

#### THE STORY OF OUR 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.

# Thanks to you...

prevention education workshops for children and teens in local schools, daycare programs, and camps, transitioned to online support once COVID struck





1040

nights of emergency shelter provided



clients received counseling and safety planning



were new clients

938 victims

of family violence supported at criminal and civil court

Over 400 volunteers donated their time

6 cars donated to clients in need





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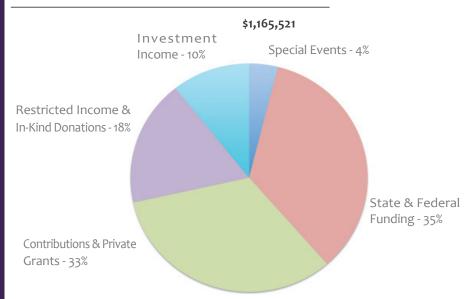
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### How is WSS funded?

Fiscal Year 2019-2020

State & Federal Funding\$404,075Contributions & Private Grants\$383,527Restricted Income & In-Kind Donations\$207,700Investment Income\$124,364Special Events\$45,855

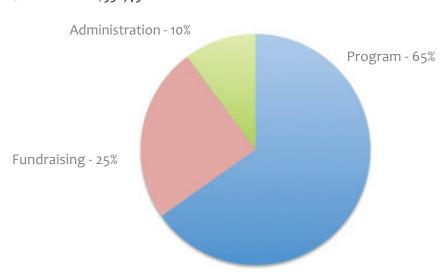


## How are funds spent?

Fiscal Year 2019-2020

Program \$612,302 Fundraising \$230,949 Administration \$95,245

TOTAL \$938,496



# A Year of Growth & Change

We launched an intensive strategic planning process that resulted in a significant shift for the agency. Largely influenced by our work in area schools on prevention education, we recognized our common understanding that interpersonal, relationship violence is rooted in attitudes and beliefs about gender norms and the exercise of power and control. As a result, we adopted a bold, new mission: 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. While continuing to provide emergency services and support to individuals and families affected by domestic violence, this new mission brings our commitment to social change and prevention efforts to the forefront of our work.

2020 began with excitement and anticipation. We had launched our new Boys and Men Initiative, we were at the peak of planning the 20th Anniversary of our major fundraising event, Trade Secrets, and we looked forward to bringing the vision of our new strategic plan to life. When COVID-19 struck, we quickly transitioned to working remotely and we drew upon our community partners to ensure that anyone who needed our services found us. Even as we cancelled our major fundraiser, we were buoyed by the outpouring of support from our donors and supporters. We adapted our educational methods and worked with area schools to continue delivering prevention education programming at the Middle Schools and High Schools this fall. While the year hasn't turned out quite as we had expected, we are the stronger for it. Online programming has opened new pathways to engage students and reach clients, partnerships have been solidified, and opportunities for new cooperation have arisen. Despite the many challenges of the past year, and because of your continued support and commitment, we are proud to have met these challenges head on.







# Your Support Makes a Difference:

#### Between July 2018 and June 2020:

- 1384 clients including 877 new clients and 50 children benefitted from our support services
- 417 prevention workshops were held with children and teens in local schools, daycare programs, and camps
- 938 victims of family violence received personal support from our criminal court advocate
- 1842 hotline calls and crisis requests were answered
- 45 adults and 22 children received emergency shelter for a total of 1040 nights in shelter



In April 2021, as the students at North Canaan Elementary School were embarking on spring break, word came that Health Counselor Leila Wood had suddenly passed away. Leila was dedicated to her students, creating a space that was welcoming to all, and encouraging them to explore the complex challenges of blooming from children into young adulthood. She laid the groundwork for WSS staff members to join her health class with lessons where students pondered unhealthy vs. healthy behavioral choices, honest communication, and the ever-shifting boundaries of identity and personal expression. Though our collaboration, due to current circumstances, was limited to Zoom meetings, Leila's compassion, humor, and honesty transmitted through the airwaves; her passing is a loss for her students, their school, and WSS. It is a stark reminder that our work requires not only a skilled and able staff, but caring collaborators at all levels of leadership throughout the community.

Stephen Montagna, WSS Director of Community Engagement and Prevention Education

I joined the board of Women's Support Services in 2015 because I believed in providing the critical support needed for victims of domestic violence. What I have learned during my time on the board is that WSS is so much more. It has become a true leader in our community for educational programs that focus on healthy communication and relationships. I have witnessed the careful and thoughtful development of these programs that resulted in the WSS staff delivering over 187 education workshops last year to support children and teen development in the complex arenas of consent, harassment, and intimate partner safety. These developments were made in concert with the development of the WSS program and support staff. Our community is lucky to benefit from the depth of knowledge and experience of the WSS staff. Their beneficial influence is clear to see. I am excited to see how WSS will continue to grow and expand and look forward to working with them to reach out to the most vulnerable populations in our community. Emily Vail, Chair, WSS Board of Directors



I attended WSS's counseling services and its weekly support group as I was recently divorced and caught up in a heinous child custody case. Three years later, with physical abuse, stalking and child endangerment on record and custody established, my four children and I returned to Connecticut, having survived an abusive and financially destructive experience.

Before our return, I remembered that WSS had a Calling All Cars program. I emailed to see if I would be eligible. I had found a new job, but had no way of getting to work. We were lucky as WSS did have a car - they even gave me a gas card to help me get home that day.

My experience made me want to give back to WSS upon our return. I completed the online domestic violence certification course and am now a certified volunteer with WSS. I know first-hand how helpful it was having advocates there for me as I was forced to meet my abuser in court.

I feel extremely lucky to have WSS in the community working so hard to support families suffering from domestic violence. I am and will always be happy to help WSS wherever and however I can. WSS was a lifeline for me in a VERY dark time and me and my children will forever be grateful.

**Former WSS Client** 



I had no idea what I was getting into when I joined the WSS staff four years ago. I am still not sure I know what I am going to end up doing each day! However, I always know that I will be collaborating with passionate co-workers, skilled community partners, and resilient, powerful clients.

As a social worker by training, I have always understood that my role in someone else's life – be it as community organizer, therapist, hospice worker, or DV advocate – is to start by listening. I often learn things that challenge my own perspective of the world, or my wish for how it "should" be. People are cruel to each other in so many ways. The variables that result in crisis are different for each person. And yet, every day I meet individuals who are determined to be in honest, trusting relationships with themselves and others. When I am able to breathe and listen, so often clients already have the answers. What they are missing is access to the resources. I feel lucky to work with a team that seeks creative ways to find that access.

At the same time, I love the work we do to educate and encourage healthier relationships. We live in a world that models get-rich-quick, win-at-all-costs relationships in a never-ending stream of virtual communication platforms. The isolation of the pandemic has not helped. As a parent, I am so grateful that our Region One schools support social emotional learning, and as a professional, that WSS can contribute to the conversation.

Virginia Gold, WSS Director of Client Services



Diana Bisselle, WSS Board Member

In our bucolic and peaceful corner of the world, we are incredibly fortunate to have an organization such as Women's Support Services providing important and critical resources for all victims of domestic violence. The mission of WSS and its vision as a resource for all, is a culmination of the strategic vision and diligence afforded by strong leadership and support. Over the past several years, we have witnessed the exponential growth in educational outreach into our community. This proactive approach was designed to provide long-term benefits for all ages by opening up important dialogue necessary for healthy relationships. This truly holistic approach makes for a stronger and more respectful community at large, where the serenity of the visual world can also be reflected in the individual.



Tanya Waugh, WSS Volunteer

## It has been a difficult year - thank you

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Contact Haydée Lopez Rosado for more information - hlopezrosado@wssdv.org

### How Can You Help?

- Make a **secure donation** at www.wssdv.org, or send a check to: WSS PO Box 341 Sharon, CT 06069. We also accept donations of securities. Contact Shelly Ross Robbins at srossrobbins@wssdv.org.
- Shop at LaBonne's Market and send us your receipts, and they'll donate a percentage of the sale!
- Drop off your used **cell phones** for clients in need. Through the Shelter Alliance program, phones are updated and distributed to shelters throughout the state for victims who need them. We also accept **laptops and tablets!**
- Go to smile.amazon.com and choose Women's Support Services, and we'll receive a percentage of all sales.
- Donate your car! Due to our rural setting and lack of public transportation, personal transportation is a critical need for many of our clients. Make a life-changing difference by donating your car to our **Calling All Cars** program. A big thanks to Art of Art's Automotive Repair for being a part of this important program.
- Consider donating items that help our clients in need: Phone, Gas, or Grocery cards.
- Create a fundraising campaign at **GoFundMe** charity.gofundme.com/womenssupportservice.
- If you are a **local business**, consider partnering with WSS to raise awareness.
- Consider Women's Support Services in your **planned giving**. Contact Kelly Rybczyk at krybczyk@wssdv.org.



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