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Word from the Director

“Now that I've found a safe place, I'm not letting it go”.

Survivors describe our healing retreats and groups as rare places of safety, acceptance, and non-judgement. They use words like “confidence, courage, gentleness, kindness, compassion” to express what they find at Safe Communities. We believe all survivors deserve a “safe place,” and our programs create a sanctuary for them within a caring community of other survivors. When they find this place of belonging and non-judgment, they don’t want to let go! Nor should they have to. At Safe Communities, we are committed to holding safe, respectful, inclusive space for all survivors.

In any given group, we may have survivors of child sex trafficking, Plain people, differently gendered people, incest survivors, and those who have been sexually abused as children and as adults. Some are deeply religious, and others don’t embrace any belief system. All are welcome.

We are equally committed to “upstream” prevention. No child should have to suffer the trauma of sexual abuse.

After teaching a group of parents how child sex offenders cultivate relationships with children and parents to gain trust, explaining that 90% of

children are abused by someone they know, and describing some warning signs of “grooming” behavior, the mom of a pre-school age child exclaimed:

“I feel like I’ve been living under a rock! Why didn’t anybody tell me this before?”

She was one of the fortunate parents whose lives Safe Communities has touched with prevention education. She is gathering up the tools she needs to keep her child safer from sexual abuse. We want all adults who care for and about children to be as fortunate as this mom. And that means reaching more people in our community with evidence-based prevention education.

Safe Communities was birthed just a few short months before the pandemic hit hard, resulting in shutdowns, isolation, uncertainty, and fear. This new “child” inherited many years of programming and experience that was developed at a local counseling center. Yet she was still fragile, in need of support, care and nurturing so she could grow and reach her full potential.

Although she is not yet three years old, she is already saving and transforming lives! But she could not have done this without the support of our individual donors, gifts from businesses, and grants from foundations. Or our volunteers, and all those who believe with us that stopping child sexual abuse and offering community-based healing for survivors is the way we move into the future. A future in which we no longer need to endlessly rescue drowning victims from the river but where we have built a community with strong guard rails upstream to keep them from being tossed into the raging waters of pain springing from sexual violence.

Later in this newsletter we’ll share some highlights from our recent **Report to Donors** that illustrate the impact of our new organization. For example, in 2021 our programs for adult survivors served 150 participants and we educated about 1,300 people on sexual abuse prevention.

But we know that even though numbers served are important, they don’t fully capture the stories of the transformative work made possible by the group of kind and caring donors and volunteers who believe, as we do, that child sexual abuse prevention is possible, and survivors deserve a safe place to heal.

Linda Crockett, Director
January 2022

Winter 2022 Newsletter, *In this issue:*

- **Child Abuse Prevention Seminar - April 2022**
- **Sexual Trauma - Heal PA Guide**

- **Parenting for Safety During the Holiday Season**
- **2021 Highlights**
- **Volunteers Needed**
- **Thank You for your Support!**

SAVE THE DATE!

Child Abuse Prevention Seminar

Friday & Saturday, April 29 & 30, 2022

**Held at Weaverland Anabaptist Faith Community,
East Earl PA**

Safe Communities is joining forces with A Better Way and Weaverland Anabaptist Faith Community for a Child Sexual Abuse Prevention conference on April 29 and 30, 2022. Weaverland will host the conference at their beautiful location in East Earl PA near the Shady Maple Farm Market.

A Better Way, based in Ohio, was founded by Hope Ann Deuck, a survivor from a Plain community, whose story of abuse and healing was featured in a series of award-winning articles in the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette in 2019 on sexual abuse within Amish and Mennonite communities.

We'll have a wide array of speakers on topics related to child sexual abuse, and on healing from childhood sexual trauma. **Counselors will be on hand** to lend support to anyone that needs it while attending. Meals, snacks and beverages will be provided.

A special Friday evening program for 7th to 12th graders will help teens better understand the dangers of viewing pornography and how it often leads to exposure to child sexual abuse material (sometimes called "child porn")

Registration will open in January and links will be posted on our website. Invite your friends and neighbors and plan to attend what we believe will be a beautiful mix of Plain and English* people learning together how to better protect children and help survivors to heal.

** Amish and Mennonite are referred to as Plain sects, and call people outside of their own communities English*

[CLICK HERE FOR CONFERENCE INFO](#)

Child Abuse Prevention Seminar

Friday & Saturday
April 29 & 30, 2022

Weaverland Anabaptist Faith Community
210 Weaverland Valley Rd
East Earl, PA

Save the Date!

Youth Event on Fri Eve
for 7th to 12th graders!

Come and get training from professionals on identifying abuse, reporting abuse, and healing for those who have experienced abuse. Let's make our homes, churches, and communities safe places.



A Better Way



SAFE
COMMUNITIES
UNITED TO END
CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Weaverland
ANABAPTIST FAITH COMMUNITY

More information coming soon at:

<https://abetterway.org/events/lancaster-2022>
or call 717-560-9989

Some of the Presentations:

- When School Is Not a Safe Place - *Linda Crockett*
- Child Sexual Offenders: What We Need to Know - *Scott MacDerment*
- Surviving Sexual Abuse: Understanding Trauma's Lifelong Effects in Adulthood and Finding Pathways to Healing - *Brittany Leffler*
- Panel Discussion: Plain Communities Task Force (PCTF) of Lancaster County - *Moderator: Hope Anne Dueck*
- Self Care in Advocacy - *Crystal Sayre*
- Understanding why Sexual Abusers Continue to Abuse Children - *Tara Mitchell*

and more!

CLICK HERE FOR CONFERENCE INFO

Survivors Spoke. PA Listened.

A New Guide for Trauma Informed Care for Survivors of Sexual Abuse is now Available through HEAL PA.

A big shout out to all the survivors who trusted us with their stories of being traumatized by health care providers who do not understand how even basic encounters with medical systems can easily re-traumatize adults who have suffered earlier sexual violence. You shared these difficult experiences with the hope that they would drive some much-needed changes to the PA Trauma-Informed Care Plan, which initially did not recognize sexual abuse as a distinct category of trauma. **AND YOU DID IT!!! YOUR STORIES MATTERED.**

Our director, Linda Crockett, served with other experts in the field on a special Work Group convened by the Executive Director of the Governor's Office of Advocacy and Reform. In December, we completed ***The Sexual Violence and Child Sexual Abuse Heal PA Guide*** for clinicians to help them provide more sensitive care to the many men and women survivors they encounter – often unknowingly – each day.

We encourage everyone to let their health care providers know about this guide – you can download and print a copy or give them a link to read it online. It includes comprehensive and updated definitions of child sexual abuse and sexual violence and offers those in health care systems a variety of short, practical steps to take to reduce the risk of re-traumatizing survivors through well-intentioned but uninformed care about their unique needs. If you'd like to learn more, reach out!

The Guide can also be found on the [Resources page of Resilient PA and HEAL PA](#) and [Safe Communities Resources page](#).

CLICK HERE FOR HEAL PA GUIDE



HEAL PA

HEALING · EMPOWERMENT · ADVOCACY · LEARNING · PREVENTION · ACTION

SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND CHILDHOOD SEXUAL ABUSE

BACKGROUND FOR CLINICIANS: THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF SURVIVORS

Childhood sexual abuse is recognized as a distinct form of maltreatment with unique interpersonal characteristics (e.g., boundary violations, betrayal, sexual traumatization, stigma, secrecy) that result in developmental consequences not associated with other forms of maltreatment (Noll, 2008). A large body of literature has documented negative psychological and social outcomes for sexually abused children. These survivors are at significantly higher risk for sexual violence later in life, compounding the traumatic impact. Nationwide, 81% of women and 43% of men report experiencing some form of sexual harassment and/or assault in their lifetime.

Survivors of sexual abuse/violence often avoid medical and dental care entirely or become re-traumatized during care due to lack of understanding of their unique needs for control, safety, and consent for touch. In addition to the widely recognized post-traumatic stress fight/flight/freeze responses that may be activated during medical care, many develop responses associated with complex trauma, including collapse/submit and please/appease which can result in their being unable to express needs to a person in authority, such as a provider. Finally, some develop a range of dissociative disorders that may also impact their ability to stay present during medical appointments, to remember symptoms, and to follow treatment recommendations.

We hope this basic guidance will enhance the clinician's capacity to provide a safe and sensitive environment for survivors.

This resource sheet was developed in November 2021, in partnership with the following individuals and organizations:

- Erika B. Brosig, LCSW, CTTS, DAAETS - Victim Services Inc.
- Linda Crockett, CSA, Health Coach - Safe Communities: United to End Child Sexual Abuse
- Beth Docherty - The TRUST Project
- Julie Evans, MSW - Silver Moon Strategies
- Andrew Grossman - Project Transition
- Jennifer Grove - PCAR/National Sexual Violence Resource Center
- Pastor Mark Harris, MDiv - Historic Salem UCC
- Dan Jurman, MDiv - PA Office of the Governor, Office of Advocacy & Reform
- Anna Brendle Kennedy, MPH - Lancaster Osteopathic Health Foundation
- Chad Shenk, Ph.D. - The Pennsylvania State University
- Mary Sonke, MSW - Fox Chase Cancer Center Partners
- Elisabeth E.S. Yaelingh-Scoffins, Ph.D. - Intersectional Life Counseling and Psychology, LLC

81% OF WOMEN AND 43% OF MEN REPORT EXPERIENCING SOME FORM OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND/OR ASSAULT IN THEIR LIFETIME.

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Parenting for Safety During the Holiday Season

Director Linda Crockett wrote a blog on keeping kids safe over the holidays for the **Lancaster Osteopathic Health Foundation**. The blog includes **tips for parents and caregivers on how to talk to children** about staying safe from sexual harm and empowering them to speak up when a boundary is crossed. An excerpt from the blog is below. Be sure to click on the link to read the full article and check out the suggested resources to help keep kids safe!

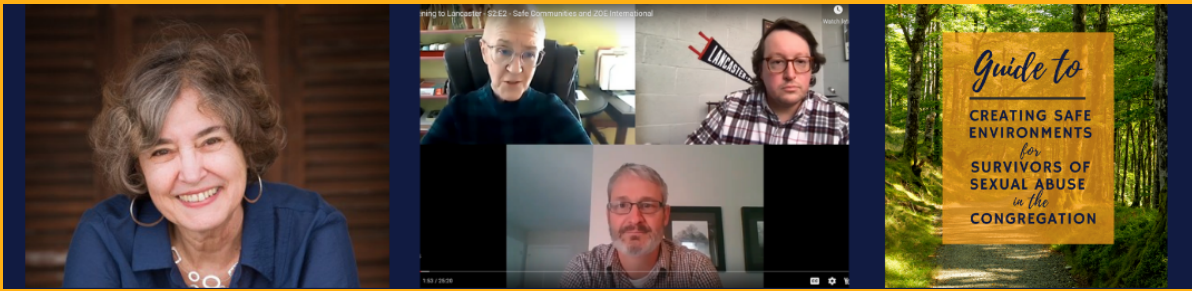


“While it’s always the job of adults to protect children, we teach them safety while crossing a street, or swimming, because we can’t keep eyes on them 24/7. **Teaching your child to stay safe from sexual harm may in fact be the most important conversation of all**, given its alarming prevalence and hidden nature.

First, it is important to know that sexual abuse includes a broad range of behaviors in which an adult or older child (or one with more social power) engages a child in sexual activity of any kind. This encompasses both touching and non-touching offenses. If you suspect a child has been abused,

early intervention is key. **A child who is believed, supported, and provided with appropriate counseling has a far better chance of avoiding long-term severe traumatic stress related issues than one who suffers for years without help..."**

[CLICK HERE TO CONTINUE READING](#)



2021 Highlights

We are grateful for the events we were able to hold in 2021 in spite of the ongoing pandemic like retreats, Survivor Voices, Circles of Hope, and first ever Men's Support group for Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse.

Below are a few highlights from 2021.

Hourglass: Listening to Lancaster (S2:E2) – Safe Communities and ZOE International

Jonathan Russell (Hourglass, Executive Director) joins Linda Crockett (Safe Communities, Director) and Brad Ortenzi (ZOE International) for a conversation about child sexual abuse and child trafficking prevention in Lancaster County.

Survivor Voices: Interview with Lyn Barrett

Lyn Barrett, author, survivor, retired elementary school teacher and principal, and pastor, discussed her experience of living with Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID), formerly known as Multiple Personality Disorder with Linda Crockett, in a segment of the “Survivor Voices” series launched by Safe Communities as part of its effort to educate the public about how this issue impacts individuals and communities. Barrett’s story helps to illuminate the severe impact of early childhood trauma on adult life even when a cognitive picture of events remains elusive. **Find Lyn’s newly released book [here](#).**

Guide to Creating Safe Environments for Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse in the Congregation

Download this free, unique 32-page, PDF guide, written by Linda Crockett, Safe Communities Director and Pastor Mark Harris. Topics include “The Impact of Child Sexual Abuse on Faith; Guide to Conversations in the Congregation; Pastoral Care for Survivors; and Sermon Texts and Seeds.” We are grateful to the Lancaster Legacy Foundation for their funding of this project.



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

Are you looking for a way add your light to a world weary of sexual violence? If you are, please consider serving as a volunteer with Safe Communities in 2022! We have multiple opportunities and have listed a few below.

1. Volunteers for various tasks during the Child Abuse Prevention Seminar on Friday & Saturday, April 29 & 30, 2022, held at Weaverland Anabaptist Faith Community, East Earl PA.
2. Safe Communities administrative tasks (remote option available)
3. Safe Communities social media updates (remote option available)
4. Spring Fundraising event

Contact us at info@safecommunitiespa.org and let us know which area you would like to volunteer in.

Your Donations Are What Make this Work Possible

Following are a few extracts from our recent Report to Donors. We are saving and transforming lives. But none of this would be happening without the support of our individual donors, gifts from business such as Clark Associates, and key foundations including Lancaster Osteopathic Health Foundation, LMC Legacy Foundation, The Alpern Family Foundation, Tecumseh Milestone Foundation, Lancaster County Community Foundation, and the High Foundation.

Our Work in Amish Communities



Amish women are “story tellers” and verbal narrative is extremely important to them. Those who have experienced abuse are doing their best to heal from past, and navigate current, traumatic experiences. They know they need more, and this is likely why Safe Communities is increasingly getting calls to come to homes to “listen to my story”. To have an “English” person knowledgeable about trauma listen to, validate, and believe them is healing. After I listened to one Amish woman recount a story of horrific sexual and physical abuse as a child and assured her that the depression, anxiety, difficulty with trust, and dissociation she suffered for decades were common responses to inescapable childhood trauma, she looked at me through her tears and said: “I can’t believe someone like you would care about my story.” Read more [here](#).

Healing in Community



The professionally facilitated groups and retreats at Safe Communities are safe places where those who have experienced sexual trauma can learn from and support each other as they continue their often life-time journeys of healing. To be with others who “get it” is a priceless gift, as survivors live in a world where even those closest to them can never really understand what life inside a body that was invaded in childhood is truly like.

During most of this year, our groups have been virtual, and we have welcomed survivors from some other states and Canada. Our groups

*"I am grateful for all the
caring support and
encouragement you've
gifted to me and all those
lives into which you've
sown seeds of growth and
courage!"*



include young survivors just beginning to address their trauma, and veterans who have done battle for years with the legacies of sexual abuse, including PTSD, dissociative disorders, addictions, depression, suicidal thoughts, eating disorders, self-harming behavior and isolation.

Child Sex Trafficking Education



In 2020, cybersex child trafficking and uploading of child sexual abuse images exploded with many children trafficked from their own homes by family members. The average age of the child in these live videos and images is 12. Some of our newest educational initiatives focus on the intersections between the sexual abuse children experience in their circles of “family and friends” and their subsequent exploitation on-line.

CORE VALUES

In 2022, we will continue to pursue our mission to end Child Sexual Abuse and achieve our vision of Communities where all children and teens are free from sexual abuse, and survivors are empowered to live healthy, joyful and vibrant lives.

We affirm mutual respect, equality, and diversity in our work environment, hiring and community relations. These are reflected in our core values, they are the ethics that guide our work, and are embodied in our multi-cultural team, and in our social work internships.

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.

Thank you for your support! This work would be impossible without you!

We invite you to become a part of this community of caring people who protect children from sexual abuse and support survivors in their healing process. We make giving easy! You can click below to give online, or send a check payable to Safe Communities - 313 W. Liberty St., Suite 242, Lancaster, PA 17603.

DONATE NOW

Please share this newsletter with your friends, family, clients, colleagues 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**

