



Women's Center & Shelter
of Greater Pittsburgh

SPRING 2021

A Collaboration Makes Music in the Children's Advocacy Program

When music and art combine, what could be more inspiring for a child's mind?

WC&S' Children's Advocacy Program has added a new musical instrument to its space — a piano generously donated by the Emma Munson Foundation and painted by local Pittsburgh artist Zac Rutter.

The gorgeous piano is decorated with bright colors, large flowers, musical notes, and a "Sun Heart" symbol. The piano bench is lined on the inside with comic book art as a reminder that anything is possible. Hidden under the lid is a powerful message: You are loved.

"I also left a little message on the bench of the piano that reads 'The Keys to the Universe' to remind these children that anything is possible when you reach for the stars," said Zac.

The children and teens have already taken a shine to the piano, playing familiar tunes and creating music of their own. Later in the year, the Children's Advocacy Program is planning to virtually host local music teachers to help kids and teens interested in piano lessons.

"The gift of the piano has been incredible for our kids," said Anita, Children's Advocacy Program Supervisor. "The piano is so calming to them and helps them to express their emotions. Zac painted it with inspiring messages and symbols and the children can really feel the love. It helps them to feel calm, creative, and cared for."

Maria, WC&S Children's Advocate, discovered a book and sticker system that allows even the youngest children to make music. The see-through stickers label the keys and the book walks them through familiar tunes, like *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star* and *Mary Had a Little Lamb*.

"We wanted to find a way for the children to truly make music even if they didn't have a background in piano. It's amazing to see their faces light up when they create a song they recognize. It's pure joy," said Maria. "Music is healing for all people. Playing the piano has given the children a new way of expressing their emotions and discovering new interests. It has been an amazing addition to the program and we are so thankful to the Munson Foundation."



Michael and Denise Munson donated the piano in memory of their daughter, Emma Munson, who tragically passed in an accident in 2013 at the age of 19. In her short but impactful life, Emma was a truly compassionate spirit, dedicating herself to art, music, Mother Earth, and global food rights. Emma's legacy is that of peace, honor, love, respect, and being true to your word.

"Our kids learned to play on this piano. Emma played on this piano," said Denise, Emma's mother.

"One of the things our Emma believed in, she had tattooed on her, along with five of her friends: 'Kunst fur leben,' which means 'Art for life' in German," said Michael, Emma's father. "That's one of the threads of our foundation — bringing art to places where it is needed. We know how much love is in this place; we thought music would brighten the space even more."

Michael and Denise chose Zac to personalize the piano to match the colorful vibe of the Children's Advocacy Program.

The Munsons knew Zac and his art through some previous partnerships. Zac's artistic vision inspired his creation of the Spread Love Army, whose message is to spread love & positivity and discourage hate. Zac includes the symbol of the "Sun Heart" in his work, which represents the visual of love being spread in all directions as a reminder that love conquers all and should be shown to everyone.

"To me, painting this piano means that my art can make a positive impact in a child's life," said Zac. "I want the color and beauty of this piano to inspire a young musician to find the spark within themselves that will lead them to follow their dreams, whatever they may be. To be able to give a child the gift of art and music is a way of showing them the beauty of the world and can help them realize their potential to make an impact of their own."

The Munsons have been bringing joy to children at WC&S for three years with their Halloween Costume Giveaway. They believe their gift is the ability to unite people towards a common goal.

"People are so intimidated about getting involved because they think they have to do everything. But, you just have to carve it up into little bite-sized pieces so everyone can help. You just have to bring people together," said Michael.

And the icing on the cake? The piano is a local Pittsburgh brand and was even constructed here — truly a local piece from start to finish. ●



*But one thing is certain:
If we merge mercy with might,
and might with right,
then love becomes our legacy*

Amanda Gorman, The Hill We Climb

Hello Friends,

As Black History Month comes to a close and Women's Herstory Month is upon us, we have been thinking a lot about the celebration and uplifting of oppressed voices. It's no coincidence that we have included a small section of Amanda Gorman's poem, *The Hill We Climb*, to set the stage for this edition of *Rosewood*.



Our nation's first ever National Youth Poet Laureate is being celebrated across not only the country, but also throughout the world, for her stunning words of strength, unity, and truth during President Biden's inauguration. Ms. Gorman's identity and experience as a young Black woman are entirely her own, but her messages can ring true for many oppressed voices in the United States: we are here, we matter, and we are rising up by standing together. Ms. Gorman's words focus not only on unity and healing, but also on the challenges to come:

“For while we have our eyes on the future, history has its eyes on us.”

It is essential to social change and justice movements for the voices of leaders to represent the voices of the people affected by the issues. When we prioritize and amplify those who have lived the reality of oppression and silence, we move away from assumption, appropriation, and white-washing in favor of reality, diversity, and open communication, even if it can be difficult to bear.

Those who are oppressed do not experience life in silos. That is, their problems cannot be cut into bite-sized pieces to be easily consumed by those who cannot understand. The issues faced by a Black woman in an abusive relationship are weaved within each

other and made more complex by each facet of her identity. This is intersectionality: the understanding of how a person's various social identities combine to create different types of discrimination and/or privilege.

Let's break it down: women of color are more likely to live in poverty, to be homeless, to experience systematic oppression, to be victims of domestic violence, and to die at the hands of their abusers. We need to listen to them and to all people who are judged by the color of their skin, their gender, their sexuality, their economic level, and their disability status. Their stories matter.

So, how can we amplify and celebrate oppressed voices in our work? Take a holistic approach. 1) Diversify your media consumption; identify journalists, authors, and movie-makers who may not look like you and who have lived different experiences. 2) Look to your friends, family, and co-workers who hold different identities than you. Do not assume they are always willing to educate you, but politely and actively seek out their opinions, keeping in mind that one person can only ever speak on their individual experience. 3) Listen. 4) Learn to accept that sometimes you will be wrong and learn to admit it with grace. 5) Keep on trying, keep on learning, keep on loving. Do not give up. Community is out there if you look for it. Together, we can live Ms. Gorman's words:

*“For there is always light.
If only we're brave enough to see it.
If only we're brave enough to be it.”*

Each and every day at WC&S, we try to not only see the light, but to be it, for all victims and survivors of domestic violence and their children. It is you, our dear friends and supporters, that help to make this possible. These incredibly brave survivors are the reason for our work, and the hope provided by our amazing supporters is often the push that they need to keep on going in their healing journeys.

For all of the tough todays, there are more hopeful tomorrows. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

With peace and respect,

Nicole Molinaro
President/CEO



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.



Aubrey's Story

Aubrey's abusive ex-husband took their child and then manipulated law enforcement and criminal justice systems into believing that she was the perpetrator of violence in their relationship.



"I was so afraid of making things worse and losing my baby that I tried to be as small as possible, accepting whatever lies and falsehoods were thrown at me," Aubrey grieved. She was then mandated to attend a Battering Intervention Program and then told her story, the truth, to the intake coordinator.

"It was the first time in weeks of unbearable fear, stress, and worry that I heard validation," said Aubrey.

The intake coordinator assured her she was not the perpetrator, but rather the victim of domestic violence. Aubrey was advised to get in touch with Women's Center & Shelter of Greater Pittsburgh. "I was filled with hope, relief, and the ability to power on in unbearable pain because someone outside of my family and friends believed me," she expressed.

When she attended the support group at WC&S, Aubrey felt like an imposter. She thought the intake coordinator must not have understood her. "I was trying to leave in the middle of a tense fight. My ex took my baby and then I hit him when he wouldn't let me leave. Didn't they hear the part where I hit him? I thought this was my fault. Why am I in the victim's group?" questioned Aubrey.

Then, another survivor, Brenda, spoke up during a group counseling session. Brenda told her story, so similar to Aubrey's own, and her jaw dropped. This woman was also trapped in a no-win situation, tried all possible options she could think of to escape, and then, after a combination of unfortunate circumstances, she was arrested. Just like Aubrey.

Survivors who have exhausted all other possibilities may do whatever it takes to get themselves and their families to safety, even if law enforcement or the justice system don't see it that way. When people who abuse their intimate partners manipulate the system to avoid consequences, it can put DV victims in horrible situations, often facing legal troubles, CYF involvement, a ruined reputation, and a lack of trust in the institutions that are meant to protect them.

Aubrey knew from experience that Brenda was doing the best she could with what she had. She wasn't trying to hurt anyone, just to survive. "She kept trying to help defuse or fix the problems and they kept coming," said Aubrey. "I understood — and that helped me to forgive myself so I could begin to heal and grow."

**“
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WC&S advocates provided Aubrey with empowering tools and exercises she could do on her own. "WC&S helped me to stand up after being beaten down emotionally, physically, and psychologically by my ex," explained Aubrey. "The part of me that longed to be seen, not isolated, not controlled, and not constantly put down was given a voice. I learned I didn't deserve the abuse that I received."

Aubrey still looks forward to her support group each week. She says that it fills a void that she just can't find anywhere else, with people who understand invisible emotional abuse and the lasting effects it can have. "Even if I don't share during that session, just being there in the presence of other incredible women gives me peace, inspires me, and motivates me to be better because I'm not alone. All I need sometimes is one thing to look forward to per week and WC&S is always there for me," Aubrey added.

Aubrey's future is looking bright and she is feeling hopeful. With the help of WC&S services, she is rebuilding her life with a new home, has shared custody of her child, is clear of all criminal charges, and is fully divorced and separated from her ex-husband. "I reunited with the independent, amazing version of myself I've always been, but who had been hiding for years because of my jealous, insecure ex," Aubrey beamed.

**“
I've rebuilt healthy relationships with family
and friends who I was previously estranged and
blocked from. WC&S has helped me to understand
the warning signs and healthy relationship
elements for the future.”**

Aubrey is thankful for her time at WC&S and for the connections she has made. "You are giving the sun back to sunflower women who felt shriveled. Love and light conquer all." ●



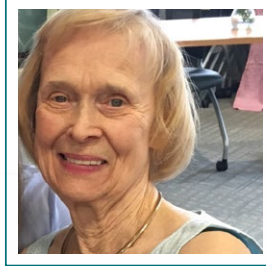
IN MEMORIAM

The year 2020 was difficult for many reasons. For the Women's Center & Shelter family, it brought about the loss of three of our beloved family members. Though the loss of loved ones is never easy, we know the differences they made in so many lives and their legacies of love will far outlast their time here with us. We continue to think of their families and hold close the memories we shared with each of them. To everyone who suffered a loss in 2020, we offer our heartfelt sympathies and hope you find peace in remembering the good times you shared with your loved ones.



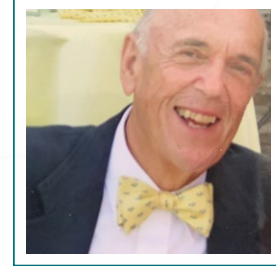
Patty Tsoukalas

Patty served as WC&S' Food/Resident Coordinator since 2011, sharing her love of food and genuine caring for others with residents, their children, and staff members. She was incredibly hard-working and went out of her way to ensure that the needs of everyone within the shelter were met with grace and dignity. Patty loved working with volunteers and making events in the shelter as joyful as possible with her delicious cooking and beautiful decorating skills. She had a kind spirit and a knack for connecting with residents, their children, her coworkers, volunteers, and anyone else she met while at WC&S. Whether it was organizing the food and drinks for the Children's Festival or helping with larger events, Patty was always willing to go out of her way to help others in big and small ways. Her legacy will live on through her two teenage children and through all of us who knew her.



Sherley Craig

Sherley, her late husband Ted, and the entire Craig family are long-time and ardent supporters of WC&S, including through the establishment of the Ted Craig Humanitarian Award, which is presented each year at Celebrating Survivors. Sherley proudly presented the award at the event for many years, which is given to an individual or organization whose work or volunteer efforts positively impacts the lives of those around them. Through the generosity of many donors, our recently renovated outdoor children's and pet play areas at WC&S were named in honor of Ted and Sherley, a legacy to those for whom they cared so deeply. Sherley was a member of the WC&S Advisory Council and enjoyed working with the WC&S team and the Celebrating Survivors committee to create a special Celebrating Survivors event each year, which continues to mean a great deal to us and to her family.



Joe Calihan

Joe and his wife Brenda first became connected to WC&S through their dear friends Don Wolff and Sherley Craig. Over the years, they attended fundraising events such as the former Spring Clothes Out and even co-hosted an event at the Fox Chapel Golf Club to help raise funds for the recent Shelter from the Storm capital campaign. The Calihans were instrumental in the success of the campaign and the building renovations, making a lead gift in memory of Don Wolff. Joe served as a member of WC&S' Advisory Council, often making connections for WC&S in the community because of how much he believed in the important work being done here. His incredible dedication to our mission and the missions of the many charities he and his family supported will without a doubt leave a lasting impact for years to come.

Celebrating Survivors... stay tuned!

*We are thrilled to announce this year's Ted Craig Humanitarian Award recipient: **Raquel A. Buranosky, MD, MPH***

Dr. Buranosky began working with Women's Center & Shelter more than 20 years ago when she recognized the need for victims in the medical setting to be screened for intimate partner violence and helped to establish the Program for Health Care to Underserved Populations. Through this program, University of Pittsburgh medical students provide health assessments to shelter residents and connect them to necessary medical treatment and additional resources in the community. Dr. Buranosky is the Medical Director for the Pittsburgh Underserved Women's Center Clinic, the Assistant Dean for Clinical Education at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, and a practicing Doctor of General Internal Medicine at UPMC Presbyterian. She is well-deserving of the Ted Craig Humanitarian

Award because of her long-time commitment to improving the lives of IPV survivors through access to medical care, as well as her dedication to ongoing education and research around IPV in the medical community. She and her team have also continued their work throughout the COVID-19 pandemic virtually. We look forward to honoring Dr. Buranosky and her contributions to the Pittsburgh community!



Please stay tuned for more details regarding Celebrating Survivors by visiting the WC&S website.

2020 Governor's Victim Service Pathfinder Award

Joyce McAneny, beloved former Women's Center & Shelter Legal Advocacy Manager, has been selected as recipient of a 2020 Governor's Victim Service Pathfinder Award under the category of Posthumous Award for Individual Direct Service.

According to the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD), the Governor's Victim Service Pathfinder Awards were created to honor and recognize those who have shown a commitment to enhancing the lives of victims of crime within Pennsylvania. Joyce was chosen to receive this award by a committee of victim service providers that represent a broad range of victim service programs throughout Pennsylvania. She was selected based on her outstanding and visible contribution to victim services in Pennsylvania through her work on behalf of domestic violence survivors.

Throughout her 20 years at WC&S, Joyce provided court accompaniment and safety planning to thousands of domestic violence survivors, presented trainings to professional and community groups including the Pittsburgh Police, and worked to strengthen the justice system's response to domestic violence. She worked tirelessly with judges, court administrators, attorneys, probation officers, police and others in the justice system so that victims were better supported, and batterers held more accountable. Joyce was an integral member of the team that implemented the Maryland Lethality Assessment Program (LAP) in the City of Pittsburgh in 2013, which will no doubt

be a part of her lasting legacy. She assisted with training police officers on administering LAP screenings and developed a system of legal advocacy follow-up for the high-risk victims who are screened through LAP by police.

Invariably, she managed all of this difficult work while remaining positive and treating those around her with dignity. As one survivor who worked with Joyce said, "Joyce constantly built me up. She gave me the confidence to move forward. Joyce was a powerful force. She was definitely unique and she should be remembered that way."

We know that Joyce is smiling and that her family, friends, and colleagues remain incredibly proud of her work. On Joyce's behalf, Women's Center & Shelter and her family would like to extend our sincere gratitude to PCCD for choosing Joyce to receive this prestigious award. There is no better example of someone who gave her all to this important work. ●



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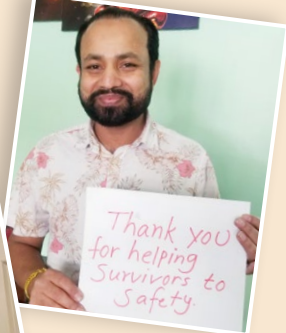
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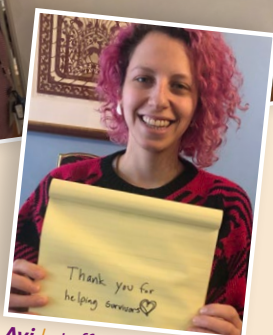
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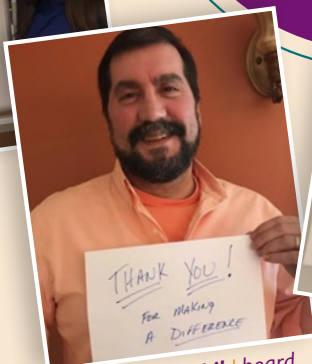
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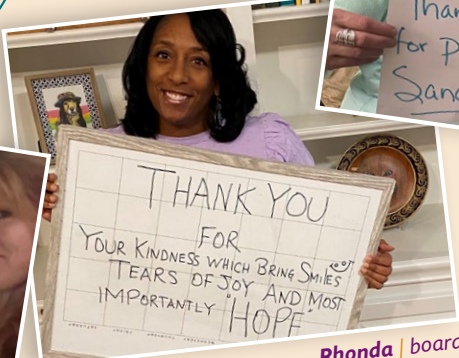
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thank you

There will never be enough words to thank YOU, our incredible donors, volunteers, and supporters, for all that you have done on behalf of survivors and their children, especially during this past year.

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Take a stroll to support survivors, on your own terms!

*Highmark Walk for a Healthy Community
is virtual again this year — but that won't
keep us from being together in spirit!*

WC&S is organizing a “walking weekend” so we can be together, near and far. On **Saturday, May 15th** or **Sunday, May 16th**, we'll all wear our new, one-of-a-kind WC&S shirts and take a walk, on our own terms. Short, long, around the block, in a park, on a treadmill, alone, or with the whole household — whatever suits you. We invite you to post pictures and videos from your walk and tag us on Instagram and Facebook to share the love.

Register as a walker on our Highmark Walk page and have a minimum of \$30 credited to your walker account to receive both the WC&S t-shirt and the Highmark Walk t-shirt. Register here: bit.ly/WCSWalk2021

REGISTER

HIGHMARK
VIRTUAL WALK FOR A
HEALTHY COMMUNITY

bit.ly/WCSWalk2021

WALK

**Saturday
May 15**

or
**Sunday
May 16**

WEAR

**BE
NEBBY.**
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
IS NOT A SECRET TO KEEP

SHARE

