

ON A MISSION: KEEPING YOU INFORMED

Despite COVID-19, you helped stop domestic violence

In this uncertain time, fear and anger are fueling domestic violence. Normally, people in need of services from YWCA's SafeChoice Domestic Violence Program get help through face-to-face meetings at our office. Due to COVID-19, those offices were closed.

But you and others in our community responded to requests for donations that allowed abuse survivors to receive the emotional support, safety planning, and resources to counter trauma, even though we could not be there in person. **Thanks to generous donors like you, those in need of help received it!**

"People got the help they needed when they needed it," said Margo Priebe, a Legal Advocacy Specialist with YWCA's SafeChoice Domestic Violence Program. "We found ways to connect, to counsel, to listen, to provide safe environments.

"People were asking for more emotional support as sheltering in place took its toll. They worried about jobs, rent, and moving forward with court proceedings. But tensions were increasing in homes where violence was an ever-present threat."

Even from a distance, your gifts helped victims

Your early, deeply appreciated donations, Margo said, allowed us to explore new ways to deliver our services. Your donations made it possible to replace face-to-face sessions with phone and video calls with those in need. Meanwhile, leaving home to escape violence became more difficult for victims. Finding a safe haven for survivors was challenging. Again, your generosity literally



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—Margo Priebe

opened doors for women and children seeking a safe haven from abuse and violence.

Because of your support, we were able to do even more to alleviate the pain and fear they confronted every day.

Your decision to support neglected and abused children can be life-changing

For more than a decade, Jean Carr-Andrews has been standing up for children and families as a volunteer for Clark County CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates). Your support allowed Jean to find her volunteer calling—one that requires strength, commitment, and compassion.

Right now, CASA is looking for more volunteers, like Jean, to advocate on behalf of children who have been removed from their homes by the courts because of abuse or neglect.

It's no lightly taken role. When you become a CASA, you are an official part of the judicial system. You will have specific responsibilities, and will be expected to offer fact-based opinions on whether you think a family separated by the court should be reunited. Last year, 760 children benefited from their CASA's advocacy.

Jean said advocates can make a huge difference in the lives of children and families. The CASA volunteer holds the key to the future of both a child and their family. The goal is to return the child to the parental home. It does not always happen. ("We must do what is best for the child.") But when it does, Jean feels fulfilled.

"There is nothing more rewarding than being part of a family's reunification," she said.

She added that, as a Black woman, she brings diversity to CASA that can help her connect to families of color. Adding more volunteers of color is a priority for CASA. CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

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Are you thinking about becoming a CASA? Do you have what it takes to be there for a child in dire need of adult guidance?

Here's how Jean says you can tell if it's right for you. You must:

1. Have a passion for children
2. Be a listener
3. Have an awareness of what the child needs
4. Have an idea of what the parent or parents need
5. Be organized around paperwork

Does this sound like you?

Visit our website ywcaclarkcounty.org/what-we-do/our-programs/casa to learn more.



CLARK COUNTY, WASHINGTON

CASA volunteers thrive in a supportive advocacy network

The work is demanding and often frustrating, Jean said. But there's an esprit de corps among the advocates and the families they stand up for.

Advocates meet regularly to compare experiences and offer support. This network has been extremely important during the coronavirus outbreak. "There are so many ways to stay in touch today with our kids so that we make sure no one falls through the cracks," Jean said.

One shining example of CASAs collaborating to raise spirits: During the COVID-19 lockdown, the advocates organized a car parade that wound past the homes of the kids under their supervision. During one parade, Program Director Sheryl Thierry told KGW News, "We had kids with a sign saying, 'Thank you for being there.' It kind of brought tears to our eyes."

Ready to follow Jean Carr-Andrews' example and change a child's life for the better? We need you! Become a CASA volunteer today.

The work can be frustrating, even heartbreaking. "Not every case ends in

reunification," Jean said. But because healthy families are vital to our community, Jean stays the course with CASA.

Ready to change a child's life for the better? We need you! **Become a CASA volunteer today.**



CASA car parade in June

“Mel and I are very intentional in our philanthropy. We give to the YWCA because the programs affect so many people and because contributions really improve people's lives.”

—Lee Faver, who has made a planned gift to YWCA Clark County with his partner, Mel Netzhammer



If you love YWCA Clark County, you can leave us a legacy gift

That's what Lee Faver and his partner Mel Netzhammer did. When the couple got involved with YWCA programs, they realized how vital those services were to the community. By leaving a legacy gift, Lee and Mel ensure that children, women, and families will benefit from YWCA services when they are gone.

Your support fulfills pledge to stand against racism every day

By Jasmine Tolbert, YWCA Clark County Board Member, VP of Public Policy

Eliminating racism, achieving racial equity—these are core objectives of YWCA Clark County. We do not merely mouth these goals. We sincerely believe they can be achieved, and that YWCA will play an impactful role in doing that. When you make a gift to support YWCA, you are bringing racial equity closer to reality in our community.

Every day, through our programs, practices, and commitments, we are focused on racial equity. YWCA Clark County works to eliminate racism and other forms of oppression through education, awareness, and engagement. We are a resource for individuals, organizations, and the community as a whole—wherever a pledge is made to end racism in America, we support that pledge.

By increasing civic engagement toward the elimination of racism and oppression, we can create respectful living, learning, and working environments and build inclusive communities. Racism's stain on America does not need to be permanent. As more individuals and organizations dedicate themselves to identifying racism's roots and pulling those roots out, we will move closer to our goal of a racism-free, inclusive America.

Our mission to end racism is guided by our Racial Equity Committee, a diverse group of staff members. Together they explore ways to ensure that racial equity is incorporated throughout YWCA's programs. Program staff work tirelessly to combat systemic racism in Clark County, to decrease barriers our participants of color face every day. The organization continues to amplify its message that we will not tolerate racism anywhere: Clark County, the U.S., or the world.

We present specific activities that highlight those who join us in the effort:

Val Joshua Racial Justice Awards: Presented annually to those who have shown leadership in eliminating racism and promoting peace, justice, freedom and dignity for all.

Stand Against Racism: A campaign of YWCA USA to raise awareness about the negative impact of institutional and structural racism in our communities.

We partner with other organizations that share our commitment to racial equity. Our partnership with NAACP Vancouver has been especially fruitful and was highlighted recently when we collaborated on a highly successful anti-racism car rally that drew 1,500 cars and an estimated 4,000 supporters. Another partnership, with Charlas Comunitarias, involved our SafeChoice program in an online resource sharing session with the Latinx community.



“Our commitment to ending racism represents a deeply held objective of YWCAs everywhere. Won't you join us in the quest for racial equity? Remember: every dollar donated to YWCA is a dollar dedicated to the elimination of racism.”

As violent incidents in homes rise, your generosity helps victims of sexual abuse

Through our communities' support, YWCA Clark County's sexual assault team has had a long-standing response protocol: When an assault survivor presents themselves to a hospital, an assault team member is contacted. That advocate then proceeds to the hospital to support the survivor.

But what happens when survivors, fearful of contracting COVID-19, no longer go to the hospital following an assault? Or, if they do, what happens when assault team members are prohibited from making a face-to-face visit to the hospital because of COVID?

You adjust and continue to provide the same high level of support that survivors desperately need.

That's what YWCA's assault team did in the aftermath of the COVID-19 lockdown. Your generosity supported advocates staying in touch with program participants remotely. Responses to calls for help were not interrupted. Some advocates created secure online group sessions to maintain the face-to-face encounter whenever possible.

This rapid pivot, from in-person to virtual, required investments in technology that your COVID crisis donation made possible. Special online communications tools ensure that a survivor's identity will be kept private. But secure phone and video lines cost more. Your gift allowed us to safely advise and guide victims by phone and computer.

Youth are especially at risk for assault during the sheltering period.

"COVID-19 has been especially unkind to people trapped at home with their abuser," said De Stewart, an advocate with YWCA Clark County's Sexual Assault Program. "We know that 94% of victims of sexual abuse know their offender. COVID puts many folks, including children and young adults, at risk for intimate partner violence."

She said young adults are particularly vulnerable to pressure from predators who force them to trade sex for shelter.

Statistics bear her out. In a recent story from National Public Radio, the Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network said instances of abuse reported by youth 18 and younger had spiked during the lockdown. Two-thirds said their abuser was a family member.

De said donor generosity during the virus outbreak helped alleviate some of the trauma. Gifts enabled victims to escape their abusers and find ways to live safely on their own.

"Right now our services are more important than ever. We need your donations to sustain them. We are here for survivors. You can be there for them too."

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—De Stewart



Your donation can make a difference after a sexual assault

Terrified. Ashamed. Alone.

That was how a young woman we will call Diane felt after years of abuse at the hands of a family member. With no family structure to hear her or support her, she faced a bleak emotional future.

But when she bravely reached out to YWCA Clark County's Sexual Assault program, she changed her path. Paired with one of our victim advocates, she began the long process of recovery.

With the advocate guiding her, Diane reported the abuse and prosecuted her abuser. The offender put the victim through not one, but two trials, and was ultimately found guilty on all counts.

The case was tried outside Clark County. Because of the relationship between Diane and her advocate, and the advocate's commitment to stand by Diane, the advocate was able to support Diane throughout the process.

Her support proved crucial when it came time to sentence the offender. Diane asked the advocate to read her victim impact statement for her, feeling overwhelmed by all she had already been through. Before reading Diane's

statement, the judge asked the advocate who she was and what her role was. After hearing the statement, and seeing the support that Diane had, the judge stated that she absolutely believed Diane. The judge added an additional 15 months to the original sentence, citing the advocate's involvement in the case.

Diane was heard and validated not only by the advocate, but also by the courts. And at least one other victim of his who was also present in the court felt strengthened and believed as well.

"The impact of support and advocacy is powerful and DOES make an impact!" the advocate, who requested anonymity, said. "What the offender did to Diane cannot be undone. But now she does not feel so alone. She knows there are people who will listen to her, believe her, and support her. She can move forward with her life."

Won't you make a gift today to YWCA Clark County so that we can continue to support courageous women like Diane as they confront their abusers? We are the only organization in Clark County that provides this service. We cannot do it without your donations.

YOUR GIFT WILL SUPPORT VICTIMS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT

- \$25** will fund one hour of sexual assault prevention education with teens in Clark County
- \$50** will allow one Sexual Assault Program participant to attend a Women, Trauma & Healing workshop
- \$75** will support a victim of sexual assault in obtaining a protection order
- \$100** will provide a training for the community and/or service providers on identifying and responding to victims of trafficking
- \$250** will provide hospital response to support a victim after a sexual assault has occurred

