



IT GETS BETTER: A JOURNEY OF HOPE

Center for Hope & Safety provides domestic violence victims with the tools and resources needed to rebuild their lives.

BY MEGAN MONTEMARANO

Everyone deserves a refuge from domestic violence – a safe haven away from a home that no longer feels like home. Everyone deserves to have the chance of knowing it does get better. Such is the mission of the Center for Hope & Safety (CHS), a non-profit agency founded in 1976 and committed to assisting survivors of domestic violence and their children throughout Bergen County. Originally known as Shelter Our Sisters, CHS aims to use its shelter and critical support services to turn fear into safety, helplessness into strength and isolation into hope.

“We help victims of all kinds of domestic violence, from emotional to economic, sexual and physical abuse,” says Julye Myner, executive director of the Center for Hope & Safety in Bergen County.

Myner has been leading and managing the day-to-day operations of the agency since 2015. Her role includes overseeing operations, finances, programs, staff and volunteers, with responsibilities ranging from strategic planning and fundraising to stakeholder relationships. Everything she does brings CHS one step closer to achieving its mission.

“Serving in this role has deepened my empathy and understanding of the challenges survivors face, while strengthening my commitment to advocating for their rights and providing critical support and services,” explains Myner. “I continue to be inspired by the resilience and courage of those we serve and the dedication of our team in supporting victims and survivors of domestic abuse.”

CHS offers a full spectrum of free services designed to address and support emotional, physical and financial healing, including:

- A safe house that provides shelter to more than 200 women and children per year;
- A transitional housing program;
- Children’s programs for those who are witnesses or victims of domestic violence, including counseling, art and music therapy, tutoring, recreational activities, and transportation services;
- An economic empowerment program, including career counseling, job development and housing services;

- Legal services programs that offer free legal representation, advice, and counsel on restraining orders, custody, visitation, child support, spousal support, etc.;

- And a free, confidential hotline (201-944-9600) that operates 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

This year, CHS is celebrating the 10-year anniversary of its community center, which is located at 12 Overlook Ave. in Rochelle Park. This space houses a variety of services, including career and housing counseling, a community pantry, art therapy programs for adults and kids and legal services.

“Our ability to serve all in need with a robust array of services hinges on community support,” adds Myner. “From monetary donations to sponsorships and volunteer services, there are a variety of ways that community members can become involved and learn more about our mission.”

CHS hosts a mix of community and fundraising events throughout the year. Each event provides opportunities for the community to stand together against domestic violence in Bergen County and educate the community to help break the cycle of violence. The center’s core fundraising events are its Evening of Hope Gala, which takes place each March, a golf outing every June and its Walk Together Against Domestic Violence, a 3K in Van Saun County Park held every October.

“October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month,” says Myner. “In addition to our walk, we host a vigil remembering and honoring victims and survivors of domestic violence.”



As part of the Light Up the Night Against Domestic Violence Vigil, CHS dedicates bricks purchased over the past year to lay in a “Pathway to Self Sufficiency” in Van Saun County Park. Purchasers of the bricks provide a message, name and/or dates to inscribe on the bricks and read at the ceremony.

At last October’s vigil, one brick’s inscription particularly stood out. The words read: “It gets better.” This simple message of hope deeply resonated with Myner, as she witnesses first-hand the process to a better, violence-free life through the work she and the center do every day.

“The purchaser of the brick approached me following the ceremony,” Myner continues. “He shared that he was a child survivor of domestic violence who had resided in our Safe House with his family many years ago. He was grateful for the services and support his family received, and it got better. It was important to him to pass on this message of hope and encourage others to begin their journeys to a better life.”

It’s important to acknowledge the reality that domestic violence happens everywhere. Even here – in our very own Bergen County community. But, thanks to non-profits like the Center for Hope & Safety, constant support is available to anyone directly or indirectly affected.

“We’re here to provide resources to help domestic violence victims find safety and sustain it,” adds Myner.

You are not alone. The CHS confidential, free hotline (201-944-9600) is available 24/7.

“You don’t have to live in fear. There are people and resources ready to help and we’re here to support you every step of the way.”

In addition to CHS fundraising events, monetary donations are critical to allow the center to continue serving victims of domestic abuse and their children. To donate today, visit <https://www.hopeandsafety-nj.org/donatenow>. You can also explore volunteer opportunities at <https://www.hopeandsafety-nj.org/volunteer>.

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