

The Supporter SUMMER 2026

CEO Letter

A New Chapter in Safety and Change



ELIZABETH SANTIAGO
Chief Executive Officer

Welcome to **The Supporter**, the newsletter for Center for Safety & Change. As we continue our mission of providing safety, healing, and hope to victims and survivors throughout our community, we are excited to share an important milestone in our organization's history.

Today, we find ourselves at another pivotal moment in our history.

We are proud to announce that we are acquiring a new shelter that will allow us to better serve the growing and changing needs of individuals and families seeking safety.*

The reason is simple: more people need help than our current shelter can safely serve.

While our existing shelter has served the community extraordinarily well for nearly five decades and will continue to do so, its physical layout limits our ability to meet today's needs. Too often, we must turn families away—not because we lack the commitment to help, but because we cannot safely configure rooms and beds to meet the unique needs of every family seeking refuge.

The new shelter will allow us to expand capacity, create more flexible living arrangements, and welcome more individuals and families during some of the most dangerous and difficult moments of their lives.

*Subject to all contract approvals

When our founders opened the doors of Rockland Family Shelter in 1979, they responded to a critical need in our community: a safe place for women and children fleeing domestic violence. Their vision, courage, and determination created a refuge that has saved countless lives over the past 47 years.

Over the years, our organization grew far beyond a shelter and hotline. We expanded our services to meet the needs of victims and survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, human trafficking, elder abuse, and other crimes. As our work grew, so did our understanding that safety is only the beginning. Survivors also need support, advocacy, healing, and opportunities to rebuild their lives.

That understanding ultimately led to our name – Center for Safety & Change.

“The new shelter will allow us to expand capacity, create more flexible living arrangements, and welcome more individuals and families during some of the most dangerous and difficult moments of their lives.”

Acquiring the property, however, is only the first step.

Before families can call the new shelter home, significant renovations, safety upgrades, and building improvements will be needed. Together, these changes will transform the space into a secure, welcoming, and healing environment that reflects the dignity and resilience of the victims and survivors we serve.

This next chapter will require the same vision, determination, and community partnership that inspired our founders nearly five decades ago.

As we move forward, we do so with profound gratitude for the generations of supporters, volunteers, donors, advocates, staff members, and community partners who have made this work possible. Because of you, lives have been saved, futures have been rebuilt, and hope has been restored.

Rockland Family Shelter remains a vital part of our story and our future. It has provided safety for 47 years and will continue serving individuals and families as we expand our capacity and strengthen our ability to meet our community's growing needs.

The words that emerged from our community wide renaming process years ago—Safety and Change—continue to guide us today.

This new shelter represents both.

It represents safety for individuals and families escaping violence and abuse. It represents change for victims and survivors rebuilding their lives. And it represents our shared commitment to ensuring that every person who reaches out for help can find refuge, support, and hope.

Thank you for being part of this journey. Together, we are building the next chapter of safety and change.

“Today, we find ourselves at another pivotal moment in our history.”

Help Is Possible



24-Hour Hotline: (845) 634-3344



24-Hour Mobile Text: (845) 286-4997



24-Hour Web Chat: centerforsafetyandchange.org

Shelter *Spotlight*

The Story Behind Our Name

Center for Safety & Change opened its doors in 1979 under the name **Rockland Family Shelter**. Earlier in the 1970s, alongside the women's movement and growing recognition of the crisis of domestic violence, the organization's founders, often affectionately known as the Founding Mothers and supported by several male allies, recognized an urgent need in Rockland County: a safe, confidential hotline number and a place for battered women and their children fleeing abuse.

Over the following decades, the organization grew. In addition to an emergency shelter and hotline, it developed counseling, legal services, advocacy, accompaniments, SAFE (Sexual Assault Forensic Exam), coordinators/liaisons to specific communities including African American, Asian, Latine, Haitian, LGBTQ, Project Tikvah, TDVPP (Teen Dating Violence Prevention Program), SAEDA (Student Activist Ending Dating Violence), workplace prevention education, human trafficking and other crime victim services.

Yet many people continued to assume that Rockland Family Shelter provided only shelter.

By 2010, it had become clear that the name no longer reflected the breadth of services offered or the communities being served.

Under the leadership of then Board President Michael Mandel and Executive Director Carolyn Fish the organization launched a community-wide process to explore what services they thought we provided and a new name. Stakeholders comprised of founders, current and past board members, staff, victims, survivors, SAEDA participants, donors, volunteers, and the community at large all contributed their ideas through surveys and focused discussions about the organization's mission and impact.

Among the many words submitted, two themes consistently rose to the top: **safety and change**.

Together, those words captured both the immediate protection victims and survivors seek and the lasting transformation the organization works to create. From that process, **Center for Safety & Change** was born.

Today, the organization continues to operate under that name, while its emergency shelter proudly retains the name Rockland Family Shelter in tribute to the vision and determination of those who founded it. More than four decades later, the shelter remains the heart of the organization—a place of refuge, healing, and hope made possible by generations of supporters, partners, and community members committed to a safer future for all.



Center for Safety & Change Board of Directors, 2010.

“Safety and change captured both the immediate protection survivors seek and the lasting transformation the organization works to create.”

Support, Safety & *Legal Rights*

*Everyone Deserves a Safe Place
to Call Home*

Victims and survivors of domestic violence face difficult choices. For many, safe housing is one of the biggest challenges.

Research shows that more than 90% of homeless women have experienced severe physical or sexual violence, and nearly two-thirds have experienced intimate partner violence. Yet leaving an abusive situation is often complicated by financial abuse,

damaged credit, housing discrimination, and concerns about safety.

Thanks to supporters like you, Center for Safety & Change helps victims and survivors understand and protect their legal rights while building safer futures.



Andrea Panjwani,
Chief Legal Officer

Housing Rights *Can Save Lives*

Many victims and survivors do not realize that New York law provides important protections that can help them stay safe, remain housed, and rebuild their lives.

Protection From Housing Discrimination

Victims and survivors of domestic violence have the right to be treated fairly when renting, buying, or financing a home. Landlords, real estate agents, sellers and lenders cannot deny housing opportunities, impose different rules or otherwise treat someone unfairly simply because they have experienced abuse.

The Right to End a Lease Early

Leaving an abuser often means leaving a home. New York law allows many victims and survivors to terminate a lease before it expires if doing so is necessary for their safety. This protection can help them relocate without the burden of paying months of additional rent.

Protection From Eviction

No one should lose their housing because they sought help. Landlords cannot evict a tenant simply because an abusive partner committed acts of violence in the home. Victims and survivors also have the right to call 911 whenever they need emergency assistance without fear that those calls will be used against them in housing decisions.

The Right to Cancel Certain Contracts

Starting over often requires severing ties with an abuser. Victims and survivors may be able to cancel utility, cable, internet and phone contracts without paying early termination fees. They may also be able to obtain a new confidential phone number, helping them maintain their privacy and increase their safety.

Protections in Subsidized Housing

Federal housing programs provide additional safeguards for victims and survivors. Applicants cannot be denied housing because they have experienced domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence or stalking. Current tenants may be able to remain in their homes, request emergency transfers to safer locations or remove an abuser from the lease while keeping their housing assistance.

Help Is Possible



**Call 845-634-3344
to speak with an advocate.**

Understanding these rights can sometimes mean the difference between homelessness and stability and safety.

If you or someone you know is experiencing housing-related challenges because of domestic violence, Center for Safety & Change can help.

Survivor Story

L'Tanya's Story



From a childhood dream
to a second chance.

As a first grader, L'Tanya noticed something. Because her birthday fell during summer vacation, she and the other children with summer birthdays never received the small bag of birthday candy their classmates enjoyed during the school year. She respectfully asked her teacher to change that. The teacher smiled, agreed—and told L'Tanya she **"should be a lawyer."**

Years later, that childhood confidence was overshadowed by tragedy and abuse. After losing her mother, becoming a young parent, and being in a violent relationship, L'Tanya feared for her life. She and her children found safety at Center for Safety & Change, where, for the first time in a long time, they could simply rest.

While at the Center, an advocate asked a simple question: **"What do you want to do with the rest of your life?"** Instantly, L'Tanya remembered her first-grade teacher's words. That moment became the beginning of an extraordinary journey.

Today, L'Tanya is an attorney, community leader, grandmother, and former Center for Safety & Change advocate who continues to help others build safer futures.



READ L'TANYA'S

Inspiring story here.



WATCH L'TANYA

Tell her story here.

QUIZ

QUESTION

In what year did the first shelter for abused women and children opened in the United States?

ANSWER

The Women's Advocates, in Minnesota was the first domestic violence shelter in the U.S., and it opened its doors in 1974.

If you or someone you know is a victim or survivor and needs help, please reach out to us, we are here 24-hours a day.



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Mission *Partners*

Thank you Mission Partners!

Mission Partners are a cornerstone of our work.

As Center for Safety & Change experienced a 40% increase in demand for services from 2024 to 2025, we asked our Mission Partners why they chose to invest in our mission during this critical time. Here is what they shared.

Atlantic, Tomorrow's Office

"In technology, when demand spikes, you strengthen the system — you don't step back. Center for Safety & Change is critical infrastructure for survivors, and we're proud to support the stability and safety they provide to our community."

*Larry Weiss, Chairman,
Atlantic, Tomorrow's Office.*

Atlantic

Drs. Ruba & Jamil Rizqalla

"A 40% rise in need is a powerful reminder that the work is far from done. Behind that number are women and families who deserve safety, dignity, hope, and support. We choose to stand with Center for Safety & Change because when our community faces greater need, it calls upon each of us to respond so no one has to face crisis alone."

Drs Ruba & Jamil Rizqalla



Goya Foods

"A 40% increase in demand is more than a statistic — it's a powerful reminder that many families in our community are facing urgent challenges and need support now more than ever. At Goya Foods, we believe that strong communities are built by showing up for one another in moments of need. Our continued support of Center for Safety & Change reflects our commitment to standing with organizations that provide critical resources, protection, and hope. When the need grows, our responsibility to act grows with it."

*Rafael Toro, National Director
of Public Relations of Goya Foods*



Kathy Perrotte & Marla Pasquale

"A 40% increase in demand is both alarming and clarifying—it underscores the depth of community need and the reality that more individuals and families are facing violence, crisis, and instability with too few places to turn. Our reaction is a mix of concern and urgency. At moments like this, organizations like Center for Safety & Change are not just helpful; they are essential. We choose to support the Center during this moment because it meets people at their most vulnerable moment with compassion, expertise, and dignity, while also working to break cycles of violence and create long-term safety. When the need grows this sharply, standing with a trusted, community-rooted organization is one of the most meaningful ways to respond."

Kathy Perrotte & Marla Pasquale



Sandra & Michael Mandel

"We support every aspect of the mission and work of Center for Safety & Change and believe it is the most impactful way to invest our charitable donations."

Sandra & Michael Mandel



If you are interested in becoming a Mission Partner and helping ensure that victims and survivors have access to safety, healing, and hope, **please contact Sandy Page-Cook at spagecook@centersc.org.**

Mission *Partners*

Thank you Mission Partners!

KeyBank

"That there was an increase in demand for services in 2025 underscores just how much work remains. Fortunately, for our community, we have a resource like Center for Safety & Change. While no one should ever have to experience violence or sexual assault, those who do deserve and are worthy of every support needed to survive, heal, and ultimately thrive. KeyBank is proud to be a partner in making this reality—ensuring that those who need help, when hope feels furthest away, get it."

*John Manginelli, President,
Hudson Valley/Metro
NY Market*



Lia Toyota of Rockland

"A 40% increase in demand tells us that more people in our community are reaching out for help, and organizations like Center for Safety & Change need our support now more than ever. We are grateful for the work they do every day to provide safety, resources, and hope to individuals and families in crisis. As a family-owned business, we believe in giving back to the communities that support us, and we're proud to partner with Center for Safety & Change to help ensure these vital services remain available to those who need them most."

Lia Toyota of Rockland



Joe & Linie Rand and the Entire Rand Family

"We need Center for Safety and Change more than ever. We love Rockland County, but no community in this country is free from the scourge of gender-based violence and human trafficking. So we're honored to stand with the Center in the great work they do for survivors, and hope people will join us to make direct investments in the safety, healing, and resiliency of the most vulnerable members of our community."

Joe & Linie Rand

JOE & LINIE RAND
— AND THE ENTIRE RAND FAMILY —

Paul & Mary Adler Charitable Fund for Good

"A 40% increase in demand is a clear signal of the urgent need facing our community. Center for Safety & Change is essential to Rockland County—providing critical support to victims and survivors while advancing justice and long-term social change. I have supported this organization for more than 45 years because its mission and impact matter, especially in moments like this."

Paul Adler, Esq.



Simona Chazen

"I support Center for Safety & Change because, after all these years, we continue to have domestic violence ranging from verbal abuse to murder right here in Rockland County."

Simona Chazen



If you are interested in becoming a Mission Partner and helping ensure that victims and survivors have access to safety, healing, and hope, **please contact Sandy Page-Cook at spagecook@centersc.org.**



Upcoming *Events*

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month
here is how you can get involved

Where will you go? Raffle

Drawing October 22 – winner does not need to be present. 1 for \$50, 3 for \$100



[CLICK HERE.](#)

**OCT
03, 04**

Nyack Arts & Crafts Walk

Benefiting Center for Safety & Change. Show your support while enjoying local artists, makers, and community events throughout Nyack.

**OCT
05**

3rd Annual Golf Benefit, Rockland Country Club

An afternoon of golf and giving to support victims and survivors.



[CLICK HERE.](#)

**OCT
09**

19th Annual Simona & Jerome A. Chazen Business Luncheon

Hilton Pearl River | 11:30 AM – 2:00 PM
Honoring Orange Bank & Trust and Harrington Press



[CLICK HERE.](#)

**OCT
15**

Shine the Light 2026

Governor Mario M. Cuomo Bridge
11:00 AM – 2:00 PM



[CLICK HERE.](#)

**OCT
15**

Guest Bartending Fundraiser

Benefiting Center for Safety & Change
Location: TBD

**OCT
16**

2026 STOP F.E.A.R. Conference

Rockland Community College | Registration Required
8:30 AM – 12:30 PM



[CLICK HERE.](#)

**OCT
22**

Designer Bag Bingo

Nyack Seaport
Doors Open: 5:30 PM | Games Begin: 7:00 PM



[CLICK HERE.](#)

Don't forget!

Mercedes Benz of Nanuet will donate **\$1000 to Center for Safety & Change** on behalf of anyone who presents this page when purchasing or leasing a new or pre-owned car before **October 31, 2026**.

Contact info@centersc.org to learn about other ways to help, including how to volunteer.



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*Learn more about
Center for Safety
& Change here*

Learn About Our Work



Tel: (845) 634-3391
Fax: (845) 634-3396
info@centersc.org

9 Johnsons Lane, New City,
NY 10956

Mission Statement

Center for Safety & Change provides critical services and support to women and all victims and survivors of gender-based violence and other crimes while working toward justice by creating social change.

Value Statement

We Are Client-Centered

- ✓ We are committed to growing as an anti-racist/anti-oppression organization in order to serve all people of every race, ethnicity, religion, ability, immigration statuses, sexual orientations, gender identities, and economic statuses with respect and compassion.
- ✓ We listen without judgment, follow the lead of victims and survivors and provide the supports and services they choose in order to increase emotional and physical safety.
- ✓ We honor the trust that victims and survivors place in us by ensuring the confidentiality of the information and documents they share.
- ✓ We advocate on behalf of and alongside victims and survivors by exercising high professional standards and best practices, and by continuing to grow and learn with humility in deference to survivor's voices.

We Are Multi-faceted Advocates

- ✓ As advocates for victims and survivors, we provide comprehensive information, critical services and meaningful emotional support while prioritizing the autonomy of the survivor.
- ✓ As advocates for social change, we provide training and coordinate community initiatives to raise awareness and engage our entire community in the movement to end violence.
- ✓ As advocates for systemic transformation, we collaborate with schools, colleges, businesses, community-based organizations, places of worship, medical and mental health providers, criminal legal system and other government agencies in order to increase accessibility and responsiveness to the needs of victims and survivors; and pursue survivor-centered policy and legislative change.

Vision Statement

A world in which all people are free from oppression and violence and experience respect, dignity, equity and safety in every aspect of their lives.

Donate Now

Every gift helps a family answer the door of a safer future.

centerforsafetyandchange.org

For further information, contact development@centersc.org