

Serving Mercer County Since 1976



2021
Volume 10 Issue 1

AWARE 2021 COMMUNITY REPORT

2021 HIGHLIGHTS

In 2021, AWARE has remained open to serve the community 24/7--in spite of the pandemic. Services were adapted to manage the changing public health restrictions. Much higher expenses were incurred for PPP, cleaning and disinfecting all programs sites, particularly the emergency housing sites located regionally in Greenville, Grove City area, and Sharon. Through the legal advocacy program in Mercer, Becky Bruno, Legal Advocacy Coordinator, continued working closely with President Judge Yeatts to manage the competing interests of victims and the public health policy restrictions.

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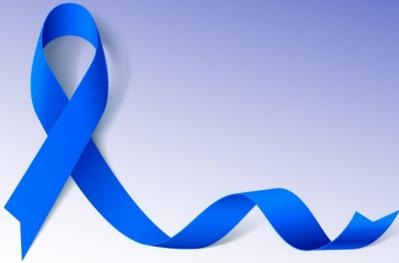
Under the guise of taking the lemons from the COVID pandemic and turning it into lemonade, AWARE has been working with Hermitage based OhanaLink Technologies to develop a technology product to improve services to domestic violence victims using the ubiquitous cell phone. Stay tuned!

- Online training via Zoom and through the AWARE Learning Management System increased the number of professional training conducted. (30) seminars completed, reaching (502) professionals!
- Williams House Advisory Board hosted ‘Night at the Races’ after suspending in-person events in 2020—and all had a great time!

- Our thanks to Becky McFadden, long-time volunteer for her leadership for both the Board and the Williams House Advisory Board for her dedication and length of service helping victims.
- AWARE hosted 1st annual meeting with the Mercer Courts and the Board of Commissioners. Looking forward to 2022 and improved responses for victims.
- Re-structured the agency in April 2021 to better serve the community. A Program Advocate has been added to provide services to elder victims, working with the Mercer Area Agency on Aging.
- Services provided through the Mercer County jail adapted and updated in light of the pandemic impact.

If you or someone you know is a victim of domestic, sexual, emotional or elder violence, call 1-888-981-1457 24/7

JANUARY IS HUMAN TRAFFICKING AWARENESS MONTH



**Mercer County
Human Trafficking
Collaborative**

In 2021, the Mercer County Human Trafficking Collaborative membership continued to grow in spite of the pandemic.

- Meetings were held online via Zoom.
- A Facebook page was activated. Consider joining!
- A mailing on human trafficking resources was shared with the faith community throughout the county in January.
- Social media postings via Facebook, Twitter and Instagram were heavily circulated every day in January to raise awareness and community education.
- A virtual 5K was held raising over \$4000. Some of these funds were put immediately to use by distributing trafficking awareness info to the business community, particularly hotel and motels.
- Volunteers are also planning the 2022 Mercer County human trafficking summit. It will be held on **May 24th 2022**--stay tuned for more details!

More info:Becky Bruno 724-662-3800 x 2543 or
rbruno@merceraaware.org

2021 AWARE BENCHMARKS

Measure	Goal	Served
Domestic violence victims	500	878
Sexual violence victims	50	235
Child Sexual assault victims	50	182
Child Domestic violence* victims	35	168
Legal Advocacy services	150	506
Emergency Housing	79	110
Permanent Rapid Re-Housing *	4	14
Senior Victims	25	110

* New service benchmark

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VOLUNTEER TIME!

Thanks to all of our volunteers and interns!

During 2021, a total of **(2,193)** hours of volunteer time was conducted serving victims

Direct Services: Katelyn Bartley

Administrative Office Bertha Chambers

Thanks to our Court Navigator Volunteers who help adult victims of domestic violence navigate civil court to secure PFA.

Madison Squibbs JP Roboski Kayla Boyles Marissa Torok

Advisory Board members

Williams House Advisory Board

Becky McFadden	Nancy Yauger	Frank Stratiff	Sue Lauffer	Jennie Kather
Andrea Colaiaco	Salley Fagley	Sarah Miller	Frank Yokubeak	Tracey Romesburg
Diana Miller	Valerie Manganello		Mary Ellen Bayuk	

Brandi Montgomery House Advisory Board

Jane Montgomery	Beth Black	Crystal Popella
Bree Freehing	Roger Flynn	Mitch McFeely
Stacy Schell	Heather Greer	Patti Parenti

Shirley Bursey House Advisory Board

Anna Marie Mindicino Courtney Saylor Carol Crawford

Are you interested in volunteering?

AWARE needs you!

Contact: Amanda, Volunteer and Training Coordinator

Email: abanic@merceraware.org

Phone 724-342-4934 x14

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Teen Advisory Board

In January 2021, AWARE inaugurated a Teen Advisory Board. Seven (7) students participated. They worked until the end of the school year creating online content, teen-to-teen, about healthy relationships and positive messaging. During a challenging year because of the pandemic, this was truly a highlight and success of the year.

AWARE wishes to thank **Aiden and Lucas Cadman, Avery McFeaters, and Michaela Tedrow** (Sharpsville school district); **Patrick Lee and Grace Smith** (Reynolds school district); **Anna Loposky and Tyler Little** (Reynolds school district); **Sarah Kokoski** (Greenville school district); **Katelyn Moyer** (West Middlesex school district);

Students from middle school and high schools in Mercer County may join the Teen Advisory Board via the application located at www@merceraware.org/volunteer.

Community service hours are documented at the student's request. Meetings are held online. Students meet online with one another to develop and share content.

COVID Homeless Prevention Program

AWARE, in partnership with members of the Mercer County Housing Coalition and the Mercer County Board of Commissioners secured a grant from the Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) to help families in Mercer County disrupted by the pandemic, and risking homelessness. Many of the housing partners have programs to help Mercer Countians at risk of homelessness. Given the large scale economic impact from the pandemic, additional funding was needed to help families and individuals.

Marsha Fields, Housing Case Manager, works with the Housing Coalition partners, private landlords, and many people desperate to remain in their homes. Through the grant, it was expected (40) families would be served. During 2021, **(110) families were served.**

Nicole Cadman, Director, Program Services, has secured additional funding from DCED to extend this grant project later into 2022 as the pandemic continues to displace working families here in Mercer County.

Rapid Re-Housing Services

Another Rapid Re-Housing program launched!

AWARE adds another rapid rehousing program in 2021! In partnership with PCADV and the western Pennsylvania Continuum of Care, AWARE is part of a multi-county, rapid rehousing initiative to aid domestic violence victims. Given the profound increase in domestic violence homicide and serious injury during the pandemic, offering a range of housing options for domestic violence victims is essential.

Building on the agency's strength in providing housing services, (14) additional families experiencing domestic violence were successfully and safely housed.

The program model works with the victim and housing partner (private and public) throughout the county. Monthly rent and utilities expenses are shared until the victim assumes full responsibility. Individual case management and care coordination along with fiscal literacy education are offered. The housing case manager also works with landlords to assure both the tenant and the landlord are clear about expectations and timelines.

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MERCER LEGAL ADVOCACY

The Legal Advocacy program located in Mercer, has had a very busy year, in spite of the pandemic. Staff and volunteers serve victims of all ages who experience domestic, emotional or sexual violence. Limitations on selecting a jury and holding jury trials slowed criminal case management because of the pandemic

- Deputies from the Mercer Sheriff Office and local law enforcement worked to serve all protection orders, to assure that law enforcement and victims remain safe during this once in a lifetime public health crisis. **Going above to serve our community.!**
- **(386)** adult domestic violence victims served; **(21)** adult sexual assault victims served by the Legal Advocacy program under the STOP grant
- **(49)** PFA violations addressed by the Office of the District Attorney
- **(21)** criminal cases of domestic violence; **(4)** criminal cases adult sexual assault investigated by the STOP grant-funded Criminal Investigator in the DA's office
- Partnering with The US attorney's office in Pittsburgh, and the Department of Homeland Security, an in-person training for detectives, investigating officers, and school resource officers was held in 2021. Focus of the training was interviewing skills and investigating cases child and teen victims sexual exploitation and trafficking and managing minor sexual assault cases. **(16)** law enforcement professionals attended the seminar.

HOTLINE

The Hotline program is often the first point of contact for people needing help, assistance, and information. Staff and volunteers respond to victims and community members via online chat through www.merceraware.org and direct messaging from social media like Facebook and Instagram pages. Online response proved integral during the pandemic.

**The hotline program is a focus of the AWARE Volunteer program. Interested in helping?
For information, contact Amanda at abanic@merceraware.org.**



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Mercercountyawareinc



Awareinc



Mercer AWARE Inc



109 S. Sharpsville Ave, Suite D
Sharon, PA 16146

Admin Phone: 724-342-4934 ☐

Hotline: 888-981-1457

24/7

2021 BOARD

Anna Marie Mindicino/Jennie Kather, President
CORWIN Somerset, Vice President
Tom Rooky, Treasurer
Jennie Kather, Secretary

Bree Freehling	Beth Black
Jennifer Bungar	Jaimie Gildersleeve
Kamala Black	Amy Burns
Mitch McFeeley	Crystal Popella
Christina Siege	Kasandra Shawago

2021 STAFF

Lizette Olsen, Executive Director
Peg Chapman, Fiscal Coordinator
Druann Swift, Grants Manager
Amanda Banic, Volunteer and Training Coordinator
Mark Rupert, Property Manager
Susie Pauch Administrative Assistant
Mi'Sha Savage, Program Specialist
Michaelene Egelsky, Program Specialist

Non-Residential Program

Angel McLaughlin, Direct Services Supervisor
Maria Thompson, Counselor Advocate
Brianna Ward, Counselor Advocate
Hope Grinnell, Program Advocate

Legal Advocacy Program

Rebecca Bruno, Legal Advocacy Coordinator
Joslyn Sims, Legal Advocate
Melanie Garchar, Legal Advocate
Brytany DiClaudio, Mobile Legal Advocate

Program Services

Nicole Cadman, Director, Program Services

Emergency Housing

Maegan Mathews, Emergency Housing Coordinator
Sarah Piseгна, Counselor Advocate/ERA
Marise Wright, Counselor Advocate/ERA
Patrice Lambert, Advocate/ERA

Programs

Marsha Fields, Housing Case Manager
Tess Korodi, Counselor Advocate
Leah Malinos Youth Advocate
Alex Bucher, Youth Advocate
Corrin StoneBraker, Youth Advocate
Cassandra Smith Hotline Advocate/ERA
Kellie Yobe, ERA
Madisyn Berkson, ERA