

ON A MISSION: KEEPING YOU INFORMED

FALL 2019

eliminating racism
empowering women
ywca
Clark County

HER COURAGE, SAFECHOICE'S SUPPORT LEADS TO FREEDOM

Diana Jaramillo had to summon all the courage she had to leave an abusive domestic relationship. But once out of the horror of her former life, all that courage, and more, might not have guided Diana and her children to their new life had they not had the support of the YWCA's SafeChoice program.

"The day I decided to say 'no more' to the abuse was one of the hardest things I have ever done. I was destroyed and had some days with very little hope," she told the audience at YWCA's Empower Luncheon on Sept. 12.

After Diana attended her first SafeChoice group meeting, she says, "I found more women like me, some in a better position, but some struggling more than me." And she appreciated that.

The group was bilingual for Spanish speakers, directed by Irma and Claudia, two Spanish-speaking advocates at YWCA Clark County.



"Because of all the support, I was able to change my life and my children's lives."

– Diana Jaramillo

"Having advocates from our own culture, who understand the barriers that we have, is so helpful and it makes all the difference. Irma has been here for so many years and is known in the Latino community as our Latina advocate. She always goes the extra mile for us, she always helps us see the best of us that we can't see," Diana said.

Today, Diana and her two children live independently; her son is preparing to enter college. Hers is a powerful story of a woman's courage and determination to escape abuse. It is a story that could not be told without SafeChoice. "Because of all the support, I was able to change my life and my children's lives."

VOLUNTEER

JOIN US IN OUR MISSION!

Apply to volunteer at ywcaclarkcounty.org
or call **360-906-9112**.

You can help support
our work by visiting
ywcaclarkcounty.org and
clicking "DONATE" today!

Eliminating racism, empowering women, and promoting peace, justice, freedom and dignity for all.



“It is so gratifying to see our community come together to support our mission in such a compassionate, caring way.”

- Sherri Bennett, YWCA Executive Director

EMPOWER LUNCHEON RAISES AUDIENCE AWARENESS ON RACISM, DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

The audience of 375 at the Sept. 12 event at the Hilton Vancouver was held spellbound by the story of abuse, courage, and a new life shared by Diana Jaramillo, a participant in the YWCA’s SafeChoice domestic violence program. They learned about the role “white people” can play in erasing racism through actions rather than words. And they generously pledged more than \$175,000 to support YWCA’s powerful work in the community.

“We are so grateful to everyone who contributed to the great success of the luncheon, from our board, to our donors, sponsors, staff, volunteers, and, of course, our amazing presenters,” said Sherri Bennett, YWCA Executive Director.

Event emcee Obie Ford III, Associate Vice Chancellor for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion at Washington State University Vancouver, set the tone for the luncheon, presented by Columbia Credit Union. “Today we are here to share the life-changing impact YWCA Clark County’s Programs have on our community and how ‘eliminating racism’ is at the forefront of their mission and embedded into every aspect of their work,” Obie said.

Sherri said she and other white people have a tremendous responsibility to fight racism.

“Acknowledging and being accountable for my privilege, especially white privilege, has been a significant focus of my personal and organizational journey.”

Diana’s account of her escape from an abusive spouse, and the support she received from SafeChoice, was moving and powerful. (See page one.) Keynote speaker Ali Michael, Ph.D, elaborated on Sherri’s remarks concerning whites and racism. White woman, author, educator, and director of the Race Institute for K-12 Educators, Ali emphasized that whites must recognize their unconscious racism, reject the reaction to feel guilt about it, and instead find ways to actively address racism in their communities.

“If I as a white person am going to contribute to fighting racism, I need to know certain skills and competencies that I was not given when I was growing up,” she said. Her words of advice and encouragement to whites to truly engage in anti-racist activities were both revelatory and challenging.

Those in attendance were clearly moved by what they experienced at the luncheon. With auctioneer Alix Zimmerman following Diana’s testimony with a call for donations, the audience responded in rousing fashion. The more than \$175,000 raised in donations will help empower YWCA programs in Clark County, addressing the racism and injustices that cry out for remedy.



Erica Nicewonger (left) and Jennifer Jones (right) enjoy the presentation at the Empower Luncheon.

All event photos: Andie Petkus Photography



Tanika Siscoe, Domestic Violence Prevention Specialist and Ana Sifuentes, Bilingual Outreach Specialist and Legal Clinic Coordinator

“A community cannot start healing from the trauma suffered through violence and poverty if every day is a reminder of the very things that won’t allow them to heal.”

— Ana Sifuentes

ENDING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

SafeChoice addresses critical community needs with its domestic violence program

The YWCA’s **SafeChoice Domestic Violence Program**, which supports Clark County residents affected by domestic violence, received a grant in 2018 to hire a full-time Bilingual Domestic Violence Outreach Specialist. The person hired, Ana Sifuentes, has surpassed all expectations in her first year.

Ana, who joined SafeChoice last September, came with a passion for defending and extending the rights of Latinas and Latinx. “That is the Latinx community’s greatest need: Rights!,” she says. “A community cannot start healing from the trauma suffered through violence and poverty if every day is a reminder of the very things that won’t allow them to heal.”

From January 1 through June 30, 2019, the number of new Latinx survivors who sought services at SafeChoice increased by 46%. Ana’s strategy: actively spread the word about SafeChoice and other YWCA services throughout the Latinx community. In part she does this through a monthly legal clinic for survivors, and quarterly immigrant rights legal clinics. She also launched a Promontora Project, where she trains Latinx community members on domestic violence advocacy so they can support community members who are unlikely to seek services from YWCA.

“My role is a huge responsibility! But also a great honor,” she says. “There are so many areas of the Latinx community that can benefit from our outreach services.”

Advocacy, Education and Shelter

The SafeChoice Domestic Violence Program commits to advocate for, educate, and support those affected by domestic violence.

7,707 bed nights provided at our emergency domestic violence shelter
1,326 individuals received advocacy services
95 youth participated in multi-session prevention workshops
and we responded to **7,279** hotline calls.



organizations that continually help their neighbors live healthy, happy and productive lives.” As they have observed, the programs the YWCA offers truly make a difference and they are proud to partner with our organization.

Over the years, CCU has focused its giving on overarching categories of the community, such as children and families, education, housing, and the environment. The vision of CCU towards philanthropy not only focuses on partnerships and financial support, but also through the management team giving of their time to help make life better across the community. As it stands, CCU is proud to offer support to over 80 different local non-profits, striving to make life better in our community.

YWCA Clark County is honored to call Columbia Credit Union a partner in our mission to empower women, eliminate racism, and promote peace, justice, freedom, and dignity for all.

CCU PARTNERSHIP

For more than 25 years, Columbia Credit Union (CCU) has been a partner of YWCA Clark County. Identifying early on the unduplicated variety of needs that YWCA addresses in the community, CCU has been dedicated to long-term support. Being a good corporate citizen is an ongoing responsibility that CCU whole-heartedly embraces. The credit union believes in supporting

local events and causes that enhance the quality of life in the neighborhood where its members and employees live, work and play.

“We believe the programs YWCA Clark County offers here in our community are life-changing to local families,” says Michelle Thor, Vice President of Outreach and Social Responsibility. “And it’s our most earnest intention to assist

YWCA WELCOMES TWO NEW BOARD MEMBERS

In June we were thrilled to swear in two new board members, Megan Peyton and Nancy Olmsted.

Megan Peyton, an attorney at Barrar Law, joined YWCA because we stand for empowering women and children who are struggling on a daily basis in our community. As an attorney who has worked in a variety of areas including criminal law, dependency and guardianships, she has had experience with many clients who struggle to find the services and support needed in Clark County. Megan shared, “YWCA is a place where they can go to get the extra help they need and it is a place where they are constantly trying to find new ways to help. I have seen the employees of YWCA and

their acts of kindness in the courtroom and am grateful for an opportunity to support them.”

Nancy Olmsted leads marketing, communications, and HR at On Line Support, a technology consulting firm owned by her family. As a mother of four daughters and the grandmother of three, Nancy envisions a world where women are empowered to steer their own destiny and children are supported, cared for, and learn

compassion. “It is easy to feel overwhelmed and powerless by the injustice, discord, and human struggle we see in the world around us,” says Nancy. “We wonder, ‘What can I, as one person do to effect positive change?’ Real change in the world starts in our own communities. I am humbled and honored to work together with the YWCA staff and volunteers in pursuit of our mission.”

New board members Nancy Olmsted (left) and Megan Peyton (center) were sworn in by Sherri Falkner, Board President.



“The support has been inspiring.”

– Sheryl Thierry, Director of CASA Clark County

CASA FUNDRAISING UPDATE

Over the summer CASA Clark County launched a fundraising campaign to offset the loss of a \$200,000 government contract. Immediately losing three staff, CASA worked to reorganize the program to retain a fourth position and add a new Volunteer Recruiter to focus on expanding the volunteer base. It was identified that CASA would need to raise \$120,000 to maintain the fourth position and focus on volunteer recruitment.

CASA Clark County has more than 500 children on its caseload and needs another 80 volunteers to advocate for children the way the National CASA model suggests. The loss of the three staff members and need for more volunteers has put a strain on CASA Clark County, as the court continues to appoint new cases to us.

CASA Clark County saw immediate success with the launch of the campaign. National CASA awarded a \$29,000 grant to hire a part-time Volunteer Recruiter. Over the next two months, the community generously donated an additional \$58,000, bringing the total to more than \$87,000.

“The support has been inspiring,” says Sheryl Thierry, Director of CASA Clark County. “It has been wonderful to see the community value the work we do and step up as we provide advocacy for the vulnerable children in Clark County. We are so close to meeting our goal.”

If you’d like to support the CASA Clark County program, you can make a program-restricted donation at support.ywcaclarkcounty.org. If you are interested in learning more about becoming a CASA volunteer, contact Katie Benzel at 360-906-9142 or kbenzel@ywcaclarkcounty.org.

CAPLES TERRACE

Clark County, Washington state, and nonprofits like YWCA are collaborating to provide safe, comfortable and affordable housing for youth who age out of the foster family system. Read more about the Caples Terrace affordable housing facility on the blog on our website.



VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: CASA'S JUDY WALTER

Judy Walter lives to give back. She has been volunteering her time and providing compassion, in one way or another, most of her adult life. But when she became a volunteer for CASA – Court Appointed Special Advocates – she knew she had found her volunteer home.



Nancy Jewell (left) Judy Walter (right)

Being a CASA is not for everyone, she will tell you. Advocating for the children of families that are in trouble can tear at the heartstrings. But it brings out the best in Judy Walter.

“All these words describe the experience of being a CASA: Rewarding and frustrating, motivating and discouraging, inspiring and tiring,” she says. “In the end, rewarding, motivating, and inspiring keeps me going.”

Judy’s work as a CASA volunteer earned her Washington State’s Volunteer of the Year in 2017. Far more important to her, though, is the recognition she receives from the children, families, social workers, and court officials who acknowledge the role she plays in keeping vulnerable Clark County children safe--a role that benefits everyone in the community.

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Join YWCA Clark County during the month of October for Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

Together we will mourn those who have died because of domestic violence,
celebrate those who have survived, and connect those who work to end violence.



TOGETHER
we can end
DOMESTIC
VIOLENCE

INFORMATION IS **POWER:**

Supporting Domestic Violence
Survivors in Your Everyday Work

Tuesday, October 15
9 am – 12 pm

YWCA Clark County Community Room

This training is geared towards social service workers
and those with similar roles, but is open to all
community members interested in learning more
about domestic violence.

ywcaclarkcounty.org/our-community/events/

Meaningful Movies and YWCA Clark County

present the mini-series

LOVESTRUCK

Wednesday, October 23

Screening at 7 pm

Panel at 8:30 pm

Old Liberty Theater, Ridgefield, WA

For more information visit

[meaningfulmovies.org/neighborhoods/
meaningful-movies-in-ridgefield](http://meaningfulmovies.org/neighborhoods/meaningful-movies-in-ridgefield)

For more information contact: gmaute@ywcaclarkcounty.org or (360) 906-9121.