



Domestic Abuse
& Sexual Assault
Crisis Center
of Warren County®



Enlightener

*Mission: To support and empower those affected by domestic violence and sexual assault
To develop a community where there is no acceptance of or tolerance for either*

March 2009

Center marks 20 years of service to Warren County *Help us raise \$20,000 to celebrate!*

by Pam Farago, Executive Director

Once upon a time, there was a small, rural county in New Jersey that did not have a shelter for victims of domestic violence. A concerned group of citizens came together and decided there should be.

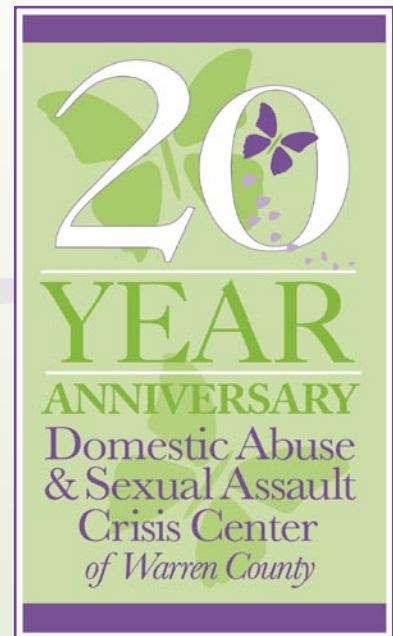
It took years to raise the money and build the shelter. The Groundbreaking Ceremony was held in November 1989 and by mid-1990 the Morningside shelter officially opened its doors. In the first year, 31 women and 51 children were provided with shelter, food, clothing, and services. By 2009, a total of 2,035 women and children had sought and found safety there.

The Domestic Abuse and Sexual Assault Crisis Center is celebrating our 20th anniversary this year. To mark the occasion, this edition of the Enlightener will focus on how the journey started 20 years ago, what has happened along the way, and where we stand now. We'll measure the distance from

many perspectives: staff, board, client, and community.

It is impossible to reflect on our past and think about our future without noting the contributions of the Warren County community. Morningside was built almost entirely with local donations. Throughout our history, whenever the agency has been in need, residents, churches, community groups and area businesses have always come through with donations of food, clothing, toys, or funds. Thanks to your ongoing support, our financial footing has remained solid. However demand for our services continues to grow and over the past year it has skyrocketed, while at the same time our funding is being reduced. As we celebrate this anniversary milestone, we are struggling to meet the increased needs of our community.

In honor of our anniversary and in recognition of this need, we



are issuing a challenge to the community:

Help us raise \$20,000 to celebrate our 20 years. If just 2,000 members of the Warren County community donate \$10 each, we could reach our goal! Imagine that: \$10 is such a small investment that will yield incredible returns in the life of a domestic violence victim who needs the support and hope our services provide. Ten dollars can help give someone a happily ever after – and you can make it happen. I know we can count on you once again.

Thank you!

Providing a safe home, when home isn't safe

by Bonnie Lawrance, ACSW

Editors Note: Bonnie Lawrance was Executive Director of the agency when the shelter was built. Here she reflects on the spark that ignited Warren County into action to build Morningside shelter.

Warren County was one of the last counties in New Jersey to build a shelter. The county was small, with only about 60,000 homes, but the need was great.

In 1987 a young woman with two small children came to our counseling center in Belvidere, her body beaten and her mind and soul abused. After much discussion, she decided to go to the shelter in Sussex County. Two weeks later, she decided to return to her home and the staff brought her back to Warren County. We knew she was in great danger, but we also knew that she had to make her own decisions about her future—it was her life. One month later, she was found murdered.

The staff and the board members of our agency were devastated by the woman's death. Instead of sitting back and doing nothing, Warren County somehow gained the momentum, against all odds, to build a shelter for abused women and their children.

Local builders, businesses, and politicians rallied. Negotiations with the county resulted in a lease of five acres, funding from the state was secured, and a local architect agreed to donate her expertise and services for the project. In fact, nearly all professional services needed to construct the shelter were either donated or discounted and fundraising efforts yielded great returns. A local car dealership even donated a car for us to raffle. The theme of our fundraising efforts was "Help us build a safe home, when home isn't safe."

Enough money was raised to build and furnish the shelter. This project was possible because a whole community said "no more" to domestic abuse in Warren County. Twenty years later the shelter is still home to many women and children because this community showed it cares.



Bonnie Lawrance (center) at the Morningside Shelter groundbreaking ceremony in November 1989, with former Freeholder and Assembly Speaker Chuck Haytaian (left), and Congressman (former Assemblyman) Scott Garrett (right). Morningside construction was completed in 1990.



A volunteer-turned-staff member reflects on 20 years

By Barbara Green

I first became involved with the Domestic Abuse and Sexual Assault Crisis Center as a volunteer in 1988, after completing state-mandated training. I recall all through the spring and early summer of 1989 excitement was growing as we prepared for the opening of the shelter. Staff and volunteers worked to prepare and decorate the shelter for the arrival of our first clients. Among other duties, we all washed windows, hung curtains, and planted flowers. It was beginning to take on the appearance of a comfortable and loving home. Many dignitaries attended the long-awaited opening and dedication.

At the time the shelter opened there was not yet a law in the state of New Jersey that specifically dealt with Domestic Violence. It wasn't until 1991 that New Jersey passed The Prevention of Domestic Violence Act. The Act

acknowledged that, although there were existing laws that were applicable to domestic violence, societal attitudes about domestic violence were affecting the way law enforcement and the judicial system were responding to domestic violence. And so specific protections needed to be created.

I officially joined the staff in early 2000, when I filled in as a substitute caseworker. When the shelter first opened, residents did not stay for long periods, however, the shelter had to be staffed 24/7 in case a family arrived in need due to imminent danger. Over the years, that has changed and today the shelter is often filled to capacity. In fact, there are times when we have to refer clients to another shelter in a different county.

It has been a wonderful experience to work with the clients; to see them grow and become empowered; to see the positive changes in their lives and the lives of their children. Sometimes, the word "shelter" has a negative connotation. Not in this case. Many clients have remarked about the pleasant surprise they have upon arriving at our shelter.

Of course there have been changes in our staff, but one thing remains the same: our dedication to serving our clients. And we are most grateful for the response of the community at large; people have been so generous with donations and time. It has been my pleasure and honor to be affiliated with this agency for the past twenty years.

A board member remembers watching the impossible becoming possible

by Board Member Jan Kiszonak

I was invited to join the Domestic Abuse and Rape Crisis Center of Warren County Board of Directors in 1986. At that time, we did not have a shelter, only a small office on Mansfield Street in Belvidere. The board would meet in a basement room of that office or different locations throughout the county. I served first as Secretary for five years, and then President for another five.

Since there was no shelter, arrangements would be made for victims to stay in Safe Houses around the community or in motels. Our primary objective was to remove them from violent situations and keep them safe, but after experiencing the ordeal of a domestic situation, being left alone in a motel was not ideal. A shelter had to be built.

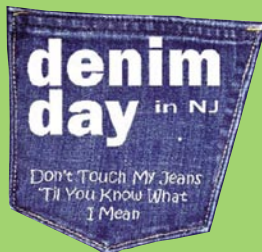
The Director at the time, Bonnie Lawrance, realized this urgent need and set about the task of securing the land and building the shelter. She reached out to prominent members of the County, finding and imploring the caring and generous people to donate their time, skills, and materials. It was an amazing response and the 'impossible' became possible.

Now, 20 years later, our board is sharply focused on doing whatever it takes to ensure the agency and shelter are meeting the needs of the community. And we all realize that so much more needs to be done to prevent the tragedies that result from domestic violence.

We also know that none of this would be possible without our volunteers—

from those who staff the hot lines, to advocates, board members, fund raisers and so many more. We are grateful for their service, especially in these difficult economic times, and look positively towards the next decade and the continuation and expansion of the very needed services the agency provides.

Accepting the invitation to be 'on the Board' was the start of a very enlightening and rewarding journey for me. It has enriched my life and given me great satisfaction knowing that together we have helped so many women and children who struggled to cope with domestic violence.



Mark your Calendars: Denim Day is April 28

As part of Sexual Assault Awareness month in April, students, businesses, churches, and individuals throughout Warren County will be planning rallies, posting flyers, raising funds, and, of course, wearing denim to mark Denim Day on April 28. The purpose of the day is twofold: to increase awareness and knowledge about sexual violence in Warren County and to raise funds for the Domestic Abuse and Sexual Assault Crisis Center. For more information about how you can get involved and to read the very interesting story behind Denim Day, visit our website www.besafewc.org and click on the "Denim Day in NJ" logo.

Overcoming "no problem here" misconceptions

by Karen Kubert, Director, Warren County Department of Human Services

The year 1980 would later prove to be the beginning of what is now known as a decade of prodigious spending for Wall Street. However, people in need of human services in New Jersey were facing budget cuts from both Washington, DC and Trenton. The human service delivery system in Warren County was no exception: resources were scarce and fragmented.

That same year, a group of women met over several months to discuss their strong belief that Warren County needed a domestic violence shelter. I was fortunate to be in the company of these dedicated women. I recall that some were from Centenary College, one was from the agency Legal Services, and one was from the American Cancer Society. I was the

government representative. All of us had unique talents that, as a group, led to the development of the first domestic violence shelter eight years later.

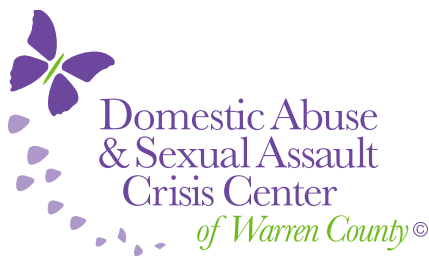
Perhaps the biggest obstacle we faced was that it was not generally believed that Warren County had any social problems or need for human service programs, because of its rural nature. We were often told that we were well-intentioned, but most likely mistaken about the severity of the problem.

But we knew the problem was real and growing. Without a recognized presence in the county, women didn't have anywhere to turn.

Violence continued to escalate. Many women feared for their safety and did not report the abuse.

We persisted and were ultimately successful in securing financial support from the county to develop a domestic violence program. It took another eight years to build the shelter and the agency has continued to receive support from the county including the donation of land on which the shelter is built.

There has been tremendous progress in the area of domestic violence and other supporting human service programs over the past 20 years in Warren County. We are hopeful this support will remain well into the future.



Domestic Abuse & Sexual Assault Crisis Center

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Wish List

Caring members of the community always ask us how they can help and what items we need. Our shelter is currently in need of the items listed below. If you would like to donate any of these items (new items only please), please contact Robin Sielski at 908-453-4121 x 107.

Alarm Clocks/Clock Radios
Baby Wash
Baby Wipes
Bath Gel
Batteries (9 volt, AA)
Body Lotion
Cleaning Products (no ammonia or bleach):
all-purpose floor cleaners; bathroom, tub and tile
cleaners; countertop cleaners
Composition Books, Day Planners, Journals
Cotton Swabs (Q-tips)
Diapers
Fabric Softener, Dryer Sheets
Feminine Sanitary Products
Feminine Shaving Gel
Freestanding Paper Towel Holders
Garbage Bags (small, kitchen and large)
Hairbrushes
Ibuprofen, Tylenol (current dates only please)
Latex Gloves (powder free)
Light Bulbs (40 Watt, 60 Watt standard medium base)
Liquid Dish Detergent
Liquid Hand Soap
Mops, Brooms, Dust Pans
Night Lights/Flashlights w/batteries
Paper Towels (rolls)
Sponges, Dish Brushes, Scrubbers
Toilet Paper
(Scott, ShopRite, or Marcal, single-ply white preferred)
Tweezers, Nail Clippers



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Contact information and phone numbers:

Hotlines: 866-6BE-SAFE
908-453-4181
908-453-2553 (TTY)

Office: 908-453-4121

Fax: 908-453-3706

Website: www.besafewc.org



How to Donate

If you would like to make a donation to the agency there are a number of ways to do this. With a PayPal account you can quickly and easily make a donation online at our website www.besafewc.org. Or, you can call Sue Allan at our office to make a credit card donation over the phone. Alternatively, you can mail a check to the agency at:

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P.O. Box 423 • Belvidere, NJ 07823**

Room sponsorship is another lovely way to support the clients we serve. For an annual donation of \$1,000 a plaque will be placed in a room either at the Morningside Shelter or the Dorothy Blake Transition House. Your donation will assure that the room has furniture, lighting, a supply of linens, towels, rugs, etc. A portion of the donation will be set aside so that when large purchases for the facility such as refrigerators, roof repairs, painting, etc. are needed we will be able to take care of those items in a timely manner.

The agency also accepts car, truck, boat, or real estate donations. To make a donation simply call 1-800-320-0476 and say that you want to donate to the Domestic Abuse and Sexual Assault Crisis Center.

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