

Women's Services, Inc.

FY 2015-2016 Annual Report

Women's Services



You may have noticed that we've been talking about community gardening and food security a lot over the past year. You might also be wondering what do these things have to do with our vision and our mission? In our opinion, **EVERYTHING!** According to Oxfam, a hunger relief agency, "Hunger isn't about too many people and too little food. Hunger is about inequality. And women and girls face the greatest inequalities of all." And as our amazing AmeriCorps VISTA Brynya Bowden so eloquently elaborated in her articles published earlier this year "The majority of the food on our planet is grown by women. In fact, if given the same agricultural resources as men, women could provide food for 150 million more people. As a result of these imbalances in accessing resources, however, women are the majority of the hungry on our planet. When women are hungry, they are faced with making difficult decisions and taking risks that make them susceptible to rape and abuse. When women leave abusive relationships, they are often left financially unstable and food insecure."

"To really change a system we need a more holistic set of skills, including systems thinking, an understanding of collaboration tools to further collective impact, and lateral leadership skills such as the ability to lead without power and to galvanize movement toward a common goal across a diverse and disjointed solutions ecosystem."

Daniela Papi-Thornton

Additionally, plants and plant-related activities and environments are evidence-based healing methods for individuals whose lives have been impacted by trauma and violence. We see our garden not only as a healing space but also as a connection to our community as it encourages neighbors to interact and get to know one another. In fact, the CDC cites community cohesion as the single biggest protective factor against violence. Community gardens not only help to build communities, there is also evidence that they make them safer and reduce violence, which we are all about.

I recently came across a story about the famed Zumbrati who walked a tightrope across Niagara Falls. Conditions were less than ideal. It was a windy day and the performer was thankful to have made it safely across. One of those waiting to congratulate him was a man with a wheelbarrow. "I believe that you could walk across pushing this wheelbarrow," the man told him. Zumbrati shook his head and said he felt fortunate to have accomplished the feat without a wheelbarrow. The man urged him to try. "I believe that you can do it," he said. The aerialist graciously declined, but the man kept after him. Finally, the performer said, "You really do believe in me, don't you?" "Oh, I do," the man assured him. "Okay," Zumbrati replied. "Get into the wheelbarrow."

At Women's Services, we have spent a lot of time thinking about the changes we want to see in our local communities. Central to everything we do and think is the belief that we can make our communities more peaceful and less violent. But how many of us truly believe this is possible? Who among us would be willing to get into the wheelbarrow and risk their life for this belief? From this perspective, our actions become subject to closer scrutiny and deliberation. We must hold ourselves accountable and judge our efforts in relation to progress made in realizing our vision for violence-free communities. We must cast off any concerns, doubts, fears, and self-imposed limitations that render our actions ineffectual and superficial. We must act as though we believe our vision is true, just, and possible. Make no mistake, this is a revolutionary perspective. Forty years ago, a group of women gathered around a kitchen table in Hershey, Pennsylvania and embraced a vision to establish a network of shelters within 50 miles of every battered woman in the Commonwealth. They acted on their belief and made it a reality. We can learn a lot from their example and create something special here in Crawford County. The late actress, Audrey Hepburn, once said, "To plant a garden is to believe in tomorrow." We have embraced this belief and have literally planted a garden at our facility on Spring Street. We believe that food security, gardening, and inviting neighbors into our kitchens is the way forward. We believe the way to make our communities more cohesive, more tolerant, and less prone to violence is to sit down together and share a meal. Gathering over a meal is one of the most ancient forms of community process, as people sharing food appreciate each other at a profound level. Nourished bodies and relationships pave the way for better collaboration and higher quality work.

At Women's Services, we are putting our beliefs into action and we invite the community to join us in this work. After all, it's a big wheelbarrow and it will accommodate many individuals who share our vision for communities free from violence.



**"Opening up
your kitchen to
neighbors is the
revolutionary
act of the 21st
century."**

-Bill Traynor



“The power of community to create health is far greater than any physician, clinic or hospital.”
- Mark Hyman

As our 40th anniversary draws near, we reflect on what we have accomplished and look ahead to the work that still needs done. If we are to remain viable for future generations, simply continuing to do what we've been doing for the last 40 years isn't going to cut it. We must develop non-traditional partnerships and service-delivery approaches. We must explore resources and opportunities we never would have imagined. We must work collaboratively with others broadening the discussion to include the role community plays in preventing violence. Every member of our community must be at the table to determine how collectively we can best function for greater impact. A community-centered approach to violence prevention solutions and an intersectional holistic approach to victims' needs are essential. We must expand our collaborative circle to include mental health, medical, indigent defense, homeless advocacy, juvenile justice, legal services, neighborhood centers, poverty, transportation and others if we are to achieve our vision of communities free from violence.

It was this thinking I had in mind when I came across a report from the Prevention Institute entitled *Addressing the Intersection: Preventing Violence and Promoting Healthy Eating and Active Living*. I love being active and eating healthy nutritious food and I'm passionate about both. So finding a way to incorporate the things I love into the work we do was like icing on the cake.

This report found five linkages between preventing violence and promoting healthy eating and physical activity.

- Violence and fear of violence cause people to be less physically active and spend less time outdoors.
- Violence and fear of violence alter people's purchasing patterns limiting access to healthy food.
- Experiencing and witnessing violence decrease motivation and capability of eating healthfully and being active.
- Violence reduces social interactions that would otherwise contribute to community cohesion.
- Violence acts as a barrier to investments in community resources and opportunities that support healthy lifestyles.

The impact of violence in communities is far-reaching: when people don't feel safe in their communities, they are less likely to use local parks and community centers and access services such as public transportation. When parents don't feel safe in their communities, they are hesitant to let their children play outside or walk to school. We must expand the idea of violence and its solutions from that between individuals to one that includes communities – both close and intimate communities and the broader communities of which we are a part. Violence is preventable and preventing violence in a community improves the overall health and wellbeing of its members. We believe that community connectedness is a crucial component of ending violence.

Community connectedness describes the strength and quality of ties between members of a community and is the biggest factor to preventing and protecting against multiple forms of violence. Central to community connectedness is collective efficacy: the cohesion between members of a community and their willingness to intervene on behalf of the common good. Higher levels of collective efficacy are associated with lower rates of youth violence, child abuse, and intimate partner violence. This is why we believe community gardens are important to the work we are doing. That is why we are collaborating with nontraditional community partners like CATA and MMC. If you had to choose between 10% more law enforcement on the streets or 10% more citizens knowing their neighbors' first names, the latter is a better crime prevention strategy. We need to look at front porches as crime fighting tools and treat picnics as public health efforts.

All of our work is driven by our end goal: meaningful, lasting social change. By developing practices of strategic thinking, honing our intersectional analysis, learning lessons from our own social change efforts and those of other social justice movements, engaging in public opinion research, and more – we are building the capacity of our movement to develop and execute visionary, long-term strategies that will attack the root causes of violence and alter the systems and balances of power that maintain the status quo.

What a difference a year can make...or does it? Last year at this time we were dealing with a statewide budget impasse that created difficulties for women and children wanting to move into permanent housing. Funds were tight and fewer community resources were available to our clients. Consequently, women and children had to stay longer in the shelter and many were not able to secure suitable housing. Some battered women decided to return to their abusive partners because the barriers to permanent housing were too overwhelming. This year, there is no statewide budget impasse but we find ourselves in a similar situation. The need for shelter services and permanent housing has increased tremendously. While it is not unusual for us to have a waiting list for shelter services, it is unprecedented to have a nine-page waiting list. Our current waiting list represents a 500% increase over previous years. Resources are not able to keep up with the demand. Subsequently, homeless women and children are remaining homeless and battered women are much less likely to leave their abusers. The situation has become untenable and dangerous.

On a brighter note, we never would have gotten through the past year without the assistance of our community partners. Organizations such as: CHAPS, Center for Family Services, Salvation Army, Crawford County Human Services, The READ Program, Parkside Psychological Associates, the YWCA of Titusville, the United Way of Western Crawford County, and Crawford County Area Transit Authority, were instrumental in helping us do the very best for our clients. Of course, assistance from our local stakeholders played an integral role as well. Through the generous support of local individuals and families, we received the funds we needed to replace our hot water heater and a broken washer and dryer. Can you imagine what it would be like to operate a shelter for 18 to 24 women and children without hot water or laundry facilities? Fortunately, we did not have to find out!

One of our other community partners is Allegheny College. We are very fortunate to reap the rewards of having so many young, committed college students nearby. In particular, the Allegheny College Bonner Program provides us with students who agree to work 8-10 hours every week. These special angels take time out of their busy days to enrich the lives of women and children during their most desperate moments. We typically meet these young people during their first year at the college. They agree to take our 65 hour counselor/advocate training program which in itself is quite a commitment. Over the next couple of years we watch them grow and strengthen their skills while taking on more of a leadership role within our organization. Sometimes we are so impressed with their abilities we hire them. Such was the case when we hired Shanile McPherson who graduated in May, 2016. During her four years as a Bonner student, Shanile responded to hotline calls, supervised our children's program and co-facilitated a weekly support group for adult survivors of interpersonal violence. Shanile has fulfilled all of our expectations as both a volunteer and now as a paid employee. We expect great things from her over the next few years.

In recent years, we have seen an increase in transgendered individuals seeking shelter which prompted us to review our policies. After researching the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Fair Housing Act, I believe we are in compliance with the regulations and that we can accomplish our goal of providing emotional and physical safety to all shelter guests, regardless of how they identify. According to the Transgender Law Center, "While it is dangerously common for transgender and non-conforming people to be turned away from shelters because of their gender identity, those who do manage to gain access to shelters are frequently housed based on their sex at birth rather than their gender identity. This situation is particularly dangerous for transgender women who are inappropriately placed in men's shelters where they are often subjected to inhumane and degrading treatment and abuse including sexual assault." I am proud to report that The Greenhouse recognizes a person's gender identity and houses them accordingly.

Another challenge we have seen in recent years is an increase in service animals and emotional support animals. We reviewed these internal policies as well and are confident we are in complete compliance with all relevant regulations. We recognize the importance of these animals and are prepared to make every accommodation possible.



One of my favorite highlights from the past year involved our collaboration with Parkside Psychological Associates around ‘trauma-informed’ care. As part of a grant project through the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD), Parkside worked with half a dozen private and public organizations to evaluate their level of trauma-informed services and practices. Specifically, Parkside helped my shelter team determine how we could improve our services and become more trauma-sensitive. One of the things we determined was that clients wanted more opportunities to provide feedback about the services they were receiving before they exited the shelter. With their input, we have gained useful insight on what our shelter guests really want or need in real time. Then, at staff meetings we discuss ways we can meet those needs. This change in our practice has led to a much more responsive and respectful provision of our services.

Lastly, despite all of the challenges we were faced with last year, we managed to provide safe and secure shelter services to over two hundred women and children. We battled bed bugs, interpersonal conflicts, drug overdoses, theft and property damages. We weathered many stressful days and weeks. Nonetheless, we powered through all of the adversity and found permanent housing for nearly half of our shelter guests, counseled and assisted many traumatized children and adults, provided two weekly support groups, assisted with the gardens, engaged in craft-making, and took a few field trips. We added new staff, lost some others, and found our harmony by the end of the year. With the promise of the new year, we look forward to helping many more of our neighbors in Crawford County. We hope to add new trauma-informed intervention strategies, build on past professional training, and prepare ourselves for new and different challenges. Whatever the future holds for us, we will be ready. We have an experienced staff dedicated to helping others in a compassionate, respectful, and professional manner. There isn’t anything we cannot overcome or succeed at. Personally, I look forward to continuing our collaborative relationships with community partners and I hope to find new ways we can partner together for the betterment of our service recipients.



INDIVIDUAL & SYSTEMS' ADVOCACY

Legal Advocacy: Donnarae Morrison

As the Legal Advocate for Women's Services, a position funded through the STOP Violence Against Women Act, I have the privilege of advocating for victims of domestic and sexual violence, dating violence and stalking. Despite many trying days, I love my work. Last year, I attended 129 Preliminary Hearings, joined and attended 3 Criminal Justice Advisory Committee (CJAB) meetings, attended 4 Active Aging Task Force Meetings, and conducted 6 Trainings on Safety, all of which were conducted at Active Aging sites in Crawford County.

Also, I attended the [trial](#) for Debra Eschweiler, a local woman murdered by her abusive ex-boyfriend. I spent the week with the family in and out of the court room. I attended to their needs to the best of my ability. I listened to their stories about Debra, laughed with them, and cried with them when the tears came. I stayed with them when the trial ended and the verdict was read. The defendant was found guilty and sentenced to life in prison. I experienced their bittersweet emotions as they finally received some closure. I spent the better part of the week not sleeping from all of the stress and found it difficult to unwind when it was all over. To say that I was glad when it was over would be an understatement. However, I was honored to be allowed to assist the Eschweiler family during this very difficult period.

I have seen a change in the stories I am hearing at the temporary PFA level. The victims are telling horrific stories that have a lot to do with drug abuse and mental health issues. Strangulation attempts have become very prevalent in a lot of recent cases. Victims are talking about seeing stars, losing consciousness, spit running from their mouth and nose, feeling close to death, and gasping for air. A lot of times the children are in the same room to witness these horrific events. Often these victims are coming into the court house to file a PFA because the abuser is threatening to take the children and not because they were strangled; those details don't come out until later in our discussions. Learning to ask the right questions has become a matter of life and death. Although I feel privileged to advocate for victims of violence, I recognize the awesome responsibility this role carries, too.

Medical Advocacy: Rose Hilliard

This past year has been the most unique year I've experienced since I started working at Women's Services over 14 years ago. As the newly-installed Medical Advocate, I have been a part of renewing our relationship with Meadville Medical Center and Titusville Medical Center. Since I have begun this work re-establishing our relationships with medical staff, we have seen our referrals increase significantly. It is critically important that victims of domestic and sexual violence have access to advocates who can provide crisis intervention, safety and support services. The hospitals have always been good about calling us when sexual assault victims presented in the Emergency Department but now they are calling us when patients report experiencing domestic violence. As I get around to all of the departments and acquaint them with the screening tool called RADAR (Routinely screen, Ask questions, Document findings, Assess safety, and Review options), more and more domestic violence patients are being identified and getting assistance. In the past year, I have received more calls from doctor's offices in Meadville and rural areas asking for information on our services. As part of my response, I acquaint medical professionals with the latest research regarding abuse and trauma. The manner in which a traumatized patient behaves has a lot to do with how they are treated. I believe the more medical professionals understand about [trauma](#) and the [ACEs](#) (Adverse Childhood Experiences) study, the more effective they can be when treating and interacting with victims of violence. To further my own understanding of ACEs, I have undertaken the ACE's Train the Trainer Program offered by the Peace4Crawford subcommittee of the Crawford County System of Care Leadership Team. As a trainer, I will be able to educate the community on how trauma affects all of us and, in particular, how childhood trauma may translate into maladaptive behaviors and chronic health conditions in adulthood. I would like to see our entire community become trauma-informed.



As the co-chair of our Human Trafficking Task Force, I am very pleased with the progress this group has made in the past year. To bring greater awareness of this issue, we embarked on the [Red Sand Project](#). Why red sand, and why sidewalk cracks? According to Molly Gochman, founder of the Red Sand Project:

Resembling scars on the sidewalk, these jagged red lines of sand are a simple visual metaphor for the millions of trafficked people who “fall through the cracks” and a reminder to not simply “walk over” this marginalized population. It’s also a symbol for strength found in numbers. At first, human trafficking seemed like such a huge issue and one you can’t possibly do anything about it. But these little grains of sand add up to transform these sidewalk cracks, and so it serves as a reminder that our small individual acts do add up to something.

Taking this project to local hotels helps people be aware that it is happening here and that we can work on a prevention plan as a community. Pennsylvania is ranked 14th out of the 50 states for human trafficking. This should be a wake-up call for all of us. Given our proximity to major interstates, coupled with our naivety, we are at a high risk for human trafficking activities. To promote greater awareness of this tragedy, I have been teaming up with colleagues on our task force to get the word out to our neighbors and friends.

As a member of the Crawford County Suicide Prevention Board, I have become a certified QPR trainer. QPR stands for Question, Persuade, and Refer. The QPR mission is to reduce suicidal behaviors and save lives by providing innovative, practical and proven suicide prevention training. The signs of crisis are all around us. We believe that quality education empowers all people, regardless of their background, to make a positive difference in the life of someone they know. Becoming a certified QPR instructor, along with Mela Calomino from Human Services, will give us the tools we need to reduce the number of suicides in our communities. We have given two trainings thus far and have plans for many more in the future.

In closing, one of the most exciting things for me this past year was taking the [KCIT](#) (Keystone Crisis Intervention Team) training. KCIT empowers local communities to support crime victims in their recovery from traumatic incidents by assessing the impact of the event on the community; developing an intervention plan; and providing crisis intervention by trained volunteer teams. Becoming one of their trained volunteers is something I have always wanted to do and now I am a contributing member of this statewide team. Not too long ago, Melanie, Matt and I were called to provide a crisis response to a program in another county. With the training the three of us received from KCIT, we were in a strong position to help service providers process a difficult and traumatic loss. To facilitate a group discussion that is in turmoil isn’t easy to do, but knowing you made a difference makes it all worthwhile.





Sexual Assault Services

730	New & Continuing Adults	1,300	Counseling Hours
85	New & Continuing Children	261	Counseling Hours
<u>32</u>	<u>New & Continuing Sig. Others</u>	<u>86</u>	<u>Counseling Hours</u>
847	Sexual Assault Victims Served	1,647	Counseling and Advocacy Hours for SA Victims

Legal Advocacy

210	Temporary PFAs
112	Final Orders
9	I.C.C. Orders
2	SV Temporary PFAs
2	SV Final Orders
51	L.A.P. Filed by M.C.P.
1	L.A.P. Filed by C.S.P.

Domestic Violence Services

594	New & Continuing Adults
55	New & Continuing Children
<u>17</u>	<u>New & Continuing Sig. Others</u>
666	Domestic Violence Victims Served
2,621	Counseling Hours
7,508	Counseling Hours
<u>63</u>	<u>Counseling Hours</u>
10,192	Counseling and Advocacy Hours for DV Victims

Education & Outreach Services

683 School Programs (K—12)
11,503 Students Reached

19 Primary Prevention Programs
59 Adults Reached

81 Community Programs
761 Adults Reached

Shelter Services

2,621	Counseling Hours
171	Adult Women
<u>115</u>	<u>Children</u>
286	Total Homeless Individuals
5,978	Total # of Shelter Days

Women's Services has made great strides in its efforts to achieve Strategic Plan Goal#2: WSI will develop a stronger, well-coordinated volunteer component. After applying for an AmeriCorps/VISTA, Brynya Bowden joined the WSI family in 2015 as our Volunteer Coordinator and Food Security Liaison and in August, 2016 signed on for a second year to grow both efforts. A Volunteer Strategic Planning Committee was put in place to provide guidance and recommendations. In summary, some of the guidelines and changes made to our Counselor/Advocate training and volunteer program in general are as follows:

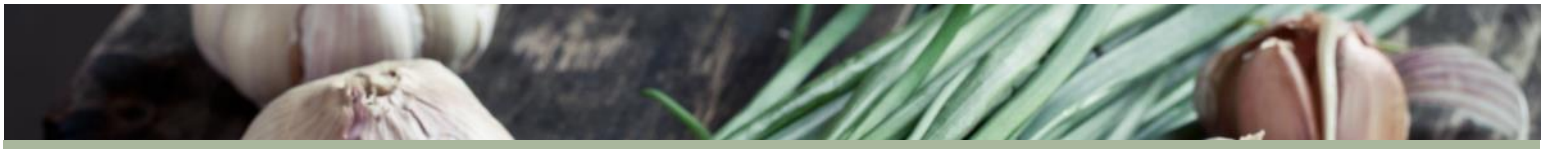
- Deadline for training applications established
- Interview questions revised
- Class size limited to 15; number of absences limited
- Independent study "Binders" used in extenuating circumstances only
- New volunteer position descriptions developed
- Volunteer database developed which allows us to run queries to attain pertinent information and ensure that each volunteer file has the required documentation
- In-service on volunteerism
- Expansion of indirect service volunteer opportunities

The 2015 Fall Counselor Advocate Training welcomed 17 trainees, 11 of which remain active volunteers. Once our fall training ended, it wasn't long before several Titusville community members and one student from Pitt-Titusville, Meghan Lenherr, showed an interest in becoming Counselor/Advocates. I developed a "hybrid training" for Titusville that included approximately 50% classroom time, and 25% online training and 25% WSI assignments. PCADV and PCAR now have some Counselor/Advocate training topics online. The combination of the online sessions and additional WSI assignments together meet the training requirements. Unfortunately, the two community members withdrew shortly after the onset of training. So, back to the drawing board-I pulled together training for Meghan that combined the online and WSI's assignments. It was well worth the effort. Meghan completed her training and has recently begun an internship with us.

Women's Services piloted a new program at WSI called "Kids Club" for children ages 5-12 years old. The program is for those children who reside in shelter; who receive WSI domestic and/or sexual assault counseling; whose parent receives mobile advocacy services; or whose parent attends support group. Kids Club began on February 1, 2016 and ran through the end of April, meeting each week, Monday through Thursday, 6:30 -8:00 pm. Club facilitators (community members, staff, and/or volunteers) planned and conducted an activity keeping in line with trauma informed practices: movement, healthy eating, and art expression.



The facilitators and volunteer assistants were full of enthusiasm and energy from day one. Unfortunately, (depends how you look at it) WSI had very few children in shelter during the pilot which greatly limited our Kids Club attendance. This of course is unpredictable, and very atypical for shelter. Those who attended said they "love" Kids Club. It was a big undertaking and the Kids Club team all felt it was a worthwhile endeavor. Plans to start up again in September were discussed, with Allegheny Bonner students taking the lead and reformatting according to their schedules and availability of volunteers. As I stated at the conclusion of Kids Club in April, "*Kids Club has found its way into our hearts and the hearts of the children who have attended. The idea of discontinuing it is not an option.*"



Women's Services acknowledged Sexual Assault Awareness Month in April in a number of ways:

- Bruce participated in Allegheny College's screening of *The Hunting Ground* as a panelist
- *The Hunting Ground* raises a number of issues regarding the reporting of sexual assault on college campuses.
- Counselor/Advocate, Corrine Livingston and intern, Angeline Pendolino, participated in Allegheny College's Gator Day events as members of small group discussions focusing on exposing rape culture and what the rape culture looked like at Allegheny.
- Teal blue lights (the color chosen for sexual violence awareness) were displayed on our building.
- A large banner sharing WSI's Vision, "Communities Free from Violence" was designed, and then erected on Park Avenue.
- Women's Services, along with Denise Johnson's in her capacity as a member of the [Pennsylvania Commission for Women](#), held a screening of *The Hunting Ground* at The Movies at Meadville for area high school seniors. A panel discussion followed with Gilly Ford, Denise Johnson, and WSI Counselor Advocates/ Corrine Livingston and Jennifer Wellington

For the past two years, with the help of Rape Prevention Funds, WSI has been engaging the Meadville community in developing tolerance and acceptance of others regardless of their sexual orientation and gender identity; specifically targeting the adult population. In moving forward this year, we are targeting the younger members of our community. Bruce Harlan and myself met with Crawford Central School District's Superintendent to acquaint him with our school prevention education programming and to discuss the possible implementation of a student initiated LGBT club. A junior at Meadville Area Senior High School voiced his interest in spearheading this endeavor, along with a fellow classmate. After several failed attempts to make the LGBT club an official school club, it was decided that an after school (independent) club would satisfy the students' goals: promoting diversity and inclusion; and providing support for students who identify as LGBT. The club has been named GLAM (Gay, Lesbian, Allies, More). WSI's Family Advocate, Patti Prince agreed to act as club advisor. GLAM has held two club meetings already this fall, with attendance slowly increasing.

The Prevention Education Team, as in previous years, did a remarkable job ensuring that students in Crawford Central, PENNCREST, and Conneaut School Districts received the important message that "everyone has the right to be safe" and that there are people who care and want to help. Curriculums continue to be tweaked; videos updated if available; new teaching methods tried; and improvements made to our evaluation process.



In September, 2015 Women's Services opened its brand new office in Titusville, PA. As the new Counselor/Advocate for Titusville, I quickly discovered that I was also the Office Manager, Administrative Assistant, Receptionist, and Janitor. That's okay, however, because I am very comfortable wearing many different hats. One of the first new hats I was required to wear was as a Prevention and Outreach Coordinator. You see, no sooner did I get settled in our new office when Domestic Violence Awareness Month arrived in October. Despite the newness of it all, I jumped right in with The [Clothesline Project](#) in conjunction with several community partners (YWCA, Early Headstart, Titusville Open Air Market, Benson Library and Pitt-Titusville University) and held three events on the campus of Pitt-Titusville: Shoe Display, [Survivor Love Letter](#), and Open Mic Against Violence. It turned out to be a very busy month but with the help of my colleagues and key community members, we pulled it off rather successfully.



In November, we held an open house at our new office. First to arrive was our landlord who gave us a beautiful flower arrangement to brighten up our office. I was especially grateful for Board President, Marcia Yohe, and some of my colleagues who helped me throughout the event. Their presence symbolized the commitment of our entire team to serve the needs of the people in this community. Also, I was pleased to see some of our new partners attend our open house. A heartfelt thank you goes out to our friends at The University of Pittsburgh/Titusville, the YWCA, the Titusville Chamber of Commerce, The United Way, the Titusville District Court, PPC Violence Free Network, Love INC., and Big Brother/Big Sisters of the Oil Region. I look forward to working with all of them in the coming months and years.

In March our founding support group members met and decided to rename our group, "No Longer Alone." They explained that leaving an abusive situation and moving into a new home can be a very scary and lonely time. Many folks who have been in abusive situations have experienced years of isolation due to living with a controlling partner. Our support group provides a place for folks to find encouragement, a sense of belonging, and a realization that through Women's Services and the participants in our support groups, they are no longer alone. The group averages two to five participants weekly. Group activities vary based on interests and passions of participants. One group made ten homemade beach totes, sold them at the Titusville Open Air market and used the proceeds to create "Welcome Home" baskets full of household and personal supplies for other victims fleeing domestic violence. Giving back to the community has been one of the hallmarks of this particular group of empowered women.

In April we teamed up with Kaitlyn Spaulding from Family Services & Children's Aid Society of Venango County to promote Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM). Using this year's theme of "Prevention is Possible," we focused on the fact that prevention requires many different voices and roles to make a difference. One way that we asked community members to participate was by displaying a teal light bulb on their front porch, entry way, front window, etc. Shining this light raises public awareness in the community and demonstrates that individuals and/or organizations are willing to make a conscious effort to advocate and educate regarding this important issue. Although we did not have as many participants as we would have liked, it was our first event and we plan to capitalize on our early success in the years to come.

Now that I have spent a year in Titusville working closely with many wonderful community leaders, I have come to appreciate and respect the values and assets present in this community. Although Titusville has experienced its share of hard times, the resiliency of this community is ever-present. Nowhere is this better expressed than in the renovation of the Towne Square Building after a devastating fire in March. Restoring a landmark building after major destruction is an apt metaphor for the work we would like to accomplish in this historic community: Restoration, Justice, Autonomy, and Safety.



Mental Health First Aid

Did you know that one in five Americans has a mental illness and many are reluctant to seek help or might not know where to turn for care. The symptoms of mental illness can be difficult to detect — even when friends and family of someone who appears to be developing a mental illness can tell that something is amiss, they may not know how to intervene or direct the person to proper treatment – which means that all too often, those in need of mental health services do not get them until it is too late. As a society, we largely remain ignorant about the signs and symptoms of mental illnesses, and we ignore our role as responsible community members to help people experiencing these illnesses.

Last June, in conjunction with Crawford County Human Services, I attended a Mental Health First Aid course. This program introduces participants to risk factors and warning signs of mental health concerns, builds understanding of their impact, and overviews common treatments. The course uses role-playing and simulations to demonstrate how to assess a mental health crisis; select interventions and provide initial help; and connect persons to professional, peer and social supports as well as self-help resources.

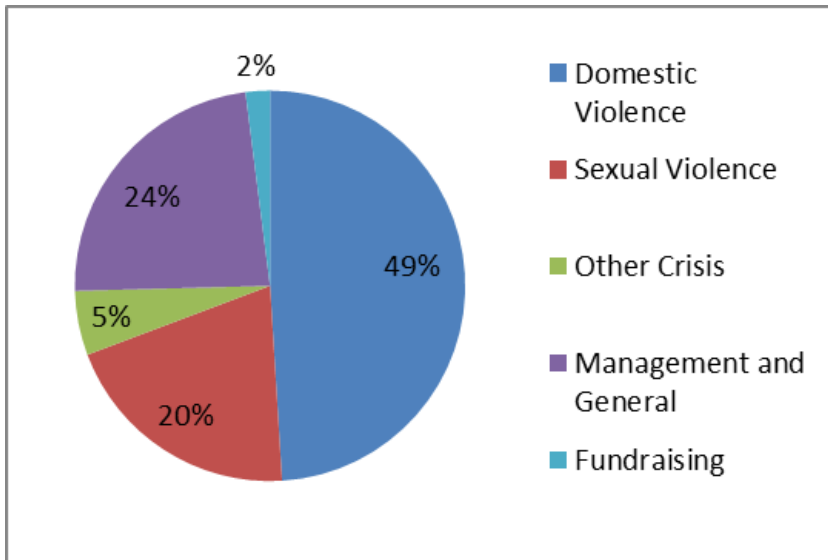
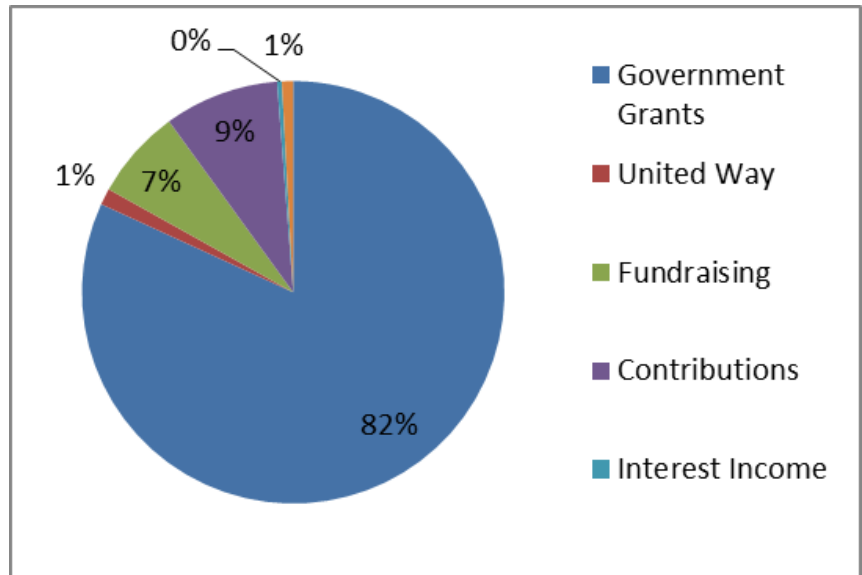
Mental Health First Aiders are trained to provide early detection and intervention by knowing the signs and symptoms of specific illnesses like anxiety, depression, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, eating disorders, and addictions. The program offers concrete tools and answers key questions like “What can I do?” and “Where can someone find help?” Mental Health First Aiders are knowledgeable about local mental health resources, national organizations, support groups, and online tools for mental health and addictions treatment and support.

As a newly-trained Mental Health First Aider, I will be offering the training to staff and faculty at Pitt/Titusville next spring. With a special emphasis on youth, I look forward to providing this training to many others throughout Crawford county in the years to come.



Revenue & Support

Government and Grants	\$	848,771
United Way		13,125
Fundraising		71,451
Contributions		91,072
Interest Income		3,761
Other Income		<u>8,882</u>
TOTAL	\$	1,037,062



Expenses

Domestic Violence	\$	519,318
Sexual Violence		214,358
Other Crisis		56,942
Management & General		247,871
Fundraising		<u>21,359</u>
TOTAL	\$	1,059,398

Net Assets, beginning of the year	\$ 637,758
Net Assets, end of the year	\$ 627,068



In 2017, Women's Services, Inc. will be celebrating its 40th Anniversary. Be sure to follow us on social media sites for all of the latest happenings:





Board of Directors

**Marcia Yohe,
President**

**Mari Mullen,
Vice President**

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Treasurer**

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Valerie Bond Waid

Susan Wycoff

STAFF

Administration

Bruce Harlan

Executive Director

Julie Hunter

Marketing & Media Supervisor

Melanie Reynolds

Fiscal Coordinator

Karen Smith

Fiscal Assistant

Vicki Wood

Special Projects Director

Brynya Bowden

AmeriCorps VISTA Volunteer Coordinator

Counseling & Education

Connie Graham

Education Specialist I

Matt Capron

Education Specialist II

Corrine Livingston-Morian

Counseling Specialist

Deb Olivieri

Counselor/Advocate

Jennifer Wellington

Counselor/Advocate-Titusville

Advocacy

Donnae Morrison

Legal Advocate

Dee Munhall

Legal Advocate-Titusville

Rose Hilliard

Medical Advocate

Shelter

Jane Buchanan

Shelter Services Supervisor

Patricia Prince

Family Advocate

Christina Smith

Night Manager I

Shanile McPherson

Night Manager II

Brenda Adams

Support Staff

Kaitlyn Pershing

Support Staff

Lisa McFerrin

Support Staff

Kyrsten Craig

Support Staff

Dina Lanagan

Support Staff



Women's Services



MISSION STATEMENT

PROVIDING HOPE AND RESOURCES FOR THOSE AFFECTED
BY VIOLENCE AND ADVOCATING TO END IT.



CORE VALUES

HOPE
RESPECT
EMPATHY
INTEGRITY
COLLABORATION
EMPOWERMENT