



crisis center

*connection*

Winter/Spring 2023



*strategic moves*

expanding shelter and services

# From our *executive director*



Dear Friends,

Domestic violence tragedies seem to be in the news regularly these days. Innocent victims have lost their lives, and families are left grieving and devastated. We are doing our best to provide domestic violence prevention and education services in the community, including our schools. As an advocate for our work, please tell your friends, family, and co-workers about the Crisis Center's resources. You might save a life.

Today I am feeling very hopeful and proud, and you have certainly contributed to that feeling. We have successfully renovated our shelter and expanded the number of households we can support. This is enabling us to better meet the needs of domestic violence survivors in the south suburbs. Our other programs have expanded as well. We have hired more staff and been able to promote some hard-working team members. None of this would be possible without you!

We've been able to expand thanks to the state's investment in Domestic Violence services. We are looking forward to hosting Congressman Sean Casten and his team for a tour of our expanded shelter facility. We will discuss with him how he can help us with the affordable housing crisis that has overburdened our emergency shelter and the families it serves. We hope he will also help us secure capital funding for a new building to accommodate our growing operations.

As we embark on a new three-year Strategic Plan with our Board of Directors and Management Team at the helm, we will continue to prioritize housing solutions. We will also remain focused on providing exceptional quality and impactful services, engaging our community partners, driving revenue growth, being good stewards of our resources and making the Crisis Center an agency that attracts and maintains highly trained and committed staff.

Finally, I want to honor and recognize recently retired Board member, Kathy Mahoney. Kathy spent her entire life in banking, most recently as Managing Director with CIBC bank. She dedicated 27 years to the Crisis Center and served as President from 2001-03. She is an incredible advocate for survivors and I am forever grateful for her generosity and leadership.

Thank you for all you do for the Crisis Center. You are the foundation on which we grow and flourish.

Gratefully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pam Kostecki". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Pam Kostecki, *Executive Director*

## Talented Shelter Staff Promoted

The expansion of the shelter opened the door to hire additional staff and promote some hard-working team members.

Congratulations to Sarah Tygart, Senior Director of Victim Services. Sarah has worked in the shelter for 15 years and had many roles, including overnight shift leader and hotline coordinator. Today, she manages the operations of the emergency shelter, housing programs and the hotline. Andrea Bird was promoted to Victim Services Housing Manager. She supervises case management services at the shelter, oversees the Transitional Housing Program (including workforce development), and the HUD funded Rapid Re-Housing and Coordinated Entry Programs.

A'Donna Washington has also worked on the hotline or in the shelter for nine years. Today she is the Residential Supervisor and responsible for the day-to-day operations of the shelter. Sarah Mullan is a rapidly rising star in Victim Services. Sarah was promoted to Hotline Supervisor and is responsible for all front desk and hotline operations.



*Pictured L to R: Sarah Tygart, Sarah Mullan, A'Donna Washington and Andrea Bird*

# Meeting the Growing Need

Increased funding from the State of Illinois, generous grants from the Coleman Foundation and others, and gifts from our faithful donors, including the American Association of University Women, have supported the incredible growth and expansion at our Emergency Shelter.

Prior to FY22, the average number of requests for shelter exceeded our ability to provide services by 83%. For the past two years, we have only been able to meet 7%, leaving 93% of the requests unmet. Over the last 5 years, we have had to turn away more than 3,000 victims of domestic violence who are seeking safe haven. In the last several months, our shelter renovations were completed. We grew 55%, going from 35 beds to more than 54 with cribs. “Our shelter still remains full most of the time and being able to support 20 households means more survivors will get a chance to break free from violence,” said Sarah Tygart, Senior Director of Victim Services.

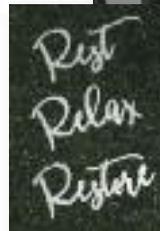
*“The expansion and renovation was the result of hardworking staff and volunteers.”*

Bedrooms now come in all sizes and can accommodate singles or larger families. Each room has a desk, wardrobe, television, refrigerator and microwave. The Crisis Center also provides bedding and other essentials, all of which are gifted to clients when they leave the shelter.

In addition to transforming former offices into client bedrooms, several other spaces were renovated and created to



support a trauma-informed approach to services. No other room in the shelter best represents this than the new Tranquility Room. The room features a meditation area with a comfortable reading nook filled with materials focused on healing, building self-worth, and resilience.



There are art therapy stations where clients can draw, paint or create a t-shirt depicting their own journey and healing process. A piano offers an opportunity for those who are musically inclined and two large lounge chairs are the perfect place to unwind, decompress and enjoy aromatherapy.



One of the most popular attractions in the room are the three large massage chairs, where clients can disconnect from pain and exhale trauma. The coffee bar and lounge were added as another place where survivors can relax, enjoy a

freshly brewed cup of coffee and chat with other residents.

Finally, the hotline area was updated with new furniture and décor. It complements the new welcome station where guests and residents at the shelter check-in and begin their healing journey.

“The expansion and renovation was the result of hardworking staff and volunteers,” said Pam Kosteki, Executive Director. “The shelter is always changing to accommodate the needs of our clients, but this has certainly been the most expansive and welcomed transformation in many years.”

## Spring Cleaning?

Neat Repeats is currently looking for donations of spring clothing, shoes, housewares, and home décor. Donations can be dropped off at the Worth or Orland Park stores during business hours, or at the Donation Center located at 8201 W. 183rd Street, Unit A, Tinley Park – T, W and TH, 9 am – noon.

# Survivors Feel Connected with Support Group

As part of our expansion of services, we hired more staff to provide professional counseling services for adults and children. We are also offering a weekly domestic violence survivors support group.

“Having a group where everyone is going through similar things helps survivors feel less alone,” said Nicole Suhm, one of the professional counselors at the Crisis Center. “Sharing stories, fears, talking about kids and what it’s like to walk on eggshells all of the time is important,” Suhm added. The support group, like all of the counseling services at the Crisis Center, is free and confidential. It also educates survivors on forms of domestic abuse and the cycle of violence.



Meetings are open to all survivors and held on Wednesdays from 7-8 pm in Tinley Park. To register for this free group, call the Crisis Center at 708-429-7233 (SAFE).

Are you a *victim*  
of domestic violence  
and need *someone*  
to *talk* to?

**FREE & CONFIDENTIAL  
COUNSELING is available now.**

**Call 708.429.7233 (SAFE)  
to schedule an  
appointment today.**

## PAIP Increases Accessibility

The Partner Abuse Intervention Program (PAIP), which provides education and intervention for abusers, has expanded services and locations. Additional Spanish and Arabic speaking staff have been hired, classes are now offered for women who abuse, and new easily accessible meeting locations are available.



PAIP Team members L to R: Chris Alcorn-Catena, Bobby Dunlap, Eva Naser.

The PAIP program utilizes a curriculum called Choices, which focuses on accountability and abusers taking responsibility for their behavior and actions. Most participants in the PAIP program are mandated by the court to participate in the 26-week course, but staff are now also networking with other counseling professionals to increase their awareness of the program and initiate referrals from their own client base. To register, call our hotline at 708.429.7233 (SAFE).

## Feeding the Body and the Soul

Is your family, business, or group (church group, book club, etc.) looking to do something special for Crisis Center clients? Please consider donating a prepared or catered meal to the shelter. Meals should feed 42 people. Interested? Call Sarah at 708-429-7255, x123 or sberger@crisisctr.org.

## A Culture of Connectedness

The Crisis Center recently added Pingboard as a staff engagement tool. Pingboard is a software platform that helps our team stay connected, see what’s new, who is joining our team and more. It’s also a great tool to help us recognize and applaud each other.



Dany Garcia, Operations Director, and “bragging rights” trophy winner.

Neat Repeats Associate Manager, Renee Kalinowski, took home the inaugural “Bragging Rights” trophy for receiving the most applause on Pingboard. Our most recent winner was Daniella “Dany” Garcia, Operations Director.

The Crisis Center is a great place to work. Visit our website at [crisisctr.org](http://crisisctr.org) for a complete list of job openings.

### Men’s Groups

Alsip (at the Doubletree Hotel) -  
Tuesday 4:30-6:30pm & 7-9pm

Tinley Park - Wednesday 6-8pm;  
Thursday 4-6pm & 7-9pm;  
Friday 3-5pm

### Women’s Groups

Tinley Park -  
Tuesday 7-9pm;  
Friday 3-5 pm

# Corporate *champions*

Corporate Champions are philanthropic leaders in the community that share a mutually beneficial partnership with the Crisis Center, and Derrick and Chris Lott are the epitome of engaged and gracious Corporate Champions. They operate several McDonald's stores in the south suburbs. In 2019, their company made



*Corporate Champions Derrick and Chris Lott, owners of Lott McDonald's stores.*

its first donation to the Crisis Center in support of the annual gala. Since then, they have raised the bar for corporate giving and

demonstrated a commitment that is second to none. "Last year, when I asked them to provide a matching gift of \$5,000 for Giving Tuesday, Derrick and Chris immediately said yes and because of their generosity the Crisis Center raised almost \$20,000 from that campaign," said Lorri Nagle, Development & Communications Officer.

It's not only their personal and corporate generosity that makes the Lotts strong Corporate Champions, it is their willingness to network and engage other businesses in supporting the work of the Crisis Center. In addition to several other companies now on board as donors because of their outreach, the Black McDonalds Operators Association is now a major supporter of our work thanks to the connections made by Derrick and Chris.

## April is National Volunteer Appreciation Month!

The Crisis Center and its Neat Repeats Resale Shops rely on over 200 volunteers each year to keep our programs and stores running. These volunteers donate over 33,000 hours and save the agency almost \$490,000 each year! Since April is National Volunteer Appreciation Month, Michelle McCarthy, Volunteer Coordinator, is working on honoring our amazing volunteers with some well-deserved accolades and surprises including flowers, special meals and other gifts this month.



Interested in learning more about volunteer opportunities, contact Michelle at 708.429.7255 (at the prompt press 5), or [volunteer@crisisctr.org](mailto:volunteer@crisisctr.org).

## Record Numbers

During the pandemic, we experienced decreased opportunities for community education and prevention outreach, but today requests for presentations are soaring.

"My calendar is filling up faster than you can imagine," said Tracy Curtis, Community Education Outreach Coordinator, who receives requests daily from community groups, churches and places like public libraries who want to help educate the community about the impact of domestic violence. "Many groups want to learn about the warning signs, types of domestic violence, and how to help a friend in need," she added.

Our Safe Start violence prevention program is experiencing the same increase in requests. Staff in the program work with local colleges, high schools, junior high and youth groups to educate students about healthy dating. Since July, staff have already presented at over 50 schools and educated over 7,000 students.



*Safe Start Prevention Coordinators Keishera Smith and Samantha Norris present to students at Rich Central HS.*

# Creative Ways to Give

We are always thankful for the donations that we receive, but did you know about these ways to donate?

**Required Minimum Distribution (RMDs)** – If you are 72 years of age and have a tax-advantaged retirement account, chances are you need to begin taking withdrawals. Consider donating those funds to the Crisis Center like donors Mark and Andreatte Brachman have done for the past two years!

**Stock** – The stock market may have its ups and downs, but no matter where the market is trading, you can always donate stock. It's as easy as 1-2-3 with an electronic transfer.



**Safety Circle** – For as little as \$10 each month you can be part of a cadre of kind-hearted givers who are helping us plan for the future.

To discuss these vehicles of giving, and other creative ways to give, contact Lorri Nagle at 708.429.7255 x140.

## Housing Challenges

Housing is always a challenging factor for victims of domestic violence who flee their abusers, but lately the challenge has increased exponentially. The impact of Covid and the expansion of fair housing laws have made landlords less willing to take chances. Many are now requiring applicants to have a credit score over 600 and an income at least three times the monthly rent. Combine that with inflated monthly rents and you have an impossible hurdle for our clients to overcome, especially during a short emergency shelter stay.

While we have increased our ability to provide transitional housing, we will never have enough to house every shelter resident. As a result, shelter stays are getting longer and more residents are ending up going to another shelter program at the end of their stay with us.

Despite the increasing challenges, we are still making a difference with survivors like Jan. Jan came to our shelter after finally breaking free from her mentally and sexually abusive boyfriend. The day she stood up for herself was the day he threatened to kick her out. Fearful she would end up on the streets, she found safety in our program. During her first few weeks, Jan had nightmares, experienced depression, and was regularly contacted by her abuser. She sought support from Case Aide, Bethany, and supervisor, Andrea, who helped her come out of her depressive state enough to get screened for housing.

Part of our housing screening process includes documenting disabilities and verifying chronic



homelessness. Jan checked all the boxes to qualify for Permanent Supportive Housing and was matched to a provider in Northern Cook County. The wait was another three months. Staff were able to support Jan, and help

her cope with community living challenges. Eventually, however, Jan's desire to connect with other residents and their lack of empathy for her disability created too many challenges and the shelter was no longer a healing place for her to be living.

Our staff did not give up! Advocates worked to find a hotel close to the new housing program and called daily on Jan's behalf until she was given a move-in date. Jan is now living in her new apartment, engaging with new support workers, and enjoying a new job. Jan is thriving and will never be homeless again.

While Jan's story has a happy ending, some do not. Too often, longer shelter stays are not enough, or the community living environment becomes toxic and behavior ends a client's stay. Together, we must work tirelessly to find affordable housing solutions that are not shelter-based so more survivors will have opportunities like the one afforded to Jan.

# Red Carpet Treatment

The ball gowns were flowing, the tiaras were carefully placed atop heads, and the elegance of the ballroom at the Odyssey Country Club all made for a memorable night at the annual Crisis Center gala, An Evening in England: A Royal Ball. Over \$315,000 was raised at the event, which was chaired by board members Jennifer Kanacki, Katie Abbott, Derrick Lott; and avid supporters Kathy Waller and Susan Frangella. Thank you to our top sponsors: *Exelon, American Family Insurance – D. Tyler Agency, BlackEdge Capital, Black McDonald’s Operator’s Association (BMOA), CIBC Bank, Susan and Patrick Frangella, Friese Family Foundation, Gifts for Hope, Peoples Bank, Republic Bank and Morgan Stanley.*

Congrats to our award winners!



Thomas McCarty,  
Dianne Masters Award recipient



CIBC, Corporate Partner of the Year



Suburban Service League,  
Gifts for Hope Award recipient

Join us next year on February 24, 2024 as we stamp our Passport to Adventure for an evening in Spain!

## Prestwick Outing Tees Up Fun!

Join us for the second annual Crisis Center Classic at Prestwick Country Club on May 22nd. Sponsorships are available and golfers will enjoy a 12:30 pm shotgun start, lunch, dinner and silent auction. For details, contact Lisa Molloy at [lmolloy@crisisctr.org](mailto:lmolloy@crisisctr.org).



## Cultural Humility

The Crisis Center is committed to inclusivity, diversity, and cultural humility. To that end, we pledge to always self-reflect and regularly assess ways that we can continually improve our policies and procedures to best serve our community. Most people understand the concepts of inclusion and diversity, but cultural humility is a less recognized principle.

Cultural humility is a process of reflection that results in a deeper understanding of cultural differences. It does not focus on competence or confidence, but recognizes that the more you are exposed to cultures different from your own, the more you realize how much you may not know, but can learn about others.

The Crisis Center for South Suburbia has invested in helping more people access essential information on our website. It is important to us that individuals with varying visual abilities, non-native English speakers, or people who have difficulty reading text on a screen are able to access our web pages more efficiently and find the support they need.

With the introduction of Recite Me on our website, those with a disability, learning difficulty, low visual impairment, or who speak English as a second language can access information barrier-free. The toolbar includes a variety of features, such as a screen reader, reading aids, fully customizable styling options, and a translation tool with over 100 languages. The Recite Me tool is accessible on a laptop, desktop, tablet, or mobile phone.

## Leaving a legacy

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

## Want to honor a loved one?

Consider a memorial or honorary gift to the Crisis Center for South Suburbia, or purchasing a brick in our Garden Walkway. For more information contact Demetria at [dpapadopoulos@crisisctr.org](mailto:dpapadopoulos@crisisctr.org) or call 708.429.7255 x144.

Connect with us on social media



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

## Want to Give Back?

Have you ever considered volunteering? Aside from volunteer opportunities at our fun-filled Neat Repeats stores, there are plenty of other ways you can help in programs, and with special projects and events. Contact our Volunteer Coordinator at [volunteer@crisisctr.org](mailto:volunteer@crisisctr.org) or 708.429.7255, press 5 at the prompt.



## the Events calendar

### Crisis Center Classic May 22, 2023

Prestwick Country Club, Frankfort  
Details and registration at [CCClassic2023.givesmart.com](http://CCClassic2023.givesmart.com).  
Questions? Contact Lisa Molloy at [lmolloy@crisisctr.org](mailto:lmolloy@crisisctr.org).



### Auxiliary Legends Luncheon June 13, 2023, 11am–3pm, Gaelic Park

Tickets \$50, includes lunch and “Elvis” show.  
For ticket information, contact Marie at 708.599.0037.

### 30th Annual Dianne Masters Cup August 8, 2023, 18-hole & 9-hole options

Silver Lake Country Club, Orland Park. Details and registration at [DMCgolf2023.givesmart.com](http://DMCgolf2023.givesmart.com).  
Questions? Contact Lisa Molloy at [lmolloy@crisisctr.org](mailto:lmolloy@crisisctr.org).



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## Summer of Golf

benefitting the Crisis Center

**May 22, 2023** **Crisis Center Classic**  
Prestwick Country Club,  
Frankfort, IL

From the championship tees, Prestwick's golf course stretches out at 7,010 yards and plays to par 72.

It features just the right number of mature trees, water hazards, elevation changes, and deep bunkers protecting its large, sloping, perfectly manicured greens.

**August 8, 2023** **Dianne Masters Cup**  
Silver Lakes Country Club,  
Orland Park, IL

Select either the 18-hole or 9-hole option and hit the links to support the Crisis Center at the annual Dianne Masters Cup golf outing.

There will be fun games and activities!