



COMMITTED TO
PREVENTING SEXUAL ABUSE
& SUPPORTING SURVIVORS
LANCASTER, PA



Winter 2023 Newsletter

A Word from the Director...

Communities of Human Connection

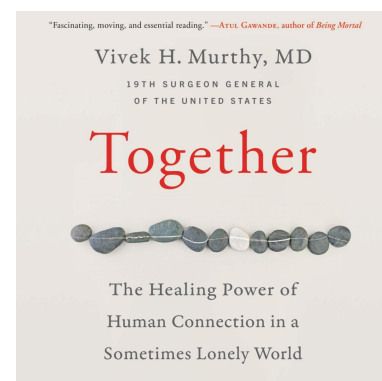
"I feel if I disappear tomorrow, no one would even notice."

Dr. Vivek Murthy, former surgeon general of the United States, went on a listening tour to hear firsthand about people's health concerns. What he heard surprised him: the numbers of Americans suffering from a lack of human connection like the one expressed by the person quoted above. In his book "Together: The Healing Power of Human Connection in a Sometimes Lonely World" (2020, HarperCollins) he sounds the alarm about how loneliness is impacting the mental and physical health of millions of us.

Researchers at Harvard University confirmed that loneliness is not just an unpleasant feeling, but a serious health risk. It can be deadly. The stress it evokes can contribute to major health crises, such as stroke or heart attacks, potentially shortening lifespan by eight years.

Survivors of childhood sexual abuse are intimately acquainted with loneliness. Many suffer from insecure attachment to an abusive or neglectful caregiver during their early years, which makes it hard to trust others and maintain close relationships. They suffer from high rates of anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder, all of which have isolating effects. They have difficulty managing or regulating their emotions, due to brain and nervous systems changes because of early trauma.

A 2019 analysis of 68 studies at the University of Manchester found that suicide attempts are three times more likely for survivors of childhood sexual abuse. Since most also suffered physical and emotional abuse, the risk compounds as described in the landmark ACEs (Childhood Adverse Experiences) study, leaving survivors far more likely to suffer serious chronic health problems in mid-life, including diabetes and heart disease.



Many survivors are lonely. To heal, some had to extract themselves from families, churches and other institutions, that minimized or denied the abuse, and chose to protect offenders. And ironically, the loneliness originating in their early childhood trauma can now, according to the latest research, kill them.

I believe that it takes a community to protect a child and to heal a survivor. The old paradigms of individualized mental health treatment for those who can afford it; and placing the burden solely on parents to protect their children, have not been working well for most people.

At Safe Communities, we are creating new paradigms for educating all adults in the community about sexual violence against children and how to do their part to stop it.

At a recent workshop on social media safety for kids, a group of 55 seniors gathered to learn about unfamiliar technology so they can help protect children - at church, in their neighborhood, or beloved grandchildren. These wise elders understand that no matter our situation in life, we all have a role to play in stopping sexual abuse.

We are creating new paradigms for survivors to heal in facilitated trauma-informed small groups, occupying a space between expensive and potentially isolating individual treatment and peer support groups in which often survivors share traumatic experiences without a professional to ensure safety and guide the process of healing.



"I was grateful for the gentle way the facilitators ran the group and their caring and empathetic responses. I appreciated the different ways we explored our thoughts, feelings, and emotions. Each week I felt as though I could go deeper and share a bit more of the story I hid so deeply for so long."

– “Katie”, Circle of Hope group participant



We develop new paradigms because we are not satisfied with the status quo of expensive, insurance driven treatment for the trauma survivors among us. We are not satisfied with the heavy reliance of many churches, schools and other institutions on mandated reporting after a child has been harmed with little or no investment in putting up guardrails to prevent abuse. And the dissonance between what we know is possible and the status quo compels us to find a better way forward.

Because we believe in the power of a community to create a future where people are not dying of loneliness. Where children are free to grow up without chains of trauma dragging them down, where survivors can heal, thrive and contribute to weaving the fabric of human connection that creates the Safe Communities we all want to live in.

If you believe a different future is possible – become part of it with us.

Linda Crockett
Executive Director
February 17, 2023

Learn more about the Harvard study here: <https://mcc.gse.harvard.edu/reports/loneliness-in-america>

Learn more about the University of Manchester Study here:
<https://www.manchester.ac.uk/discover/news/child-abuse-linked-to-risk-of-suicide-in-later-life>

Learn more about ACEs at <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/aces/index.html>

Winter 2023 Newsletter, *In this issue:*

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 - PA Dutch Interpreter Training
- Monthly Donor Program

Upcoming Events at Safe Communities

Free Public Workshops Via Zoom

In 2022, Safe Communities offered three free workshops open to the public via Zoom in order to see how popular such a program would be. The answer was VERY POPULAR! We presented workshops on Internet Safety, Child Sexual Abuse Prevention, and Grooming which were very well attended, with many participants asking when more workshops would be offered.

This year, we received a generous grant from the Lancaster County Office of the District Attorney to offer six more workshops related to child sexual abuse free to the public. Almost as soon as we opened registration for the first one on Tuesday, February 28th on Internet Safety for Kids, we reached our maximum Zoom capacity. We will definitely offer this workshop again later this year. In the meantime, if you want us to bring this to your school, church or organization please reach out and let us know!

The next free workshop will be held on Tuesday, March 28th at 6:30pm, and will focus on Sex Offenders: What all adults who care about children need to know. In light of the recent tragic rape and murder of a 12-year-old girl in Columbia, PA by a Registered Sex Offender, we want to educate the community on the dangers to children posed by offenders, common behaviors, warning signs, and how to talk to children if you discover a Registered Sex Offender lives in your neighborhood, attends your church, or volunteers or works at a location where children and youth gather. Registration will open shortly.

Our aim is to continue providing these workshops for free to the public. These workshops cost about \$500 each to produce and deliver, so we are seeking partners to sponsor additional workshops. If you know of a business or organization that is interested in supporting safer communities for children, please reach out to our Assistant Director, Mark Harris
@ Mharris@safecommunitiespa.org

Keep an eye on our webpage and social media for the topics of upcoming workshops and how to register for them!



SAVE THE DATE! April 22nd, 2023

Retreat: Resistance, Resilience, And Re-emergence: A Retreat for Survivors of Childhood Trauma and Their Friends



Those who have experienced trauma in childhood such as sexual, physical, or emotional abuse, carry a heavy burden. They are often more likely to experience additional trauma as adults. Pile on the disruptions stemming from the pandemic, and survivors get crushed under the weight. Friends and family members that want to support them are also exhausted by the social trauma we've all experienced, as well as often their own traumatic experiences.

Spring is a time of re-birth. A time to heal. And this retreat offers that opportunity.

After a multi-year hiatus due to the pandemic, Safe Communities will begin again to offer in-person retreats for adults who experienced childhood trauma, including sexual, physical, and emotional abuse, as well as friends and others who care for survivors and want to help support them. Our April 22 retreat will be held at a beautiful location in Ephrata, PA.

Using our themes of **Resistance, Resilience and Re-Emergence** we'll explore how we resist caving in to internal and external voices that deny our humanity and our reality; how we develop resilience so we can weather the storms that befall us; and how we want to re-emerge in this post-pandemic time when forced social isolation has diminished and multiple demands are being placed on us to "get back to normal" – which never really worked for most of us.

Registration for the retreat will open soon. Please check our website and watch for an email with a fuller description. In the meantime, **SAVE THE DATE!**

Want to purchase a retreat gift certificate for someone in your life or a survivor you don't know who needs a hand? Contact us at 717-560-9989 or email info@safecommunitiespa.org

PA Dutch Interpreter Training

Scenario #1: Imagine you are a little Amish girl who speaks only PA Dutch in the dialect of your local church community, and you've been sexually abused. You are taken to a Child Advocacy Center where a man who does not speak the kind of PA Dutch you know interviews you. In your culture, a girl or woman would never talk to a man about sexual things, and this particular man is of an ethnicity you have never seen before; he is dressed in clothes that look very strange to you; and PA Dutch is not his native tongue. When you get out of the interview, you tell your mom you could not understand his PA Dutch, and you were very scared. Your case is not going to move forward – because you did not disclose.



You will go back to the farm, and the uncle or brother or grandfather who molested you will likely do it again. And your mom will be in trouble with the church for going to outsiders.

Scenario #2: Imagine what the outcome might have been if you had been interviewed by an interpreter who is an Amish woman. She speaks your language, and she looks like other women in your life. She understands your idiomatic expressions and you feel safe with her.

Scenario #1 is happening all too often in counties across PA with Amish populations. To shift to Scenario #2, we need to get Amish women trained as certified court interpreters. Which is why we are partnering with the Administrative Office of PA Courts to create pathways for Plain women who are native PA Dutch speakers to become interpreters. If you know someone who might be interested – spread the word!

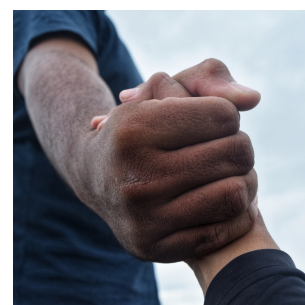
For more information on this training and how to register, please contact us by email at info@safecommunitiespa.org or by phone at 717-560-9989.

Monthly Donor Program

One of the options available to help support our work here at Safe Communities is our Monthly Donor Program. This program allows an automatic disbursement of funds once per month to Safe Communities spreading a donor's support over the whole calendar year, and saving the costs associated with writing and mailing checks.

Currently, we have several monthly donors who provide anywhere from as little as \$5 per month to as much as hundreds each month. This not only adds to our ability to serve the community, but it also provides us with a measured, regular source of funding that we can depend upon month to month. Last year, we received over \$8,000 from Monthly Donors, a significant amount, and donations that came to us in a way that helped facilitate budgeting our monthly expenses.

If being a Monthly Donor would be something you are interested in, we invite you to sign up on our donation webpage by selecting the link below.



Your Donations Are What Make this Work Possible



*We are **THANKFUL** for the valuable support of our individual donors, gifts from business such as Clark Associates, and key foundations including Touchstone Foundation, LMC Legacy Foundation, The Alpern Family Foundation, Tecumseh Milestone Foundation, Lancaster County Community Foundation, and the High Foundation.*

Your partnership enables us to continue this work! Thank you!

Safe Communities needs everyday items to keep our programs running. We have created a wish list of our most needed items on Amazon.com. Your aid will help us in continuing our work of educating people about Child Sexual Abuse and assisting Survivors. Please click on the link below to view our wish list.

If you have not already done it, please check out our storefront for some cool merchandise. Your purchase will help Survivors of child sexual abuse move forward in their healing journeys and lead more fulfilling lives.

If you would rather support us directly, you can click below to give online, or send a check payable to our Fiscal Sponsor, Humanitarian Social Innovations (please write Safe Communities in Memo line only)
- 313 W. Liberty St., Suite 242, Lancaster, PA 17603.

Our core values: **Respect:** Recognizing the worth and dignity of each person of every race, culture, and socioeconomic status. **Integrity:** Adhering to moral and ethical principles, keeping commitments, doing the “right thing”. **Social Impact:** Eliminating root causes of systemic social problems so that individuals and communities can flourish. **Equality:** Embracing non-hierarchical models within our organization, and our work. **Accountability:** Being transparent and accountable to those we serve and the donors who support us.

Please share this newsletter with your friends, family, clients, colleagues, organizations, and faith communities to help spread the word that prevention and healing are possible.

www.safecommunitiespa.org

**We welcome your questions about any of these programs.
Contact info@safecommunitiespa.org or 717.560.9989**

