

# 2020 ANNUAL REPORT

We make a living by what  
we get, but we make  
a life by what  
we give.

Winston Churchill



MONTGOMERY COUNTY  
**WOMEN'S CENTER**



# LETTER FROM LEADERSHIP

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As we reflect on 2020, we are proud of the unparalleled transitions our Agency made to continue providing services during the global pandemic. However, COVID-19 was not our only challenge. Domestic violence is a “silent epidemic” flourishing alongside the coronavirus --- globally, nationally, and in our own back yard. Not only has domestic violence increased, but victims are reporting more serious injuries. While 2020 has brought unimaginable challenges, our dedicated staff, volunteers, and community stakeholders worked tirelessly towards achieving our mission: to lead the effort in preventing domestic violence and sexual assault through crisis intervention, assistance, advocacy and social change.

For 39 years, our Agency has remained committed to serving our communities most vulnerable residents. We specialize in providing survivors with a complete continuum of services, while empowering them as they courageously embark on their healing journeys. At all times, we provide a voice for victims of abuse. We are committed to finding innovative approaches to support survivors, shaping public opinion about family and sexual violence, collaborating with other community organizations, and amplifying our work across systems.

In a March 2020 press release, the Montgomery County District Attorney’s office reported a 35% increase in family violence-related cases in comparison with the previous year. Most notably, in 2020, our crisis hotline advocates responded to 65,011 hotline calls. To put this in perspective in 2019, we answered 49,618 calls, representing a 31% increase in hotline calls.

In response, we transitioned to providing virtual counseling, advocacy, outreach and legal services. Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have adapted our service delivery model to a hybrid system which honors trauma-informed and evidence-based principles.

Lastly, we want to thank our dedicated volunteers, donors and board members. Due to your steadfast support, our doors have remained open. Although the path forward into 2021 may feel uncertain, one thing has never been clearer: to change the trajectory for the better we have to come together, work together, and support each other.

*Sarah Raleigh*

Sarah Raleigh  
President/ CEO

*Vicky Pafk*

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Board Chairman

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# BY THE NUMBERS

## **HOTLINE- 65,011 CRISIS CALLS**

Our hotline is a lifeline for victims. Often, a victim's introduction to the Agency is through the crisis hotline. The hotline is answered 24 hours per day, seven days a week. In addition to crisis intervention, staff provide safety planning, information, and referrals.

## **EMERGENCY SHELTER- 747 SURVIVORS**

Our shelter provides a safe and confidential refuge for victims and their children. We empower residents from crisis to confidence by addressing their diverse needs. Comprehensive case management, therapeutic support groups, and individual counseling sessions, enable survivors to begin their healing journeys.

## **TRANSITIONAL HOUSING- 17 FAMILIES**

Reaching Pines is a short-term investment in a long-term strategy for independent living. The primary outcomes of this program are for residents to achieve financial stability, to establish independence, and to improve their quality of life.

## **LEGAL SERVICES- 1,526 SURVIVORS**

Legal resources provide safety and economic justice for victims and their children. Our attorneys provide consultation and representation to survivors at no cost.

## **ADVOCACY- 614 SURVIVORS**

Advocates are a vital resource and agents of hope and change. They provide 24-hour crisis response at local area hospitals in intimate partner violence and sexual assault cases.

## **MEDICAL ACCOMPANIMENT- 210 SURVIVORS**

As an advocacy accompaniment response program, our advocates stay with a victim of sexual and domestic violence at eight local hospitals and clinics. Advocates provide immediate care, emotional support and compassion before, during and after a medical forensic exam.

## **OUTREACH & EDUCATION - 46,339 INDIVIDUALS EDUCATED**

Education is key to ending the cycle of violence. Our Outreach staff begins the difficult conversation about family and sexual violence and provides participants with tools for modifying behaviors and beliefs.

## **COUNSELING- 907 SURVIVORS**

Our counselors empower survivors of domestic and/or sexual violence to heal and rebuild their lives. This is achieved by utilizing a trauma informed framework rooted in evidence based best practices.

## **VOLUNTEERS- 1181 CARING INDIVIDUALS PROVIDED 26,673 HOURS**

Volunteers are indispensable to our Agency's survival. Without them, we would be unable to carry out our mission. They give selflessly of their time and build our capacity.

# HOMETOWN HEROES

As we reflect on 2020, we remain optimistic despite the pandemic. Our most celebrated achievement has been our ability to sustain our operations. Doing so would not have been possible without our compassionate and talented staff, our loyal supporters, and our dedicated volunteers. More than ever, we wish to acknowledge some of our "hometown heroes" who are on the frontlines, making a meaningful difference:

**Brett Ligon, the Montgomery County District Attorney:** Brett Ligon has served as a symbol of strength and moral conscience for our local community. In 2013, he established a dedicated position within the District Attorney's Office to prosecute misdemeanor family violence cases on an accelerated docket. In 2016, he expanded the division to include felony cases on a dedicated docket. As part of his ongoing commitment to eradicate family violence, he has also donated time and resources toward prevention. Our agencies serve jointly on various coalitions and stand in solidarity against domestic abuse. Most recently, in commemoration of Domestic Violence Awareness Month, the office hosted a Flowers on the Lake Ceremony. This powerful, live-streamed event honored survivors of domestic violence and memorialized victims who have tragically lost their lives. In an unforgettable statement, Mr. Ligon delivered the following message to viewers: "There has been a 35% increase in domestic violence arrests; that is a 35% increase in a crime that is already tragically prevalent. Two-thirds of all of the murders in the county are (domestic violence-related). Those are numbers that are 100% preventable."

**Theresa Monroe, Volunteer and Donor, Montgomery County Women's Center:** Theresa ("Tesa") Monroe has led a women's social group in the Woodlands which has fundraised for the Montgomery County Women's Center each holiday season for over 20 years. Her remarkable and steadfast leadership in the community has truly been an inspiration to us all. She and her husband have two college age children and are consummate advocates on behalf of victims of domestic violence in our community. In 2018, when her youngest daughter moved away to pursue higher education, she began actively volunteering with our organization. She continues to contribute her time on a weekly basis by answering our hotline, developing a digital resource manual and helping with special events. We feel very fortunate to have Tesa on our team!

**Peter Sayadzad, Staff Attorney, Montgomery County Women's Center:** Peter Sayadzad is an experienced Family Law Attorney who has been employed by the Montgomery County Women's Centers legal program since 2016. He is a native Houstonian and graduated from South Texas College of Law. Peter is a leader in the legal advocacy field, exemplifying what it means to be a "hero." During the Covid-19 pandemic, he has expertly provided services to 356 survivors and creatively facilitated legal clinics to survivors in multiple settings. Most notably, Peter has helped obtain numerous final protective orders, for both survivors and their children. This includes one lifetime sexual assault protective order and four two-year protective orders.

MONTGOMERY COUNTY  
**Women's Center**  
24 HOUR HOTLINE (936) 441-7273



Conroe Office  
1401 Airport Road  
Conroe, TX 77301

The Woodlands Office  
1600 Lake Front Circle Ste130  
The Woodlands, TX 77380

Something Special  
19073 I-45 South  
Shenandoah, TX 77385

**OUR MISSION:** To lead the effort in preventing domestic violence and sexual assault through Crisis Intervention, Assistance, Advocacy & Social Change.