



**COMMITTED TO
PREVENTING SEXUAL ABUSE
& SUPPORTING SURVIVORS**
LANCASTER, PA

IMPACT 2022: Bending The Arc Towards Justice

"The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice."
—Martin Luther King

We can't choose which part of the moral arc of the universe we are born to, but we can work to tilt it toward justice. And with the help of our friends and supporters in 2022, we bent that arc a bit more toward a future where children are free from sexual violence, and survivors have safe communities in which to heal and thrive.

A Word From The Director

We are a small organization faced with a Herculean task: Protect children from sexual abuse through empowering them and educating adults; and create safe spaces for survivors to heal, seek justice and build peer connections. To bend that arc toward justice for a child or for a survivor takes a community of donors, friends, and supporters.

Because of this beloved community who helped to bend the arc, we were able to impact the lives of over 1,850 adults, youth, children and survivors in 2022, compared to 1,304 in 2021. An that doesn't even include those we reached via social media, blogs, and media interviews!

But statistics don't capture the impact on the life of a little girl who does NOT become



one of the four girls sexually abused before she is 18, or the man who is able to speak about what happened to him as a child for the first time.

They can't describe what it means to an Amish woman to be told that her nightmares, eating problems, depression, and intimacy difficulties don't mean she is crazy and must be locked away in an institution as she has been told, but are a very normal response to the trauma she has suffered. To give her a pathway to healing means, as one young Amish woman we worked with declared, ***"I used to live in a cage. Now, I am free!"***



Or the excitement on children's faces when we teach them that although they may not be the boss of much, they ARE the boss of their bodies while we dance to a video where we wear sunglasses and point fingers to show that we are SERIOUS about this! Or use a bullhorn to practice our "I MEAN BUSINESS" voices.

A snapshot of accomplishments in 2022 is offered below with gratitude to our donors, friends and foundations who made these impacts possible, and as an open invitation for more of you to join our community as we collectively add our weight to that arc in 2023.

Linda Crockett, Ex. Director

SNAPSHOT OF 2022

- **After more than a year of effort**, our collaboration with the PA Family Support Alliance resulted in state-funded training for up to ten Amish and Old Order Mennonite Women to get certified by the State to train school teachers on mandated reporting! This has never been done before, and we are thrilled at this hard-won opportunity. Most Amish school teachers lack the State required training on mandated reporting and many are told to report abuse to a committee of religious leaders instead of directly to ChildLine.
- **We provided services** to over 1,850 adults, youth, and children through education on prevention of child sexual abuse, child sex offenders, trauma and its impact; and to survivors in individual and group settings to facilitate healing and pursuit of justice in ways that are *meaningful to them*.
- **We offered public workshops via Zoom on** child sexual abuse prevention, social media navigation with children, and child sex offenders, and began using a



VIMEO platform for mandated reporting training to make the training accessible on demand.

- **We engaged in advocacy** to improve state and local agency responses to victims of sexual abuse, especially in Plain communities where cultural norms and practices routinely silence victims and often punish those who seek outside intervention.
- **We worked with 18 churches, 3 regional church bodies, and nine organizations** on how to embed practices that prioritize prevention, as well as with the public and community groups.
- **We provided Sexual Ethics and Boundaries training** for 240 religious leaders that included a focus on the problem of gendered misconduct to elevate the voices of the many clergy women who know firsthand how devastating this can be.

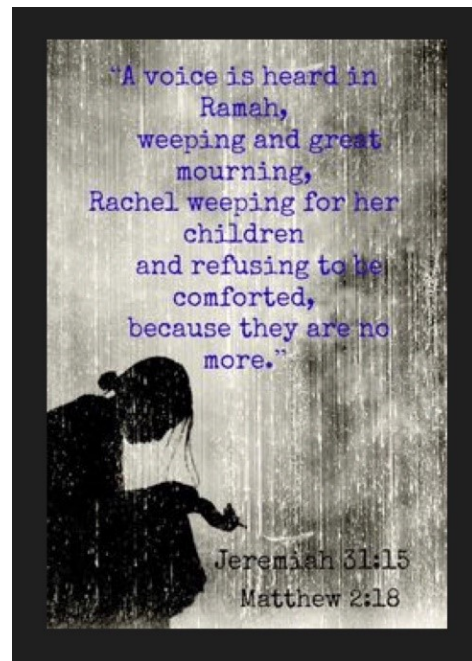
Taking it public!



- **In April**, we co-sponsored a two-day conference in Lancaster County with an Ohio-based organization on abuse prevention and healing focused on people in Plain communities. Many attendees were survivors and their families.
- **In June**, we presented on the issue of child sexual abuse in Amish communities at the Young Center's The Amish and their Neighbors Conference at Elizabethtown College. It was the first time this issue has ever been addressed at this annual multi-disciplinary conference, which draws academic researchers from around the nation and a few foreign countries.
- **In November**, we presented at a PA Court conference held at the Lancaster Marriott on gender-based violence against Amish women and girls and cultural interactions with the justice system. Attendees included court staff, law enforcement, and others involved with the justice system.
- **Our virtual Circle of Hope groups** for adult survivors of childhood trauma, including sexual abuse, were theme focused, including a special group for the holidays for survivors who can no longer "go home" and struggle to celebrate because of the toxic family relationships that continue to harm them.
- **More survivors of child sex trafficking** sought our services to foster healing from complex trauma, including sexual, physical and emotional abuse in their families of origin. Some were forced to have abortions, beaten on a regular basis, filmed as small children by a parent for pornographic use, and grew up in such climates of fear that the streets seemed a safer bet than their homes. Despite it all, they long for healing. We featured poetry written by one of these survivors in our September newsletter.
- **In June, we launched our RACHEL PROJECT**, which included writing a 60-page workbook for use in our new Rachels' Sisters healing groups for Amish women.

RACHEL PROJECT

Rachel, wife of Jacob, is the symbolic mother of Israel who intercedes for her children. She is the voice in Ramah weeping when King Herod orders little boys under age two to be murdered. She refuses to be comforted until the children are safe, and her sisters are healed. Amish women echo her cries.



The faith-integrated workbook educates women on the impact of trauma while fostering their healing through a dynamic process of study, discussion, therapeutic processing, self-awareness exercises, and tools for self-regulation. Most of these women have no education about trauma and its impact on our brain, bodies, emotions and relationships.

- Their stories are heartbreaking. One young Amish woman who is deaf described how hard it is for her to shake the hand of the ex-boyfriend who raped her when she was 15. She is now married but continues to encounter him at social events. Her husband knows this man raped her, but Amish custom “requires” them all to shake hands. Each time she does this, she suffers reactivated PTSD symptoms for weeks. Another speaks of years of sexual abuse by her father. She writes incredible poetry and shares it with the group. A young girl raped two years ago comes to each group session but will not speak – to us, or to her parents at home. She has gone mute. But she listens keenly, and tears roll down her cheeks when other woman share their feelings or stories. The only other time in two years she has shown ANY emotion, according to her mom, is when her beloved horse died.
- Many of the traumatized women in our groups share stories of being forcibly taken from their homes (with their husband’s consent) and transported to unlicensed, Amish-run mental health facilities when they try to stop the sexual abuse of their children, which often co-occurs with domestic violence. The women say they are heavily medicated until they cease talking about abuse. Women tell us of signing away their legal rights to a church leader on a power of attorney often after having been brow-beaten for many hours by a ministry group that comes to their home and refuses to leave until they comply.
- One woman’s child was sexually abused by her paternal grandfather who lived on the property. When she tried to report it, her husband threatened her, and the grandfather said he would “take her life” with his gun. She had no safe place to go with her children, so she stayed. Her story, and that of other women in similar situations, led us to begin conversation with several agencies and organization in

Lancaster County to discuss how we can develop safety options for our sisters in the Plain communities that are culturally appropriate, empowering, and victim-centered. Stayed tuned for more on this in 2023!

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 every day 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**



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