



Newsletter - May 2021

## Letter from our President & CEO

So much has happened since our last newsletter it is hard to know where to begin! First of all, I am proud that we were able to pivot to virtual services and organizational activities almost immediately once the pandemic caused the lock down. We continued to provide our critically needed services and prevention programs/trainings, held very successful virtual fundraising events and ensured the Holiday Program and awareness month activities were observed. We learned many lessons along the way, including that virtual services, such as support groups, removed barriers for some of our clients who struggled with transportation and/or childcare issues. We will continue to provide a virtual component whenever feasible to meet the needs of our clients. I am so proud of our Women's Center staff and volunteer team members who helped us continue to be there 24/7 for all turning to us for help.



In addition to sustaining our on-going services and activities during the pandemic, special projects were also underway. Our \$1M bonding project was successfully completed and our headquarters has never looked spiffier! The bond funding enabled us to address some badly needed items such as a new roof, electrical/HVAC upgrades, new windows and technology/security upgrades as well as installing new carpets and fresh coats of paint throughout. Our Speaking Up Speaking Out enrichment campaign efforts continued and as the photo at the end of this newsletter illustrates our new residential facility for women and children in transition is coming along nicely. Stay tuned for some exciting additional announcements in the next few months!

I look forward to seeing you, in person (!) at our June 18<sup>th</sup> *An Evening Together* annual dinner fundraiser to be held at the Amber Room. We are very excited to be honoring Raffaele Gallo with our Founders Award for his generous support of the Women's Center as well as the entire Ridgefield community and celebrating Glori Norwitt for her many years of service as Chair of our Board of Directors. It promises to be a fun evening and I for one, cannot wait to see what Comedienne Extraordinaire, Christine O'Leary, has in store for us!

Thank you so much, for your continued support and joining us in our efforts of "working to end the violence".

In Gratitude & Peace,

*Pat Zachman*



### Annual Dinner

On June 18, 2021, the Women's Center will host its annual fundraising dinner, ***An Evening Together***. The event will be held at the Amber Room Colonnade located in Danbury and is scheduled to begin with a cocktail hour sponsored by Linde at 6:00 p.m. We will, of course, observe all applicable safety protocols and will offer our guests a virtual participation option as well the choice of indoor or outdoor seating. Proceeds will benefit our many no cost programs and services, including our hotlines which operate 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

We look forward to honoring Raffaele Gallo for his philanthropic support of the Women's Center as well as the entire Ridgefield community. We are also excited to celebrate Glori Norwitt for her eight years of service as the Women's Center Board Chair. Comedian Christine O'Leary will be



### Father's Day Campaign

You can join our battle against domestic and sexual violence this Father's Day. We are asking men in our service area to add their names to our annual message in the News-Times. In this public statement, local leaders and influencers are taking a pledge to serve as positive male role models to men and boys in our community. Those who join our message understand that violence does not equal strength. We have learned that truly strong men treat women and children with respect and dignity and they encourage their friends, neighbors, and co-workers to the same. We hope you'll agree to join us and "take a stand" against domestic and sexual violence.

While a donation is not required to include your name, every dollar helps. Please **click here** to make a donation and your name will be included, or to simply just add your name email [samantha.f@wcogd.org](mailto:samantha.f@wcogd.org). The deadline to be included in the ad is Monday,

back as host.

We have many fantastic auctions items in store: a week-long stay in a gorgeous home in Rangeley, Maine, a private dinner for 10 from our evening's honoree, Raffaele Gallo, an entire cast and executive producer Shonda Rhymes autographed script of the Grey's Anatomy episode, "Silent All These Years," tandem skydive, acupuncture, artwork, jewelry, designer handbags and lots of gift certificates to area restaurants, brewery tours/wine tastings, trips, golf outings and more!

This event is an integral part of our organizational fundraising plan, and we are counting on your support! Please **click here** to purchase your ticket! If you are interested in donating to our silent or live auctions, or would like to sponsor the event, please contact Linda Cummins at [linda.c@wcogd.org](mailto:linda.c@wcogd.org) or 203-731-5200, ext. 232.



### Annual Breakfast

Our Hearts of Hope Breakfast was another fundraiser that transitioned to virtual during the pandemic. Although we couldn't gather in person, we did gather virtually for A Day of Self-Care that included everything from morning Pilates and meditation, to afternoon art and writing classes, to an evening improv performance and bedtime yoga. The day began with a video presentation to our "Service Above Self" honorees, Karen Ross of Joe's

June 7th.

Thank you for your efforts and Happy Father's Day!



### Volunteer Appreciation

The Women's Center would like to send special thanks to all of our volunteers. April was Volunteer Appreciation month, but we appreciate our incredible volunteers all year round!

This year has proven to be extremely challenging, and we could not have provided our lifesaving services without the support of our volunteers. Throughout the pandemic, they have held virtual support groups, coordinated workshops, delivered food to clients, helped with holiday programs, responded to emergency hospital calls, covered hotline shifts, worked with children living in Elizabeth House, completed administrative tasks, held events and fundraisers, and creatively assisted with the details of building our new transitional residential facility.

These volunteers committed countless hours to meet the needs of clients and

Salon + Spa in New Milford and Toni Ribeiro of Klickers Hair Studio in Newtown, for not only their generous donations to the Center but also their work with us in training their employees to look for signs of distress.

Women's Center team members Rayna Havelock, Manager of Counseling and Advocacy, and Carly Jacques, Child Counselor, shared impactful stories of their lifesaving work.

Our online auction was a success with many happy winners of everything from trips to self-care baskets to gift cards for local restaurants/stores.

Mark your calendars for February 2, 2022! We hope to be back at the Fox Hill Inn in person.



### Holiday Programs

The Women's Center's 2020-21 holiday programs kept us all engaged and enjoying time with our wonderful volunteers, who helped staff to make them hugely successful. Thank you to everyone who donated for making the holiday season a little brighter during such a difficult year.

Our 2020 Thanksgiving gift card program provided 146 families with holiday dinners when many people

residents to support our mission. We could not be more proud of or grateful for every one of our dedicated and selfless volunteers!



### Awareness Months

Last fall and spring, we celebrated two of our annual awareness months in October 2020 (Domestic Violence Awareness Month) and April 2021 (Sexual Assault Awareness Month). During each of these months, we held events and campaigns to help spread the word about these issues. In October, we kicked off DVAM with our SafeWalk event, which was a rousing success garnering the most participation and engagement we have ever had.

Our education department held a series of live-streamed chats on each Wednesday in October, discussing various DVAM-related topics ranging from what domestic violence is to how it affects our local community. We also participated in the national 'Purple



were struggling with the pandemic. In December, our Adopt-a-Family program supported 124 families (a total of 352 individuals including children) with gift contributions from more than 100 donors.

In April 2021, Champs Boxing Club & Fitness in Danbury provided the Center with a donation of 20 lovely Easter baskets generously filled with goodies such as play dough, candy, coloring books, crayons, toys, water bottles, and more. Our young clients were thrilled to receive such thoughtful treats!



## Annual SafeWalk

Thursday' campaign, with our staff and many of our supporters wearing purple and posting their photos on social media to help spread awareness.

During both awareness months, we partnered with many local libraries to create displays and curated reading lists of books addressing domestic and sexual violence. In another library partnership, our Director of Education, Training & Outreach, Matt Austin, provided monthly education programs in conjunction with the Brookfield Library. All education programs can still be accessed on the Brookfield Library's online archive.

In April, we were able to host a handful of virtual events for SAAM, including a very successful 'Cocktails & Consent' event. We were thrilled to welcome one of Los Angeles' top mixologists, Amanda Sasser, for a fun evening of learning about consent and it's relationship to alcohol, as well as how to create the perfect cocktail. In addition to that event, we held two virtual self-care events. Local Yoga instructor, Jenny Shuck, led a very successful online class that reached more than 500 people, and we live-streamed an acoustic concert with local duo Noelle & Tyler. During April, we also partnered with Art Teacher Kymberly Noone and the students of Newtown High School to create a SAAM mural for our headquarters.

Fortunately presenting our events virtually this year proved to reach more people than ever before with our message. We look forward to returning to in-person events very soon!



Although our 2020 SafeWalk was virtual, our cause remained the same; to unite the community in working to End the Violence. Thank you to everyone who walked, ran, hiked, and creatively moved their way to a 4K over the first weekend last October. We loved seeing all your smiles and SafeWalk swag in your pictures. Thanks to your efforts, we raised essential funds to support our programs. Once again, Strength In Numbers, Fairfield County Bank was our highest fundraising team, Girls Inspiring Girls from Newtown High School our highest fundraising youth team, and Marcia Nelson raised the most as an individual. We are already working on this year and look forward to seeing you then! Save the Date for the weekend of October 1 – 3, 2021.



**SPEAKINGUP  
SPEAKINGOUT**  
Essential Conversations for the Resilient Future

### Enrichment Campaign

New Residential Facility construction continues to move along. Please consider joining us on this milestone project by making a gift. [Click here](#) to learn about ways to give.



### Women's Center on Campus

The Women's Center on Campus partnered with the Western Connecticut State University Library and Housing & Residence Life for the annual Clothesline Project throughout Sexual Assault Awareness Month in April. Resident students created t-shirts in their residence halls, which were then put on display. The campus library hosted a table and display for commuter students to be able to participate as well.



### Community Conversation: *Human Trafficking & the Pandemic*

This virtual event was hosted on Facebook Live during Human Trafficking Awareness Month in January. The discussion about human trafficking and sexual exploitation during the pandemic was moderated by Cara Mackler, the Women's Center's Manager of Campus Education, Training & Outreach/Human Trafficking Specialist.



The panelist of esteemed experts included Brooke Morris, LCSW, the Careline Program Supervisor from DCF; Officer William Chapman, a School Resource Officer at Newtown Middle School; and Leah Juliett, the Founder/Executive Director of March Against Revenge Porn.

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www.wcogd.org



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