

Women's Support Services

PO Box 341
158 Gay Street
Sharon, CT 06069

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WSS

 WOMEN'S
SUPPORT
SERVICES

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Spring 2021

POSTAL PATRON

Women's Support Services provides a 24-hour Crisis Hotline 860.364.1900.

All services are FREE and confidential.

Contact Us

PO Box 341
158 Gay Street
Sharon, CT 06069
Hotline 860.364.1900
T 860.364.1080
F 860.364.5767
info@wssdv.org
www.wssdv.org

Find Us Online

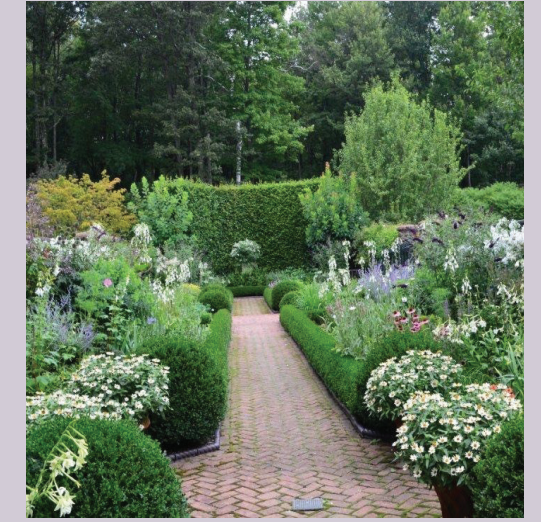
www.wssdv.org
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www.tradesecretsct.com

WSS Staff

Dr. D. Elizabeth Mauro, *Executive Director*
Virginia Gold, *Director of Client Services*
Heather Haneman, *Adult Advocate*
Jesi Sarno, *Family and Child Advocate*
Lisa Waldron, *Family Violence Victim Advocate*
Tracey Abut, *Hotline Counselor*
Megan Clyne, *Hotline Counselor*
Stephanie Koven, *Hotline Counselor*
Stephen Montagna, *Director of Community Engagement and Prevention Education*
Haydée Lopez Rosado, *Primary Prevention Educator*
Ruth Felipe, *Office Administrator and Development Assistant*
Shelly Ross Robbins, *Director of Development*
Kelly Rybczyk, *Director of Special Gifts and Events*

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Anna Traggio



Photos: Vendors and Community Partners once again rallied around Women's Support Services and our clients with a variety of fundraisers.

This year has been, as for so many, completely different. Online education, virtual meetings and thinking on our feet (far more than normal!) became the norm. Ultimately, this reorientation strengthened our work in a variety of ways. We drew upon our partnerships to ensure connection with potential clients, we had new partners reach out to us as shelter capacity became limited across the state, and the increased awareness around domestic violence in general fueled interest in our work. While initially concerned about not working face-to-face with students, we found that online programming has increased access for many young people by providing them a safe space in which to ask questions.

This year has been different in other ways as well. With the groundswelling response to the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Women's Support Services, like so many, has taken an introspective look at the ways in which we raise awareness and engage our clients and partners. Thanks to the **Foundation for Community Health**, WSS has launched an effort to address issues of diversity within our agency and in the ways in which we work. This is vitally important as communities of color and the LGBTQIA+ community face additional barriers to accessing support. Understanding these intersections is essential to ensure that we are inclusive in our outreach and effective in our provision of support. Using our platform to advance the larger movement for equity across the country is an obligation in line with our mission and values.

A Year of Change - Strategic Directions and New Programming in the Community



Ruth Felipe, Office Administrator and Development Assistant

COVID-19 brought about changes not only in the operating environment, but for staffing at Women's Support Services as well. **Liz Davis**, Adult Counselor Advocate at WSS, retired at the end of September 2020. Liz has been a fierce advocate for victims of violence and abuse, working in the fields of domestic violence, sexual assault and HIV/AIDS for nearly 40 years. **Robert Kuhn**, Community Outreach and Prevention Education Coordinator, and **Deanna Barry**, Prevention Educator and Volunteer Coordinator, both relocated to be closer to family. Robert and Deanna brought our prevention efforts to new levels. In addition to a complete revision of our prevention education curriculum and overhaul of our volunteer program, they undertook training on human trafficking for the middle schools at the request of the Assistant Superintendent for Region One and they launched the *Boys and Men Initiative*. **Marie Vedder**, Family and Child Advocate, and **Louisa Dux**, Development and Administrative Assistant, moved on to new opportunities having left us with the foundation for our re-housing program and improved data management. While we miss these colleagues, we wish them all the best in their new endeavors and adventures!

The other side of this story is, of course, the many new faces who have joined us at WSS: Adult Advocate **Heather Haneman**, Office Administrator and Development Assistant **Ruth Felipe**, Director of Community Engagement and Prevention Education **Stephen Montagna**, Primary Prevention Educator **Haydée Lopez Rosado**, and Family and Child Advocate



Jesi Sarno, Family and Child Advocate

Jesi Sarno. Our new staff members bring a wealth of experience to Women's Support Services, from work with marginalized populations and survivors of sexual assault to education, arts and work on gender and equity. We now have two bilingual staff members, whose skills in Spanish have already had a significant impact on client engagement. We are excited by the directions in which our new colleagues will take us.



Stephen Montagna, Director of Community Engagement and Prevention Education

I just want to let you know that your presenters are doing a GREAT job with a very sensitive topic - "Healthy Relationships". Haydée also presented "Boundaries". She brings a lot of energy to the presentations. The students really like both Haydée and Stephen. The boys especially like having a male presenter. A male presence lessens their anxiety when the topic is sensitive.

Thank you,
Leila Wood

North Canaan Elementary School

It is with great sadness that we note the passing of
Leila Wood this past April.



Heather Haneman, Adult Advocate

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, emergency shelter has been in crisis across the state. WSS has been at capacity for sheltering since last summer. In our area, the collapse of the affordable housing market and other pandemic-related consequences means that families are with us for months instead of weeks as they seek to establish a safer future for themselves and their families. WSS has met this challenge head on - expanding shelter partnerships and building our capacity in re-housing. **In the past year, we provided over 2,800 nights of shelter to 24 individuals and families - including 16 children.** This is an incredible shift from the previous year, when we provided 634 nights of shelter.



Haydée Lopez Rosado, Primary Prevention Educator

Women's Support Services also welcomed four new Board Members this year: **Susan DeMelle**, **Ileene Smith**, **Pamela Kling Takiff**, and **Vickie Tillman**. Susan, Ileene, Pamela and Vickie bring a wealth of experience to WSS in the areas of finance, business strategy, education, publishing, law, human rights and photography.

Thank You to Our Auction Donors & Third Party Fundraisers!!

Blackwell Botanicals ❖ Campo de' Fiori ❖ Debbie Cooper & Dan Sternberg ❖ David Burdick's Daffodils and More ❖ Page Dickey & Bosco Shell ❖ Falls Village Flower Farm ❖ Jane Garmey ❖ Glendale Botanicals ❖ Great Falls Brewing Company ❖ Bill Hamilton ❖ Hammertown Barn ❖ Pete Hathaway ❖ Rebecca Hathaway ❖ Helia Native Nursery ❖ House of Brinson ❖ Juliet & John Hubbard ❖ Hunter Bee ❖ issima ❖ Johnnycake Books ❖ Debby & Bart Jones ❖ Kent Flower Market ❖ The Ker Family ❖ Le Gamin Café ❖ Lee & Fritz Link ❖ Ruth Lloyds & Bil Ehrlich ❖ Mary Jane Magoon ❖ Thao & Scott Matlock ❖ Michael Trapp ❖ Barbara Kahn Moller & Karsten Moller ❖ Cindy O'Connor ❖ Passports ❖ Nicholas Pentecost ❖ Pergola ❖ Privet House ❖ Katie Ridder & Peter Pennoyer ❖ RT Facts ❖ Susan Sheehan & John O'Callaghan ❖ Christopher Spitzmiller & Anthony Bellomo ❖ Douglas Dockery Thomas ❖ Viridissima Horticulture & Design ❖ Larry Wente ❖ Bunny Williams & John Rosselli ❖ The Wish House ❖ Withington & Co. Antiques



Once again, Women's Support Services made the difficult, but necessary decision to cancel *Trade Secrets*. And once again, the community rallied around WSS in extraordinary ways. From third party fundraisers to an enthusiastic response to our Spring Appeal, individuals, foundations, local agencies, and businesses reached out with kindness and encouragement. **THANK YOU.** To fill the funding gap - and cover our significantly increased sheltering costs - WSS undertook its first-ever online auction. The offerings of intimate garden tours, master gardening classes, and unique items helped raise over \$93,000 to support our clients and their families in shelter.

Interested in supporting our shelter program?
Visit www.wssdv.org/donate.



Calling All Cars!

The rural nature of our area and lack of public transportation makes having a car essential. If you have a vehicle in good working condition that you would like to donate, please call 860.364.1080. Your donation will make a significant



difference in a client's life. Thank you to **Art's Automotive Repair** for supporting this important program!