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PASSAGES, INC

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A Note from Our Executive Director

By Marlene Austin

When I was offered a job at PASSAGES, Inc. as a Prevention Educator in 1996, I had been teaching elementary and middle school students for 7 years. I felt ready to take this next challenge, although I will admit that, like many people, I did not know a great deal about sexual violence at the time. I thought I did, but quickly learned I believed many of the same myths surrounding this issue that many people still do. It did not take me long to make it my mission to educate and help to protect children as well as adults from this horrific crime in our communities. This mission has become my passion.

When I think back to when I began presenting programs, we were not in many schools speaking to children. I had to speak to many school boards and administrators to plead my case as to the importance and value to educating their students about sexual abuse. It was a challenge, but one that I was ready to take on. Within a year, I was in nearly every school district teaching

students about how to protect themselves, and what to do if someone would ever try to harm them.

Each year, the programs that I would provide grew in quantity and variety. With each year that went by, I loved educating people about sexual abuse more. I also learned over time that even though I was thankful to get disclosures from children who had been abused, those disclosures that I received were not decreasing. Each year I seemed to be getting more, even though our programs were designed to curb violence. So over time, I learned that our focus needed to also change. We needed to not put so much pressure on the children in trying to stop the abuse. We needed to also educate adults so they could help to prevent abusive situations before they even occur.

In 2014, I stepped into the role as the new Executive Director of PASSAGES, Inc. This was quite an adjustment and new challenge for me; one that I was, because of my love for PASSAGES, ready to take on. It has allowed me to work more



Our newest Clarion volunteers show off their certificates of completion for our training. May 2017.

with the different agencies and systems within Clarion, Clearfield, and Jefferson counties.

As community members, we need to understand that whether we realize it or not, we all know survivors of sexual abuse, both young and old. The first step in prevention is to understand that sexual abuse happens each and every day in our communities, that those crimes are mostly committed by people we know, and that we *all* can make a difference in preventing it from happening. And if it does happen, the key is your support. It is on all of us to help stop sexual violence.

Pennsylvania and the Rape Crisis Movement

By: Tia Marie DeShong

When the *Pittsburgh Action Against Rape* (PAAR) was founded in 1972, it began as a volunteer organization, mimicking several other rape crisis centers that were slowly emerging across the country. Both the *Washington DC Rape Crisis Center* and Berkeley California's *Bay Area Women Against Rape* were founded around the same time and operated under similar principles – the idea that women needed a non-institutionalized setting to which they could turn when they experienced sexual violence. At the time, marital rape was still legal in most states. Rape shield laws were not yet in place, so many victims faced a barrage of questions about their past sexual history while on the witness stand. In many cities, members of law enforcement and the medical community were known to treat victims of sexual violence with suspicion and derision. PAAR and the other organizations were dedicated to helping to address the immediate concerns of survivors of rape – offering counseling, medical advocacy, and legal advocacy as well as, in many cities, emergency shelter for women who were unable to return home to their abuser. Additionally, however, these centers sought to challenge the dominant culture that viewed women as subservient, recognizing that women's equality was crucial in eliminating personal and systematic violence against women.

Around this time, a suburban housewife from Pittsburgh named Anne Kurlfink began her involvement in the women's movement. Although she had married her husband at age 16 and quickly bore him two children, Anne was intrigued by the new opportunities the women's movement offered. In 1972 she helped to found PAAR. She was its first staff member and it's first executive director. PAAR was the first rape crisis center in Pennsylvania and one of the first federally-funded centers in the country.

In 1977, Anne separated from her husband and decided to adopt her maiden name Huggett. Anne's father, however, disapproved of his daughter's involvement with the women's movement and refused to allow his name to be associated with it. Ultimately, Anne chose a name for herself that "reflected the woman she had become." Anne Pride, as she is now known, would go on to establish the Domestic Relations Taskforce for the National Organization for Women (NOW), serve on NOW's national board or directors, as well as edit their national newspaper, *Do It Now*. In 1980, Anne Pride received national attention when she was held in contempt when she refused to obey an order in court to make a victim's records with a counselor available to a defendant. Although she was facing jail time for her refusal, Pride insisted the records were confidential and stood her ground. Ultimately, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court upheld her appeal and their ruling would later inspire a ground-breaking law making communications between rape victims and crisis counselors confidential. Pride is also on record as being the first person to use the phrase "take back the night" in a speech delivered in Pittsburgh in 1977. "Take Back the Night" has now become synonymous with rallies and marches across the globe in which participants protest violence against women.

As PAAR flourished in Pittsburgh, other centers opened across the state. In 1975, members of all the different centers in Pennsylvania gathered together to form a coalition to address the needs of victims at the state level. On August 4, 1975, the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape (PCAR) was born. Since its creation, PCAR has partnered with sexual violence agencies across the state to "help bring help, hope, and healing" to those in

need. Like its predecessors, it is dedicated both to crisis intervention and counseling as well as long-term awareness and prevention initiatives.

In many cases, sexual violence advocacy agencies start at the grassroots level, where concerned community members see a need for direct and focused action to respond to and combat rape. Certainly this is the case with PASSAGES, which was founded in 1980 in Clarion, PA. At the time, two women, a 911 communications operator and a member of Clarion University's campus security staff, became increasingly frustrated by the lack of resources available to survivors of sexual violence. With the help of university officials, they were able to secure a small amount of funding and establish the Clarion County Rape Crisis Center. In 1983, those services expanded to Jefferson county, and then again to Clearfield county in 1998. In 1995, the center was renamed PASSAGES, Inc – Prevention And Services for Sexual Assault through Guidance, Empowerment, and Support – in order to reflect the rape crisis movement's changing agenda.

Whereas the first rape crisis movements relied on an anti-institutional philosophy, the changing times and the changing social response to sexual violence had compelled the rape crisis movement to adapt as well. Thanks to the tireless work of early advocates and activists, state and federal laws, in many cases, began to transform in order to better serve victims, penalizing sexual assault within marriage and adopting laws that protected survivor's safety and privacy. To have a SANE or SAFE nurse (sexual assault nurse examiner, sexual assault forensic examiner) in emergency departments is now

much more commonplace and helps more victims to receive the care that they need. Furthermore, the passages of Title IX statutes in 1972 and the Clery Act in 1990 helped to extend the focus on safety and prevention against sexual violence to K-12 and college campuses across the country. While sexual violence advocacy agencies are still, on principle, outside of the criminal justice and medical systems, it is now much easier (and more beneficial) to adopt multidisciplinary approaches in communities across Pennsylvania.

Here at PASSAGES, we are proud to honor our founding mothers – from the early Washington DC and Bay area activists, to housewife-turned-activist Anne Pride, to the young women in rural Pennsylvania who came together to say, loudly and with conviction, "no more" to rape and rape culture. Further, as we enter a new era in the rape crisis movement, we look forward to our partnerships with new faces. Established law, legal, and medical systems; members of the LGBTQ and gender equality movements; and a growing number of male-allies are now all changing, for the better, the face and the scope in the fight to end sexual violence.



Anne Pride, founder of Pittsburgh Action Against Rape and activist.

Multidisciplinary Approaches to SA Survivor Support & Prevention

By Robin McMillen

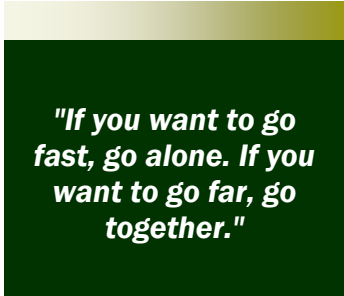
While the mission of PASSAGES, Inc. is to advocate for sexual violence survivors, we could not do it alone. Our response relies on our partnerships with other persons and agencies. When an act of sexual violence is reported, a team of professional individuals from different agencies and departments swing into action. Child Youth Services, members of law enforcement, Children's Advocacy Center staff, the district attorney's office, hospital personnel, and, of course, PASSAGES, all play a part to provide services for the victim, their family and friends by providing resources and support. This collaborative inter-agency effort not only seeks to reduce the trauma for the victim once the report or disclosure is made, it also forges relationships between agencies that can

help to stop crime from happening in the first place.

What does this multidisciplinary collaboration look like? Police department staff or Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANE nurses) know to call for a PASSAGES advocate when a survivor shows up at their departments, recognizing that victims may need support to help them through the questioning or medical exams. Similarly, our advocates and prevention educators host trainings for members of law enforcement, medical personnel, and school employees so that they can help victims in advance of our arrival. Finally, multidisciplinary teams help our district attorney's offices to ensure that our legal systems best serve victims while still producing high-quality investigations designed to put perpe-

trators behind bars. Multidisciplinary investigative teams (MDITs) meet routinely to discuss cases, streamline procedures, and develop community programs that keep our streets safe. In this way, our investigative powers serve both survivors and their communities at large.

There is an African Proverb that states: "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together." This has been the guiding philosophy of our multidisciplinary approach; by working with other persons and agencies in our communities, PASSAGES hopes to continue to go far in preventing abuse and helping survivors thrive everywhere and for all time



The Three Pillars of Sexual Violence Response: Advocacy, Prevention, Outreach

By Tia Marie DeShong

Advocacy

Sexual violence survivor advocates are trained professionals who support victims of sexual assault and similar crimes. Advocates are there with survivors to offer support, information, and help finding resources. Oftentimes, victims are unfamiliar with the medical and legal systems they must now navigate. Our advocates are trained to anticipate this confusion and offer objective intervention on the survivor's behalf, ensuring that their rights are upheld and that they have the necessary information to make important decisions. Additionally, counselor advocates offer emotional support to survivors and help them to develop positive coping strategies to begin to heal from their trauma.



ADVOCACY



PREVENTION

Prevention

When most people think of preventing sexual violence, they think of learning self-defense or using the buddy system when going out for a night on the town. Certainly those are good tips, but our prevention programs are not only designed to help prevent people from becoming victims, they are also designed to prevent people from becoming perpetrators. As such, our prevention education programs, which we offer to area schools, community groups, businesses, social service agencies, etc., teach age-appropriate topics designed to create a community of respect. Topics include developing healthy sexuality, respect for boundaries, internet safety, acquaintance rape, etc.

Outreach

If you ask a random person on the street (and I have) what PASSAGES, Inc. does, they probably don't know. Similarly, if you tell them that 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 6 boys will be sexually abused by their 18th birthday, they will express surprise. Despite the ubiquity of sexual violence, few people have knowledge about the issue or places to find help, like PASSAGES. Thus, a crucial component of our work is also to raise community awareness through outreach. Not only does this help to prevent crime by keeping communities more vigilant, it also helps to create a culture in which survivors are believed and respected, and where survivors know where to go if they need help.



OUTREACH

Helping Your Child Develop a Healthy Sexuality

By Kylee Estudante

Children begin to receive information about sexuality from a very young age. They become curious about their bodies even before their first birthdays. How parents respond to this natural curiosity can send messages that might influence the child's view on sexuality throughout their lives.

So, where are children getting this information? It could be coming from a number of sources, depending on the child's age, including movies, television, music, friends, games, school, advertisements, and the internet. Once parents come to realize that their children are inevitably getting this type of information from society, they often feel that it might be best that they are providing at least some of this information themselves. This way the parent's opinions and values regarding sexu-

ality can be heard.

A potential barrier is that many parents do not know what to say to their children. Luckily there are a lot of great resources out there relating to the topic. Children *need* information about sexuality at each stage of development beginning with identifying the private parts of their body using their proper names. The middle years can include various topics, including an introduction to healthy relationships. If a 2nd grader comes home and says they have a girlfriend, a parent could follow up by asking what having a girlfriend means to them. A great way to respond to questions such as "how did the baby get out of mommy's belly?" is to ask the child how they think the baby may have gotten out. Maybe they *already know* the answer and they just want to talk to you about it. Or maybe the child is not ready for the full detailed an-

swer to the question. This approach opens communication and allows you to see where the child is at developmentally to then give them an age appropriate answer.

Prevention education in the community is a great tool for starting the conversation about sexuality and the realities of sexual violence in our society, however it is much more effective if the topic is introduced by and then followed up on by parents. Studies suggest that children whose parents talk to them about sexuality are more likely to delay intercourse and more likely to practice safer sex when they do become sexually active. By talking to children about sexuality they are able to love and respect their bodies, form healthy boundaries, have the accurate information needed to make safe choices and even recognize the warning signs of abuse. Other benefits can include improved trust and communication within families.



Why I Work With PASSAGES: An Intern's Perspective

By Sophie Costan, PASSAGES Intern

I firmly believe that the support and physical and emotional services that we receive from community resources have the power and influence to shape who we are and who we want to become in the future.

I was diagnosed with Graves' Disease when I was thirteen, and what could have easily been a frightening experience for a teenager who didn't know what to expect became a very positive experience due to the wonderful doctors and nurses that took care of me. They were the epitome of what health care workers should be; they were kind, intelligent, confident, and down-to-earth.

Additionally, in the past there were a few years where I decided to regularly get counseling from a psychologist for some common issues that most teenagers experience. Like many other people, I struggled with feelings of anxiety and low self-esteem. However, my sessions with my therapist were extremely helpful to me not from her giving me a quick and easy fix to

my problems, but rather from her providing me with the skills and abilities needed to be self-sufficient, become confident, and pull myself out of my negative thoughts.

The positive lessons that my psychologist taught me are part of the reason why I'm minoring in psychology. Having the ability to advocate for someone, whether it's a client, patient, or just a friend, and teaching them how to become a more confident and self-sufficient person is an invaluable skill that has the potential to make those individuals, as well as the whole community, stronger and resilient.

These experiences during my formative years are the main reasons why I want to be able to help people more than anything else in the world. I'm not interested in making a lot of money; instead, I want to have the opportunity to give back to others in need just like the doctors and mental health professionals did for me years ago. This is why I was so initially drawn to PASSAGES, and part of why I'm so passionate about what PAS-

SAGES' counselors and volunteers strive to do for clients. This organization is made up of individuals that come from various career paths and walks of life that are all united in their passion to provide help and resources to people affected by sexual assault. Making it a mission to ensure that everyone is healthy physically and mentally is one of the cornerstones of public health and wellness, and nonprofits such as PASSAGES really take this commitment seriously.

Organizations like PASSAGES are imperative in maintaining both the physical and mental health of communities. Everybody goes through a variety of issues throughout their lives, but just hearing a doctor, counselor, or somebody close to you tell you that the issues you are experiencing are valid and nothing to be ashamed of, and that they want to listen and help, can really make a world of difference for your overall healing process.

"Organization's like PASSAGES are imperative in maintaining both the physical and mental health of communities."

Changing the World & Making a Difference for Survivors

By Tia Marie DeShong

Community involvement is crucial in the sexual violence victim's advocacy movement. We need attentive parents, dedicated medical and legal systems, and informed community members in order to prevent violence as well as help support survivors. Because we are such a small agency with only nine people on staff, we also rely on wonderful, committed volunteers who help us to offer our services in 3 counties that stretch over 2000 square miles.

Our volunteers share a unique passion for our work combined with a strong belief that they can elicit change. It is not uncommon for a person to shut down when they hear stories of sexual violence, feeling resigned to the imperfect world we live in. The people who find their way to us are different; they know the world can be hard, but they are dedicated to changing it. As Kristin Logan, a PASSAGES volunteer, put it: "I got really exhausted and angry hearing awful stories about sexual abuse... The biggest reason I wanted to become an advocate is my daughter. I don't want to wait until someone I know or someone close to me is a victim to start taking a stand and trying to make a difference." In addition to her work with PASSAGES, Logan is an LPN at Christ the King Manor as well as a student at Penn State Dubois.

Volunteers with PASSAGES can do many tasks. We welcome help with office work, community awareness

events, and in our prevention education programs. Volunteers also, importantly, can serve as emergency on-call staff in the event that our advocacy services are requested at a local hospital or police station. Each month, we ask our volunteers to commit to a week of being on-call when our offices are closed – Monday through Friday, 4:30 pm to 8:30 am and 24 hours on the weekend. While on call, our volunteers go about their daily lives; they simply need to be able to take a call and respond. Call-outs are fairly rare, but it is essential we have those advocates ready to go, in the event that someone needs us. Our volunteers are like volunteer fire fighters; you would prefer that they never had to exercise their skills, but you're relieved to know they are there if you need them. "It is difficult to put into words how rewarding it is to be the calm in the storm for someone who has experienced sexual violence," Robin McMillen, PASSAGES' legal advocate and longest-running volunteer, notes. In her seven years as a volunteer with PASSAGES, McMillen has responded to call outs many times, and, while each call out is different, the thing that unites them is that the victim is always relieved to have an advocate there to support them.

All of our volunteers are required to receive some level of training so that they understand our services and mission. Our on-call volunteers require the most training – 40 hours – because they directly provide ser-

vices to survivors. This training is flexible and fun, designed to introduce our advocates to sexual assault issues and crisis intervention techniques. McMillen notes the importance of the training for advocates: "The realities of sexual assault are often much different from the public's perceptions. Having a greater understanding, through the training, equips volunteer advocates for the 'real' world." But it isn't just the knowledge that makes training so valuable, it is the introduction to other passionate people. As Logan puts it, "By far the best part of training was the people I met and connections I made. It's nice to know that there are other good people in this world that want to help and make a change." By the end of training, our volunteers and staff become good friends, always willing to offer support and guidance to each other as we work together to end sexual violence.

To volunteer with PASSAGES, you are not required to have a background in counseling or crisis intervention; we take advocates from all careers and walks of life. What is essential is that you are reliable and, of course, that you are passionate about helping survivors. This work is hard sometimes, and can seem daunting, but supporting survivors matters and the work we do here at PASSAGES is vital to our communities. Want to help make the world a better place? Join us today!



Our newest Clearfield and Jefferson county volunteers show off their certificates of completion for our training. May 2017.



Robin McMillen (left), PASSAGES legal advocate, discusses our services and the important of supporting survivors during a Sexual Assault Awareness Month Event featuring Child Advocacy Center Forensic Interviewer Pat Berger, county detective Guy Felmlee, and Jefferson County DA Jeff Burkett.





PASSAGES, Inc. is a sexual violence victim advocacy agency that serves the Clearfield, Clarion, and Jefferson county area. We have offices in Dubois, Brookville, and Clarion, PA. Our services include individual and group counseling for survivors and their families; medical and legal advocacy; prevention education programs; and community outreach and awareness. All of our services are free and confidential. We accept clients of all ages immediately following their assaults or many years later. For more information, or to schedule an appointment, please call our offices today 1(800) 793-3620.



On Community Service

By Tia Marie DeShong

When most people think of "community service," they think of punishment, picturing people in neon vests picking up litter along the side of the road or washing graffiti off public walls as a penalty for a crime. But "community service" extends well beyond the confines of court-ordered public works for offenders. Community service is the willful, free work of someone dedicated to making the small slice of earth they reside on a better place. We can thank community service for our firefighters, food pantries, homeless shelters, public parks, libraries, churches, The Red Cross, Habitat for Humanity, Special Olympics, Relay for Life, Meals on Wheels, candy strippers, boy and girl scouts, The United Way, summer camps, art camps, youth and recreational sports leagues, community theatre, and, yes, sexual violence victim advocacy. All of these organizations and groups rely on volunteers. Volunteers make service possible, allowing organizations to allocate money away from paying for labor and towards providing services free or at a low-cost for people who would not otherwise be able to access those services. Helping the most vulnerable in our communities is not just moral and noble, it is also essential to help-

ing everyone who resides in this community. We all benefit from healthy, well-fed citizens; educated and civic-minded young people; the fight to end disease; and the effort to prevent sexual violence.

If we think about it, we all know this to be true. Yet, many of us do not offer our service to the communities at large. There are many reasons why. Some of us simply cannot afford to; our wages are barely sufficient to support our livelihood, let alone volunteer our time for others. Others are not well enough, physically or mentally, to offer their support as they work toward coping with or healing their own illness. Others, finally, simply don't think they have much to offer; in their minds, a volunteer is supremely, unrealistically virtuous – outgoing, strong, smart, resilient – and they don't feel as though they stack up. While the first two reasons for not volunteering are entirely valid (we must take care of ourselves so that we can help others), the last reason is more a product of idealistic expectations than anything else. The truth is everyone – yes, even you – has something valuable to offer their communities. Sure, we can picture someone in the Peace Corp fighting malaria in Zimbabwe when we think of "service," but we can also remember the boy scout that offers to help the old

lady cross the street to remember that any act, however small, can be extremely important to the person on the receiving end of your service and generosity. Some people are just selfish; but most are not. I firmly believe that most of us believe entirely in the idea that service to others is nothing short of pure joy – hard joy, self-sacrificing joy, sometimes-scary joy, but joy nonetheless.

Coincidentally, there's another benefit to service that makes the entire thing worthwhile: a sense of belonging. Nothing better eradicates that pesky human notion of infinite loneliness than to dedicate yourself to others and to find, much to your surprise, others just as dedicated and passionate as yourself. Whether those new friends are fellow volunteers or part of the communities you serve, it is hard to feel lonely when you are surrounded by so much enthusiasm, gratitude, and love. So go to that blood drive, teach a free art class, donate your old items, help build a house for the needy, start a canned food drive, and, yes, volunteer as an advocate with PASSAGES. We can't pay you in tangible currency, but what you do gain from helping us help others is priceless.



Walk a Mile at Clarion University. April 2017.