

# Womenews

W o m e n ' s C e n t e r o f M o n t g o m e r y C o u n t y

## Executive Director's Notes:



By Maria Macaluso

As we enter the month of the April and enjoy the welcome Spring weather, it is also a month of celebrating and recognizing the tremendous support we receive from our volunteers as we commemorate Volunteer Appreciation Month.

One of our greatest strengths here at the Women's Center is our dedicated volunteer labor force. Each year we benefit from more than 20,000 hours of volunteer labor, comprised of more 150 volunteers providing both direct and indirect services in support of our work. Our reliance on a volunteer labor force has been a key factor in our ability to withstand the budget cuts which have faced so many non-profits in recent years. In addition to the labor they bring to the Center, our volunteers infuse our work with their creativity, their vision and their passion. They are an incredibly valuable, integral and much-loved part of the Women's Center, and they give the Center its most unique and special sense of community.

For me, personally, what I most love about volunteerism at the Women's Center is the rich diversity of talents, temperaments, humor, and skills that this wonderful group of individuals brings to the Center. Each of you enriches and brightens the day in some significant way, creating the most supportive, friendly and uplifting environment for our work.

I would therefore like to take this opportunity, on behalf of myself, the staff, the Board, our membership and the community we serve, to thank all of our volunteers for the commitment, creativity, generosity, talents, passion and dedication you bring to the Women's Center of Montgomery County. We hope that you know how much you are appreciated and how important you are to the Center, throughout year. You are truly a treasure!

As we consider the role that volunteers have played in shaping the Women's Center, I also wanted to take this opportunity to address one our earliest volunteers, who also became our first executive director, Linda Collins. For those of you who have not had the opportunity to meet Linda, she has been associated with the Center in some capacity for almost all of its 30 years of existence. Although she left the Center in the mid 80's to study law and, later, to lead Laurel House, she has remained a committed, interested and constant supporter in our work. Much of what the Center has become began as part of Linda's vision. Linda, in fact, wrote the original mission statement which until, only recently, guided and defined our work.

It is with both sadness and optimism that I must announce that Linda will be leaving her position at Laurel House on June 1<sup>st</sup>. While it is a great loss to all of us that she is leaving, I am personally thrilled for her to have this opportunity to grow, recharge and explore all of the wonderful possibilities that await her. I know Linda too well to think that she will be resting on her much-earned laurels, so I can only imagine what path this talented, motivated leader will take, but I do expect that we will be hearing very soon that she setting new worlds on fire with her energy and impassioned leadership. From all of us here at the Women's Center, I would like to wish this much admired friend, mentor and supporter all of the best in her future endeavors. She will always have special home here at the Women's Center, and she will always be an inspired part of our work, our mission and our hearts!

## April is Volunteer Appreciation Month

Actually, every month, every day, every shift worked by a volunteer is greatly appreciated. Whether it's sorting and displaying merchandise in the thrift shop, teaching English to newcomers or answering a crisis phone call in the middle of the night, the Women's Center would not exist without each and every one of you.

The dedication, pride and passion that goes in to your work here is evident in the Women's Center's rich history, longevity, and our ability to expand the scope of our services.

The Center has touched so many lives over the years, improving several, saving some. I hope all of you realize the impact and importance of your work and take pride in a job well done!

Paula  
Jenkintown Volunteer Coordinator

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## Jenkintown In-Service Reminder

**Monday, April 18<sup>th</sup>, 7-9p.m.:**

**Active Listening In-Service.**

All counselors are required to attend at least one active listening in-service per year. Please plan to attend.

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## A Note of Thanks from the Thrift Shop Volunteers

Your Mother's Closet thrift shop would like to send a million thanks to **Marjorie Lashley** of the Galman Group in the Fox Pavilion, for her most generous donation of accessories for the jewelry display case. Come in to see our new look!

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## Korean Women's Support Committee Celebrates 20 Years

The Korean Women's Support Committee is celebrating their 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary and invites you to join the party. Dinner and an art exhibition will be held on Saturday April 16<sup>th</sup> at 6:00pm, at St. Mark's church at the intersection of Meetinghouse & Beverly Roads in Jenkintown.

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## Supreme Court Hears Arguments in Gonzales Case

The U.S. Supreme Court heard oral arguments in *Town of Castle Rock, Colorado v. Jessica Gonzales* in March. At issue is whether victims domestic violence have a right to sue if their local government fails to protect them and their children from batterers.

"This case is critically important for victims of domestic violence," said Family Violence Prevention Fund President Esta Soler. "A positive ruling will establish that local governments will be held accountable if they fail to enforce the restraining order women and children depend on – sometimes for their lives."

The case centers on a brutal crime. Jessica Gonzales sought and received a protection order in May of 1999 requiring her estranged, violent ex-husband to stay away from her and their three daughters, ages seven, nine and ten. Police failed to enforce the order, and her husband kidnapped the three girls from their yard in June of 1999.

*continued on page 5*

## ADVOCATES' CORNER

*Submitted by Denise Flynn, Program Director*

I usually enjoy the newsletters that are produced but I was particularly moved and inspired by March's Womensnews newsletter. In President Joyce Skobinsky's comments about achievements and accomplishments of the Women Center / Women's Advocacy Project, my mind raced with stories of struggles and triumphs in seeing the Norristown and Pottstown offices grow from infancy to the level of maturity we now enjoy. I recall many days of going to the Courthouse and police departments with trepidation because of the hostility and attitudes we received and because they were skeptical about our role and position we took as advocates for abused women/battered individuals.

I recall doing court advocacy/accompaniment and was afraid to whisper to the person we accompanied what was going on and offer legal options; couldn't wear badges – now we are being called on to assist the court in the implementation of final PFA orders, badges and all! The judges respect our position and appreciate what we offer the court and battered individuals

I recall having a judge throw papers across the table at me and a very terrified person I accompanied to get a temporary protection order and after advocating for her received a temporary order and a lecture from the judge about "you people." The same judge was instrumental in the development and implementation of protection from abuse procedures when the amendments to the PFA act was enacted.

Over the years, I have seen and am enjoying the respect and value in which various systems regard the Women Center and look forward to many more positive in-roads being made.

We could not have accomplished any of this without the dedication and courage of legal advocates, paid and volunteer, who weathered the storm and offered education, training and advocacy where needed. Little drops of water create big change.

### **Norristown Volunteer Update:**

**New Program : Montgomery Child Advocacy Project (MCAP)** is a newly formed non-profit organization established to protect the rights of children. MCAP has, so far, 60 attorneys who offer pro bono, (free of charge) services to represent children in domestic abuse and neglect cases (including sexual assault and molestation). Wendy Demchek-Alloy, Esq. oversees this much-needed program. Any abuse cases we (WCMC) come in contact with can be referred to this program directly and also through Court Administration of the Montgomery County Courthouse. Contact number is 484-429-3229 or call the Norristown office.

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### **Domestic Violence in the Courts and In the News**

Domestic violence experts were elated on March 29<sup>th</sup> when the Colorado State Supreme Court ruled that communications between advocates and victims are protected and will remain unavailable to batterers and the public. The case involved an accused batterer who sought information about the services his alleged victim received from the Alliance Against Domestic Abuse. A lower court judge ruled that records detailing assistance were not protected by privilege, but the State Supreme Court disagreed, extending broad confidentiality to domestic violence agencies as they work with victims. It was the first case in the nation to define the scope of confidentiality between service providers and victims, Colorado experts told the *Rocky Mountain News*.

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### **Book Club Meetings**

April 20th Dorothy will do *The Hours* by Michael Cunningham at Elaine's house

May 18th Sunny will do *My Sister's Keeper* by Jodi Picoult at Martha's house

June & July To be announced

All book club meeting start at 7:30 for socializing and 8:00 the discussion begins. Any questions call Dorothy at 215-782-2259.

## Elder Abuse

Elder abuse is a serious problem. Each year hundreds of thousands of older persons are abused, neglected and exploited by family members and others. Many victims are people who are older, frail, and vulnerable and cannot help themselves and depend on others to meet their most basic needs.

Legislatures in all 50 states have passed some form of elder abuse prevention laws. Laws and definitions of terms vary considerably from one state to another, but all states have set up reporting systems. Generally, adult protective services (APS) agencies receive and investigate reports of suspected elder abuse.

The 1998 National Elder Abuse Incidence Study funded in part by Administration on Aging (AoA) found the following:

- 551,011 persons, aged 60 and over, experienced abuse, neglect, and/or self-neglect in a one year period;
- Almost four times as many new incidents of abuse, neglect, and/or self-neglect were not reported as those that were reported to and substantiated by adult protective services agencies;
- Persons, aged 80 years and older, suffered abuse and neglect two to three times their proportion of the older population; and
- Among known perpetrators of abuse and neglect, the perpetrator was a family member in 90 percent of cases. Two-thirds of the perpetrators were adult children or spouses.

### Generally Accepted Definitions

Elder abuse is an umbrella term used to describe one or more of the following:

- Physical abuse is the willful infliction of physical pain or injury, e.g., slapping, bruising, sexually molesting, or restraining.
- Sexual abuse is the infliction of non-consensual sexual contact of any kind.
- Emotional or psychological abuse is the infliction of mental or emotional anguish, e.g., humiliating, intimidating, or threatening.
- Financial or material exploitation is the improper act or process of an individual, using the resources of an older person, without his/her consent, for someone else's benefit.
- Neglect is the failure of a caretaker to provide goods or services necessary to avoid physical harm, mental anguish or mental illness, e.g., abandonment, denial of food or health related services.
- Self-neglect is characterized as the behavior of an elderly person that threatens his/her own health or safety.

### Reporting Elder Abuse

To report elder abuse, contact Adult Protective Services through the local or state hotline. The APS agency screens calls for potential seriousness, and it keeps the information it receives confidential. If the agency decides the situation possibly violates state elder abuse laws, it assigns a caseworker to conduct an investigation (in cases of an emergency, usually within 24 hours). If the victim needs crisis intervention, services are available. If elder abuse is not substantiated, most APS agencies will work as necessary with other community agencies to obtain any social and health services that the older person needs.

The older person has the right to refuse services offered by APS. The APS agency provides services only if the senior agrees or has been declared incapacitated by the court and a guardian has been appointed. The APS agency only takes such action as a last resort.

Source: Administration on Aging website [www.aoa.gov](http://www.aoa.gov)

**Protective Services Hotline: 1-800-734-2020**

Gonzales reported her daughters missing, pleading with local police over the course of eight hours for help- to no avail. She eventually reached her ex-husband on his cell phone, and he told her he was at a nearby amusement park. She called the police to pass on the information and ask for help. She alleges they took no action even after she called four times and went to the police station personally to seek assistance.

Simon Gonzales came to the police station some ten hours after the kidnapping, in the middle of the night. He opened fire with a handgun he had purchased that day. Police killed him and later found the three girls' bodies in his pick-up truck; Sin killed them while they slept.

Colorado has a mandatory arrest law that requires law enforcement to use "every reasonable means to enforce" restraining orders like the one Jessica Gonzales obtained.

The Denver-based U.S. Court of Appeals for the 10<sup>th</sup> Circuit ruled six to five that Jessica Gonzales can sue Castle Rock for failing to enforce the restraining order. The narrow majority found that Gonzales had a case that police failed to follow proper procedures and heed her repeated calls for help. She is asking for \$30 million in compensatory damages, plus punitive damages.

But the town appealed, and the U.S Supreme Court will decide. The Bush Administration joined the case on behalf of the City, arguing to maintain the longstanding policy that individuals cannot go to court to invoke a right to law enforcement.

The National League of Cities and International Municipal Lawyers Association is siding with Castle Rock, warning of a flood of lawsuits that could bankrupt local governments if the appeals court ruling is allowed to stand. Several justices asked questions during oral arguments that may suggest that they share that concern.

This case may cause the U.S. Supreme Court to revisit- or reaffirm- its 1989 in *DeShaney vs. Winnebago County*. In that case, it decided by a six to three margin that the mother of a brain-damaged Wisconsin boy could not sue her county social services agency for failing to stop the boy's father from beating his son, even though officials knew of the abuse. That ruling, which has been widely criticized, was based on the conclusion that government is not required to protect its citizens against "private actors."

Several justices expressed sympathy for Jessica Gonzales, but skepticism about courts intruding on police discretion. Advocates strongly disagree.

"A negative decision from the high court... would give police everywhere a green light to ignore state mandates requiring enforcement," wrote Attorney Joan Meier in the *Washington Post*. "Such a decision would encourage police to do less than they do now, drastically weakening the effectiveness of protection orders, which are a crucial legal means of protecting battered women and children. In fact, the history of profound gender inequality in the government's treatment of wife-beating makes the problem one of core constitutional concern. No less than police brutality, this kind of passive misconduct implicates fundamental civil rights.""

"A bad ruling in the *Gonzales* case will send a dangerous message," Soler agreed. "We need to strengthen the tools that can keep victims safe, not let cities that fail to protect their citizens off the hook."

A ruling is expected this summer.

# Honor Your Mother on Mother's Day With a Special Gift

With a minimum donation of \$5.00 per recipient, the Women's Center will send a personalized mother's day card to your family member or friend.

Please accept the enclosed donation of \$\_\_\_\_\_ in honor of \_\_\_\_\_ on Mother's Day. If the Women's Center receives this flyer by **MAY 5<sup>th</sup>**, then my honoree will receive a personalized Mother's Day Card, letting her know she inspired this donation to the Women's Center.

*or*

Please accept the enclosed donation of \$\_\_\_\_\_ in memory of \_\_\_\_\_ on Mother's Day.

For credit card donations, please supply the credit card number, expiration date and the zip code of the billing address.

Mother's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Mother's Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Your Name \_\_\_\_\_

Your Address \_\_\_\_\_

Your Personalized Message to be printed on your card or you can opt for our standard message:

\_\_\_\_\_

## Community Support and Generosity in Lower Merion

During the months of October, November and December the less fortunate families in the Lower Merion community were gifted with the generosity of many kind hearts!

There were Thanksgiving dinners delivered to the Bryn Mawr office with specific recipients in mind. As a result of these incredible acts of kindness, families in need were able to celebrate Thanksgiving “with all the trimmings”!

When Thanksgiving was over the generosity kept pouring in! Surrounding companies, schools and organizations chose another way to celebrate the season among their staff and employees. In lieu of a traditional in-office Pollyanna, they opted to give monetary donations and/or supply a family in need with items that were on a “wish list”. The recipients, thanks to the generous donors received far MORE than they wished for!

The staff and volunteers as well as the entire Women’s Center were overwhelmed by the kind, caring and selfless people who were shining examples of the spirit of the holidays! To quote one of the moms who got a Women’s Center delivery (in between tears of joy), “My kids can now have a wonderful holiday! I am so truly, very happy! Thank You!”

On behalf of the Board Members, Staff, Volunteers, all of the Women’s Center of Montgomery County members, we would like to extend our sincere and heart-felt thanks to each and every one of you who were instrumental in giving someone a holiday that they didn’t ever believe that they could have. Thank you for helping to make so many dreams become realities!



Our friends at The American College located in Bryn Mawr generously donated \$585.00. The donation will be used to help those in need residing in the Lower Merion Communities. In addition to their monetary donation, The American College held a Book Drive and gifted us with a wealth of wonderful reading material.



Help Source Home Health Services located in Jenkintown selflessly provided “oodles” of goodies for our wish list families in lieu of an office “Pollyanna” for themselves!



Judy, John, and Alexis Donnelly delivered a Thanksgiving feast to the Bryn Mawr Office with all the ingredients and trimmings for a bountiful holiday feast!



Gail Wright and her Main Line Health “elves” were busy preparing and delivering gifts to families in need in their “Adopt A Family” holiday outreach. Many women and their families from the Bryn Mawr area were the recipients of their generous efforts!

*The Women’s Center of Montgomery County like to thank the following donors not pictured who turned “wish lists” into beautifully wrapped tangible gifts*

©Sanofi Aventis in Great Valley  
©Markowitz and Delheim Dental Office in Narberth  
©Montgomery County Career Link in Norristown

**OUR SINCERE THANKS TO ALL OF YOU!!**

## Benefit the Women's Center When You Shop On-Line! Website Shopping Links

The Women's Center of Montgomery County will earn a percentage of each purchase you make with our online vendors if you link to their site through the Women's Center website at [www.wcmontco.org](http://www.wcmontco.org):

Staples.com  
Boscovs.com  
Barnes&Noble.com  
IBM.com  
PetSmart.com  
Priceline.com  
MusiciansFriend.com  
Kmart.com  
Amazon.com  
OldNavy.com  
Modell's Sporting Goods  
Verizon Wireless  
Proflowers.com  
Entertainment Book

### Women's Center of Montgomery County

#### Jenkintown Office

215-885-8440

Korean: 215-886-8725

Thrift Shop: 215-885-0620

FAX: 215-885-8156

#### Norristown Office

610-279-1548

FAX: 610-279-7740

#### Pottstown Office

610-970-7363

FAX: 610-970-0705

#### Lansdale Office

215-853-8060

FAX: 215-853-8065

#### Bryn Mawr Office

610-525-1427

FAX: 610-525-1429

[www.wcmontco.org](http://www.wcmontco.org)

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