



Women's Support Services Annual Report 2015 - 2016



Committed to creating a community free of domestic violence and abuse through intervention, prevention, and education.

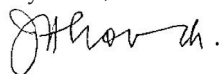
Women's Support Services (WSS) takes pride in our second Annual Report, the theme of which is, 'A Day in the Life'. It highlights the impact WSS has through its mission of intervention, prevention, and education, and is a testament to the care and commitment of our staff, the strength and perseverance of our clients, and the encouragement and support of our donors, volunteers, and community partners.

At a time when the government grants upon which we depend are in question, and the need for our services continues to be critical, we find encouragement and inspiration in the commitment of our community. We hope this report reveals the person-to-person relationships that make a vital difference to those we serve.

WSS is the smallest non-profit, stand-alone agency of its kind in the State of Connecticut. We serve over 500 clients directly and hundreds more through our education and community outreach programs. We are committed to fiscal responsibility and transparency, especially to our donors, supporters, and volunteers, without whose fidelity we could not possibly survive.

It is my great honor to serve WSS as Chair of the Board of Directors, and I take this opportunity to pay tribute to the passion and dedication of the professional staff at WSS, and to the guiding members of the WSS board. I thank them for their extraordinary tenacity in addressing the tragedy of domestic violence and abuse in our society, for their attention to developing a culture of kindness, and for their daily struggle to make a difference.

Your interest in the personal stories written here, and your involvement in our mission is critical to the health and well being of WSS and to the community we serve. We welcome engagement on any level, and we thank you for your support.



Judith Crouch
Chair, WSS Board of Directors



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A Message from our Executive Director

It is with gratitude that we offer this annual report. In these pages you will sense the courage of clients who come to us to be free of domestic or intimate partner violence. We are grateful for their courage and resiliency. You will discover the accomplishments we have made with community partners to create a coordinated response to those in need. We are grateful for these collaborative partnerships. And you will notice the generosity of many people who, through their gifts and donations, ensure that all of our programs and services are free and accessible to all. We are grateful for these gifts that do tangible good. In these uncertain financial times, when state and federal contracts that fund domestic violence services hang in the balance, Women's Support Services is uplifted and encouraged by the strong community support we receive as together we seek to create communities free of domestic violence and abuse through intervention, prevention, and education.



Dr. D. Elizabeth Mauro
Executive Director

Intimate partner violence, also referred to as domestic violence, is a serious, preventable public health problem. In the United States, approximately 27% of women and 12% of men have experienced sexual violence, physical violence, or stalking by an intimate partner (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2016). Women's Support Services, Inc., (WSS), is a non-profit domestic violence agency serving Northwest Connecticut and the surrounding communities in New York and Massachusetts. The mission of WSS is to create a community free of domestic violence and abuse through intervention, prevention, and education.

Our services include:

- 24-hour confidential hotline
- Short-term emergency shelter
- Individual counseling and safety planning
- Support groups
- Legal advocacy, transportation, and referral
- Violence prevention education and programming
- Training for local professionals
- Violence Prevention Education Program for pre-K - grade 12

Troop 'B' finds the forged relationship with Women's Support Services of Sharon, CT, to be an extremely invaluable partnership for all parties involved, which includes police, victims, and counselors. Our continued support is unwavering.

**Lt. William Baldwin, Commanding Officer
CT State Police, Troop 'B' North Canaan**

What do we do?

One of the initial points of contact for many of our clients is through our crisis hotline. Our certified counselors respond 24-hours per day, 7-days per week. Counselors undertake a risk assessment to determine whether a caller is 'safe' and complete an intake form as they help the caller explore their options.

Last year, we responded to approximately 420 hotline calls. The types of calls include those from our clients who are experiencing a crisis; calls from local law enforcement and medical providers seeking immediate assistance for victims; and calls from sister agencies requesting shelter services. We also operate a crisis center - people from the community can come to our office without an appointment and speak with a counselor during business hours.

Lethality Assessment Program (LAP)

Women's Support Services continues to partner with the Connecticut State Police Troop 'B' in Canaan and Troop 'L' in Litchfield on the *Lethality Assessment Program (LAP)*. This program has been successful in connecting victims who are most at risk of lethal violence to WSS for safety planning, support, and advocacy. WSS provides victims with safety planning at the time of the police response, and with victim consent, provides next day follow up with our Adult Counselor Advocate, and in cases resulting in arrest, with our Family Violence Victim Advocate.

In the past year, Women's Support Services:

- Worked with 527 clients - including 41 children - to provide support services and crisis response.
- Led 343 sessions on topics ranging from bullying and healthy relationships to teen dating violence and conflict resolution in schools, daycares, and other educational settings.
- Delivered 794 individual counseling sessions.
- Provided court-based advocacy and support to 250 victims of family violence.

When victims connect with WSS, we begin a process of intake and assessment:

- Conducting risk assessments and initiating safety planning;
- Exploring options available to the victim; and
- Identifying needs and barriers.

In educating victims on the dynamics of abuse, we explore the intersection of domestic violence and other factors (such as substance abuse), as well as the impact on children, and other relevant topics. For victims with needs that our services cannot meet, we provide information and referral. We provide individual and support group counseling, case management, and advocacy. We work with victims to:

- Develop budgets and plans for achieving financial independence;
- Secure affordable housing; and
- Empower victims to take back control and make decisions for themselves and their children.

Each quarter, WSS provides ongoing support services to approximately 40 -60 adult clients at our community-based office in Sharon.

Victim Advocacy Services

WSS provides community-based and court-based advocacy services. Advocacy is a process through which we speak on behalf, or in support, of victims.

Examples include:

- Meeting a victim at the hospital and speaking with the physician about conducting a thorough examination of her/his injuries
- Being present during meetings with child protective services to assist victims in identifying the efforts they have made to protect their children
- Contacting other providers on behalf of the victim to coordinate services

Our Family Violence Victim Advocate (FVVA) supports victims of domestic violence in the Connecticut Superior Court in Bantam. *Each quarter, the FVVA works with approximately 130 - 140 victims.* 45 - 50 of these victims are new referrals; the remainder are victims for whom she provides ongoing support. The FVVA prepares reports for each court appearance, keeping the victim apprised of the process and ensuring that they have a voice in the proceedings. The FVVA also provides crisis counseling, risk assessments, safety planning, and information and referral for victims of crime.

The overwhelming incidence of domestic violence in the United States is perpetrated by males. I feel that correcting this terrible and ongoing behavior requires men to stand firmly against domestic violence and participate whenever possible to help its victims.

Warren Carter, Board Member

Did you know that shepherding a client from the intake phase through successful completion of goals can require up to 50 hours per client?

WSS provides emergency short-term (3 - 5 days) shelter services. In Connecticut, we are part of a coalition that includes 18 domestic violence shelter programs; the majority of shelter requests come from sister agencies when other shelters are full. As our service area is remote and rural, with no public transportation and limited social service resources, it poses a difficult commute for people who come from outside our area. However, for those individuals and families we do shelter each year, it is a critical component of their safety plan, and is often a stepping stone to longer-term options.

Last year we sheltered one family (mother and 3 children) and one single woman.

Education and Prevention Services

WSS has made great strides in our community education and prevention efforts. Our Community Educator delivers violence prevention programs to children and youth throughout our service area, in public schools, private schools, preschools, after-school programs, and day camps. She also provides secondary prevention to adults who are receiving substance abuse treatment at Mountainside and MCCA's Trinity Glen, and provides community education and professional training as well.

Last year, the Community Educator provided 215 presentations for young people, and 194 presentations for adults.

20
PEOPLE PER MINUTE ARE
PHYSICALLY ABUSED BY
AN INTIMATE PARTNER IN
THE UNITED STATES

DURING ONE YEAR,
THIS EQUATES TO MORE
THAN 10 MILLION WOMEN
AND MEN

I support WSS because I want to break the cycle of domestic abuse that started in my own family and help other families to do the same. I want my sons to grow up in a world that supports them in handling conflicts without violence. My first grader has been so lucky to have Rebecca Cohen, WSS's Community Educator, teach classes in his schools since preschool. He loves her lessons and they have given us wonderful opportunities to talk at home about bullying, self-esteem, friendship, and handling difficult feelings. I'm so grateful for everything WSS does for our community!

Emma Wynn, Board Member

Trinity Glen Women's Residential Substance Abuse Treatment Program

WSS provides monthly psycho-educational groups at two area substance abuse treatment programs, Mountainside Treatment Center in Canaan, CT; and Midwestern Connecticut Council of Alcoholism, Inc.'s (MCCA) Trinity Glen Women's Program, a long-term residential treatment center in Kent, CT. The partnership with Trinity Glen provides support group and individual counseling services to women in their residential recovery program who have experienced intimate partner violence. This partnership also provides WSS the opportunity to educate substance abuse treatment professionals about the intersection of substance abuse and domestic violence. The crossroads regarding intimate partner violence and substance abuse are important to address in order to decrease the risk of relapse and increase the residents' knowledge of safety planning when returning home.

'Catherine', a 28 year old mother of two, was referred to WSS after the Connecticut State Police were called to the home. After assessing the risk of lethal violence, the police called the WSS hotline. A WSS counselor talked to 'Catherine' about her concerns and helped her develop a safety plan for herself and her children. 'Catherine's' husband was arrested, and the criminal court issued a protective order prohibiting her husband from entering the home. Although this supported the physical safety of 'Catherine' and her children, she now faced a financial crisis due to a reduced income and need for childcare. With 'Catherine's' permission, WSS was able to advocate for the family with the town social worker and the landlord, and WSS provided one month's rent for the family. WSS's Child Advocate met with 'Catherine' to talk about her concerns for the children, and with her permission, provided advocacy with the Department of Children and Families (DCF) and the school, and referred the family to a child therapist. The Child Advocate also met with 'Catherine's' eldest son, and helped him identify supportive adults in his life. The WSS Family Violence Victim Advocate at the criminal court provided ongoing advocacy for 'Catherine', and when she filed for divorce and custody of the children, referred her to an attorney and helped her prepare for court hearings where she would be face-to-face with her abuser. 'Catherine' and her children continue to receive services from WSS.

'Mary' had been with her husband for 44 years – since she was 20 years old. Police were called to her home and during the course of the Lethality Assessment Program (LAP) screen, her husband was arrested. At the time of arraignment, 'Mary' was very reluctant to speak to anyone and requested that the charges not be pursued, stating that she did not want a protective order. The court considered the victim input, and issued a Limited Protective Order allowing the defendant to remain in the home. 'Mary' did agree to meet with a WSS Counselor, and during the course of their conversations, disclosed a history of extensive physical and sexual abuse, which had taken place throughout the course of their marriage. With no income of her own and no family to support her, she felt trapped. 'Mary' eventually filed for divorce. She receives ongoing counseling services and support with pending civil matters.

In the past year, WSS has seen an increase in gay males seeking services through our hotline, as well as referrals from court. We are seeing a trend that when police are called to a domestic incident involving a gay couple, both men are arrested (dual arrest), with no assessment as to who is the primary aggressor. In one case the WSS Adult Counselor Advocate met weekly with 'Anthony', a primary victim of a dual arrest, for six weeks. He received support and education regarding the difference between an abuser's violence and a victim's violence. The first is a learned behavior that is done to gain and maintain control over another, and the second is what is called retaliatory, resistance, or self-defense, and is done to stop the abuser. This client was provided with a letter for the court regarding his participation in victim services, which resulted in his case being dismissed. Increasing our outreach to underserved communities is a key activity for

'Veronica' is in her twenties, with three small children. She had left her partner three times previously, but felt that she had no place to go. WSS provided counseling and short-term shelter for 'Veronica' and her children while she contemplated her options. Despite being convinced that her mother, who lived in the mid-west, had 'washed her hands of her', she reached out to her for support. Her mother asked her to come 'immediately' and WSS arranged for transportation and flights for 'Veronica' and her three children. WSS also linked 'Veronica' to support services in her new community in order for her to continue her healing and planning.

Women's Support Services is able to provide confidential services free-of-charge thanks to the generosity of our supporters. **THANK YOU!** We could not do this work without you. There are many ways you can support the mission of WSS:

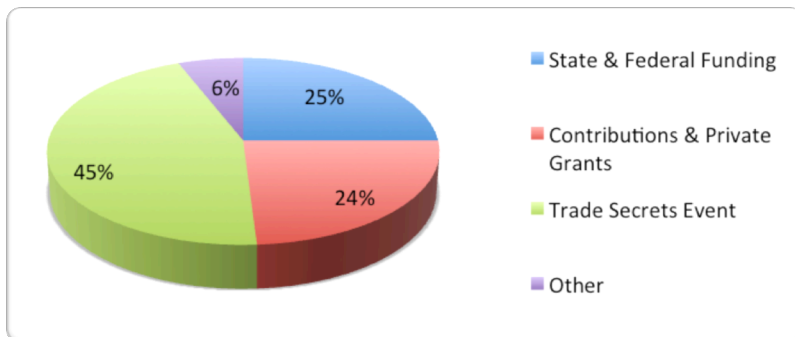
- Send us a check or make a secure donation at www.wssdv.org
- Send in your LaBonne's receipts and WSS will receive a percentage of their worth
- Donate your old cell phones
- Create a fundraiser on Crowdrise - <http://www.crowdrise.com/womenssupportservice>
- Consider donating items that help our clients in need:
 - *Phone, Gas, or Grocery cards
 - *Gift certificates to local restaurants and cafés
 - *Used, but serviceable, cars for our **Calling All Cars** program



Finances

How is WSS Funded?

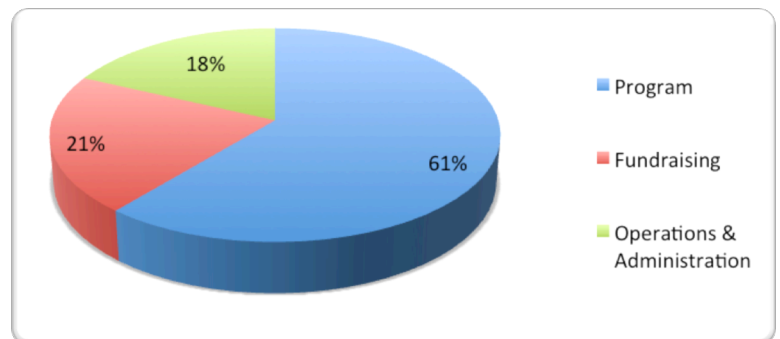
State & Federal Funding - \$154,751
Contributions & Grants - \$150,633
Trade Secrets Event - \$275,559
Other - \$33,864
TOTAL - \$614,807



How are Funds Spent?

Program - \$365,841
Fundraising - \$128,529
Operations & Management - \$110,854
TOTAL - \$604,954

Total investments as of 09/30/2017 - \$1,199,507



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Trade Secrets – Our Signature Fundraising Event

In 2001, WSS undertook a new fundraising event - *Trade Secrets* - a rare plant and garden antiques sale, spearheaded with the help of community member Bunny Williams and her head gardener and WSS Board member, Naomi Blumenthal. The income from Trade Secrets helped WSS expand programs and increase direct grants to clients for their critical needs. Proceeds from Trade Secrets continue to support the vital work of the agency. **Our 2016 event raised more than \$275,000 – well over 1/3 of the WSS annual budget.**

We would like to thank and acknowledge the many community members who helped plan and execute the 2016 event. We couldn't do it without you!!



Charlotte Barnes, Patricia Best, Diana Bisselle, Janet Andre Block, Elise Carlson, John Carlson, Dawn Cassara, Pamela Chassin, Maja Clark, Mari Consolini, Judith Crouch, Susan DeMelle, Page Dickey, Mimi Estes, Rob Fish, Lisa Foster, Brie Giunta, Adelaide Goldfrank, Libby Hall-Abeel, Sally Hambleton, Elyse Harney-Morris, Adelaide Harris, Annie Harris-Milliken, Heide Hendricks, Cynthia Hochswender, Maria Horn, Jim Hutchison, Sara Joannides, Anita Tiburzi Johnson, Vicki Kirkpatrick, Elaine LaRoche, Lee Link, Carol Magowan, Betsey Mauro, Priscilla McCord, Deborah Munson, Kamilla Najdek, Christine Owen, Matthew Patrick Smyth, Laura Ponkos, Jeanne Rebillard, Edie Schechter, Maria Schmidt, Pom Shillingford,

Save the date! TRADE SECRETS 2018 will be held on May 19 & 20, 2018

Women's Support Services would like to thank the many volunteers who make our work possible – Thank You, Thank You!!!

Chris Abeel, Ceely Ackerman, Rebecca Allyn, Lynn Ambrico, Wendy Anderson, Maria Andrade, Jeff Andrews, Leora Armstrong, Gretchen Babarovic, CB Babcock, Katie Baldwin, Candy Barker, Charlotte Barnes, Kate Beatty, Rick Beatty, Carrie-Ann Beeman, Patricia Best, Karen Bibro, Diana Biselle, Andrew Biselle, Janet Andre Block, Jamel Bonello, Marsi Boon, Marian Bowen, Rose Brown, Marian Browning, Maria Bulson, Sandy Burling, Michelle Burns, Elise Carlson, John Carlson, C. Warren Carter, Dawn Cassara, Sophia Cassara, Toni Castro, Kelly Churchill, Elise Cieplik, Eric Cieplik, Cynthia Clark, Maja Clark, Mary Ann Clark, Dave Clement, Kathy Clement, Mia Coats, Marlon Cobos, Hank Collins, Mari Consolini, Caroline Coolidge, Gail Coolidge, Pat Corrigan, Randi Costa, Judith Crouch, Anne Day, Susan DeMelle, Walter DeMelle, Page Dickey, Mary Dohne, Susan Donaghey, David Doskow, Jonathan Doster, Marian Dounis, Donna Drew, Teruko Edmonds, Mimi Estes, Dorothy Felske, Peter Felske, Lisa Foster, Katherine Freygang, Danielle Giulian, Brie Giunta, Gerrie Giunta, Deborah Gobble-Lewine, Lili Goldberg, Adelaide Goldfrank, Kristine Jennings Graham, Dan Gunnip, Libby Hall-Abeel, Titi Halle, Sally Hambleton, Elyse Harney-Morris, Joanne Harras, Adelaide Harris, Annie Harris-Milliken, Heide Hendricks, Kitty Hickox, Wendy Hill, Cynthia Hochswender, Fiona Hooper, Maria Horn, Jim Hutchison, Justine Ickes, Virginia Iles, Nina Imperatore, Pam Irving, Brett Jackson, Sara Joannides, Tamara Johnson, Pamela Kelley, Jane Kellner, Lindsay Kerr, Larry King, Linda Kinney, Alison Kist, Lisa Kohomban, Colleen Kopec, Karen Kopta, Nanci Kryzak, Amy Lake, Michelle Lam, Alexandra Lange, Adam Langlands, Elaine LaRoche, Leanne Larson, Rebekah Larson, Claire Lasseur, Lori Lewis, Lee Link, Jo Loi, Kiau Loi, Hannah Lovejoy, Ida Luria, Bridget Lynch, Jeff Lynch, Liam Lynch, Reilly Lynch, Teagan Lynch, Carol Magowan, Debbie Mark, Nancy Marting, Leslie Mastrianna, Priscilla McCord, Michael McGarry, Bill McGinn, Grace McKenna, Teresa McKenna, Steve McKibben, Leonardo Medina, Noemi Medina, Lynn Meehan, Debbie Meek, John Merola, Susan Mieras, Kara Miller, Barbara Kahn Moller, Pauline Moore, Lea Anne Moran, Mohammed Moro, Brian Munson, Claire Munson, Deborah Munson, Julia Munson, Kamilla Najdek, Cici Nielsen, Glen Nielsen, Clue Noble-Morrissey, Sue Norris, Kara O'Neill, Pam Osborne, Chloe Otterson, Clark Otterson, Jack Otterson, Matt Otterson, Nina Otterson, Sage Otterson, Christine Owen, Marlena Owen, Helene Palella, Gaye Parisi, Pat Pancer, Joseph Peters, Robert Pidkameny, Liza Pinder-Steinmetz, Laura Ponkos, Barbara Ponkos-Merola, Ellen Potter, Halley Potter, Marcia Potter, Samantha Potter, Stephen Potter, Faith Quinlan-Maus, Bonnie Regendahl, Cathy Riley, Hilary Robinson, Marel Rogers, Alison Rusczyk, John Rusczyk, Vicki Saltzman, Cybelle Santo Domingo, Kathy Sawyer, Edie Schechter, Maria Schmidt, Fred Schwerin, Dan Shaw, Elaine Sheetz, Lori Shepard, Shrevie Shepherd, Judy Sheridan, David Shillingford, Pom Shillingford, Dana Simpson, Dana Slaughter, Carrie Smith, Paul Smith, Matthew Patrick Smyth, Kamaren Suwijn, Dick Taber, Anita Tiburzi-Johnson, Sharon Tingley, Kathy Trahan, Bea Trotta, Pam Wilton Ulm, Vali Valenti, Debra Van Keuren, Marianne Vandenburg, Barbara Vasaturo, Kathy Washburn, Greg Waterman, Dobrila Waugh, Philip Waugh, Tanya Waugh, Lori Blakey Welles, Laura Werntz, Karin Wexler, Pat Whelan, Mary Whitehead, Kim Widener, Bunny Williams, Abigail Wood, Louisa Yap, Eva Yxfeldt, Barbara Zucker-Pinchoff