

Walk For NO MORE!



On June 17th, a coral sea of advocates flooded Penn Avenue just prior to Art on the Avenue for our 2023 Safe Berks Walk for No More (WFNM). Held at 820 at the Mills, over 400 participants packed the event space, making for the largest turnout in our WFNM history. Ben and Britany LaManna, Safe Berks WFNM ambassadors, Mandy Acuna, Safe Berks Board President, and Beth Garrigan, CEO, shared how Safe Berks serves the entire Berks County Community. Safe Berks then honored Friend, Inc. and the LGBT Center of Greater Reading with the Safe Berks Voices for Change award. The award was created to honor those individuals and institutions whose work makes a significant contribution to further service the mission of Safe Berks and the vision of a world free from domestic violence and sexual assault.

James Reece, Executive Director, accepted the award on behalf of Friend, Inc. Jim shared that creating safe and healthy spaces while collaborating with community partners across the county is important to Friend Inc. Their vision is to eliminate all barriers for residents to receiving support services as needed. Friend Inc. provides valuable resources for those living in Northern Berks County, some of which include a self-select food pantry, budget counseling, referral assistance for utility and housing support while partnering with other relevant community partners such as Safe Berks.

The LGBT Center of Greater Reading provides support services to all LGBTQ+ community members and allies. Michelle Dech, Executive Director, happily received the award and expressed heartfelt gratitude for their partnership with Safe Berks but acknowledged their work ensuring everyone in Berks County and beyond may have a life of fulfillment, inclusion, and celebration, is far from done.

Luis Serrano shared his mother, Maria Serrano's heart wrenching story of loss due to domestic violence, with a fully engaged audience. While sharing how tragic the loss of his mother has been for his family, Luis pleaded with the audience to reach out if they or someone they love are in a domestic violence situation. Luis shared,

"please do not stay quiet. There is no shame to be had and reaching out may save your family from the tragic loss my family experienced". There was barely a dry eye in the room. Safe Berks is grateful to Luis for sharing his family's story to help others in need.

Thank you to everyone for your participation, especially our Annual Sponsors printed on page 3. **For more information on The Walk for No More, or to become an Annual Sponsor, contact Mindy McIntosh at MindyM@safeberks.org.**

SAVE THE DATE

Celebration of Peace

Tuesday, February 20, 2024
Starting at 6 PM

Guest Speaker
Troy Vincent

FORMER CORNERBACK

EVP FOR FOOTBALL OPERATIONS

Honoree **Craig Poole**

FURTHER DETAILS TO FOLLOW

A Message from our CEO

Hello! It is hard to believe we are in "Back to School" season and looking forward to Fall already! The summer just flew by! And as you see in this newsletter, we were busy this summer! We had the largest turnout ever for our annual Walk For NO MORE and not one, but two Camp Safe Berks hosted by our creative and talented Education and Outreach department.

With Fall approaching, we are working hard to prepare for Domestic Violence Awareness Month, in October. Safe Berks staff will be facilitating and attending awareness events all month long, throughout our community. Look for more information about upcoming events on our social media pages, including details about our annual Silent Witness March which will take place on Monday, October 16th, in partnership with our friends at RACC.

I am very pleased to share that our updated Strategic Plan is in full swing. This plan is the result of the collaborative efforts of our staff, leadership team, and Board of Directors. The planning process provided an opportunity for us to assess our daily functioning, prepare for changes that are outside of our control, and identify long-term goals and objectives and the best approach to achieve them.

It lays out a bold but achievable vision for the future of Safe Berks. Through specific goals, objectives, and action steps, the strategic plan will be our roadmap to further the mission of Safe Berks in our community and the lives of those we serve.

We believe this plan complements and builds upon our strengths, defines the environment in which Safe Berks operates, and is the most collaborative effort the agency has undertaken to date. All staff have tactical opportunities to be engaged in the plan's goals and objectives as we focus on advancing our position as an innovator in domestic and sexual violence service provision and enhancing our living-learning community committed to saving lives and building our future.

We can accomplish this with the passion, dedication, and investment of our staff and community. And together, we can build a Safe Berks!

In gratitude,

Beth Garrigan



Safe Berks CEO Beth Garrigan
Photo by John Secoges, Photo courtesy of Berks County Living magazine

Safe Berks in Search of Volunteer Cooks!



A big thank you to Kathy Galtere and Hackaway for Hunger for providing our residents with a nutritious and delicious dinner every month.

Sharing a homemade meal with our residents can help spread kindness while providing wholesome nutrition! If your family, club or church group enjoys cooking, you can help by providing dinner to survivors of sexual assault and domestic violence. Safe Berks is seeking volunteers to provide our residents with dinner each day of the week. You may also sponsor dinner from a restaurant of your choosing. Meals for 35 to 40 people is needed.

For more info, or to schedule a date, please contact Mindy McIntosh, Director of Development, at (610) 468-9637 or email Mindy at MindyM@SafeBerks.org.

*A huge thank you to all volunteers!
Together, we are building a Safe Berks!*

**Safe Berks services are free,
confidential, and available
in all languages.**

Toll Free Hotline:
844-789-SAFE (7233)

or

Text SAFE BERKS to 20121

Available 24/7/365

Counseling

610-373-1206, ext. 606

Legal Services

610-373-1206, ext. 107

Peace@SafeBerks.org

www.SafeBerks.org

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UPMC HEALTH PLAN

Sara Kleiman



Camp Safe Berks- A safe place for all Berks County youth



In July, Safe Berks held two free day camps for youth on the campus of Penn State-Berks. Starting July 10th, eager campers, aged 10-12, joined Safe Berks staff for the inaugural year of Camp Safe Berks Junior, followed by Camp Safe Berks, held on July 24th, for campers aged 13-17. Each summer, the Safe Berks Education and Outreach Department, along with many community partners and volunteers, provide a free day camp to discuss topics of oppression and their direct roots in causing violence.

This year, several returning Camp Safe Berks campers from previous years were invited to join the Safe

Berks staff and volunteers at Camp Safe Berks, Jr. as "junior camp counselors." These youth assisted staff with various presentations and activities. "Having our campers peers facilitate programming involving tough topics really helps our campers to open up and understand that Safe Berks provides a safe space for all," said Ashley Moyer, Director of Education and Outreach at Safe Berks.

Safe Berks strives to educate Berks County youth about domestic violence and sexual assault by tying in age-appropriate programming on topics such as anti-bullying, red flags in relationships, ableism and



power and privilege to name a few. Campers had a blast participating in games and activities throughout the week including tie dying, salsa dancing, a talent show for friends and family as well as creating a mural that will be displayed at the agency showcasing the acceptance and inclusivity of Safe Berks.

Finally, this experience does not end when camp is over, as monthly meetups are held throughout the year to encourage youth to remain connected, nurture their friendships, and continue to work together to better their schools and community.

PeaceTrust Luncheon Brings Together Advocates!

Safe Berks strongest supporters came together on May 1st at the Double Tree for our PeaceTrust Luncheon. This annual event is sponsored by Carolyn Holleran and provides an opportunity for us to share important updates on what is going on at Safe Berks and how the community can get involved to help.

This year, our COO, Mereliss Colon-Ortiz shared how we are restructuring some of our core services so we can focus on survivors' unique and often complex needs-in that moment when they make that first connection to Safe Berks-and remain a constant support throughout their journey to restoring their sense of safety and security.

More info on this can be found on page 5.

We are grateful to Andi Funk for leading the PeaceTrust and sharing the urgency for unrestricted dollars that allow us to weather the uncertainties

of funding cycles and invest in programs proven to support domestic violence and sexual assault survivors right here in our own community.

PeaceTrust, a leadership giving program, was founded in 2006 to help Safe Berks by providing solid, dependable funding. Members commit to give \$500 annually for five years. While this was started as a woman's giving group, we are proud to say that anyone is welcome to join and we now have different levels that allow opportunities for all ages.



Pictured from left are District Attorney John Adams, Doug Rauch, Honorable Judge Jill Scheidt, Amy Vaughan, Tima Evans & Derek Garcia



Carolyn and Jerry Holleran with their granddaughter Bridget Coe



Board Member Todd Migliaccio is pictured with Mereliss Colon (COO), Aleida Rodriguez (Residential Services Director) & Briana McGovern (Case Management Director).

To join the PeaceTrust, visit www.safeberks.org/donate/peace-trust/ or for more information, contact Mindy McIntosh, Director of Development at Safe Berks, at 610-468-9637 or MindyM@SafeBerks.org.

Safe Berks Safehouse Restructure:

Safe Berks continually strives to provide the highest level of care and assistance to all Berks County domestic violence and sexual assault survivors. Historically, our Safehouse staff were responsible for all the tasks it takes to run a 24/7 emergency shelter, case management for survivors and their children, crisis intervention services, advocacy services, and answering the 24/7 hotline and textline. After meeting and comparing strategies with several Pennsylvania sister agencies, Safe Berks determined the need for a restructure of our Safehouse to provide more comprehensive trauma-informed and victim-centered support services to our program participants as well as lessen the burden on our shelter staff.

This new structure will be divided into three new departments: Residential Services, Case Management Services and Crisis Services. Within each of these new departments, Safe Berks staff members will have a more specialized focus in providing individualized support services to the survivors we serve.

Residential Services will have a focus on providing support groups, emotional support, and life skills classes. They will ensure residents have their daily needs met with clothing items, personal care items, meal planning, etc.

Our Case Management team will provide intensive case management and wrap around services for survivors and their children. Crisis Services staff members will answer our hotline and text-line inquiries 24 hours a day, provide crisis counseling, safety planning, monitor email/social media messages, and conduct intake assessments over the phone and in-person for admission into our Safehouse program.

Here at Safe Berks, we are grateful to provide these enhanced lifesaving and critical support services to all Berks County domestic violence and sexual assault survivors and appreciate all of our community support as we continue to grow in ways to support our mission.

Congrats to Winners of the Safe Berks Employee Spotlight Award!

These dedicated employees were chosen by their co-workers for going above and beyond the call of duty every day by truly embodying the Safe Berks values of Safety, Respect, Empowerment, Education and Hope while upholding the mission of relentless commitment to advocating, educating and ending abuse. Thank you for your service!

February Spotlight Award



Tara A.

Tara A., Residential Services Specialist, who joined the Safe Berks staff in 2017, provides counseling and resources to residents who are also dealing with addiction or substance use issues. Thank you, Tara, Safe Berks is so happy to have you on the team.

March Spotlight Award



Michelle N.

Michelle N., our Financial Empowerment Counselor coordinates our Financial Empowerment curriculum, and assists clients in obtaining employment and housing. Thank you for your dedicated service to Safe Berks and survivors!

April Spotlight Award



David T.

Dave T., Director of Finance, has worked for Safe Berks since January 2023 and has truly revamped the finance department. Dave, your motivation inspires others, and Safe Berks is lucky to have you.

May Spotlight Award



Eldin M.

Eldin M. Known as the "go-to" for leading many projects, Eldin M. portrays our values of safety, respect, empowerment, and education each day. Safe Berks is extremely lucky to have a talented team member such as Eldin. Thanks for your dedication, Eldin!

June Spotlight Award



Odette F.

Odette F., Payroll and Accounting Clerk has worked with Safe Berks since May 2023. We are thankful for Odette's relentless efforts to help us stay connected online so that we have zero interruptions during our life-saving work.

July Spotlight Award



Meghan B.

Meghan B., Director of Community Outreach and Response, continually proves herself as a relentless advocate for survivors across the criminal justice, legal and healthcare systems. Bravo, Megan! Thank you for all you do for Safe Berks.

SAVE THE DATES!

Safe Berks Silent Witness March & Dedication

Monday, October 16, 2023

11:00am

Gather at Safe Berks

11:15am

Silent March to Reading
Area Community College (RACC)

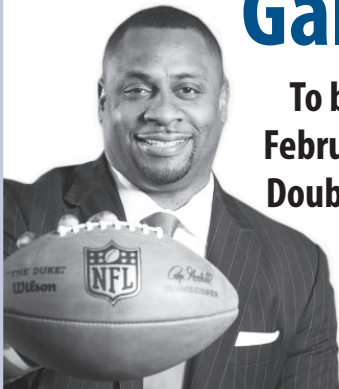
Noon:

Dedication Ceremony at RACC,
followed by Lunch

Visit www.SafeBerks.org,
click on Events; for more info
or to RSVP, contact Dacey Horohoe,
at (484)651-5153 or
DaceyH@SafeBerks.org.

Celebration of

Peace Gala



**To be held in
February 2024
DoubleTree by
Hilton,
Reading**

**Updates: www.SafeBerks.org,
click on Events**

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Educate • Advocate • End Abuse

Gifts to Safe Berks

The Give Now button, located on our website at 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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844-789-SAFE (7233)
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