

## Celebration of *Peace* A Historic Success!

The 13th annual Safe Berks Celebration of Peace, held Dec. 10, 2018, was an epic evening that will be long remembered by the more than 400 people who attended.

Dr. Thomas F. Flynn, President of Alvernia University, was honored with the Vision for Peace Award. Only two other people have ever received this award – Carolyn Holleran and Susan Fromm. The Vision for Peace Award recognizes individuals who have made justice and peace their life’s work.

In his very moving acceptance speech, Dr. Flynn inspired all those in attendance with these closing words: “We must all dedicate ourselves to strongly opposing – and even eradicating – violence against women; racial, religious and other forms of bigotry, and all destructive actions and attitudes that divide rather than unite us.”

A courageous survivor of domestic violence and former Safe Berks resident spoke to the crowd. She said, “When I got to Safe Berks I took a deep breath because I knew I was safe.”

Safe Berks also presented Voices for Change Awards to Koinos Community Church, Sinking Spring, and The Power of the Purse in Berks County. The Voices for Change Award honors individuals and organizations whose work makes a significant contribution to furthering the mission of Safe Berks.

During the ceremony at the DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel, Reading, it was announced that an anonymous couple has donated \$1.7 million to pay off the mortgage of the Safe Berks building. This historic news was met at first by stunned silence, followed by a standing ovation, cheers, and more than a few tears of joy.

Special thanks to our dedicated Host Committee, led by Co-Chairs Helen and Steve Najarian, and Susan and Mike Fromm. We also thank all our donors, sponsors and volunteers, who helped make the night so special. Together, we are building a Safe Berks!



Dr. Thomas F. Flynn, left, receives the Vision for Peace award from Mike Fromm.



From left, Andrew Carpenter & Tim Diehl of Koinos Community Church accept the Voices for Change award from Nina Bohn.



Susan Fromm, left, presents the Voices for Change award to Chiara Sockel Renninger, founder of The Power of the Purse in Berks County.



From left, Steve, Lian & Helen Najarian.



From left, Jacob Stein, Jim Boscov & Gary Boyer.

## A Message From Our CEO



April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month. Safe Berks provides services to anyone impacted by this violence whether as a direct victim or significant other. We work with women, men and children to heal from the trauma of this violence. Sexual Assault Awareness Month is designated as time to raise public awareness about sexual violence and educate communities on how to prevent it. This year's campaign theme, I Ask, champions the message that asking for consent is a healthy, normal, and necessary part of everyday interactions.

Safe Berks works with parents, teens and others to understand the importance of consent and how to have safe, respectful conversations about these subjects. For example, "I Ask How to Teach Consent Early" is program for parents of late childhood and early adolescent children to provide messages about relationships and consent. We know these children are already getting messages from TV shows, movies, social media, and friends. This makes it an ideal time for parents to have conversations about consent. Talking with your child now will encourage open and honest communication as they mature and enter their first relationships.

### "I Ask How to Teach Consent Early" includes these principles:

#### What is Consent?

Consent means asking someone for their permission to do something and accepting their answer. Consent shows up in kids' lives when they ask peers if and what they want to play, if they want to sit together at lunch or on the bus, if they'd like to share school supplies, toys, food, etc. Helping kids to ask for consent and accept rejection in these everyday ways builds a foundation for practicing consent in intimate relationships as they get older.

#### Talk Openly

Ask yourself: What messages is my child getting about relationships and consent? What messages do I want them to get? Let your child know they can come to you with questions about consent and relationships. Answer their questions honestly and encourage ongoing conversations about respect and safety.

#### Model Asking for Consent

Show your child ways to ask for consent by modeling the words and actions yourself. Model respect for boundaries by asking your child for consent and accepting their answer, like when asking for a hug or sharing information about them with others.

These and other tips are available on the National Sexual Violence Resource Center website at [www.nsvrc.org](http://www.nsvrc.org). We encourage you to attend our SAAM awareness events and to reach out to us at Safe Berks for information on healing from trauma and prevention of sexual assault. Remember, we need your help to create a truly Safe Berks!

Gratefully,

*Mary Kay Bernosky*



## New Counseling Support Groups for Survivors!

**Free Support Groups for:**  
ADULTS • TEENS • ADULTS IN THE LGBT COMMUNITY  
MENS • ADULTS IN RECOVERY FROM ADDICTION

For more info or to join, visit [www.SafeBerks.org/services/counseling](http://www.SafeBerks.org/services/counseling)  
or contact Danielle Palermo at [DanielleP@SafeBerks.org](mailto:DanielleP@SafeBerks.org)  
or 610-373-1206, ext 120.

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**  
**610-373-1206**  
**Peace@SafeBerks.org**

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## April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month

In 1975, a group of women in London, England, gathered on a street after dark to protest against sexual violence. That protest was the first "Take Back the Night" march.

The idea caught on in many nations around the world. In 1978, the first "Take Back the Night" events in the U.S. were held in San Francisco and New York City. In the early 1980s, these marches grew into Sexual Assault Awareness Week. In 2001, April was designated Sexual Assault Awareness Month.

This April there will be events locally, around the country and around the world, bringing attention to sexual violence. Events will cover many issues including sexual assault on campus, sexual harassment at work, speaking out about sexual assault, how to help survivors, healthy sexuality, and the prevention of sexual violence. Events will be marked on social media with the hash tag #SAAM.

The 2019 SAAM theme is #IAsk. Consent means asking someone for their permission to do something and accepting their answer, without pressuring them to change their mind. #IAsk brings home the message that asking for consent is a respectful part of everyday interactions.

**Safe Berks will be partnering with local colleges and organizations to support SAAM events and workshops. Following are a few examples:**

### April 1 • 9 p.m.

Penn State Berks will kickoff Sexual Assault Awareness Month with a Take Back the Night inspired event, "Night Walkers," outside of the Perkins Student Center. Students will be encouraged to walk around the Perkins Plaza, learn more about what they can do to prevent sexual assault, better understand the experience of survivors, identify harmful stigmas, and learn about available resources. In case of rain, the event will be held in the Perkins Multipurpose Room.

### April 3 • 1-2 p.m.

Reading Area Community College will offer "The C Word Consent" at Raven's Lounge in the Student Union Building. This upbeat program will utilize interactive skits to provide education about consent and bystander intervention strategies.

### April 9 • 9 p.m.

Penn State Berks will offer Sexual Assault Awareness Month Glow Bingo in the Perkins Multipurpose Room. Each square on the bingo cards will hold a different statistic, which will be read throughout the game.

### April 11 • 11a.m.-5 p.m.

Kutztown University will present the "Clothesline Project" in McFarland Student Union, Room 218. Survivors and allies will decorate and hang up T-shirts to express their feelings, tell their stories, and create a visual demonstration about the effects of rape and sexual violence.

### April 11 • 7 p.m.

Kutztown University will hold their annual "Take Back the Night" vigil and march, starting in McFarland Student Union, Room 218. Prior to the march, survivors of sexual or domestic violence will have an opportunity to share their stories and bond with other survivors.

**For additional events or more info, visit [www.SafeBerks.org](http://www.SafeBerks.org) or our Facebook page. To request a staff member to visit your organization, email [Peace@SafeBerks.org](mailto:Peace@SafeBerks.org) or call 610-373-1206.**

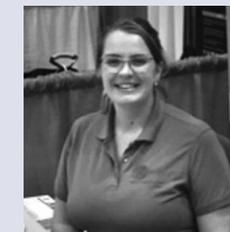
## Contact your Federal Reps & Senators: Reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act!

The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) is one of the pillars of the federal government's response to domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking. Initially passed in 1994, VAWA has been reauthorized three times, each time expanded and updated to meet the needs of victims, survivors, advocates, and other stakeholders.

As a result of the federal government shutdown, VAWA's authorization lapsed at midnight on December 21, 2018. Its temporary reauthorization was included in a short-term spending bill approved when the federal government reopened on Jan. 25, 2019. However, that action only held until Feb. 15, 2019. The debate between whether to enact another short-term reauthorization or to expand VAWA to offer additional protections to victims was not resolved, causing VAWA to expire for the first time since 1994.

A lasting solution is needed. In coalition with our partners in the National Task Force to End Sexual and Domestic Violence (NTF), we look forward to continuing to work with Congress to pass a VAWA reauthorization with important improvements to meet the needs of survivors and direct service providers. Please contact your federal Representatives and Senators to remind them how important VAWA is to the continued safety of our community.

## Welcome New Staff!



Michelle Knoll, Community Educator



Laura Renavales, Intake Hotline Counselor



Brenda Russell-Diaz, Advocate/Counselor



Helping Hands at the Mall Add Up! Thank you to all the volunteers who donated your time to gift wrap at the Berkshire Mall Dec. 1-24 to help Safe Berks! Thank you to all the corporate employees, church groups, civic organizations, families and individuals who came to wrap. With your help, we raised \$10,894 to help provide a safe haven and ongoing support system for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. We couldn't have done it without your helping hands! Shown in photo, Sammi and Taylor Rymshaw.



Thanks to all the volunteers who cook delicious dinners for Safe Berks residents! Shown in photo is a group of volunteers from Delilah's Hope. Safe Berks is always seeking groups of volunteers to cook dinners on weeknights. Volunteers can bring their own food, cook the food we have at Safe Berks, or a combination. Anyone interested in cooking can email Mindy McIntosh, Director of Development, pictured in center of photo, at [MindyM@SafeBerks.org](mailto:MindyM@SafeBerks.org).



### Save the Date - April 26!

At noon, we will celebrate the new Safe Berks Playground with a Ribbon Cutting event!

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

- ▶ Crisis Services
- ▶ Residential Services
- ▶ Education & Outreach
- ▶ Counseling
- ▶ Systems Advocacy
- ▶ Legal Services

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## Save the Date!

**Walk for No More**  
**Saturday, June 15, 2019 • 9 am**  
**Penn Avenue, West Reading**  
**Kickoff of Art on the Avenue**

## 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

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United Way of Berks County