



Women's Center & Shelter
of Greater Pittsburgh

FALL 2024

Help, Healing, and Hope

Women's Center & Shelter of Greater Pittsburgh has been working for 50 years to create safe spaces for survivors on their healing journeys. We know that domestic violence can happen to anyone at any point in their life and that there are many different ways that it can manifest in relationships. That's why it is so crucial for us to maintain our comprehensive services so that we're able to continue meeting the ever-changing needs of survivors. A survivor can come to WC&S for a variety of services, including legal advocacy, support groups, emergency shelter, and many others. In honor of our 50th anniversary of serving survivors and their families, we want to share three stories from survivors who have been empowered by WC&S. Read their stories of hope and healing.



Leslie

(content warning: description of violence)

For the first five years of their relationship, Leslie's partner never physically hurt her. Then one day, he began strangling her while he was driving her home. She tried to escape the vehicle, but her abuser parked and climbed on top of her to prevent her from leaving. Eventually a bystander was able to call the police, and her partner was arrested, but Leslie knew her experience wasn't over. What she didn't know was what to do next. Fortunately, one of the officers who responded to the call was able to get her in touch with Women's Center & Shelter.

“The Shelter called me right away and gave me the next steps to take in order to be safe. When I realized I had so much support, it was just beautiful. When I reached out for **help**, it was there. From all angles — mentally, physically and emotionally.”

Leslie was partnered with a Legal Advocate who helped her through the PFA process, which made a huge difference for her. Navigating the legal system while recovering physically and emotionally from abuse can feel almost impossible.

“Going through court was the hardest because I had to see him. I had an advocate with me every step of the way — she was there to support and guide me and let me know that I was doing the right thing.”

After the legal proceedings ended, Leslie worked with a counselor for private therapy sessions that helped her get the assistance and support she needed while she healed from her experience. She says while she wishes it hadn't happened, she's grateful for the person she's become and the perspective she's gained from it.

“Don't get caught up in a bad relationship; get out of it while you can. I made a decision that day and I ended it. I wasn't going back.” ●

Shalyn

After getting out of her abusive situation and taking time to reflect, Shalyn was looking for a place to share her experiences with other survivors to continue **healing**. She reached out to WC&S to ask about options.

She joined a weekly support group that provides survivors a chance to meet and talk about their day-to-day experiences and provide an emotional check-in. Shalyn said the groups typically didn't focus on the abuse they had gone through, instead, they discussed their goals — reminding them that they're more than the abuse they endured. The community aspect of the group reassured Shalyn that she wasn't alone.

“It felt wonderful — like I wasn't defeated. It felt like there were people out there who care about me and my problems.”

Keep reading Shalyn's story of healing...

Shalyn's story ...

The support group provided more than just emotional support for Shalyn; at one of the meetings, she mentioned that one of her children had a gluten allergy and another was diabetic and explained the financial strain this often put on her. Without being asked, her advocate arranged for gift cards to be provided to help cover the cost of groceries.

“Before I joined the support group, I wasn’t sure if I’d be able to make it. My world was crumbling, and I needed someone to be there for me. Before I was just existing – I didn’t have any purpose in life. After, I feel that there is hope for me and my family. I’m reaching for the stars.” ●

Dalishia



Dalishia came to stay in the emergency shelter at Women’s Center & Shelter after leaving a toxic and abusive relationship. She needed a safe space to go to and she found WC&S. During her time in shelter, she took part in counseling sessions and received support for her three kids through the Children’s Advocacy Program. Before WC&S, Dalishia said she felt fearful and ashamed, but after working with staff, her life changed.

“I felt like I could breathe again. There were opportunities and avenues that I didn’t know existed — doors opened that WC&S opened for me.”

The decision to reach out for help came when she felt she had no other option. Once she made that call, there was no regret or second-guessing.

“Women’s Center & Shelter staff made me feel welcomed and powerful. They gave me encouragement and made me feel **hope**. I couldn’t have made it without them.”

Abuse in relationships is based on a cycle of power and control. The abuser uses power to control and often hurt their partner and it can be difficult to break out of the mentality even after leaving the relationship. Dalishia said that working with WC&S changed that for her.

“Working with WC&S gives someone the opportunity to change their story. Due to DV, someone else is usually controlling the script of your life and at that point, you’re taking back the story. You’re in control.” ●

Dear friends,



As we commemorate our 50th year of serving survivors of domestic violence, I am overwhelmed with a profound sense of gratitude and awe for the incredible community that surrounds us. This past year of remembrances and celebrations has been nothing short of remarkable, and it is all thanks to you—our supporters, partners, and advocates.

The theme of gratitude and community has guided us through this anniversary year. We began by hosting a solemn vigil to honor those who have lost their lives to domestic violence. Hearing a victim’s family member share her journey was a powerful reminder of why our work is so vital. “The most important thing I can say is thank you. Thank you for remembering the people we’ve lost — our loved ones. All the support that Women’s Center & Shelter provided for my daughter gave her hope.” It was a moment that brought us together in shared grief and resolve, and it reinforced our commitment to supporting survivors and preventing future tragedies.

We were also deeply moved by the overwhelming support from businesses in Downtown who lit up the city skyline in purple. The sight was a beautiful and poignant tribute to our mission, marking the actual date of our anniversary and bringing much-needed awareness to the issue of domestic violence. It was a stunning sight, and it served as a glowing reminder of how much we can achieve when we come together.

This year, we forged monumental partnerships that have amplified our message even further. From the domestic violence awareness night with the Pittsburgh Pirates to the special beer releases from a collaboration with Pittsburgh Brewing Company and The Alchemist Brewery in Vermont, our community has shown up in the most incredible and creative ways. And let’s not forget our sold-out anniversary event with almost 600 people! Seeing so many there to support us was both humbling and exhilarating. We laughed, we cried, and, together, we celebrated the strength and resilience of survivors.

We are especially thankful for companies like APC Technologies, whose generosity in providing matching opportunities for donations will double the impact of your contributions following this edition of Rosewood (*more information on back panel*). It is because of supporters like you that we continue to serve approximately 7,500 people every year.

From the bottom of my heart, thank you for being a part of this journey. Your belief in our cause, your generosity, and your commitment to our mission have made all the difference. Together, we are creating a safer, more compassionate community for everyone.

While we have accomplished so much together, we know that our work is far from finished. The need in our community is still great, and we remain steadfast in our mission to support and empower survivors. But with your continued support, I am confident that we can rise to meet the challenges ahead.

With deepest gratitude,

Nicole Molinaro, *President/CEO*



Our mission is to strengthen our ability to meet the individual and evolving needs of those affected by domestic violence by investing in the growth of our people, deepening community engagement, and amplifying the voices of all survivors.

Women's Center & Shelter Honors 50 Years of Service to Survivors and the Community

Throughout the first half of 2024, WC&S, in partnership with our amazing community of supporters, recognized our 50th anniversary in several ways, each serving a very specific purpose. While we are honored to be celebrating 50 years of service, we are also painfully aware of the fact that domestic violence remains a significant public health crisis that has increased in severity, frequency, and complexity in recent years. We remain as committed as ever to serving those experiencing domestic violence and working within systems to continually improve the community's response.

Candlelight Vigil

To remember those who have lost their lives to acts of domestic violence in the last 50 years, WC&S held a vigil on April 11th at the City County Building, which was illuminated in purple to represent domestic violence awareness.

We were joined by families who have lost loved ones to domestic violence, advocates, current and former WC&S staff members, volunteers, Erin Dalton, (Director of Allegheny County's Department of Human Services), and Pittsburgh Mayor Ed Gainey. It was a powerful evening that included a remembrance of the approximately 1,000 homicide victims of domestic violence over the last 50 years. WC&S staff members read the names and lit a candle for each of the 212 people killed since 2007, which is when our county started tracking these murders as domestic violence. Reminding us at the end of his remarks, Mayor Gainey said of teaching our children, **"Peace is the answer, not violence."** ●



Lighting the City Purple

One of the most special parts of WC&S' journey for the past 50 years has been our connections to the local community.

To commemorate WC&S' 50th anniversary date of May 2, 2024, we partnered with businesses, corporations, and organizations in downtown Pittsburgh to light the skyline purple for domestic violence awareness. In recognition of this special milestone, these partners changed their building lights or features purple including BNY Mellon, the Gulf Tower, Koppers, Highmark, UPMC, PNC, PWC, the City County Building, County Courthouse, and the Convention Center. We are grateful to volunteer Laura Miller for coordinating these efforts, to everyone who made this awareness possible, and for the beautiful photographs taken by volunteers Emmanuel Panagiotakis and Zack Woods, that will remind us how far we've come in the past 50 years. ●





50th Anniversary Celebration

On Saturday, May 11, WC&S held its 50th Anniversary Celebration at Nova Place in Pittsburgh's North Side, celebrating 50 years of service to survivors of domestic violence and the community.

With nearly 600 people in attendance, we could certainly feel the warmth and love from a community of donors, funders, volunteers, survivors, current and former staff members, and current and former Board Directors. WC&S' founders, Ellen Berliner and Anne Steytler, were honored posthumously with the Sherley and Ted Craig Humanitarian Award, graciously accepted by their daughters Christine Berliner and Carol Steytler. Mary Ellen, a domestic violence survivor who stayed at WC&S in 1976 to escape her abusive husband said of Ellen and Anne, **"There are not too many women in the world who would do what those two women did. They literally gave up so much of their time, their talent, and their treasure to build Women's Center & Shelter to save women like me."** Those in attendance also heard the powerful stories of five brave survivors who shared their experiences of working with the WC&S staff in various programs such as support groups and

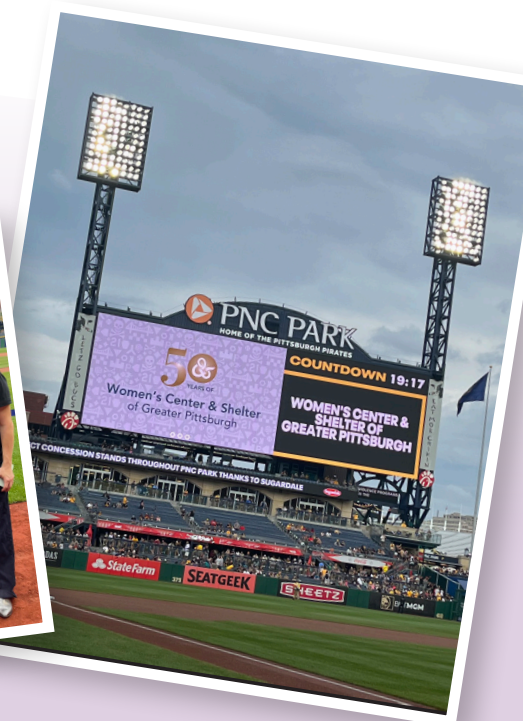
Emergency Shelter. One survivor stated, **"I owe WC&S my life."** Videos from the evening can be found on our YouTube channel @pghwomenscenter.

Guests were treated to a delicious three-course family style meal prepared by DiAnoia's Eatery, frozen treats from Millie's Homemade, hors d'oeuvres by Eat'n Park and Bistro to Go & Company, as well as a cookie table as long as the eyes could see with cookies donated by various local bakeries. We were humbled to receive donations from local florists to make the event look spectacular and auction items to fill an incredible silent auction. The event netted nearly \$170,000 to benefit WC&S' programs and services. It was an unforgettable evening that will live in our hearts as we continue to serve survivors and their children for the next 50 years or until the day this issue no longer exists. ●

DV Awareness Night at PNC Park

It was a night to "strike out" DV together on Friday, August 16th as the Pittsburgh Pirates held a DV Awareness Night at PNC Park.

President/CEO, Nicole, threw out the honorary first pitch, and four brave survivors were recognized during the evening's group salute. We had the opportunity to table on the Highmark Riverwalk and chat with members of the community about WC&S' programs and services and the Bright Sky app and website. We are grateful for this broad awareness and thank the Pittsburgh Pirates for their partnership! ●



Introducing the Lovelace Legacy Society

At our 50th Anniversary Celebration on May 11, we unveiled the name of our new planned/legacy giving society, proudly called The Lovelace Legacy Society after WC&S' longest-serving Board Director, John Lovelace.

John's tireless work in the community and on behalf of survivors has helped to propel WC&S to where we are today. The Lovelace Legacy Society is for those who have made WC&S aware of their intent to make a planned gift to the organization or those who have made a planned gift to WC&S during their lifetime.

John recently made a significant legacy gift himself saying, "For almost forty years, I have had the honor and pleasure to support the mission and work of Women's Center & Shelter of Greater Pittsburgh, as a board member and officer, a volunteer, an advocate, and as a financial supporter. It is a remarkable organization that has become ever more vibrant and successful through all those years.



"As I am nearing the end of my board service, I wanted to make a more substantial gift to indicate my commitment, and to that end, I was able to make the inaugural gift to the Legacy Fund. This will help to assure the continued growth and success of WC&S under Nicole's leadership and into the future."

Many generous donors have made thoughtful planned gifts to WC&S which have assisted in enriching and supporting our many life-changing programs and services throughout our 50 years in existence. Planned gifts help to support WC&S' long-term sustainability while also helping donors achieve their own financial goals by working alongside a financial planner and/or attorney. If you'd like to explore legacy giving and/or becoming a member of the Lovelace Legacy Society, please contact Kristin Brown, Chief Development Officer, at (412) 894-4551 or brownk@wcspittsburgh.org. We appreciate John's generosity and all of those who have made legacy gifts to WC&S! ●

Congratulations to Eric Kroll as he retires from his 29-year career with the Pittsburgh Bureau of Police where he has served as a leader in improving law enforcement's response to domestic violence (DV).



Driven by a family member's experience as a DV survivor, Eric's career as a law enforcement officer demonstrated his steadfast dedication to addressing the issue of DV. He was a constant and supportive community partner to WC&S and our mission. While serving as a training expert at the City Police Academy, Eric worked with WC&S and the District Attorney's Office to develop a 20-hour DV curriculum to train police officers on model response to DV and to help them understand the seriousness and danger of DV situations. Eric spearheaded the Pittsburgh Bureau of Police's implementation of the Lethality Assessment Program (LAP) in collaboration with WC&S in 2013 following a spike in DV homicides. He took the lead on drafting the LAP police policy, the training curriculum, and training of all officers, as well as the implementation of the LAP smartphone app. He became a recognized statewide expert on DV and lethality assessment work and assisted other jurisdictions across Pennsylvania and the nation in their implementation of lethality assessment programs. In addition, through Eric's most recent work as a Shift Lieutenant and Acting Commander in Zone 4, he assisted in responses to several emergency calls from WC&S. He later volunteered to assist WC&S in the development of an improved active shooter response protocol to improve WC&S' building security and the safety of our clients and staff.

Known for his professionalism and his calm, laid-back demeanor as well as his ability to connect with people from all walks of life, Eric Kroll's career in law enforcement assisted in his own healing, ultimately helping thousands of individuals and improving entire systems. Due in large part to Eric's efforts, police officers are doing more than ever to address domestic violence and save lives. His work will have a lasting impact on DV survivors, their families, and whole communities for years to come. For all of this, WC&S was pleased to be able to award Lt. Kroll the Sherley and Ted Craig Humanitarian Award presented at our annual Celebrating Survivors Event in 2019. We are now happy to wish him well in his retirement from the police force and in his new role as Deputy Security Director at the Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh. We will miss him! ●





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Matching funds available!



In honor of Women's Center & Shelter's 50th Anniversary, APC Technologies, Inc. will be matching all donations via this appeal and online through 11/1/2024, dollar-for-dollar up to a total of \$15,000.

APC Technologies, Inc. is proud to support survivors of domestic violence and the WC&S mission.

Women's Center & Shelter of Greater Pittsburgh is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization — donations to which are tax-deductible to the fullest extent permitted by law. The official registration and financial information of Women's Center & Shelter of Greater Pittsburgh may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll free, within Pennsylvania, 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

Help & hope are available



412-687-8005

Available 24/7



412-744-8445

Available 9am-5pm, Monday - Friday



WCSCanHelp.org

Click the chat bubble to begin

Available 9am-5pm, Monday - Friday

United Way Contributor Choice #110



Bright Sky



2024 SUPPORTING SURVIVORS SUMMIT

Join WC&S, STANDING FIRM, and our community of partners as we bring education and awareness to the complex issue of domestic violence.

The Supporting Survivors Summit will explore emerging issues around the topic of domestic violence, ignite discussions, and help to shape a future of empowerment and support. The three major areas of focus for the conference are domestic violence and financial stability, the legal system, and the medical field.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 25

Regional Learning Alliance Learning and Conference Center
Cranberry Township, PA

Registration 8 a.m.

Summit 9 - 4 p.m.
(includes breakfast, a buffet lunch, beverages, snacks and a networking Happy Hour)

SurvivorsSummitPGH.org

Visit for more details and to register by October 11.

The conference will offer continuing education credits and engage human service, legal, and medical professionals, as well as students and anyone interested in learning more about these critical issues.



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**Your Fall 2024
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