

## A Legacy to Last a Lifetime: *Celebrating Betsey Mauro*



In January of 2016, the Board of Directors of our organization (then Women's Support Services - WSS) proudly announced the appointment of Dr. D. Elizabeth ("Betsey") Mauro as Executive Director. Former Board Chair and current Connecticut State Representative Maria Horn said of Betsey's appointment, "We believe Dr. Mauro's experience, skills and leadership style make her the ideal person to lead WSS in its next chapter." In the nearly 8 years since that time, staff size has doubled, emergency and long-term shelter offerings have expanded, prevention education programming has more than tripled the number of sessions taught, the agency moved to a new, larger home at 13A Porter Street in Lakeville, and WSS changed its name to Project SAGE (Support-Advocate-Guide-Educate). Under Betsey's leadership, the agency is extremely well-positioned to begin its next chapter.



A native of northwestern Connecticut, Betsey joined the staff after a career in ministry and higher education, which included work with victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. Betsey holds a BA in geology from the University of New Hampshire, a Master of Divinity from Earlham School of Religion, and a Doctorate in Ministry from Princeton Theological Seminary.

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A thoughtful, courageous, and empathetic leader, Betsey has developed a hugely productive network of connections in the community and beyond. She has ensured clients in need of support are connected to resources such as civil and criminal legal advocacy or emergency shelter. She has forged connection within the staff and Board. During COVID, staff dispersed to work remotely, yet Betsey ensured the hotlines remained open and those in need maintained access to the agency's critical services. Her ability to create connections and dedication to our mission resulted in a stronger agency that grew despite many challenges and unknowns.

In Betsey's first year, Project SAGE responded to 515 hotline crisis calls, provided emergency shelter to 3 adults and 5 children, and taught nearly 50 prevention education workshops to children and teens in the area about the importance of healthy relationships. Last year, the agency responded to 2,040 hotline crisis calls, provided over 1,700 nights of emergency shelter, and taught more than 250 workshops to children and teens through prevention education programming. These numbers not only speak to the need for Project SAGE's services within our community, but also to the incredible growth of the agency thanks to Betsey's leadership.

We are so grateful to Betsey for the vibrant, sustainable agency Project SAGE has become; one that will continue in its mission to end relationship violence long after her tenure has ended. She has made Project SAGE an invaluable community resource and transformed the agency from a locally known organization to a leader in the field of defeating domestic abuse.



Photo credit: John Dolan, courtesy of Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation

## Early Years Program

Thanks to the dedication of Project SAGE's volunteers, the agency brought back its Early Years Program this past year! This program is designed to teach young children concepts and skills for maintaining healthy relationships. Using children's literature and interactive activities, children learn about identity, emotion regulation, communication skills, conflict management, bystander intervention, and empathy.

*"We appreciate you teaching us how to make good choices. We loved playing games with you too"*

– Early Years Program teachers and students



# An Extraordinary Visit in an Extraordinary Year!



Pictured from left: Jerome Stallings of the CT Department of Social Services; Tonya Johnson, Executive Vice President & Chief Operating Officer of CCADV; Betsey Mauro, Executive Director and Virginia Gold, Director of Client Services.

*"This is how it is supposed to be. I wish the services weren't needed, but I am so glad to know that this area of the state is receiving such amazing services."*

Jerome Stallings of the Connecticut Department of Social Services

This past June, Project SAGE had the pleasure of hosting Jerome Stallings of the Connecticut Department of Social Services and Tonya Johnson, Executive Vice President & Chief Operating Officer of the Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence (CCADV) at the Porter Street office to learn about the many innovative and creative ways the agency supports individuals and families in need of emergency housing. Led by Executive Director, Betsey Mauro and Director of Client Services, Virginia Gold, the visitors toured through the offices before visiting our shelter and interim housing locations. It had been many years since Jerome had visited the agency, and at that time, Project SAGE (known then as Women's Support Services) sheltered only a handful of individuals for short periods of time.

Since then, the agency has significantly increased its shelter programming, providing emergency shelter to 41 individuals - including 13 children for a total of 1,719 nights of shelter from July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2023. The agency also placed 12 families in permanent housing through the state's Rapid Re-housing program. Both Jerome and Tonya were astounded by the agency's growth and ability to think out of the box to ensure all clients receive the support they need to rest, recover, and plan for brighter futures.

## Get Involved at Project SAGE

Become a certified Project SAGE volunteer this spring by completing the 20-hour certification program. We encourage interested individuals to contact Linda Ciano, Director of Community Engagement, or visit our website at [project-sage.org/volunteer](https://project-sage.org/volunteer) to explore all available volunteer opportunities.

# PROJECT SAGE

*Support • Advocate • Guide • Educate*

PO Box 717  
13A Porter Street  
Lakeville, CT 06039

**Project SAGE provides a 24-hour crisis hotline 860.364.1900.  
ALL SERVICES ARE FREE AND CONFIDENTIAL.**

## **Project SAGE Staff**

Dr. D. Elizabeth Mauro, Executive Director  
Linda Ciano, Director of Community Engagement  
Brenna Doyle, Fund Development Administrative Assistant  
Thom Dunlavey, Office Administrator  
Sarah Ford, Prevention Educator  
Virginia Gold, Director of Client Services  
Yamile Leal Baron, Adult Advocate  
Kaitlyn Robitaille, Director of Appeals & Fundraising Events  
Kelly Rybczyk, Director of Operations  
Jesi Sarno, Housing Advocate  
Lisa Waldron, Family Violence Victim Advocate

## **CONTACT US**

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