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2020 Impact Report

Sexual Assault Crisis Center
Dear Friends,

As we all know too well, the COVID-19 pandemic dramatically changed the way we live, the way we work and the way we connect with one another. The Center staff did an amazing job of adapting to the sudden changes while continuing to provide unwavering support for victim survivors of sexual violence.

We reimagined how to deliver programs and services to meet COVID-19 safety guidelines while never compromising privacy, confidentiality and care for our clients. These new ways-of-work will continue to be available for anyone seeking different access points to our programs, services and information:

- We invested in a teletherapy platform for anyone who wants to connect virtually for advocacy or counseling sessions.

- Our prevention education team created age-appropriate video presentations for schools unable to schedule a live virtual session.

At the beginning of the pandemic we started a new prevention education program, SAFER. With the guidance of a cross-section of community leaders, the SAFER Steering Committee identified and prioritized Outagamie County’s needs, starting with prevention programming for teens.

More information about how the pandemic affected our work is in this impact report. On the back cover, you will read about Jean Coopman-Jansen, a board member who has dedicated hundreds of volunteer hours to the Center. Although Jean will be leaving the board at the end of 2021, she will continue her work as a SANE (sexual assault nurse examiner), helping people who have experienced sexual assault or abuse.

Most importantly, I want to thank you for the incredible compassion, generosity and friendship you have shown us during one of the most difficult years we have all experienced. Your kindness knows no bounds.

With gratitude,

Amy Flanders
Executive Director

By the numbers

**Victim Services**

- 4% increase in services to clients in rural communities.

- 24% increase in teletherapy services.

**Prevention Education**

- 1 eighth grade virtual book study of *Speak* by Laurie Halse Anderson.

- 5 virtual KNOW More to Protect Children trainings for 52 adults.

**Shall We Dance**

*Shall We Dance* was virtual for the first time. Broadcast peaked at 350 concurrent devices streaming.

Cover: Umbrella art installation downtown Appleton for Sexual Assault Awareness Month April 2021.
When the COVID-19 pandemic arrived in spring 2020, the Center pivoted quickly to continue providing vital services to the people of Northeast Wisconsin in a safe way.

“The phone worked well to prevent any gaps in counseling,” said Sally Smarzinski, Therapist and Director of Advocacy and Support Groups. “But we also recognized it wasn’t a great way to communicate with our clients because so much of counseling is done through nonverbal communication.”

So the Center implemented the secure video platform Doxy.me to continue face-to-face counseling – and found that the platform worked better for some clients who otherwise might have had to juggle child care or work schedules to get to their sessions.

That virtual option will now continue as an option for clients, said Michelle Swenson, Therapist and Director of On-campus Advocacy.

“There are pros and cons – obviously having somebody in the office allows you to clearly see their body language,” Michelle said. “But with virtual, you can see clients in their home environment, and what’s happening around them – and there also are benefits to the client being in their safe space.”

Thankfully, hospitals still allowed advocates to be present during sexual assault exams throughout the pandemic. But COVID-19 complicated things in other ways: The stress of the pandemic had a tendency to trigger past traumas.

“We had clients from the past reach out as they were feeling isolated and having more time to be in their own heads,” Michelle said.

Counselors actively reached out to both past and current clients to ensure they knew Center services were still available to them. As 2020 progressed, the Center was able to bring in-person, masked and socially distant support group meetings, as well as in-person counseling sessions, using a conference room instead of an enclosed office space. “Our clients needed more support because they had fewer outside resources at that point,” Sally said. “Everybody came together with different opportunities and ways to continue to put the emphasis on the victim.”

The Center continued to work with community partners such as St. Elizabeth’s Partial-Hospitalization Program for children ages 12 to 17 and coordinated with its sister agency in Winnebago County to help provide on-call services, increasing its ability to reach more people, Sally said.

The staff also kept in close communication with each other to provide support and “make sure we weren’t on an island by ourselves, and having that vicarious trauma. We made it work in a way that our clients will continue to be served – that’s what matters,” Michelle said.

Korey Hokenson, Director of Prevention Education and Community Engagement, quickly shifted to live and recorded video programming for K-12 students, creating in-school programs for more than 100 schools across 15 school districts in Outagamie and Calumet counties.

The challenge was making engaging materials that held kids’ attention at every age group – but the benefit was the ability to reach more schools in a shorter period of time.

“Sexual violence doesn’t discriminate – 1 in 10 kids will experience sexual abuse or violence before age 18,” Korey said. “These kids were at home, and might be at home with an abuser. That’s why it was so important that we were still there.”

SAFER Program
Empowers Teens in Prevention

With teen girls and young women four times more likely than any other age group to become victims of sexual assault or abuse – and boys and transgender teens at high risk as well – it makes sense that teens lead prevention programs of their own design.

With a 2020 grant from the state’s Department of Health Services, funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) – along with local support from Ascension Wisconsin and Kimberly-Clark – the Center is launching community-based initiatives that prevent sexual violence, including the new SAFER program.

SAFER launched with a youth-led empowerment program that allows teens to develop their own way to share prevention information, such as through an art installation. “We’ve been working on prevention in local schools for the past 37 years – SAFER will expand the programming with community organizations,” said Sarah Jaschob, SAFER Program Coordinator.

The SAFER coalition brings together a coalition of dedicated community volunteers who managed to launch the program in July 2020, mid-pandemic.

“There’s no way we would be where we’re at without the support and engagement of our volunteers,” Sarah says. “When we feel empowered, we can do amazing things.”

2020 COALITION MEMBERS
Jeff Amstutz, A2Z Design
Amy Bardon, ThedaCare
Rayon Brown, Fox Valley Technical College
Nicole Doebert, Thrivent Financial
Sheree Garvey, Appleton Area School District
Heidi Keating, Outagamie County Health Department
Trina McCormick, Kimberly-Clark
Rotating Public Health Nurse, City of Appleton
Erin Schultz, SOAR Fox Cities
Chris Wardlow, Catalpa Health & Outagamie County Prevention Specialist
Kristine Wells, Ascension Medical Group
Laura Welsh, Kimberly-Clark
Anne Wiegman, Community Volunteer
Heidi Zeich, Home Builders Association of the Fox Cities
Making good things happen

When longtime volunteer Jean Coopman-Jansen worked as an ER nurse in the 1980s, she noticed that victims of sexual assault could wait hours to be seen—and she knew something had to change.

“I saw patients not get the treatment I would have wanted or would have wanted my family or friends to receive,” said Jean, who began conducting sexual assault exams at that time, when victim advocacy and forensic nursing was just getting a start. “We’re fortunate enough to have some pretty strong and very intelligent women who knew it could be better, who knew there was a better process.”

The International Association of Forensic Nurses launched the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) program, and when the opportunity came for Jean to train, she took it.

“The ideal would be a forensic nurse available 24/7 in every community that can respond to these needs, because it really does require specialized care,” she said.

Jean brought the SANE program to Appleton Medical Center in 2002, and joined the Center’s board in 2007, serving as president for several years, during which time she saw the Center triple its staff and greatly expand prevention education efforts from K12 schools to the local colleges.

“My time on the board has been invaluable to me to see how our community can pull together to make good things happen,” she said. “One of the primary focuses is we don’t want to be responsive to sexual violence in the community—we want to figure out how to prevent it and not have it happen at all.”

How you can help

To eliminate sexual violence in our community by 2038, each of us needs to do our part. We invite you, your family and friends to join us by sharing your time, talent or treasure. Please use the envelope to make a donation, or visit us online and donate through our portal. Give us a call for more ways you can be involved. Thank you!