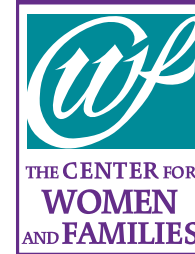




THE CENTER FOR WOMEN AND FAMILIES
Of EASTERN FAIRFIELD COUNTY, Inc.
(Corner of Park & Fairfield Avenues)
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THE CENTER PIECE

A Publication of The Center for Women and Families of Eastern Fairfield County, Inc.

Vol. 1 No. 2

October 2011

Pawnee Biggs: Volunteer extraordinaire

'Find your passion; match it with your expertise'

Pawnee Biggs of Fairfield has volunteered at The Center for 38 years, since she was pregnant with her oldest daughter. She started when The Center was part of the YWCA, and got involved as many volunteers do: Her friends roped her in!



"When I began volunteering, I was a stay-at-home Mom," Pawnee says. "I had many good friends - all forward thinking - that were volunteers at the YW. We were all about women helping women, and I liked that."

Since then, at The Center, she has volunteered in just about every capacity, so many she cannot remember them all. But those she can remember are impressive: President of the Board, finance chairman, long-range planning committee member, and co-chair of numerous events and rallies, including Speaking of Women. "I've volunteered more hours than it took to raise my children!" she laughs. Presently, she is on the Board, and on the development and board affairs committees.

The only work she has avoided is working directly with clients. "There is no way I could ever do that," she says. "They would all wind up living with me."

Like many other volunteers, it's the sense of giving and not constantly taking that keeps Pawnee in the volunteer ranks. "It's not about me, it's about other people, and I like that," she says. "I get to meet extraordinary people who feel the same way I do, which is educational and inspiring."

Pawnee encourages everyone to volunteer, even as little as 30 minutes each week, especially now when federal and state grants are decreasing. "Nonprofit staffs are multi-tasking, taking on extra jobs to provide services to their clients. Volunteers can use their skills to become part of an organization that needs those skills. If someone is good in finance, I guarantee there is a nonprofit that can use those skills."

She often talks with women, whose children are almost grown, who are searching for ways to make the next segment of their lives more meaningful. "I always ask them: 'Have you ever thought of volunteering?'" Pawnee says these women often don't know where to begin looking, so she suggests they identify causes about which they are passionate. For example, if it's the homeless, find an agency that helps the homeless. Of course, if it's sexual abuse and domestic violence, head to The Center. "Find your passion, and match it with your expertise," she advises.

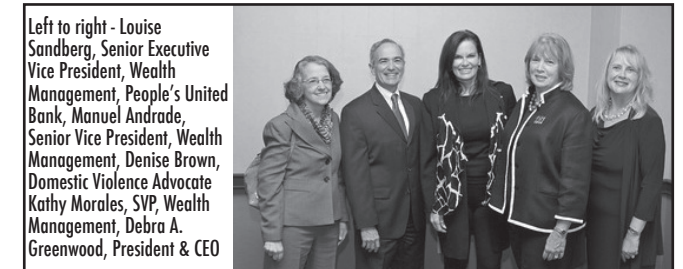
If you still cannot find an agency, start talking to your friends. "Often, people don't talk about their volunteer work," Pawnee says. "You'll be amazed what you will learn if you just ask."

For example, in addition to her work at The Center, she volunteers with The Bridgeport Ladies Charitable Society, and Giant Steps, where she walks alongside a horse to keep an autistic child in the saddle. Each of these charities affects different needs in our community.

"We all have the ability to make a tremendous difference in the life of another person," she says. "I encourage people to get out of their comfort zones. Nonprofits do a phenomenal job helping the less fortunate. You will never understand or see that need unless you get involved."



Left to right - Denise Brown, Domestic Violence Advocate, Debra A. Greenwood, President & CEO, The Center for Women and Families, Jack Barnes, President and CEO, People's United Bank; Ellen Carter and George Carter, Chairman of the Board, People's United Bank



Left to right - Louise Sandberg, Senior Executive Vice President, Wealth Management, People's United Bank, Manuel Andrade, Senior Vice President, Wealth Management, Denise Brown, Domestic Violence Advocate, Kathy Morales, SVP, Wealth Management, Debra A. Greenwood, President & CEO

THE CENTER FOR WOMEN AND FAMILIES THANKS THIS YEAR'S SPONSORS OF SPEAKING OF WOMEN. WITHOUT YOUR SUPPORT, THIS EVENT WOULD NEVER HAVE HAPPENED.

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Mark Your Calendars now!

- November 2011 Thanksgiving collection for non-perishable food items for clients.
- November 2, 2011..... Open House - Foundations
- December 19 - 23, 2011..... Holiday Boutique at The Center- Collection of Gift Cards and Gifts for clients will be distributed.

Please see our website for all details pertaining to the above events.
www.cwfefc.org

MEMBER OF:
Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence
Connecticut Food Bank
Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services, Inc
National Children's Alliance



Visit our website www.cwfefc.org



Monroe's candlelight vigil, one of four held this year



Our 2011-2012 Annual Giving Campaign is launching. Please join us in our fight to end domestic abuse and sexual violence. Every 15 seconds someone becomes a victim of domestic abuse. Enough!



From Deb's Desk

Dear Friends,

At each of our October candlelight vigils in Monroe, Trumbull, Fairfield and at the University of Bridgeport, we read the 21 names of the Connecticut victims of domestic abuse who were murdered last year. In each case, not one of those 21 victims knew that agencies such as The Center exist, and that breaks my heart.

It also breaks my heart that since our economy began failing, domestic abuse and sexual assault keeps rising, 32 percent in our state alone. Not only are the incidences rising, but the violence is more severe, the cases more complicated. Once, a typical stay at our safe house was two months. Now it's three or four months until these victims – adults and children – receive the care and support they need to move on.

These are dire times. I would like nothing more than to devote this space to describing the life-sustaining programs we offer, but today, I have to talk about money, money we desperately need to survive. As we kick-off our Annual Giving Campaign, I encourage you to close your eyes and count to 15. During those short 15 seconds, another person has become a victim of domestic abuse.

The money raised from the Giving Campaign goes directly to support programs for victims and their families. Last year's campaign raised \$158,000, \$8,000 over our goal. This year's goal is \$160,000, and we would love to surpass that number.

It's also important to mention our other fund-raising endeavor, our \$2 million Opening Eyes, Opening Doors Capital Campaign. We're halfway to our goal, and money raised was used to open and staff our satellite offices in Fairfield and Monroe, and our new center at Old Mine Park in Trumbull. For safety, the lobby at The Center's Bridgeport headquarters needs renovating, but we need to raise the rest of the funds before work can begin. With the help of our new Director of Development and Major Gifts, Greg Bastek, this goal will be realized.

I want to thank everyone who has contributed to The Center in the past, and ask each of you to do the same this year. And please, spread the word about the work we do to everyone you know. Consider holding a coffee, tea or wine party in your home for your friends, relatives and neighbors. We can be there to talk about what we do and how we need their help to survive.

Our goal: To put The Center out of business. What a wonderful world this would be if domestic abuse and sexual assault ceased to exist.

- Debra A. Greenwood, CEO



CENTER PIECE

The Center Piece is the official quarterly newsletter of The Center for Women and Families of Eastern Fairfield County, Inc. serving Bridgeport, Easton, Fairfield, Monroe, Stratford and Trumbull. It's published with the cooperation and support of numerous staff and volunteers. Comments, suggestions and submissions are welcome. Email to Centerpiece@cwefec.org.

-Valerie Foster, Editor

The Center for Women and Families of Eastern Fairfield County, Inc.

Corner of Park & Fairfield Avenues
753 Fairfield Avenue
Bridgeport, CT 06604
203-334-6154
Hours: 8:30 am to 5:00 pm

Executive Staff

Debra A. Greenwood.....Chief Executive Officer and President
Greg Bastek.....Dir. of Development and Major Gifts
Kathy Ercolano.....Dir. of Finance
Sarah Lubarsky.....Dir. of Volunteers, Events & Community Outreach
Paul Santos..... Dir. of Information Technology & Operations
Susan Schnitzer.....Dir. of Contracts & Program Administration

Fairfield Satellite Office

Located inside the Fairfield Senior Center
100 Mona Terrace, Fairfield, CT
Hours: Tues., Wed., Thurs. 9 am to 1 pm
Walk-in or call main office to make an appointment

Monroe Satellite Office

Located inside Monroe Town Hall
7 Fan Hill Road, Room 213, Monroe, CT
Hours: Mon. & Fri. 9 am to 1 pm
Walk-in or call main office to make an appointment

Our Mission

The Center for Women and Families of Eastern Fairfield County, Inc. is dedicated to strengthening women and families and to eliminating violence and abuse through education, intervention and community collaboration.

2011-2012 Board of Directors

- | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
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Five Questions With.....



Greg Bastek Director of Development and Major Gifts

Greg Bastek of Seymour, The Center's new Director of Development and Major Gifts, held this position at Ability Beyond Disability in Bethel, in addition to working in development at Sacred Heart University. Raising money to help nonprofits stay afloat is where Greg feels comfortable, and says he is excited to use his knowledge and contacts to make The Center grow and prosper.

What convinced you to join the Center's staff?

Greg: It just felt right. The Center has a solid foundation, and it was a great opportunity for me to do good work for a worthy cause. I felt like I could come here and make a difference. The money raised goes directly to services to help people survive, to raise public awareness about the issues of sexual abuse and domestic violence, and to work toward preventing these issues from ever happening. Everyone deserves their fair shake: to wake up in the morning and smile, and be able to go through their day not living in fear.

What would you like to change at The Center?

Greg: I would like to see The Center's primary funding come through individuals who want to make a difference rather than federal or state money. The pie chart is most telling. We receive \$1.4 million from state and federal agencies, and we don't raise more than \$2 million a year. Unfortunately, that state and federal money is drying up.

What are some of your immediate goals?

Greg: First, to see major gifts grow. We also have to look at all our events, maybe adding another signature event like Speaking of Women to our spring calendar. The Capital Campaign also needs to be re-ignited.

How will you accomplish these goals?

Greg: None of us can be shy anymore about asking for support. We need to meet with potential donors to educate them about what The Center accomplishes in the six communities we serve, and then explain to them our needs. We also need to engage and empower our Board, to make sure everyone has the same elevator speech and always has their eyes open, looking for the next donor, the next volunteer, the next board member, the next speaker. This might mean sitting around a table looking at a list of potential donors, figuring out how we are going to engage them, and then putting strategies in place to make that engagement occur. Once you get that ball rolling, it takes a life of its own.

What sets The Center apart from other nonprofits?

Greg: Our subject matter has so much bearing on every pocket of society. If you think about it, many of society's issues, such as teen pregnancy, bullying, drug abuse and suicide, have their roots in sexual abuse or domestic violence. This is what brought me here. And this is one of the messages we have to deliver. It's up to all of us to help The Center survive, grow and prosper.



Sarah Lubarsky Director of Volunteers, Community Outreach and Events

Sarah Lubarsky of Fairfield has accumulated an impressive list of jobs since she arrived at The Center in 2004: event planner, newsletter editor and Director of Development, working on the annual appeal and capital campaigns. In her newest post – Director of Volunteers, Community Outreach and Events – Sarah is able to use the vast knowledge she gained from past jobs to help The Center thrive. Her new position grew out of the Harvard Business School's report that concluded The Center had to improve its volunteer program and community outreach to survive in this economy. Volunteers help nonprofits do the work nonprofits can no longer pay to be done.

What is the greatest challenge facing you?

Sarah: Time. And of course money! The volunteer program needs to be improved and standardized. Because of federal and state cuts, we have been forced to downsize The Center many times over the past four years. Right now, our staff is bare bones. The best way to help the staff is to have an active group of volunteers. Equally important is to provide training, so our volunteers feel valued and needed.

What types of positions are available?

Sarah: Just about everything, but because of the nature of the work we do here, someone can't come in the door and start working. Volunteers have to be trained, and all this takes time and energy. In addition to volunteers working in administration, there are also positions available on committees, such as the annual Speaking of Women luncheon and the golf tournament. Some volunteers put their professional skills to work, helping with finance, writing, public relations or grant writing. Other volunteers work directly with clients, which calls for intensive training, and a combination of a tough skin and compassion.

What type of community outreach have you planned?

Sarah: I will speak to anyone who will listen to me talk about The Center and what services we provide to fight domestic violence and sexual abuse. I will go to churches, health centers, hospitals, women's groups, mom's clubs, service groups, universities. Making kids aware of the issues surrounding domestic violence and sexual abuse is key to eradicating these problems. My ultimate goal: To put The Center out of business. Imagine a world without domestic abuse or sexual violence?

What is your goal for this year?

Sarah: Having our volunteer program become a model that every other nonprofit looks at and says 'Wow!' I am carefully investigating what other nonprofits are doing, where they have had their greatest successes, and plan on putting some of those programs into place.

What makes The Center so special?

Sarah: It's the staff. My hat is off to the people that deal with our clients on a daily basis. They hear some of the most horrific things. They are the front line, providing clients with the help they need. Most important, they believe the clients and have a hand at keeping them safe. The staff and volunteers are an honest, hard-working, caring group of individuals who really want to help the people that walk through The Center's doors.