

Women's Support Services

PO Box 341
158 Gay Street
Sharon, CT 06069

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POSTAL PATRON

**Women's Support Services provides a 24-hour Crisis Hotline (860) 364-1900.
All services are FREE and confidential.
Collect calls are accepted.**

Contact Us

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WSS Staff

Dr. D. Elizabeth Mauro, *Executive Director*
Virginia Gold, *Program Manager*
Liz Davis, *Adult Counselor Advocate*
Marie Vedder, *Adult and Child Advocate*
Lisa Waldron, *Family Violence Victim Advocate*
Tracey Abut, *Hotline Counselor*
Megan Clyne, *Hotline Counselor*
Stephanie Koven, *Hotline Counselor*
Deanna Barry, *Prevention Education and Volunteer Coordinator*
Robert Kuhn, *Community Outreach and Education Coordinator*
Shelly Ross Robbins, *Director of Development*
Kelly Rybczyk, *Trade Secrets Coordinator and Financial Administrator*
Louisa Dux, *Development Administrative Assistant*

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WSS WOMEN'S SUPPORT SERVICES

Community Connections

Summer 2020



Photos: WSS table at the Salisbury Fall Fest, Toys for Tots donations, tie-dye aficionados at the Salisbury Fall Fest, WSS staff members wear orange to mark Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month (February).

It has been a year of tremendous growth and change for Women's Support Services. Thanks to our donors and volunteers, we continued to expand our prevention education focus, providing 187 programs across the region. This included 52 sessions at area elementary schools, daycare centers and local camps; 99 sessions at the middle school level; and 36 sessions at Housatonic Valley Regional High School and three area private schools. With support from the **Foundation for Community Health** and the **Block Family Foundation** we also launched our inaugural Boys + Men programming, designed to support the healthy emotional and social development of boys.

The launch of our strategic planning process in early 2019 resulted in the expansion of our work in the areas of prevention education and community education. Women's Support Services adopted a new mission focused on social change, which emphasizes the need to challenge attitudes and beliefs about power, control, and gender norms. The other end of the spectrum of change, of course, was the unprecedented pandemic that caused upheaval across the globe. As WSS pivoted to ensure client support and safety, we confronted the Herculean tasks of communicating the cancellation of our major fundraising event, emergency planning, and establishing remote work protocols. The outpouring of support from the community and the strength of our program partnerships enabled WSS to weather this storm and continue our work. We could not have managed this period of uncertainty without you. **Thank you.**

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

We create social change to end interpersonal, relationship violence by challenging attitudes and beliefs about power, control, and gender norms and by advocating for victims and survivors.

Back to School! Despite the outbreak of COVID-19, Women's Support Services delivers 187 educational sessions to children and teens from daycare through 12th grade across the region this year.

Community members provide much-needed support and cheer to families grappling with domestic violence during the holiday season. CT State Troop 'B' once again delivers a sleighful of toys and many organizations and foundations provide numerous grants and donations. **Thank you!!**



WSS Volunteer, Ellen Axelrod and WSS Board Member, Beth Simon, attend the Community Vigil in Kent.



WSS Volunteer Valerie Lenis speaks at the Community Vigil.

Community members launch fundraisers to help ensure support for WSS and our clients. Our deepest thanks go to: Bunny Williams, The Edward, JP Gifford, The Wish House, Mohawk Mountain, Berkshire School and Atlantic Sportswear, Pergola, Montage, Visko Hatfield, Ten Mile Table and Troutbeck, Victoria Selbach and Chloe El Hadj.

WSS launches its inaugural Boys + Men programming at The Salisbury School, designed to support the healthy emotional and social development of boys and engage them as allies in promoting healthy relationships.

Marie Vedder joins Women's Support Services as our new Family and Child Advocate!

February marks Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month. According to the CDC, 1 in 9 female and 1 in 36 male high school students report having experienced sexual dating violence in the last year.

Program staff prepare 960 goodie bags for all six town Parks and Recreation Departments - ensuring 8 weeks of activities for kids this summer.

september

november

january

march

may

july

october

december

february

april

june

During Domestic Violence Awareness Month, community members remember the 16 Connecticut residents who lost their lives to domestic violence.

Generous support from the **Northwest Connecticut Community Foundation's** Philanthropy Fund enables Women's Support Services to launch a strategic planning process earlier this year.

The state-wide shutdown due to the outbreak of COVID-19 results in the unfortunate, but necessary cancellation of *Trade Secrets*, the primary fundraising event for Women's Support Services. However, tremendous community support - including multiple fundraisers from our *Trade Secrets* vendors - ensures that WSS is able to help anyone who needs our services - through the crisis and beyond.

WSS certifies another 9 volunteers, bringing the total number of WSS program volunteers to 36!

WSS participates in the Salisbury Fall Fest, hosting a tie-dye booth for kids. WSS donates proceeds to our shelter partner, The Little Guild. Abuse of pets is a common threat for victims of domestic violence and many shelters do not have the capacity to house beloved pets. The Little Guild and Sand Road Hospital provide free shelter for pets in partnership with Women's Support Services.



WSS Executive Director, Betsey Mauro, and Board Member, Barbara Kahn Moller, during the WSS Strategic Planning retreat.

In partnership with the **Foundation for Community Health**, Women's Support Services collaborates on a report that addresses gender-based violence as part of the Foundation's *Cultivating Solutions* series.

As WSS staff members adjust to working remotely, Executive Director, Betsey Mauro manages the necessary changes to ensure a smooth and safe return to the office. Innovations range from the construction of a counseling room to ensure social distancing to the creation of new safety protocols and building improvements including automatic lighting and hand sanitizing stations.