



THE SAFE BEACON

News from SAFE in Hunterdon



Looking Back, Moving Forward: A New Year's Message

By Dominic Prisco, Executive Director

Happy New Year from SAFE in Hunterdon!

As we enter the new year, we wanted to take some time to reflect on what the past year has meant for our organization, including our official relaunch on June 15th, 2021, after a brief hiatus of services in 2020. Our organization has been fortunate enough to recruit and hire some extraordinary talent that is both extremely passionate about our mission, bringing a diverse wealth of experience and an unyielding dedication to our clients.

Despite the challenges that the COVID-19 pandemic presents, we have been able to successfully support Hunterdon County survivors and their families through a fully operational 24/7 emergency shelter and hotline, child and adult counseling program, legal advocacy program, as well as a prevention and community education program. In the fall of 2021, we were able to re-establish our Domestic Violence Response Teams and Sexual Assault Response Teams, providing support on activations from law enforcement and Hunterdon Medical Center.

As we move forward, we aspire to create greater accessibility of services to all populations in need. We plan on achieving this by continuing to partner with community providers to create a comprehensive network of support available to all survivors.

All of our success would not be possible without our strong board leadership and the community's overwhelming support and commitment to help get us back on our feet. We would like to thank our community partners in Hunterdon Healthcare, Hunterdon County Prosecutor's Office, Local/State Law Enforcement, ShopRite of Hunterdon County, Flemington Food Pantry, Norwescap, United Way of Hunterdon County, Family Promise of Hunterdon County, Hunterdon County Department of Human Services, Hunterdon County Chamber of Commerce, BW NICE, Friendly Sons of St. Patrick, and The Consignment Shop of Flemington.

We would also like to thank the state coalitions (NJCEDV, NJCASA) and our sister agencies that both supported the community in our absence and assisted us during our transition period back to services. A huge thank you goes to the Domestic Abuse & Sexual Assault Crisis Center of Warren County (DASACC), Womanspace, Domestic Abuse & Sexual Assault Intervention Services (DASI), Safe + Sound Somerset, and Zufall Health Sexual Assault and Supportive Services (SASS)!

24/7 HOTLINE
908.788.4044



"A Light in the Darkness" Event Recap and Pictures

by Sarah Pawlowski, SAFE Prevention Educator

On October 21, 2021, SAFE in Hunterdon hosted its first public event since the brief closure of the agency the year before.

SAFE was joined by nearly 75 community members and supporters for its "A Light in the Darkness" candlelight vigil. Attendees gathered in support of those in our community who have experienced domestic violence, and honored them through poems, music, and prayer. Speakers at our event included Hunterdon County Prosecutor Renée Robeson, SAFE Executive Director Dominic Prisco, and Karen Uyar, mother of Yasemin Uyar. Yasemin Uyar, a New Jersey native, was killed by her abuser in July of 2021.

SAFE in Hunterdon would like to thank the community members who attended our successful event, and the support given by our local businesses and officials.

Our county shines brighter because of you!



Thank you to the Hunterdon County Board of County Commissioners for attending our event!



Together, we are stronger.



Prosecutor Renée Robeson shows her support alongside SAFE board member Honorable Peter Buchsbaum.



Karen Uyar describes what her daughter Yasemin lived through at the hands of her abuser.



Attendees participate in the lighting of candles to honor those we have lost from domestic violence.

Ask An Advocate: Staff Interviews!



by Sarah Pawlowski, SAFE Prevention Educator and SAFE Advocates

SAFE's work is supported by our many capable and devoted staff! For this edition of our newsletter, we will be highlighting our Safe House Advocates. Our advocates are in the most client-facing role of all of our staff members. Keep reading to learn more about our advocates and their work!

What is something you'd like the community to understand about your job?

Advocate: I would say that our job is more than just answering phone calls. We are the first people that a crisis victim comes into contact with when they call the hotline, and so that initial interaction that we have with them is very, very important. We allow the client to tell their story without any judgment. We listen and empathize with them and make sure that they know we are here to help. We educate them on the cycle of abuse and what kinds of behaviors are healthy and what aren't, and then we may direct them to the appropriate resources (such as shelter, counseling, legal advocacy, etc.).

What challenges have you had to overcome in your role?

Advocate: I think one of the biggest challenges has been accepting the fact that clients ultimately have the right to decide how they want to move forward. We're here really to give survivors as many options as possible and talk through them in as much depth as the client requests, but at the end of the day we can't tell them what to do. This is tricky because sometimes what they want to do is go back to an abuser. It's definitely challenging to watch clients sometimes make decisions that you wouldn't personally recommend, but it's so important to remember that it is really is their decision and we always have to respect that.

What is one thing you'd like survivors to know about the work we do at SAFE in Hunterdon?

Advocate: It is a privilege to work with individuals seeking asylum from violence. Watching a client's journey from intake to exit is powerful. One thing I have learned is the power of empowerment. Often clients will make decisions that we don't necessarily agree with, but it is not our place to pass judgment. We are here for the sole purpose of adding support to a survivor's journey. As much as clients learn from us, we learn from them. It is a unique position to be in and I can't imagine being anywhere else.

What is one important lesson that your role as an advocate has taught you?

Advocate: To be patient, increase empathy and learn to validate other people's problems.

What is some advice you would give someone who wants to help support a survivor in their life?

Advocate: I would say that, a lot of the time, your presence alone can offer the support they need. Sometimes they just need to know that they have someone who is there to listen and not judge.

by Renee Walton, Clinical Director

Some safety measures put in place to curtail the spread of COVID-19 have unintentionally created a new, dangerous dynamic for victims. Many already face isolation due to the complex issues created by domestic violence, but now, some are confined with their perpetrators, putting them at a risk of increased violence.

These factors, and many more, have all contributed to a vast increase in domestic violence incidents. A 2020 survey by the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence reported an 83.7% increase in reported cases over the first few months of the pandemic.

Your generous contributions help us assist families seeking services. With the pandemic still surging, we appreciate all of our community support that enables us to continue providing these essential services to survivors and their families.

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Media Review: Maid

By Sarah Pawlowski, SAFE Prevention Educator

A limited series on Netflix is making headlines for its portrayal of domestic violence and representation of the challenges that survivors face as they fight for freedom.

Based on the true story of Stephanie Land, *Maid* follows the story of a young woman named Alex as she leaves her abusive boyfriend. After leaving, Alex is confronted head-on with the nuances and challenges that survivors face when trying to navigate systems of support. From financial instability, to finding affordable housing, and suffering a lack of available and accessible childcare, Alex must fight for her safety and the safety of her daughter, Maddie.

Notably, the abuser in this series rarely puts his hands on Alex. This is a direct challenge to the typical media portrayal of abusers as "wife beaters" or violent offenders. *Maid* rightfully highlights the emotional and psychological aspects of abuse, paying particular attention to the consequences of abuser-induced isolation.

The recognition of abuse beyond just physical aggression is a victory for survivors and advocates. *Maid* has encouraged renewed conversation about red flags and abuse tactics, particularly those that can often end up overlooked. The series has also sparked public discourse about mental illness and fair wages for low-income workers.

After being watched for more than 469 million hours in the first 28 days post-release, *Maid* has earned a spot as one of Netflix's most popular English-language TV shows of all time. The series is also nominated for a variety of awards, including three Golden Globe Awards.



Source: GoodtoKnow



Source: Rotten Tomatoes

SAFE DATING TIPS FOR TEENS

- Let your friends and family know where you are going
- Consider going on group dates as you first get to know someone
- Talk about consent to get on the same page
- Reach out for help if you are in a dangerous or uncomfortable situation
- Communicate your needs and expectations from the relationship

February is Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month!

Did you know that one in three US teens will experience physical, sexual, or emotional abuse from their partner before they become adults?

Let's keep Hunterdon County healthy by practicing safe dating!

Need to talk?

24/7 Hotline: 908-788-4044



Calling All Volunteers!

By Rebecca Ramos, Emergency Services Manager

SAFE is currently recruiting volunteers for our Domestic Violence Response (DVRT) and Sexual Assault Response Teams (SART)!

The role of the DVRT/SART volunteer is to provide victims of domestic and sexual violence with immediate support at the moment of crisis and provide all available information regarding the law, safety options, and available resources at a victim's local police department or hospital.

All applicants selected as part of the DVRT/SART teams are required to successfully complete a 60-hour training provided by SAFE in Hunterdon.



Apply here!



Volunteers must be 18 years old or older, have a valid driver's license and reliable transportation, be willing to submit to a background check, and be available to commit to 3-4 volunteer shifts per month. To apply, scan the QR code to the left of this article or click [here](#).

Community Thanks

By Sarah Pawlowski, SAFE Prevention Educator

SAFE would not be able to sustain its programs and mission without the support and generosity of our community partners.

Especially around the holiday season, the support of our donors is immeasurable! Thank you to our community members who have supported SAFE in Hunterdon through our year-end appeal!

SAFE would also like to thank the Tewksbury Township School District, Copper Hill Country Club, the Hunterdon County Prosecutor's Office, Project Linus of Hunterdon and Warren Counties, Chabad of Hunterdon County, Hunterdon Family Medicine at Delaware Valley, and Asbury Coffee Mill for their contributions towards holiday gifts for our clients.

Finally, we acknowledge the many generous community members that shopped our Amazon wishlist or called our office to inquire about needs for the holiday season!



Communities for Change: Join BW NICE to Support Hunterdon County Survivors

By Sarah Pawlowski, SAFE Prevention Educator

BW NICE (Business Women Networking Involving Charity & Education) is a professional women's empowerment organization that provides women at all stages of business and personal life with support, education, and resources. The organization sees value in the balance of business networking and charitable outreach. Each BW NICE Chapter is dedicated to raising funds and awareness supporting a local organization in the fight against domestic violence and sexual abuse.



Source: bwnice.org

BW NICE of Hunterdon County welcomes new members!

The Hunterdon County Chapter meets on the second Wednesday of the month at the Mountain View Chalet in Asbury, NJ from 8:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. and is open to all women in business and women in transition. For those that would prefer to attend virtually, a Zoom meeting option is available.

The Hunterdon County Chapter is proud to support SAFE in Hunterdon. In addition to monthly networking meetings and events, the chapter provides critical support to SAFE in Hunterdon through monthly collections and our annual fundraiser, The Red Shoe™.

Proceeds from The Red Shoe™

go directly to client services to assist women and families in safe and transition housing gain their independence for a new and better life. Stay tuned for more information regarding the date for our 9th annual Red Shoe event!



Source: bwnice.org

For more information regarding BW NICE and the Hunterdon County Chapter, please visit the chapter's website [here](#).

Help Wanted! Volunteer at The Consignment Shop of Flemington

The Consignment Shop of Flemington is looking for volunteers to join their team! The shop is a nonprofit organization that sells gently used women's and junior's clothing and accessories, with proceeds benefitting Hunterdon County agencies that serve victims of domestic violence.

The shop welcomes all visitors, volunteers, and consignors during their business hours of: Wednesday 11 AM-3 PM, Thursday 11 AM-6 PM, and Friday 11 AM-3 PM. Stop by and shop "clothing for a cause!"

The Consignment Shop of Flemington is located on Main Street of Flemington, next to the post office. Stay informed of shop updates [here](#).