



crisis center

# connection

Winter/Spring 2021



*the final say*

one survivor's story, in her own words

# From our *executive director*



Dear Friends,

We continue to remain strong and resilient at the Crisis Center, and of course continue to pivot through the ongoing pandemic challenges. We have begun to see the light at the end of the tunnel as more and more staff, volunteers, and community members are vaccinated. Our next step will be the facilitation of onsite vaccinations for our residential clients.

I continue to be proud of our staff for all they are doing and how they have learned to adapt throughout this last year.

Our Development Team, along with many board members and community supporters who served on our Gala Committee, did an amazing job with our 2021 virtual gala, Lifelines of Love. They made it fun and engaging, they brought in new sponsors and the proceeds came in just under their budgeted goal.

I am also happy to announce that Domestic Violence Services in the Governor's budget did not decrease this year. Gov. Pritzker is recommending our funding amount at the same level as last year. As part of a statewide coalition of domestic violence service providers, we will continue to advocate for a \$5 million increase which would take us back to our 2009 allocation amount.

I am super excited that in the next quarter we will start our first cohort of employment seekers in our newest endeavor, Choose Your Adventure. This program will provide survivors with classroom education and a ten-week internship in our Neat Repeat stores. We look forward to reporting how many of our survivors find employment after this experience!

We continue to be blessed by the support of all of our donors. Without all of you, we would not have survived this year. Thank you for being a lifeline of love and hope.

Be well,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pamela A. Kostecki".

Pam Kostecki, Executive Director

## Launching New Adventures

Over a year of research and planning is finally paying off as the Crisis Center officially launches its newest program in April – Choose Your Adventure.

The workforce development and job training program will empower domestic violence survivors with work and life skills to ensure they have an opportunity to become financially self-sufficient.

The inaugural cohort of participants will spend the first two weeks in classroom-style training after which they will engage in a ten-week internship at one of our Neat Repeats boutique resale stores.

At the conclusion of the program, graduates will receive assistance filling out job applications, practicing for interviews, and securing transportation. Some local businesses have also agreed to provide further on-the-job-training and job placement.



*Workforce Development Coordinator, Bobby Dunlap, has been hard at work connecting clients with positions in their area of interest.*

# The Final Say

by Jennifer W.



A few months before the pandemic began, I was facing my own personal crisis. My relationship of over ten years was ending after a volatile six weeks that were an escalated repetition of the dysfunctional cycle I was living in for several years. While my story is in many ways unique, every survivor's story is unique.

As is common with domestic violence, I never expressed to my family or friends that I thought I might be in an abusive relationship. In hindsight, I realized I hid it out of denial and fear.

I found myself in the emergency room and was forced to reach out to my parents, as the hospital refused to release me to my partner. I moved back home and lived with them for a few months, which took its toll as they heard and witnessed the effects of my abusive relationship. I was fortunate, though, to be able to transfer my work as a global corporation employed me.

*“Being in an abusive relationship destroys one’s sense of self and often leads to isolation from family and friends.”*

Abuse can be insidious and does not always escalate to physical assault. If someone is screaming, punching walls, slamming doors and drawers, name-calling, constantly criticizing, and gaslighting\* in an effort to

maintain a sense of power and control over another person, that is domestic violence.

Being in an abusive relationship destroys one's sense of self and often leads to isolation from family and friends. Anyone can be a victim of domestic violence, including a college-educated, gainfully employed, successful person.

No one's story needs to end with abuse having the final say. Survivors, and families of both victims and survivors, have the power to not only heal from domestic violence, but to give back to those who are currently in its grips. This not only creates a direction of hope, but also has the power to create a movement of support within a community, as everyone knows a victim and a survivor, whether we realize it or not.

*\*Gaslighting is a form of psychological manipulation in which a person covertly makes an individual doubt or question their own judgement, perception and memories. It can result in low self-esteem and render the victim dependent on the abuser.*

Jennifer has chosen to support other survivors by donating housewares and clothing to Neat Repeats, and shopping at [neatrepeatsonline.com](https://neatrepeatsonline.com). She also recently held a Facebook fundraiser to benefit the Crisis Center. “Giving is how we take our power back,” Jennifer says.



*Jen has been the Assistant Manager at Neat Repeats and was recently promoted to Associate Manager and Coach for the new Choose Your Adventure workforce development program.*

# Providing a Safe Start

February is recognized nationally as Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Month. Our Safe Start program provides



*Safe Start Coordinator, Briana Wesley*

education to teens on healthy relationships and dating, and promotes discussion of issues like cyber stalking and bullying. In a typical year, the program impacts over 8,000 students.

It's been almost a year since our Safe Start coordinator, Briana Wesley, was regularly visiting and teaching in schools, but we've kept her busy. Briana has been reaching out to teachers and faculty, blogging, and providing resources. She has also been providing support to students who are e-learning in the onsite computer lab at the shelter. During scheduled instructional breaks, Brianna has used the time to talk with students about healthy relationships. "I think the children have grown from our discussions. It also gives their mothers a break so they can focus on healing and goals," she said.

## Auxiliary Continues Support of Safe Start

Our Auxiliary recently made a gift of \$14,300 to the Crisis Center, including a \$10,000 gift for Safe Start. "We have been a strong advocate for educating youth about healthy relationships; it's something we believe in," said Auxiliary President, Marie Kaminski.

The Auxiliary's annual Legends Luncheon has officially been cancelled for 2021 and the group will focus on hosting it in spring of 2022.

## 40-hour Training Series

The Crisis Center currently offers two 40-hour domestic violence training programs that equip individuals with the knowledge needed to volunteer or work directly with clients in a domestic violence setting. You can complete the entire 40-hour training on-site at the Crisis Center or complete 20 hours of the required training online via the Illinois Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

The Crisis Center will reimburse 50% of the on-site total training cost in exchange for a six-month weekly volunteer commitment. For more information, contact Sol Ennis-Klyczek at [education@crisisctr.org](mailto:education@crisisctr.org) or visit [crisisctr.org](http://crisisctr.org).

## The Valentine Effect

The number of people relying on our Emergency Shelter fluctuates throughout the year, although in a typical year the shelter remains at capacity most of the time. This last year, however, was far from typical. Traditionally, hotline calls and requests for shelter in February seem to decrease.



"We call it the Valentine Effect," said Sarah Tygart, Director of Victim Services. "Sometimes abusers use Valentine's Day to make up for prior abuse with flowers, candy and other traditional gifts associated with the holiday," she said. Victims see these actions as an attempt by the abuser to change and as a result, they experience a honeymoon stage. "Once the 'holiday of love' is over, the cycle starts again, tensions rise and violence occurs," Sarah added.

## Republic Bank



*Pam Kostecki (left) and Kamlesh Jain (right) of Republic Bank*

Since 2017, Republic Bank has been setting the bar high as a Corporate Champion with annual gifts of \$5,000. This year, the bank chose to support the gala with a \$5,000 sponsorship. “It is my honor to support the Crisis Center. Your mission to provide emergency shelter and other essential services for people impacted by domestic violence and creating for them a pathway to success resonates with our own goals,” said Kamlesh Jain, VP/Branch Sales Manager in Tinley Park.

## Frankie’s Ristorante

Frankie’s Ristorante of Tinley Park has been donating to the Crisis Center for more than ten years. They have hosted fundraisers, shared social media posts and advocated for domestic violence victims in hopes of increasing awareness in the community.



*Frankie’s Ristorante serves up care and compassion*

Last spring, amidst the pandemic, our relationship blossomed. Owners Angela Castelli and Frankie Santoro reached out to us after a customer made a cash donation to the restaurant and told them to use it to provide food to others during the pandemic. Since Frankie’s had already donated to frontline hospital workers in the area, they chose one of their favorite charities, the Crisis Center.

In the past year, Frankie’s has donated six gourmet meals for the shelter clients, which always included special desserts and small gifts. Angela said she wanted the clients to feel special. She certainly succeeded.

## Parenting After Domestic Violence

Victims of domestic violence who are parents often feel shame and guilt for allowing their children to live in an abusive home. Many times these feelings inhibit their ability to communicate and effectively parent their children. After much research, the Crisis Center has invested in a new culturally competent and trauma-focused parenting

curriculum designed for supporting parents who are victims of domestic violence.

The curriculum is launching this spring with one-on-one sessions for parents living in any of our residential programs. Trained staff will teach parents how to cope with their own trauma while also helping children to cope with theirs.

## Neat Repeats Online

Our Neat Repeats resale stores have found a way to make shopping work in the midst of a pandemic by introducing its online store - [neatrepeatsonline.com](http://neatrepeatsonline.com).



“You can shop from anywhere, at any time, and with the same perks of our local Neat Repeats stores - great purchases at a great price for a great cause,” said Chris Beele, Director at Neat Repeats. All products are sold at 50% off store prices and you have the option to pick up your purchase from one of our stores or have them shipped.

### Providing Safety through Monthly Giving

Safety Circle members enable a reliable, steady source of income needed to maintain our programs and meet our client's needs. No one understands this more than Melanie.



“Women and children have always been vulnerable to domestic abuse. Decades ago, crisis centers didn't exist, and it's crucial that we keep these services going. I used to buy more regularly at Neat Repeats, but my daughter is grown and I've downsized, thus, a monthly contribution continues my support for a place I believe in. Having worked for a nonprofit, I know that pledges help an organization to plan their budgets throughout the year. **When we all give a little, it adds up to a lot.**” - *Melanie Holmes*, Palos Park

To join, visit [crisisctr.org/donate](http://crisisctr.org/donate) or contact Janice Barry at [jbarry@crisisctr.org](mailto:jbarry@crisisctr.org) or call 708.429.7255 x141.

## The Impact of Domestic Violence on the Workforce

When you're a victim of domestic violence, the abuse doesn't stop at home. Domestic abuse is likely to affect a victim's work performance due to sleep deprivation, depression, lack of focus, and injuries.

The Department of Labor reports that victims of domestic violence lose nearly eight million days of paid work per year in the U.S., resulting in a \$1.8 billion loss in productivity for employers. Oftentimes, employers are unaware of the signs of domestic abuse or the laws that protect victims in the workplace.

We're developing a curriculum that addresses how domestic violence impacts the workplace, including how to identify signs of domestic violence among staff and how to safely address someone



*Solomohn Ennis-Klyczek, Director of Education and Prevention*

who might be a victim. The curriculum will also educate on the laws that protect the company and victims in the workplace.

## Why Don't They Leave?

One of the most common questions we hear is, “Why don't they leave their abuser?” Our Director of Clinical Services, Stacey Jones, stated that the most prevalent barrier to a victim leaving is the lack of financial resources. According to Stacey, many victims have a joint bank account with their abuser and are afraid to make withdrawals. Some do not have access to the accounts because their abuser withholds the passwords. Many victims are also manipulated into quitting their job, thus losing any form of income.

Without a credit score, a security deposit, or the financial means to make monthly rent payments, it is nearly impossible to leave an abuser without the fear of becoming homeless.

One of our counseling clients, Giulliana, knows this fear well. After losing her job early on in the pandemic, and with two small children in tow, she chose to stay with her abuser longer than she cares to admit. “We helped Giulliana create a detailed plan to safely leave her abuser,” said Stacey. While her plan was being created, she was accepted into our Transitional Housing Program where she and her children will live safely for the next two years. While in the program, she can work on improving her work skills and getting a job. “We took the fear of homelessness away for Giulliana, and once that obstacle was removed, she could see the light at the end of the tunnel,” Stacey said.

# Lifelines of Love



A Virtual Gala to Support Victims of Domestic Violence

Our first-time virtual gala was a great success. The gala committee, co-chaired by board members, Katie Abbott and Jennifer Kanacki, dug deep this year for unique ways to keep the event exciting and engaging for viewers. Special thanks to Kathy Waller for coordinating the “In Memory of Mary” raffle, and to our amazing Empowerment Sponsors: Exelon, The Dik Family Foundation, and Morgan Stanley. We are grateful to everyone whose support was unwavering and kept our gala dreams alive. The gala raised over \$200,000. Join us next year when we return to the Odyssey Country Club for an Evening in Venice on February 26, 2022!



*Patty Ridings, our event location host, (left) and Lisa Molloy, Crisis Center Special Events Manager, (right) celebrating a successful night after the live broadcast.*



*Our tech crew working hard behind the scenes of the virtual event.*



*The day-of event staff and volunteers on stage after a successful night.*

## Gifts for Hope

Gifts for Hope, a local charity, was honored for the direct support they give to clients. They have provided iPads, laptops, mattresses, bedding and more. Above all, the charity pays moving costs for clients who are moving into Transitional Housing or a permanent new home. They set the bar very high and as such the award was named for the charity and will be presented to other worthy recipients in years to come.

## Gala Award Recipients

We recognized five very special award recipients at the gala: Beth Mahar, recipient of the Dianne Masters Award; Mike Ruffner, Volunteer Spirit Award; Brenda White, Courage Award; Donna Littleton and Gifts for Hope, recipients of the inaugural Gifts for Hope Award; and Sam and Kari Aiello, recipients of the first Spirit of Charity Award.



*Mike Ruffner*



*Beth Mahar*

## Leaving a legacy

A long-time donor and frequent Neat Repeats shopper who wishes to remain anonymous recently made the decision to include the Crisis Center in her will. "The Crisis Center is always supporting the community and that is very important to me," she stated.

Interested in learning more about planned giving? Contact Lorri Nagle at 708.429.7255 x140.

## Shop Amazon Smile!

Do you use Amazon to shop for household supplies, gifts, and more? Support the Crisis Center by shopping on Amazon Smile and choosing the Crisis Center for South Suburbia as your beneficiary.

## Want to honor a loved one?

Consider a memorial or honorary gift to the Crisis Center for South Suburbia. For more information contact Janice Barry at [jbarry@crisisctr.org](mailto:jbarry@crisisctr.org) or call 708.429.7255 x141.

Connect with us on social media



[www.crisisctr.org](http://www.crisisctr.org)



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## the Events calendar

### Auxiliary Spring Luncheon

Postponed until 2022, Date TBD.

### Dianne Masters Cup

**Tuesday, August 10, 2021** at Silver Lake Country Club, Orland Park. 18-hole option is \$150 (9:00am tee-off) or the 9-hole option is \$100 (12:00pm tee-off). Sponsorships available. Fun hole contests, raffles and auction. Registration information available soon. Contact Lisa Molloy for details at [lmolloy@crisisctr.org](mailto:lmolloy@crisisctr.org) or 708-429-7255, x142.



Join us for our Gala Passport to Adventure:

### An Evening in Venice

**February 26, 2022** Odyssey Country Club