

## More than 400 Attend 2017 Celebration of Peace

The 12th annual Celebration of Peace, held Dec. 11 at the DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel, Reading, attracted a record crowd of more than 400 supporters. Andi Funk, Event Chairwoman, and the Host Committee, brought together an enthusiastic crowd of both longtime Safe Berks benefactors and new advocates.

Julia H. Klein and Missy Zimmerman received the *Voices for Change Awards* from Vicki Ebner, Board President. This award honors individuals or institutions whose work makes a significant contribution to furthering the mission of Safe Berks.

“This is the right time to focus on peace, to create peace, to grow peace,” said Klein, after she received the award. Klein, CEO of C.H. Briggs Company, is the third generation in a family dedicated to helping Safe Berks and ending violence. She co-hosted the first Celebration of Peace in 2006, helping to create an event which has become a cherished annual tradition.

Missy Zimmerman, who retired at the end of 2015 after a 40-year career in Human Resources, was a member of the Safe Berks Board from 2009 through 2016, and served as Board President from 2013 to 2016. She was instrumental in guiding the organization formerly known as Berks Women in Crisis through the process of becoming Safe Berks. Zimmerman, who volunteers three days a week in the Safe House, said she was inspired by her mother, who offered her home as a shelter to women fleeing domestic violence.

The event raised a record of more than \$75,000 to support Safe Berks services for survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault. In addition to corporate sponsorships, ticket sales, and ads placed in the Program Book, funds were raised through a special invitation, delivered by Dick Henry, to become a “Promoter of Peace” by providing support for trauma-informed empowerment counseling and the Nature Explore Garden.



Andi Funk, 2017 Celebration of Peace Host Committee Chair & Emcee Extraordinaire!  
Photo by Gregory P. Pancerev



Julia H. Klein, left, and Missy Zimmerman, receive the Voices for Change awards for their service to Safe Berks. Photo by Jeremy Drey, courtesy of Reading Eagle

## Thank You to our Celebration of Peace Sponsors!

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## A Message From Our CEO



This has been a busy and eventful year for us at Safe Berks! Our 40th Anniversary Celebration in 2016 culminated with the announcement that we have a new name and a new look — Safe Berks. We have been diligently working to get the word out that our services continue to be the same, but that we want to be clear that we are here for ALL those impacted, directly or indirectly, by domestic and sexual violence.

We were fortunate to be chosen as a project of the Leadership Berks team to create a marketing plan for us. They have been working with us and our

clients, supporters and friends to determine how best to share the story of the impact Safe Berks has on our community.

We held our 12th Annual Celebration of Peace on Dec. 11, 2017. Host Andi Funk and our committee outdid themselves and we were fortunate to see a record crowd in attendance at the DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel, Reading. This year we were thrilled to present our *Voices for Change* Award to two women who work tirelessly to support Safe Berks and women in our community. Julia H. Klein, CEO of C.H. Briggs Company, has been a supporter of Safe Berks for many years. She co-hosted our inaugural Celebration of Peace in 2006 in recognition of our 30th Anniversary. The success of this annual event for Safe Berks is due entirely to Julia's vision for us. Missy Zimmerman was the past Board Chair and Committee Chair for our 40th Anniversary, helping to shepherd us through a process of great change until we found Safe Berks on the other side! She

continues to support us by giving three days per week to provide direct services in our Safe House.

In addition, we showcased some of our amazing work in trauma-informed counseling. I encourage you to visit our Promoter for Peace video on our updated website ([www.safeberks.org](http://www.safeberks.org)) to see what one survivor has said about the support we provided to her, and our innovative Nature Explore Garden curriculum for children and adults.

We intend to update our website frequently, so check in often for updates and additional content to come!

Thank you all for your continued support and your work to make a truly Safe Berks. We cannot do it without you!

Gratefully,

*Mary Kay Bernasky*

## Celebration of Peace 2017

Photos by Gregory P. Pancerev unless otherwise noted



From left: Dr. Thomas Souders, Louise Souders, Carolyn Holleran and Jerry Holleran



Kirk MacDonald and Caroline MacDonald



From left: Sara Gallagher, Laura Brennan, Deborah Lloyd and Andi Funk



From left: Dr. Ruth Daly, Celeste Houllion, Donna Coleman and Judy Engle Aulenbach



Arianna Sanchez and Stephanie Fetterolf

## #MeToo Campaign Rocks the World

Since Oct. 15, 2017, millions of people around the world have posted #MeToo on social media, sharing their experiences of sexual assault and sexual harassment. This viral campaign rocked the world – and demonstrated the magnitude of these crimes and tragedies.

The wave of sexual assault and harassment accusations that toppled powerful men, including movie magnate Harvey Weinstein, news personalities Bill O’Reilly, Matt Lauer and Charlie Rose, and actor Kevin Spacey, was named the top news story of 2017, according to The Associated Press’ annual poll of U.S. editors and news directors.

*Time Magazine* named the #MeToo movement the Person of the Year.

Aly Raisman, one of the greatest American gymnasts of all time, courageously appeared on *60 Minutes* and shared the tragedy of being sexually abused by the team’s official doctor, Larry Nassar.

Nassar has been accused of similar abuse by more than 130 women. Aly’s interview with *60 Minutes* shed light on the devious behavior of many abusers who prey on children, “grooming” them prior to abuse with gifts and other bonding behaviors, which build trust. That trust sets the child up for the crime, and often protects the abuser.

Female farm workers reached out to Hollywood actresses to express solidarity. In response, more than 300 of Hollywood’s most powerful female artists founded the new #TIMESUP movement and Legal Defense Fund, to fight back against sexual assault and sexual harassment in all fields of work. Within a few weeks, more than \$16 million was raised by more than 15,000 people around the world via the Go Fund Me page: [www.gofundme.com/timesup](http://www.gofundme.com/timesup).

The original #MeToo campaign began more than 10 years ago, founded by activist Tarana Burke. The campaign went viral after actress Alyssa Milano

tweeted a callout to victims, encouraging them to utilize the #MeToo hashtag on social media.

The *Reading Eagle* published an article by reporter Beth Brelje about the campaign, “#MeToo means: Time to not look the other way.” Safe Berks CEO Mary Kay Bernosky was quoted in that article, reminding survivors that Safe Berks is here to help if you are dealing with these issues, either now or in the past.

**If you are in immediate danger or crisis, our Hotline is available 24/7: 844-789-SAFE, or text SAFE BERKS to 20121. Our services are free, confidential, and offered in English and Spanish.**



Esteffani Alcantara and Victoria Chalmers



From left: Annmarie Dallao, Annarose Ingarra-Milch and Rosemarie Sullivan Sandman



Dr. Kelley Kenney and Mark Kenney



Dick Henry asks the audience to be Promoters of Peace  
Photo by Bill Coughlin



From left: Diane Duff, Chris Spanier & Jim Spanier

## Safe Berks Volunteers Make a Difference!

Dedicated Safe Berks volunteers wrapped gifts at the Berkshire Mall every day from Dec. 1 to Dec. 24. “The response from our volunteers was absolutely incredible,” said Mindy McIntosh, Special Events & Volunteer Coordinator. “By wrapping gifts, we raised more than \$10,000 to help survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault. We are very grateful to our volunteers for giving so many hours, especially during such a busy time of year.”

Santander Bank, Wells Fargo, and other companies helped the effort by encouraging their employees to volunteer. This was the first year for this successful fundraiser. Volunteers also shared information about the services Safe Berks offers with thousands of shoppers.

Safe Berks volunteers also wrapped gifts for residents and clients, organized A LOT of donations, supported staff in the Safe House and the office, and cooked delicious dinners for residents. “Many families and groups have cooked dinners for our residents, and those meals are very appreciated,” said Mindy. “We would like to have volunteers prepare dinner every weeknight. Groups or individuals can bring their own food, cook the food we have, or a combination.” Anyone interested in cooking can email Mindy at [mindym@safeberks.org](mailto:mindym@safeberks.org) or call 484-869-5293.

Safe Berks volunteers who provide direct services to clients are required to complete a 66-hour training program. This intensive training program educates participants on domestic violence and sexual assault, confidentiality requirements, and how services and programs are delivered. If you are interested in participating in this training program, please contact Mindy.

Safe Berks is also sincerely grateful to all the donors who contributed needed funds, and donated mittens, hoodies, socks, blankets, toys, clothes and gifts. We couldn't do it without you!



*Slapshot and Reading Royals goalie Mark Dekanich wrapping gifts at the Berkshire Mall.*



*Members of the Reading Hospital's Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner's team volunteered to cook a feast for Safe Berks residents a few days before Christmas.*

## New Additions to Safe Berks Staff and New Safe Berks Sign!

During 2017, experienced Safe Berks staff worked diligently to interview, hire and train new staff members to fill key open positions. Throughout the year, veteran staff and new staff worked closely together to provide services to survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault, share educational programs with schools and colleges, and plan special events for the community.

Safe Berks staff also focused on sharing the news of our organization's new name.

Founded in 1976 as Berks Women in Crisis (BWIC), we announced our new name, Safe Berks, as we celebrated our 40th anniversary. We are grateful to L&H Sign Company, Reading, for installing a sign with our new name on our building.



**Our new name is also our goal.**

**Thank you for helping us build a Safe Berks!**

*New Safe Berks staff, group photo, from left: Francine Scoboria, Communications Coordinator; Laura Burke, Legal Advocate; Mindy McIntosh, Special Events & Volunteer Coordinator; & Tiffany Middleton, CAC Coordinator/ Counselor/Advocate; (Photo by Gregory P. Pancerev). Individual photos, from left: Jennifer Ebersole, Director of Education & Outreach (Photo courtesy of Leadership Berks and Tim Tannous Photography); Amber Mancebo, Counselor/Advocate; & Tara Anspach, Counselor/Advocate. Not pictured: Nicole Avila, Counselor/Advocate.*

## Photo Voice Project Celebrates Latina Survivors *Los Retratos de Mi Voz - The Pictures of My Voice*

Mayra Rodriguez, a participant in the Photo Voice Project, said her photo of an empty playground symbolizes the loss of innocence experienced by survivors of childhood sexual assault. In a second photo, a vibrant Mayra reclaims her zest for life, placing herself in the playground.

“The Photo Voice Project has encouraged me to express myself,” said Mayra. “I felt very comfortable talking to the other ladies in the group. By talking about our experiences, we can try to have a better and happier life. By looking at my photos, I can see how I have grown.”

In 2018, exhibits of the Photo Voice Project at Safe Berks will celebrate Latina survivors of sexual or domestic violence, and the photography they have created.

“I want to help women who are in the same spot I was in, or even worse,” said Mayra. “I am 54. I started to enjoy my life in my 50s. I do things now that I didn’t do as a child - I play.”

Eight Latina women participated in the Photo Voice Project. They each received a digital camera, as well as photography instruction from Danielle Reardon, a professional photographer. They created photographs to express their struggles and their survival, and each chose three photos to exhibit. The exhibit of 24 photos is titled, *Los Retratos de Mi Voz – The Pictures of My Voice*.

In addition to the photography, the Photo Voice Project included weekly group meetings, facilitated

by Safe Berks staff members Mereliss Colon Ortiz, Aleida Rodriguez, Letty Vázquez-Pena and Nicole Avila. During the meetings, the women shared their experiences and bonded with other Latina survivors. “It became a sisterhood,” said Mereliss. “They realized they were not alone. They want to continue meeting and working together.” During the month of April, the Photo Voice Project will be displayed at the GoggleWorks Center for the Arts. There may also be additional exhibits in 2018; updates will be included in future newsletters.

The Photo Voice Project was funded in 2016 by a grant of \$34,631 from Raliance, a collaborative initiative dedicated to ending sexual violence in one generation.

The goal of the project is to improve Safe Berks services for Latina survivors, starting with a community needs assessment. The grant funded a survey of Berks County Latina women about their life experiences, including with sexual violence.

“Safe Berks has consistently looked for ways to better serve sexual assault and domestic violence survivors in our large and still-growing Latino community,” said Christine A. Gilfillan, Chief



This empty playground symbolizes the lost innocence experienced by survivors of sexual assault. Photo by Mayra Rodriguez



Survivor Mayra Rodriguez said this photo expresses how she has reclaimed playing and loving her life. Photo by Mayra Rodriguez

Operating Officer. “The survivors who participated in *Los Retratos de mi Voz – The Pictures of My Voice* expressed an outpouring of positive feedback about the experience, and its impact on their processes of healing and empowerment.”

Safe Berks services are free, confidential, and available in English and Spanish.

Toll Free Hotline:  
**844-789-SAFE (7233)**  
or  
**Text SAFE BERKS to 20121**  
Available 24/7/365

[www.safeberks.org](http://www.safeberks.org)  
**610-373-1206**  
[peace@safeberks.org](mailto:peace@safeberks.org)

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## The vision of Safe Berks is to eliminate domestic violence and sexual assault in Berks County.

- Crisis Services
- Residential Services
- Education and Outreach
- Counseling
- Systems Advocacy
- Legal Services

## Board of Directors

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## Gifts to Safe Berks

The Give Now button, located on our website at [www.safeberks.org/donate/donate-now/](http://www.safeberks.org/donate/donate-now/), is a convenient way to support Safe Berks. Receipts are generated immediately via email. The official registration and financial information of Safe Berks may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll free, within Pennsylvania, 1-800-732-0999. Registration does imply endorsement.

## Contact Us

Safe Berks  
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[www.SafeBerks.org](http://www.SafeBerks.org)  
P: 610.373.1206 | F: 610.372.4188  
Email: [Peace@SafeBerks.org](mailto:Peace@SafeBerks.org)

Toll Free Hotline:  
844-789-SAFE (7233)  
Or Text SAFE BERKS to 20121



## Save the Date!

# Walk for No More

Saturday, June 16, 2018 • 10 am

## Penn Avenue, West Reading

## Kickoff of Art on the Avenue



United Way of Berks County