

Thank you for empowering her to safety



Women's Center & Shelter
of Greater Pittsburgh

Survivor Story: Touched by Two Angels

Deirdre Baker, Dee for short, is one of those people who you meet for only five minutes but feel like you've been friends forever.

There's a warmth about her. If the feeling of sitting by the fireplace, wrapped in a soft blanket on a cozy couch, sipping hot chocolate could describe a person, it would be Dee. She has an infectious smile, bouncy hair, and despite what she says her age is, couldn't possibly be a day over 35. There is so much life and brightness beaming from her, you'd never think she'd had any dark days. But she did. Those days began as a young girl.

"I grew up with domestic violence. My father got into it with my mother all the time. To this day, I still don't think my mother knows that I saw and heard what was going on between them and what he did to her. There was 'no such thing.' 'And since 'there was no such thing' going on, you didn't talk about it outside the home. And you didn't seek help. You watched and you learned."



After her first marriage had ended, Dee was ready to find love. "I wanted to start dating again, but I wasn't the type to meet someone at a bar. Online dating sites were out, too. But meeting someone on a social media site? That didn't count; it wasn't the same thing.

"There I was commenting on a post. He commented on the same post. We commented back and forth and then moved on to sending messages to each other. I think the kids these days call it 'sliding into your DMs,'" Dee laughed. "Before I knew it, we were talking regularly on there. I didn't give him my phone number right away and we didn't meet in person for a couple of weeks. Before meeting DeSean in person, I thought I was doing everything right in order to be safe."

As the weeks turned into months, Dee and DeSean started dating. After a little time had passed, Dee introduced him to

her two older daughters. "They were not fans. I thought they were just being protective of their mother. My daughter Sandra commented right away about how he had to be the center of attention and the smartest person in the room. It rubbed her the wrong way. My other daughter Tamara told me she didn't like how he seemed standoffish toward the dog; annoyed that it was in the house," Dee explained.

"As much as I knew about warning signs, even the smallest ones, I made excuses for them," said Dee. When the physical abuse started, she made excuses for those as well. "It was the grab of my arm here, or a little shove there; nothing serious really. But it became more frequent. And more intense. Ultimately it escalated to sexually abusing me, too. And then the pet abuse began," continued Dee. "At this point, and a couple of years had passed by now, I had to admit to myself that I was in a relationship consumed by domestic violence. I was embarrassed, ashamed, angry, and broken, but I had to get help."

Dee became a Non-Resident client of WC&S and received help from our Civil Law Project and the Immediate Needs Coordinator. "Without Maggie and Joy, I have absolutely no idea how I would have survived. I was in a very dark place and may not have, to be honest. They were my angels! I got help with my court case, housing arrangements, basic necessities—everything. My favorite memory was falling to my knees with happy tears when Joy gave me a gift card for the holidays. I was a sobbing, speechless mess, but felt overwhelmingly supported. I finally started to believe things were going to be okay and I felt safe," sighed Dee. "Survivors of DV will always be safe and supported as long as you're here. I sing your praises!" And with those last few words, Dee's electric smile beamed again. ●

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A message from Nicole...

Often, our staff here are asked some variation of, "How do you do your job? How do you stand witness to the damage done by abusers, day after day, and then go right back and face it again? It never ends."

They're right. It doesn't end. And that's what doggedly drives all of us at WC&S to face another day.

Working to end domestic violence is **hard**. At times, the good we see can be overshadowed by darkness. We see adult and child survivors everyday who have reached their rock bottom. We see the physical, emotional, financial, and overall effects of what intimate partner violence looks like. And though we don't yet know the full extent of how this trauma will play out, we know it's there.

But we also know that we do this work with an incredibly dedicated, hard-working, smart, compassionate team. I am so deeply grateful for each and every one of them. And, we know that we have an amazing community of supporters like you, who are passionately fired up to figuratively extend a hand to survivors to lift them up and help them rise.

Over the past few months, the outpouring of your willingness to help survivors was nothing short of remarkable. Between Giving Tuesday, Adopt-A-Family, End of Year Giving, Third Party Events, and more, you made it possible to help hundreds of survivors begin to rebuild their lives. From making sure their immediate needs were met, to having legal advocacy to support groups and individual counseling, you set them out on the right path to defy the "it never ends" stigma.

One look at the headlines and you'll see that IPV is not backing down. But, neither are we. Not when a professional



athlete assaults his partner and only gets a smack on the hand before returning to the game, and not when a singer escapes punishment for multiple abuses and continues to sell out concerts. And especially not when a battered neighbor's husband tells you to mind your own business or a coworker is out for a few days and returns with bruises. Whether it's the social climate and movements like #MeToo, helping survivors speak out, or friends and colleagues gathering their collective strength and determination to do *something*—we keep going. We speak up. We work harder.

Yes, this work is heartbreaking at times, but it's an honor. Standing shoulder to shoulder with our clients on their journeys from being hurt to being hopeful is extremely inspiring. With our Board of Directors recently approving an ambitious Strategic Plan for the next three years, I am excited about what's to come. Surrounded by smart, passionate people like you, our staff, and our Board, together, we can face this heartbreak again and again, every day. The work never ends, but our resilience, resistance, and strength only grows.

With my deepest gratitude,

Nicole

Nicole Molinaro
President/CEO




See your support in action!

Inspiration, stories of hope, videos, and timely advocacy to help adult and children survivors.

 Women's Center & Shelter of Greater Pittsburgh

 @wcpittsburgh

 @wcs_pittsburgh

 Women's Center & Shelter of Greater Pittsburgh

Also, be sure to sign up for our short email newsletter on WCSCanHelp.org

Our mission is to advance the safety and wellbeing of victims of intimate partner violence and prevent and respond to intimate partner violence through social change.

Women's Advocacy Group

PROVIDED BY WOMEN'S CENTER & SHELTER



TOPICS INCLUDE:

- HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS
- SAFETY
- COPING SKILLS
- ANGER
- SELF-CARE
- HEALTHY COMMUNICATION
- SELF-ESTEEM

We are here to help you explore your feelings and understand your options in a supportive and non-judgmental space.

Gain support from other survivors and grow stronger through shared experiences.

JOIN OTHER WOMEN. SHARE YOUR STORY.

Together, we are making a difference in the lives of women!

Homewood Library
7101 Hamilton Ave. Pittsburgh, PA 15208
Every FIRST & THIRD Monday of the month
from 10 am - 11:30 am

Allegheny General Hospital
320 E. North Avenue, Pgh. PA 15212
Every Tuesday of the month from
3 pm - 4:30 pm
CALL FOR EXACT ROOM LOCATION

Knoxville Library
400 Brownsville Rd. Pittsburgh, PA 15210
Every Thursday from 1 pm - 2:30 pm

Sheraden
(Christian Teaching Ministries Church)
3045 Chartiers Avenue,
Pittsburgh, PA 15204
Every Thursday from 10 am - 11:30 am
NO RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION

Celebrating Survivors presented by UPMC Health Plan

A Special Evening to Remember

While every Celebrating Survivors event is special, this year's is proving to be a particularly meaningful year as we welcome the mother-daughter teams of **Pat Siger** and **Carli Siger** as well as **Barbara Jeremiah** and **Abigail Gardner** as honorary chairs for the evening. Together, they bring with them years of dedication to the WC&S mission through their expertise and commitment to service.

We are also humbled to be honoring two incredible people with *Ted Craig Humanitarian Awards*, **Sgt. Eric Kroll** of the Pittsburgh Bureau of Police and the late **Joyce McAneny**, WC&S' long-time and beloved Legal Advocacy Manager. This dynamic team worked together for over ten years, alongside law enforcement in the City of Pittsburgh, the Office of the District Attorney, the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence and others to improve DV training for police and to implement the Maryland Lethality Assessment Program (LAP) in Pittsburgh, a program that identifies and supports over a thousand high risk DV victims each year.

In addition to writing policies, developing and presenting trainings, and serving as a statewide resource around LAP, Sgt. Kroll also worked with WC&S in the creation and implementation of both



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the LAP and RUSafe 2.0 smart phone apps. Joyce worked at WC&S for more than 20 years, providing court accompaniment and safety planning to thousands of domestic violence survivors, presenting trainings on domestic violence to professional and community groups, including the Pittsburgh Police, and working to strengthen the justice system's response to domestic violence.

Please consider joining us to honor them, as well as to enjoy delicious food prepared by Rania's Catering, smooth sounds from the Kevin Howard Band, great friends, a wine grab and silent auction, and the festive atmosphere of the Children's Museum. To learn more, visit bit.ly/CelebratingSurvivors2019. ●

Outreach Program: Accessible Advocacy!

We've all heard realtors say that what's most important in buying a home is "location, location, location."

Turns out, WC&S would agree — except for us, it's the location of services that is so important. One barrier that can prevent a survivor from receiving the help she needs is where she needs to go for them; so now, receiving help within the City of Pittsburgh is more accessible than ever before. Thanks to a grant from PCCD (Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency) Victims of Crime Act (VOCA), survivors of intimate partner violence now have more access than ever to our programs and services. Our newly created Outreach program allows us to further extend our services into the community to provide advocacy support groups and individual advocacy in accessible, community-based locations throughout the city!

Our Outreach Advocate, Ani, has recently started facilitating advocacy groups in various locations in Homewood, Knoxville,

Sheraden, and the North Side, with more groups on the horizon. Discussions during these advocacy group meetings include crucial topics such as healthy communication and relationships, self-esteem, safety, coping skills, and more. This generous grant also allows clients who are having transportation troubles or other concerns and prefer not to come directly to our facility the ability to receive individual advocacy. We love breaking down barriers!

Additionally, our community partners can receive outreach, awareness, support, and training. Do you know an organization in our community who could use this assistance? Reach out to Ani—she can be contacted at outreach@wcpittsburgh.org for more information. ●

Leaving a Lasting Legacy to WC&S

Did you know that it's possible for donors just like you to leave a lasting legacy to WC&S through a planned gift?

By definition, a planned gift is any major gift, made in lifetime or at passing as part of a donor's overall financial and/or estate planning (plannedgiving.com). This often means that donors are able to make a larger gift than they could usually make from their typical income. And, with a well-executed, individualized plan done alongside a professional financial planner and/or attorney, a donor can reap financial benefits while supporting WC&S in achieving long-term sustainability. To begin the conversation, we decided to talk with WC&S' current Chair of the Board of Directors, Mary Anne, who has made a recent planned gift to WC&S:

"I think every donor wants to know that their contribution is impactful in some way. I have always been drawn to participate in efforts in which I could lift other women who are in need of assistance. WC&S has a mission I wholeheartedly believe in, and provides immediate hope for those who urgently need it. I feel gratified that my contributions are making a difference right away at WC&S."



I was about to update my will when I realized that I could do something now to ensure that the services I value today are available when needed in the future. I have invested time and donations in WC&S, and I would like to see that investment honored and secured. With a planned gift, I can make a donation decision now that is not subject to any estate tax, and I am comfortable that something that is important to me now will continue when I am gone."

I am giving via two vehicles: My will and an IRA. In each, I have specified a percentage of the estate will go to WC&S. For the IRA, I completed a form that was provided by my financial planner. For the will, my attorney added a sentence into the document. In the event my financial circumstances change, I can change these documents at any time."

If others are considering a planned gift, I would say that if you are making charitable donations now, you should definitely consider planned giving. Your beneficiaries may have different priorities, and you can ensure that a portion of your estate is truly a lasting legacy of your life's work."

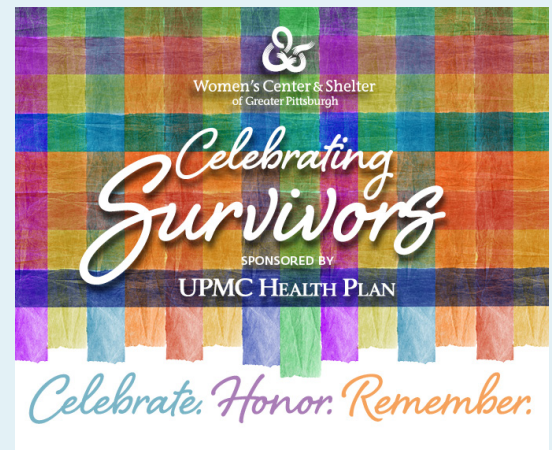
For more information, please contact Kristin Brown, Development Director, at 412-687-8017 ext. 350 or via email at brownk@wcspittsburgh.org. •

Calendar alert!

Please be sure to save these dates.

April 26

Our premier event, **Celebrating Survivors**, will be held at the **Children's Museum of Pittsburgh** on **Friday, April 26, 2019** from 6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. We'll be celebrating survivors of intimate partner violence (IPV), remembering those who have lost their lives to IPV, and honoring Sgt. Eric Kroll of the Pittsburgh Bureau of Police and our beloved former Legal Advocacy Manager, the late Joyce McAneny, with **Ted Craig Humanitarian Awards**.



May 11

The **2019 Highmark Walk for a Healthy Community Pittsburgh** will be held on **Saturday, May 11, 2019**, at Stage AE. Registration is open! With every step you take in this #DashAgainstDV, you can help IPV survivors take a step to a better and brighter life. Grab those walking shoes and we'll see you at the starting line!

