

THE SUPPORTER

Spring/Summer 2020 | ISSUE 10

A LETTER FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



As the leader of Center for Safety & Change, I could not be more proud of the strong foundation we have established here for 40 years. A foundation so resilient that we have been able to withstand a global pandemic that increased the demand for our services by nearly 70%. A foundation so sturdy that we have endured a turbulent storm of protests in our fight to end injustice and systemic racism. A foundation so unwavering that our team of passionate advocates who work 24/7 to ensure victims and families have everything they need. I could not do the work that I do without the support of our amazing and dedicated staff. I want to publicly recognize and express my deepest gratitude to them.

I would be remiss if I didn't express my sincerest appreciation for our Board of Directors, volunteers and supporters who have lent a helping hand during these troubled times. We are very thankful! Even though more storms may lie ahead, we stand with full confidence that after the rain finally ends a beautiful rainbow will be cast overhead and our beloved Center will have made a significant impact in encouraging change in a seemingly dark world. We will always provide hope to those who seem hopeless and need it the most. We will remain a beacon of light to those who are in despair and experiencing unimaginable pain.

At the Center, we long for a world that has dignity and equality for all; one in which we can live free from fear, violence and oppression. Until that day comes, we will stand in solidarity and speak the names of Breonna Taylor, George Floyd and so many others who we have tragically lost. We stand as an organization that is committed to helping all victims of oppression and we need your support now more than ever.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Elizabeth Santiago".

Elizabeth Santiago



COVID-19



+ 135 DAYS OF IMPACT

For more than 40 years, the **Center for Safety & Change** has remained the only victim-assistance non-profit agency in Rockland, providing critical comfort to victims in crisis 24/7. Yet, we have never experienced a challenge like the one that we are currently facing as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. More families are in crisis today than ever before and hundreds of victims are reaching out to us for the first time. The crisis for many has grown dire and these families must rely on the Center.

WE supported

1,714
VICTIMS and SURVIVORS
a total of
14,224 times

nearly **70%** increase
in demand
of our
PROGRAM
and **SERVICES**



IMPACT BY PROGRAM	# of victims	# of times we helped
15-Bed Emergency Residential Shelter	29	2,634
Comprehensive Crime Victims Services	218	278
Children & Youth Department	352	3,335
Non-Residential Domestic Violence Services	398	2,835
Sexual Trauma Services	210	2,110
Legal Department	322	1,721
Anti-Human Trafficking Program	48	544
Immigration Services	137	767



Helped

1,186

VICTIMS

by providing

4,930

ITEMS OF

EMERGENCY RELIEF

including food, face masks, gloves, toiletries, gift cards and monetary support



1,108

HOTLINE

CALLS



30

ORDERS OF PROTECTION ISSUED

2

CASES that reported the use of **THREAT** or **FIREARMS**



SEXUAL ASSAULT FORENSIC EXAMS

SURVIVOR STORY

LIFE DURING COVID-19

Donna* is the mother of two young children who finally escaped her abuser while under quarantine. She was stricken with COVID-19 and lost her job. She faced unimaginable stress; fearing for her life at the hand of her abuser while juggling remote learning and a lack of basic needs. She had no one to turn to. It all became too much for her to handle. Thankfully, she turned to the Center for Safety & Change so we could be there for her during this traumatic time, helping reduce the burden and providing her and her children with nutritious food, essential supplies, clean clothes ... and hope. I am happy to inform you that Donna is now healthy and living with her children in a safe place.

“The help I received from Center for Safety & Change made me realize that there are good people in the world who care about others and want to support their neighbors. **I felt so alone but I made the call for help and I am truly grateful that I found this safe haven.** I had no idea that they would be such a resource for me and my kids during this time of such uncertainty. We truly appreciated the art care package sent to my kids so they could virtually continue their therapy through the creative arts program. They are lifesavers and I am forever thankful!”

~ Donna

COVID-19

+ 135 DAYS OF IMPACT



192

ART CARE
PACKAGES

mailed to
children and youth
to virtually
continue their
therapy through the
creative arts program



12

SAFE PARENT
- SAFE KIDS (CPS)
CASES



HOUSEHOLD
LOCKS CHANGED



7

PETS

kept in **SAFE** and
confidential shelter

5

were **INJURED**
because of domestic
violence

A STORY OF A LONG-LASTING FRIENDSHIP A TRIBUTE TO EDWARD C. COURY



*The brightest stars shine for
the benefit of others.*

In 1975, Elisabeth and Dick Voigt met then New City neighbor, Edward C. Coury (Ed), and became very dear friends for more than four decades. In 1978, Elisabeth met a concerned group of citizens who were a part of the movement to end domestic violence. They were amazing individuals who had the courage to put a public face on private torment. Elisabeth was invited to become a part of this group to open Rockland Family Shelter, the County's first emergency shelter for domestic violence victims. Becoming a friend to the Voigts meant Ed would soon become a friend of Rockland Family Shelter, later renamed Center for Safety & Change.



Ed Coury was a dear friend and advocate to the Center for more than 40 years. He will be truly missed.

Throughout his tenure at the Center, Ed was well known to help with unforeseen crises and played a major role in supporting the agency's first Capital Campaign in

“Ed never said no; his giving was always heartfelt, passionate and dedicated,” said Elisabeth. “Ed would support in various ways whether it was signing a petition, participating in a demonstration or attending our fundraising events, he was a true ally to the end of his life.”

(continue on next page)

PHILANTHROPY CORNER

A TRIBUTE TO EDWARD C. COURY (cont.)

Planned Giving

1979 Legacy Society

For more than 40 years, Center for Safety & Change has been on the frontlines supporting victims and survivors of gender-based violence. With the continuous fluctuation of government support and ever growing demand for our programs and services, leaving a planned gift to the Center will keep our agency alive for generations to come.

Making Center for Safety & Change a part of your estate plan can be as simple as including a charitable bequest in your will or living trust or making a beneficiary designation.

For more information, please contact Tracie McLee, Chief Development Officer at (845) 634-3391 or tmclee@centersc.org.

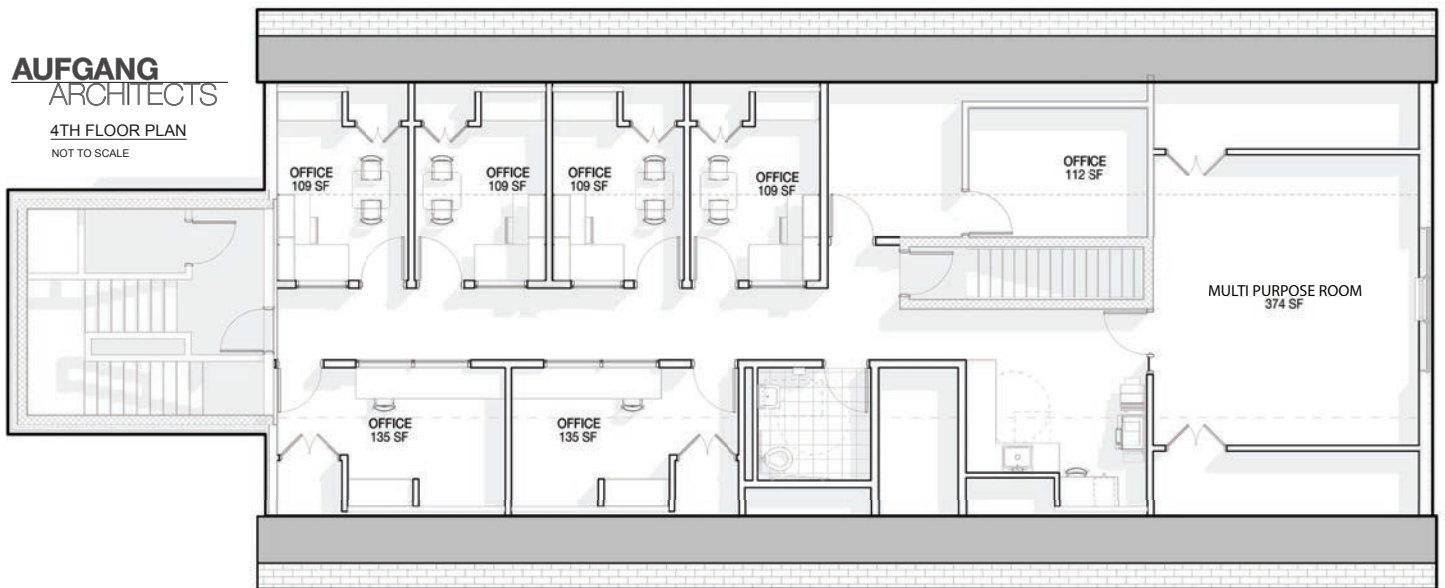


Pictured from left to right; Elisabeth Voigt one of the founders of Center for Safety & Change, longtime supporter Ed Coury, Carolyn Fish former executive director of the Center.

2012. Years later in 2020, after his passing at the age of 94, Ed bequeathed a significant donation to Center for Safety & Change. Ed will be recognized for this most generous gift in the newly anticipated fourth floor suite for the Children & Youth Department. It will now carry his name and continue a longstanding legacy of his unwavering support.

Ed lived a long life of service to others and his country; he was endlessly committed. He was a dear friend, caring neighbor, trusted confidante, community leader and advocate for freedom and equality. Center for Safety & Change will miss this true friend dearly. Nevertheless, his legacy will live on in the Center's building and his name will carry on in memoriam.

CHILDREN & YOUTH DEPARTMENT FOURTH FLOOR EXPANSION



A Brand New Place to Heal and Play

The fourth floor suite at Center for Safety & Change is a safe haven for young people, as it provides services to children and youth who are impacted by domestic violence, sexual trauma, child abuse, human trafficking and other crimes. This space will have a brand new look and feel soon thanks to a generous donation by long-time supporter Edward C. Coury.

In anticipation of this upcoming renovation, Center for Safety & Change has had the pleasure of working with Maria Vera, job captain and one of many at Aufgang Architects who has generously

donated their time to design the space so beautifully.

“I have had such a love for architecture since my father introduced me to this industry back home in Colombia and now in a small way I can give back to helping other young people explore art and have therapy services that will help them in the future deal with challenging life experiences,” Vera explained.

Thanks to Aufgang Architects, the newly designed suite will include six private therapy offices, an ADA compliant bathroom, common area, and a multi-purpose conference room for children’s activities like therapeutic yoga, play and sandplay therapies as well as creative arts. In addition, there will be six new parking

CHILDREN & YOUTH DEPARTMENT FOURTH FLOOR EXPANSION (cont.)

spots added, a half basketball court, a playground and a rock garden for the benefit of the participants. These indoor and outdoor spaces will be a therapeutic oasis for children and their families. In 2019, the children and youth services department saw more than 500 victims compared to the 100 victims seen in 2016. Currently there is a waitlist.

“We are so excited for this renovation project. At the Center, we meet each child and youth where they are in their experience and this place is so special for many of them,” said Jean Roemer, LCSW, RPT and Center for Safety & Change’s Senior Director of Children & Youth Programs.

“At the center, we use a trauma-informed approach that is client-centered, and 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 provide a space that is safe and nurturing and incorporate creative arts in our activities, with a goal to create a safe distance so as not to re-traumatize the child,” Roemer further stated.

The services provided:

- **Advocacy**
- **Accompaniment**
- **Assistance with Filing for Crime Victim Compensation**
- **Individual & Family Counseling**
- **Information & Referrals**
- **Parent Information & Guidance**
 - the effects of trauma on children and ways parents can support the healing process
- **Support Groups**
- **Therapy Services**
 - play and sandplay therapies, creative arts and cognitive behavioral therapy
- **Transportation**

For more information on these services or to schedule an appointment, call our confidential 24-Hour Hotline (845) 634-3344.



Look who volunteers at
Center for Safety & Change
Nancy Durand, Esq.

Center for Safety & Change Board Member
Attorney



Why I Serve On The Board:

Sexual abuse and violence have the power to crush one's spirit at its core. Without help, victims of abuse can go a lifetime feeling broken and worthless, never quite able to restore the broken pieces of themselves or transform from victim to survivor. I serve on the board of the Center for Safety & Change because it's the very least that I can do to help those suffering from the effects of abuse and violence. Even if only vicariously through the work of the dedicated staff and volunteers of the Center, I get to be part of a restoration process that brings forth healing and empowerment to others and am grateful for the opportunity to serve.



TEXT TO CHAT WITH AN ADVOCATE



Web Chat



Mobile Text

There has been close to a **70% increase** in the demand for our services, including hotline calls, during the COVID-19 pandemic. The crisis created an urgency for those in need to communicate in a discreet way. "Having a new means of conversing with victims has been on our wish list for nearly two years," said Laura Seroo, LMSW, program manager of special victims and comprehensive crime services. "We recently received the funding to make this a reality," Seroo explained further. The timing could not have been better. At the start of the pandemic it was decided that this project needed to be expedited. It was completed in May instead of the originally planned October deadline. The technology allows for victims to use an encrypted website so that information is stored on our server for no more than a day before it is permanently deleted. Dedicated and highly trained advocates are assisting clients, Monday - Friday from 9am until 11pm and soon weekend hours will be available. The pandemic has proven that a discreet communication mode is needed now more than ever. Since March, people have been sheltered in place, often restricting access to our 24-hour hotline number (845) 634-3344. The text to chat feature will help those in dire need reach us for assistance even if they are in the presence of their abuser.

LEARN MORE:

Before texting with an advocate, please be sure you are on a safe device. If you think it may not be safe then find a safer device, switch to our web chat option by clicking "Chat Now" or call our confidential 24-Hour Hotline at (845) 634-3344. You'll receive an automated message in response to your first text. When you have finished texting with the advocate, we recommend you manually delete the messages from your device. Send a text to (845) 286-4997 to be connected to an advocate.

TAKE MY ADVICE

Ask Andrea!



Family Law in the Time of COVID

During the pandemic, countless news sources have reported on the spike in domestic violence and child abuse across the country as survivors have been sheltering in place with their abusers. Center for Safety & Change announced that the demand for our services has increased nearly 70% since January and a domestic violence-related double homicide tragically occurred in Valley Cottage. Until recently, courts were closed and were only hearing essential matters remotely. Courts are now gradually expanding the types of matters they will hear, although have not returned to normal operations. Numerous survivors who contacted law enforcement to report domestic violence shared that police officers responded but would not enter their homes or arrest the perpetrator, even when threatened with weapons. Along with many businesses and organizations, the Center's staff has been working remotely since March, 2020. It is in this context that advocates and attorneys from the Center have been trying to help survivors stay safe over these past months.

What are some challenges survivors have faced during the pandemic?

The pandemic created additional stressors and barriers for survivors. While sheltering in place, many survivors and abusers were suddenly out of work, together around the clock with no buffer time and coping with the additional stress of trying to afford rent and groceries. Added to this was the challenge of home schooling for those survivors with children. We received countless calls from survivors who were feeling desperate from the psychological stress of relentless verbal abuse and controlling behaviors, and also from those who feared for their physical well-being due to escalating violence and threats of harm. At the same time, many callers were afraid to pursue orders of protection or report to law enforcement for fear of retaliation. They worried how their abusers would react if the petitions

were denied knowing the survivor had sought an order of protection, or if the judge ordered the abuser to refrain from the harmful conduct but did not remove them from the home. Conversely, many expressed concern about their abusers becoming homeless during the pandemic if removed from the home. Our advocates listened and provided

safety planning. However, many survivors were not afforded a window of time in which to leave, as abusers were home and not at work. In addition, survivors did not have the choice to stay with a friend or family member as they did pre-COVID. Many of our calls with survivors were interrupted due to lack of privacy and staff would encourage survivors to call back while on a private walk, in the car or in a private space such as a bathroom. Some survivors who were already separated from their abusive partners faced issues around their exes refusing to return the children from visitations using COVID as an excuse. On the other hand, some survivors were afraid to bring their children to visitations knowing that their ex-partners were not practicing safe social distancing in their lives, and wanted to take their children to large group settings. Survivors were not able to file for child support until recently, and that brought financial stress. For survivors with existing custody, guardianship and child support court cases, their cases were put on hold leaving many feeling that they were in limbo. Survivors were not allowed to file new matters, such as custody and child support petitions. The only petitions being accepted were those related to orders of protection, abuse and neglect and refusal to return children from visitation.

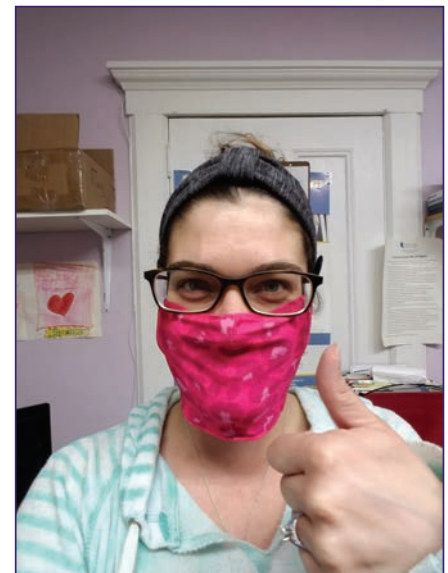
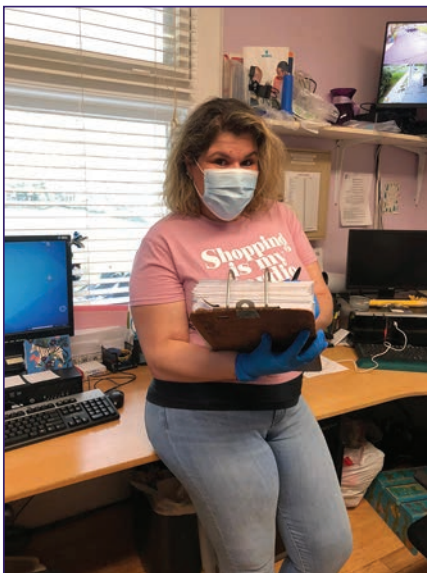
Andrea Panjwani, Esq., is the Chief Legal Officer at Center for Safety & Change. With more than 28 years of legal experience, Andrea co-chairs the Rockland Immigration Coalition, sits on the New York State Advisory Council of Immigration Issues in Family Court, ICE out of Courts Coalition, Statewide Coalition for Court Simplification and facilitates the Justice for Families collaborative in Rockland County.

For more information, please contact Andrea Panjwani at apanjwani@centersc.org or call our 24-Hour Hotline at (845) 634-3344.

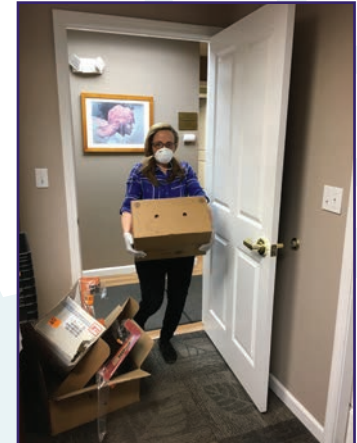
EMERGENCY RESIDENTIAL SHELTER STAFF TRIBUTE

Special *shout out* and kudos...

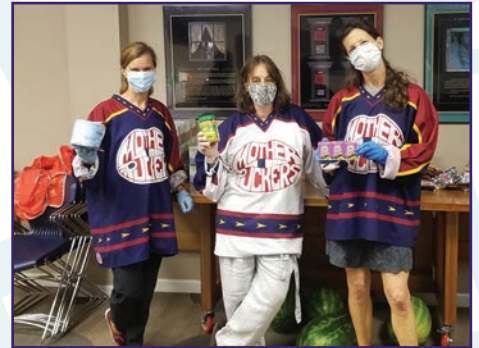
Thank you to the emergency residential shelter staff led by **Annquette Mackey**, director of residential services. During the pandemic, while most were able to work remotely, there are no work-from-home options for the emergency residential shelter staff. As frontline essential staff members, they risked their own safety to help others during a health crisis. Thanks for your commitment to the victims and survivors; your hard work is truly appreciated!



COVID-19 DONATIONS AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS



COVID-19 DONATIONS AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS (cont.)



VIRTUAL EVENT HIGHLIGHT

GETTING TO THE CENTER: **Unmask the Violence & Abuse**



Cathleen Trigg-Jones
Special Guest Host



Sharon Leal



Gretchen Carlson



Roxanne Shanté



Sakina Jaffrey



Nicole Ari Parker & Boris Kodjoe



Christopher Gorham



Suzanne Vega



Anita Kopacz

On June 4th, the Center's first-ever virtual event entitled **Getting to the Center: Unmask the Violence & Abuse** featured a star-studded lineup, including Boris Kodjoe, Nicole Ari Parker, Sharon Leal, Chris Gorham, Sakina Jaffrey, Suzanne Vega, Cathleen Trigg-Jones and Anita Kopacz. The live streamed event was hosted and produced by Emmy Award-winning journalist Cathleen Trigg-Jones. She had the pleasure of introducing musical performers like Suzanne Vega, the songwriter who penned the 1987 hit song about domestic violence entitled "Luka," as well as musical performances by Rockland locals Alex Francisco and Yan Falmagne. Acclaimed actors Sharon Leal and Chris Gorham committed to this fundraising endeavor by shining a light on the concerns of victims of abuse. It was also a family affair, as Nicole Ari Parker and Boris Kodjoe promoted health and wellness for family members quarantined

during the pandemic by sharing a fun workout routine for all ages. Finally, Sakina Jaffrey, a well-admired actress from the web television series House of Cards, treated everyone to an easy and delicious cooking demonstration. The diverse and entertaining program also included Linie Chang-Rand, the Center's board president, showcasing her adorable dogs to bring awareness to our Paws for Safety program.

As a crisis intervention agency, the work at Center for Safety & Change did not slow down because of the health crisis. In fact, the need for our life-saving services increased nearly 70% since January and this special event raised a record amount of donations for our emergency fund, allowing us to continue helping those in dire need. A big thank you to all our sponsors and supporters. We look forward to our next one in October!

SAVE
THE
Date

A Star-Studded Virtual Evening

GETTING TO THE CENTER:
Unmask the Violence & Abuse *Part 2*

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 4, 2020 | 7:00 PM EST

FACEBOOK LIVE

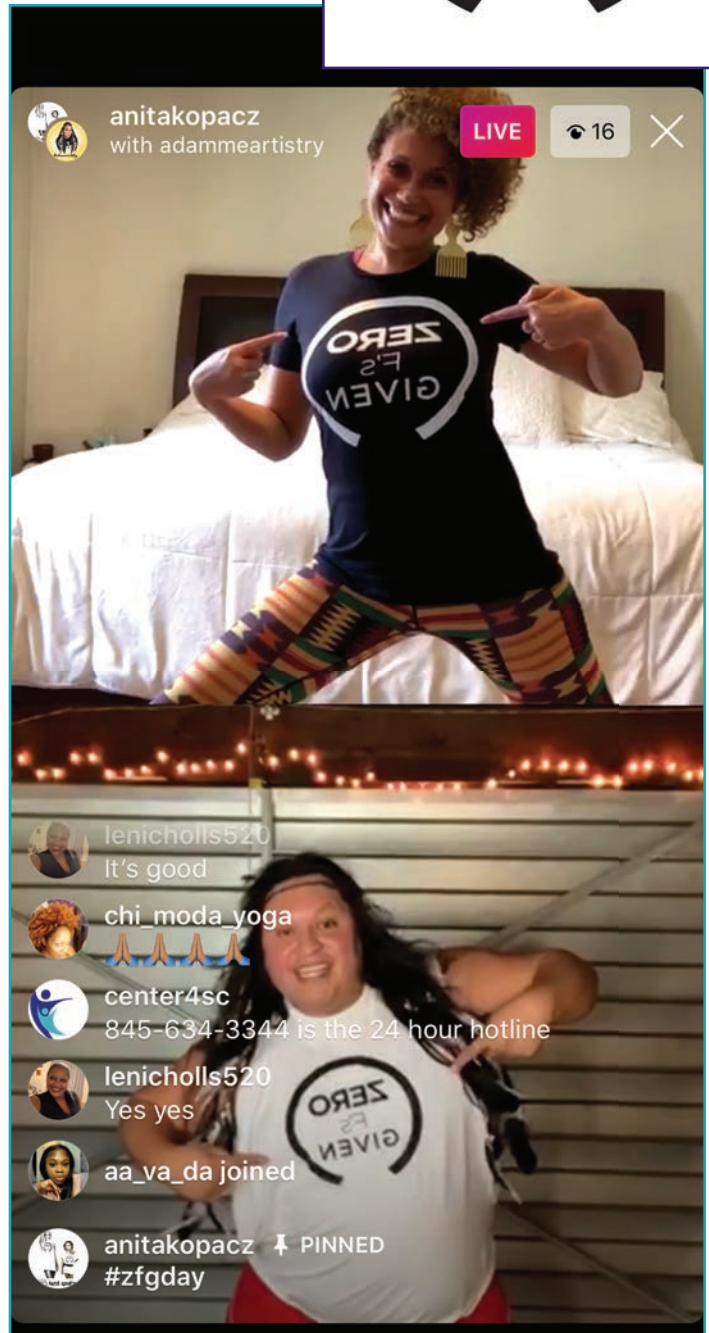
ZFG DAY



On Sunday, June 7th, supporters joined on Instagram Live for a freedom meditation with a sound bath presented by @channelthelove, Hibiscus Flow Yoga with @iamtheprotectress and vibrant dancing with @adammeartistry all to raise awareness for **Zero F's Given (ZFG)**. Created by Center for Safety & Change Board Member Anita Kopacz, Zero F's Given is a campaign to raise awareness and help victimized and disenfranchised populations heal from trauma, find their voice and reclaim their power.



Anita Kopacz was inspired to create the ZFG campaign because she is a thriving survivor of sexual abuse. She has utilized numerous modes of healing to reclaim her power, the strongest of which was communing with women. She took that idea and ran with it. Together, with partnerships, she created Zero F's Given.



Virtual ^{33RD} ANNUAL WOMEN'S DISTANCE FESTIVAL 5K RUN • WALK

The week of Saturday, July 11th through Saturday, July 18th, the Rockland Road Runners hosted the **33rd Annual Virtual Women's Distance Festival** presented by **We Love Rockland** in support of the Center. The event raised over \$60,000 with nearly 1,300 participants shattering last year's record of \$43,000 raised!

The women's only 5K run/walk is the tri-state's largest for women and girls and the race this year was in honor of those suffering in silence during the COVID-19 pandemic. The virtual 5k run/walk was significant because participants were able to participate regardless of their location.

We welcomed supporters virtually from Arizona, Massachusetts, Oklahoma, California and many other areas. Although virtual, this movement allowed participants to be "Socially Distanced and Emotionally United."

Special thank you to race co-directors, **Carissa and Michael Seidenfrau**, and all the amazing participants, donors and sponsors who helped make the 33rd Annual Virtual Women's Distance Festival an unprecedented success, with record sponsors, donations and funds raised!

(continue on next page)



Virtual 33RD ANNUAL WOMEN'S DISTANCE FESTIVAL 5K RUN • WALK



**CALLING ALL
TEEN LEADERS!**

Virtual SAEDA TRAINING

**Student Activists
Ending Dating Abuse**

celebrating diversity / challenging
injustice / ending violence

Receive **28 hours** of community service

Looks great on **college** resumes

All students will receive **\$50**

Fun & Free program

Now Accepting
Applications for
November 2020
Virtual Training!

Applications can be found on our website:

centerforsafetyandchange.org/saeda

For more information, please call **Natalie Surin**
at (845) 634-3391 or email nsurin@centersc.org

A program of:



In collaboration with our
community partners:



centerforsafetyandchange.org

Tel: (845) 634-3391

24-Hour Hotline: (845) 634-3344

Web Chat | Mobile Text

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In Memoriam

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Chief Executive Officer
Venesia Defrank
Chief Operating Officer
Tracie D. McLee
Chief Development Officer
Andrea Panjwani, Esq.
Chief Legal Officer



Mission Statement

The mission of the Center for Safety & Change is to develop strategies to end gender-based violence and provide shelter and supportive services that empower survivors of domestic violence, sexual abuse and other crimes.

Value Statement

The values of the Center for Safety & Change are built on a foundation of knowledge that gender-based violence is a historically deep-rooted and pervasive reality. The Center is committed to changing systems that tolerate and perpetuate the oppression of women and violence against others. We are bound by these values to offer services that are both relevant to and respectful of the diverse communities we serve.

Vision Statement

The vision of the Center for Safety & Change is to help create a society in which all individuals can live with dignity and equality, free from fear, violence and oppression.

centerforsafetyandchange.org

development@centersc.org

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

24-Hour Hotline: (845) 634-3344



WE ARE *Hiring!*
[Click here to view current job openings.](http://centerforsafetyandchange.org/careers)
centerforsafetyandchange.org/careers