SEXUAL ASSAULT AWARENESS MONTH

April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM). This is a time for advocates, survivors, their loved ones, and the community to come together to talk openly about sexual violence to support survivors, increase knowledge and awareness, and identify strategies and resources to prevent sexual violence.

Denim Day is a campaign that began after a ruling by the Italian Supreme Court where a rape conviction was overturned because the justices felt that since the victim was wearing tight jeans she must have helped the person who raped her remove her jeans, thereby implying consent. The following day, the women in the Italian Parliament came to work wearing jeans in solidarity with the victim.

The Clothesline Project affirms that violence does occur all around us, and in all forms. "It is a visual reminder of statistics that we often ignore." Those who have been silenced can now speak out. The goal is to motivate people to take action. Each display provides information on how to identify and avoid violence, comfort survivors, and impact surrounding regions. It is in honor of survivors who can make a difference by giving their testimony.



1 IN 5 WOMEN
WILL BE RAPED IN
THEIR LIFETIME IN
THE UNITED STATES.
#STARTBYBELIEVING

APRIL IS
SEXUAL ASSAULT
AWARENESS MONTH



Providing Safety, Changing Lives

24-Hour Hotline: (845) 634-3344

24-Hour Mobile Text: (845) 286-4997

24-Hour Web Chat: centerforsafetyandchange.org

**EVERYONE HAS A
ROLE TO PREVENT
SEXUAL VIOLENCE.**

WHAT IS YOURS?



START THE CONVERSATION

Many people who experience sexual and gender-based violence don't know who to turn to. Your willingness to help can be important to a victim in their safety planning efforts. Be ready to offer the kind of help that's needed, while keeping yourself safe at the same time.



BELIEVE ALL YEAR LONG

- Initiate a conversation in private and when you have enough time to talk at length, but if they want to.
- Let go of any expectations you have that there is a "quick fix". Not doing anything may very well be the safest thing they can do at any given time.
- Challenge false attitudes and beliefs that you may have about domestic and gender-based violence.
- Believe victims and let them know that you do. If you know the person who has or is abusing them, it may be hard to believe they are capable of abuse but remember that abusers typically act differently in public than they do in private.

EVERYONE KNOWS SOMEONE

- Avoid victim-blaming. Tell the victim the abuse is not their fault.
- Take it seriously. If you are concerned about their safety, tell them you are concerned without judgment by simply saying, "Your situation sounds dangerous, and I'm concerned about your safety."
- Offer help. Offer specific forms of help and information, such as providing childcare, driving them to appointments, or assisting with pets.
- Support and respect their decisions. Remember that there are risks with every decision a victim makes and there is no one way an individual must react to abuse or assault. If you really want to be helpful, be patient and respect their decisions, even if you don't agree with them.

APRIL IS SEXUAL ASSAULT AWARENESS MONTH

HOW DO WE TALK ABOUT SEXUAL VIOLENCE? HOW DO WE TAKE ACTION AGAINST IT?

Arm yourself with the truth and tips to start leading the way in sexual assault prevention.

THE FACTS: SEXUAL ASSAULT IN THE U.S.

Every day in the U.S., over **500 women** are sexually assaulted

That number doesn't even account for all the sexual assaults that go unreported

1 in 3 teens suffer physical, sexual, emotional or verbal abuse from a dating partner



1 in 5 women are sexually assaulted while in college



For every **100 cases of rape**, there are only...

12 ARRESTS

9 PROSECUTIONS

THE POWER OF EARLY EDUCATION

Teaching safety and respect as part of early education is critical to preventing sexual violence.

Why is this important?

At-risk children without adequate early education are **70%** more likely to be arrested for a violent crime

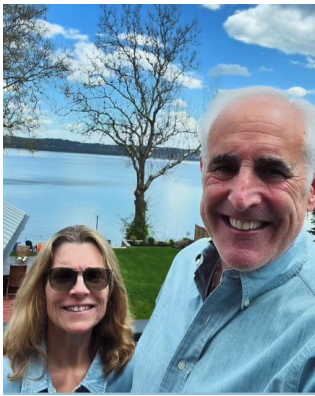


Children without healthy attachments (relationships with those responsible for their care) can have difficulty with emotional and social development later on

5 Things to Teach Our Kids About Safety and Consent

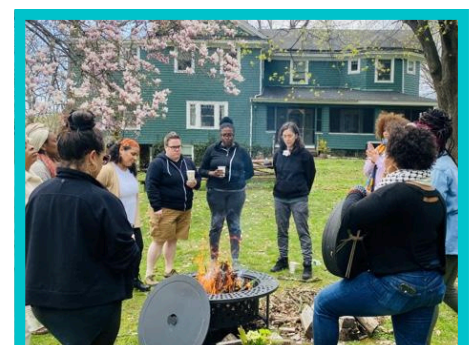
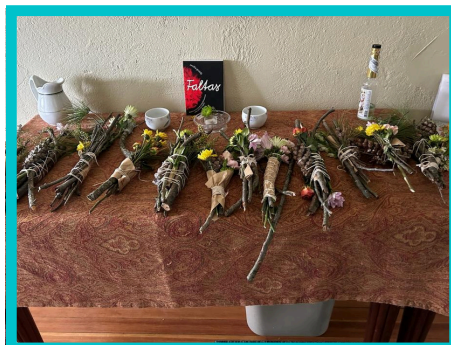
- 1 Always ask before touching, and heed the answer
- 2 Value the importance and truth in the words "stop" and "no," whether they're saying it or hearing it

DENIM DAY 2024



TELLING YOUR STORY: SHE IS! WRITING RETREAT

She Is! - A writing retreat tailored for self-identified women who are survivors. This retreat provides a supportive and empowering environment for healing through creative expression. The Center held its first retreat in April 2024 and had 12 participants over a 2 1/2 day experience at the Stony Point Center.



This retreat aims to create a safe space where participants can share their stories, explore their emotions, and find strength in their resilience.

Through various writing exercises, workshops, and guided discussions, attendees harnessed the therapeutic power of writing to process their experiences, connect with others who have faced similar challenges, and foster a sense of community.

This retreat not only nurtures individual healing but also encourages a collective narrative that breaks the silence surrounding these issues, fostering empowerment and solidarity among us.

SHE IS RETREAT 2025 -- SAVE THE DATES: MAY 16-18 2025

The She Is writing retreat was exactly what I needed to rekindle my creative spirit. Our workshop sessions and presenters were excellent. I was motivated when I left, and months later, I'm still applying the things I learned. Most of all I'm forever grateful to be connected to all the incredible women I met. This was definitely the highlight of my year and one of the best retreats I've ever attended.

- Kim Bady, Certified Integrative Nutrition Health Coach and Registered Yoga Teacher

17TH ANNUAL SIMONA & JEROME A. CHAZEN BUSINESS LUNCHEON

We want to thank all who made it possible for the 17th Annual Simona and Jerome A. Chazen Business Luncheon to be a successful business event, where community leaders and businesses held up the vision of Simona and Jerome A. Chazen - to end domestic violence.

Our 2024 honorees, Goya Cares and Interstate 59 Toyota, solidified the importance of businesses using their platform for educating, raising awareness, and being philanthropic to eradicate domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking. [▶ WATCH NOW](#)



Simona Chazen, Linie Rand, David Chazen



Elizabeth Santiago, Kathleen Maldonado, Reina Ramos



Rafel Toro, Goya and Elizabeth Santiago



Teddy Maldonado, Interstate 59 Toyota and Elizabeth Santiago



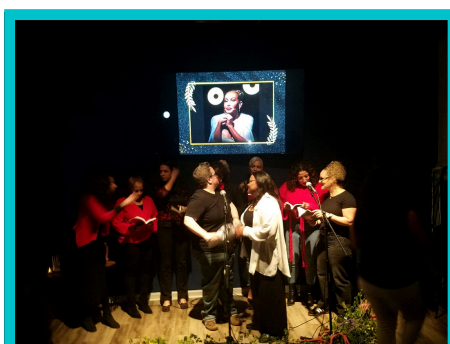
S: Dornzella Milligan, Wilbur Aldrige, Nikki Hines, L'Tanya Watkins | Standing: Shadia Alvarez, Willie Trotman, Pastor Carl Washington III, Elizabeth Santiago, Dr. Frances Pratt,



SAVE THE DATE: 18TH ANNUAL SIMONA & JEROME A. CHAZEN BUSINESS LUNCHEON --FRIDAY, OCTOBER 24, 2025

TELLING YOUR STORY: ANNUAL SHE IS! EVENT

The She Is! annual event highlights women's stories, writing, prose, music, dance and art. This event is designed to uplift and affirm women's voices, all while raising awareness and advocacy for gender based violence, sexual assault, human trafficking and all other crimes affecting women and girls.



SHE IS EVENT 2025 -- SAVE THE DATE: APRIL 26, 2025

THE SUPPORTER

Financial illiteracy is not an issue unique to any one population. It affects everyone: men and women, young and old, across all racial and socioeconomic lines.

SEMI ANNUAL NEWSLETTER

Domestic violence advocates must be prepared to address many of the economic issues that victims face, and facilitate opportunities for victims to learn how they can improve their economic situation.



APRIL IS ALSO FINANCIAL LITERACY MONTH

Center for Safety & Change partnered with Key Bank to provide education to victims and survivors on key aspects of financial literacy from basic banking to credit reporting and buying a car. Educating all on financial literacy helps us help victims and survivors.

PROGRAM



SPOTLIGHT



Victims of domestic violence often make several attempts to leave an abusive partner and are forced to return for economic reasons. Economic self-sufficiency is frequently the difference between violence and safety for many victims.

Domestic violence advocates must be prepared to address many of the economic issues that victims face, and facilitate opportunities for victims to learn how they can improve their economic situation. Issues such as budgeting, identity theft, banking, predatory lending, violence in the workplace, housing, and credit, all play a role in ending domestic violence.

THE SUPPORTER

In Loving Memory of Elisabeth Voigt

SEMI ANNUAL NEWSLETTER

In Loving Memory



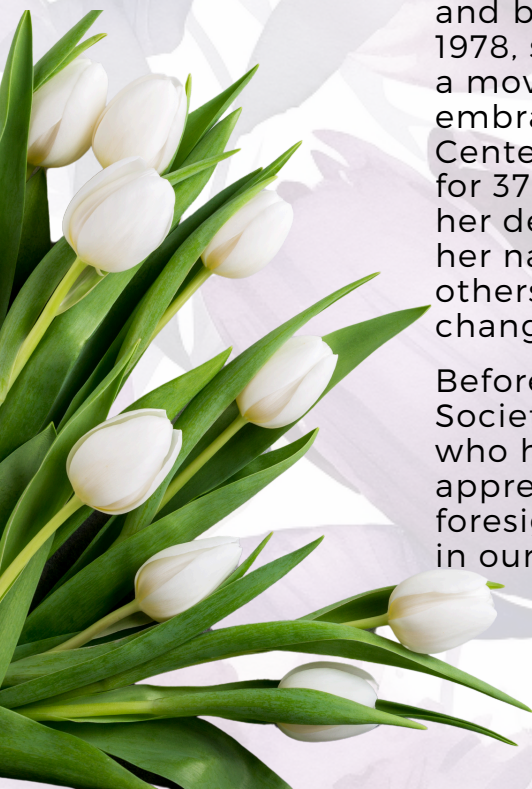
"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world ... indeed it's the only thing that ever has." - Margaret Mead

ELISABETH VOIGT'S LEGACY

On May 12, 2024, one of Center for Safety & Change's founders, Elisabeth Voigt passed away. The Staff and Board of the Center mourn the loss of a prominent figure in Rockland County and remember Elisabeth and all that she gave to the Center and to end gender-based violence.

Elisabeth was a visionary who worked tirelessly to end gender-based violence. Elisabeth exuded kindness and poise, affirmed and believed women, and stood up for victims and survivors. In 1978, she joined a group of women and men who were creating a movement to end domestic violence in Rockland County. She embraced the mission and became an original founder of the Center then Rockland Family Shelter. She served on the Board for 37 years, including two terms as Board President. Because of her deep commitment to the Center, she was honored to lend her name to the Elisabeth Voigt Legacy Society. She encouraged others to join her in making a gift that will help create lasting change for generations to come.

Before her passing, Elisabeth named the Elisabeth Voigt Legacy Society. The Elisabeth Voigt Legacy Society encompasses donors who have committed to a planned gift to the Center. We appreciate these members and honor their generosity and foresight by including their names on our 'Giving Tree' located in our central office.



Elisabeth Voigt Legacy Society

Create a Lasting Legacy

Leaving a gift to Center for Safety & Change in your will is a meaningful way to leave a legacy of compassion and support to victims and survivors.

**To learn more about planned giving,
please contact us at (845) 634-3391
or development@centersc.org.**



45

— FOR —
SAFETY



CENTER FOR SAFETY & CHANGE CELEBRATES A MILESTONE ANNIVERSARY THIS YEAR - 45 YEARS!

We're marking the occasion by setting a goal to **welcome 45 new members** into the Elisabeth Voigt Legacy Society.

Just as Center for Safety & Change has created a legacy of compassion and care, you can leave your own legacy by including the Center in your estate plans and provide **safety** to victims and survivors for years to come.

Among the ways to make a planned gift are:

Naming Center for Safety & Change as a beneficiary of a bank account, IRA or Donor Advised Fund residual.

Naming Center for Safety & Change as the beneficiary or owner of a life insurance policy.

Providing for Center for Safety & Change in your will or trust (bequest a percentage of assets - from 1/2% to 100%).

THE SUPPORTER

"I have found that among its other benefits, giving liberates the soul of the giver.

-- Maya Angelou

SEMI ANNUAL NEWSLETTER



Philanthropy CORNER

GIVING LIBERATES. GIVING SAVES.

Philanthropy plays a crucial role in addressing social issues and bridging gaps where government and private sector efforts fall short, fostering community well-being and social progress. By providing financial resources, expertise, and volunteer efforts, philanthropic activities can drive innovation, support under served communities, and create lasting positive change in society.



MARG VENTURA & BARBARA RANDS VALENTE
Major Donors to the Center

Giving to support victims and survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, human trafficking, and other crimes is a vital act of compassion and justice. These individuals often face significant barriers to rebuilding their lives, including emotional trauma, financial instability, and social stigmatization.

Donations and volunteer efforts can provide critical resources such as safe housing, legal assistance, counseling services, and job training programs. By supporting these survivors, we not only help them regain their independence and dignity but also strengthen our communities by promoting safety, healing, and resilience. Every contribution, whether big or small, plays an essential part in fostering a more just and supportive society for those who have endured such profound hardships.

For giving options, naming opportunities, or to take a tour contact development@centersc.org.

THE SUPPORTER

"I have found that among its other benefits, giving liberates the soul of the giver.

-- Maya Angelou

SEMI ANNUAL NEWSLETTER



Donor SPOTLIGHT

MARG VENTURA & BARBARA RANDS VALENTE

Marg Ventura and Barbara Rands Valente make it possible for children and families to receive services at the Center.

Both Barbara and Marg are ever committed to the Center, constantly inquiring what victims and survivors need. Barbara and Marg donated two beautiful art pieces commissioned to local artist Marisol Diaz, at the entrance of our Children and Youth Services Suite. One is a mural ascending the stairwell to the fourth floor and the second a portraiture wall hanging. In addition, Barbara was instrumental in the kitchenette build of the Children and Youth space.

For years, both Marg and Barbara have volunteered, donated time and financial support, and provided resources to all victims and survivors.

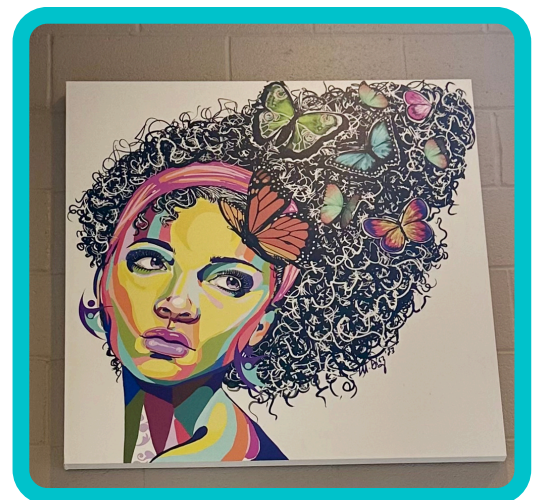
The Children and Youth Suite allows children and youth to be together in healing through counseling, creative arts, and play.

Center for Safety & Change provides services to children and youth living in Rockland County who are impacted by domestic violence, sexual trauma, child abuse, human trafficking and other crimes.

We believe children and youth are their own experts in what they need to rebuild their sense of safety.

We take direction from them as to what they believe will support their healing process. We incorporate creative arts in our activities, with a goal to create a safe distance so as not to re-traumatize the child and provide a space that is safe and nurturing.

For a naming opportunity or to take a tour contact development@centersc.org.



THE SUPPORTER

"No pride for some of us without liberation for all of us." - Marsha P. Johnson

SEMI ANNUAL NEWSLETTER



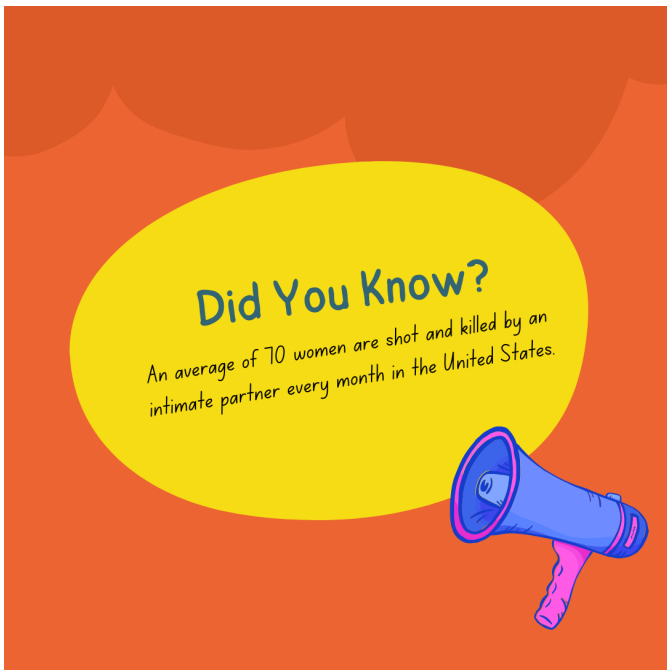
JUNE IS PRIDE MONTH AND GUN VIOLENCE AWARENESS MONTH

The Center is proud to work in collaboration with the Phyllis B. Frank Pride Center of Rockland County in serving victims and survivors who identify within the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Communities. Every June the Center also advocates and educates about the issues around gun violence in relationship to ending domestic violence.

Celebrating Pride is not just an affirmation of identity and love, but also a crucial acknowledgment of the ongoing struggles and achievements of the LGBTQ+ community.

Working with LGBTQ+ victims and survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, human trafficking, and other crimes is essential in providing comprehensive and sensitive support. These individuals often face unique challenges and compounded trauma due to their sexual orientation or gender identity/expression. Understanding these complexities is crucial for effective intervention and healing. Specialized services and training for providers can ensure that LGBTQ+ survivors receive the respect, validation, and tailored care they deserve.





KNOW THE FACTS

- Two-thirds of intimate partner homicides in the United States are committed with a gun, and 75 percent of intimate partner firearm homicide victims are women.
- The number of female homicides by violent partners with a firearm has accelerated in recent years.
- Over the 10-year period from 2011 to 2020, there was a **6 percent increase** in intimate partner homicides of women.

EDUCATE AND ADVOCATE

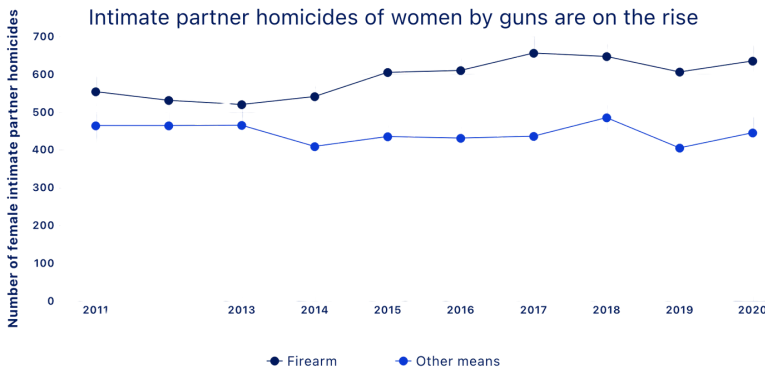
In the US, the crisis of domestic violence is closely linked to the widespread and growing use of guns by abusers. The majority of women killed by an intimate partner are killed with a gun.

Existing loopholes in federal and state law allow access to guns by abusive partners and stalkers, often with deadly results. Common-sense laws that keep guns out of the hands of abusive partners can reduce gun violence and domestic violence.



SHARE THE REALITIES

Intimate partner homicides of women by guns are on the rise



Homicide Report (SHR) data from 2011–2020, accessed October 2021. Analysis includes all female victims of intimate partner violence.



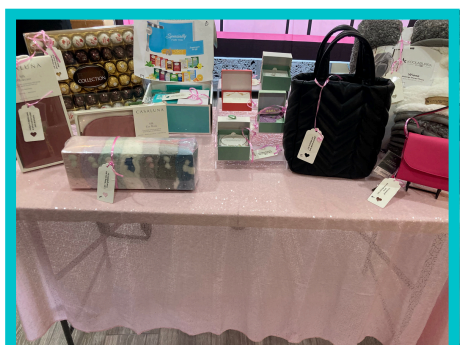
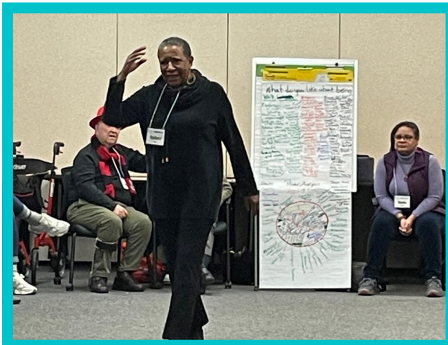
Source: Everytown analysis of FBI Supplemental Homicide Report (SHR) data from 2011–2020, accessed October 2021. Analysis includes all female victims of intimate partner homicides. Data from AL and FL were excluded.

Last updated: 10.26.2022



COMMUNITY SUPPORTING THE CENTER THROUGH DONATIONS, TRAININGS, AND TOURS

A donation of time, support, training, goods and services and more help support a range of interrelated programs and services that provide critical comfort to victims and survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, human trafficking and all crime.



THE SUPPORTER

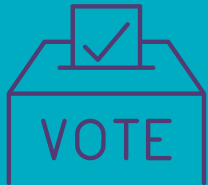
"We are strongest when we see the most vulnerable in our society, bear witness to their struggles, and then work to create systems to make it better." - Stacey Abrams

SEMI ANNUAL NEWSLETTER



Our mission: women, children, victims, and survivors of domestic violence, sexual violence and human trafficking are **human right issues**. Our issues are bipartisan. They impact people who vote Democrat, Republican, or Independent. The Center is not political but our politicians make the issues of domestic violence, sexual abuse, and human trafficking political, which is why **YOU NEED TO VOTE!**

HOW TO GET YOUR BALLOT:



ROCKLAND COUNTY

[LEARN MORE](#) >>

NEW YORK STATE

[LEARN MORE](#) >>

NEW JERSEY

[LEARN MORE](#) >>

JOIN US!

Celebrate our 45th Anniversary with us on **Saturday, October 5th** at the Pearl River Hilton. Honoring six new inductees into the Rockland Women Leaders Hall of Fame. Tickets, Sponsorships, and Journal Ads Available. [CLICK HERE](#) >>

Walk in Honor and Memory with victims & survivors at this year's **Shine The Light Walk** across the Mario Cuomo Bridge on **Thursday, October 17th**. Walk will begin on both sides at 12:00 PM. [CLICK HERE](#) >>

Attend this year's Stop FEAR Conference on **Friday, October 18th**. Highlighting the significant connections between stalking and intimate partner violence, assisting professionals in the field with how to identify and respond to stalking, and address recent trends on the use of technology to perpetrate stalking. [CLICK HERE](#) >>

Ongoing Getting to the Root Training offered throughout 2024 and 2025. This two day intensive training will allow you to learn from history, understand power and systemic oppression around race and organize for social justice and equity. [CLICK HERE](#) >>

THE SUPPORTER

Mission, Values, Vision and Board of Directors

SEMI ANNUAL NEWSLETTER

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Sandra Ortiz, MD – Vice Chair
Tracy Dressner – Co-Treasurer
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Sandy and Michael Mandel
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Alyssa and Howard Shams
Gail and Ronald Walerstein

In Memoriam

Jerome A. Chazen
Edward C. Coury
Carolyn Fish
Leonard Merrill Kurz
Dick Voigt
Elisabeth Voigt

SENIOR LEADERSHIP

Elizabeth Santiago
Chief Executive Officer
Steven Carroll
Chief Financial Officer
Venesia Defrank
Chief Operating Officer
Phyllis B. Frank
Chief Program Officer
Andrea Panjwani
Chief Legal Officer

Newsletter Created by

Diana Wilkins
Director of Strategy & Impact

MISSION STATEMENT

Center for Safety & Change provides critical services and support to women and all victims and survivors of gender-based violence and other crimes while working toward justice by creating social change.

VALUES STATEMENT

We Are Client-Centered

We are committed to growing as an anti-racist/anti-oppression organization in order to serve all people of every race, ethnicity, religion, ability, immigration statuses, sexual orientations, gender identities, and economic statuses with respect and compassion.

- ✓ We listen without judgment, follow the lead of victims and survivors and provide the supports and services they choose in order to increase emotional and physical safety.
- ✓ We honor the trust that victims and survivors place in us by ensuring the confidentiality of the information and documents they share.
- ✓ We advocate on behalf of and alongside victims and survivors by exercising high professional standards and best practices, and by continuing to grow and learn with humility in deference to survivor's voices.

We Are Multi-faceted Advocates

- ✓ As advocates for victims and survivors, we provide comprehensive information, critical services and meaningful emotional support while prioritizing the autonomy of the survivor.
- ✓ As advocates for social change, we provide training and coordinate community initiatives to raise awareness and engage our entire community in the movement to end violence.
- ✓ As advocates for systemic transformation, we collaborate with schools, colleges, businesses, community-based organizations, places of worship, medical and mental health providers, criminal legal system and other government agencies in order to increase accessibility and responsiveness to the needs of victims and survivors; and pursue survivor-centered policy and legislative change.

VISION STATEMENT

A world in which all people are free from oppression and violence and experience respect, dignity, equity and safety in every aspect of their lives.



centerforsafetyandchange.org | communications@centersc.org

Tel: (845) 634-3391 | Fax: (845) 634-3396

24 Hour Hotline: (845) 634-3344 | 24 Hour Text: (845) 286-4997

24 Hour Web Chat Available

