

2022 ANNUAL REPORT



40 Years of Hope and Empowerment

MCWVC
Montgomery County Women's Center

24-HOUR HOTLINE (936) 441-7273

A LETTER FROM LEADERSHIP

Celebrating 40 Years of Hope and Empowerment

What a year! 2022 brought an onslaught of challenges; some were expected and, some were not. We have found that in the face of extraordinary challenges, there is an opportunity for even greater change. Every day, people from across the country have been on the ground, working to create innovative solutions for their communities; To fight back against seemingly insurmountable odds. We have achieved that, and we would like to take a moment to thank all of those who have made it possible: donors, volunteers, board members, staff, and our community partners.

This year marks the 40th anniversary of the Montgomery County Women's Center. Without a doubt, we have all been significantly impacted by a worldwide pandemic that isolated and divided many of us. Throughout the crisis, we have proudly continued providing lifesaving services for families experiencing domestic abuse and sexual violence in our community. It was truly a team effort as we saw unprecedented increases in the demand for our services, illustrating **together we rise**. We never closed our doors, discontinued programming, or laid off staff. Instead, we grew to meet the ever-expanding need. We continued to focus our attention on expanding our essential behavioral healthcare offerings and raising awareness in our community. Most notably, our Outreach Program looked for inventive ways to engage with local elementary, middle, high schools and universities. We have expanded our reach by enhancing partnerships with many local organizations. This has helped fill in meaningful community-wide gaps that have been intensified by the pandemic, including transportation, housing, health care, and other resources.

If this year has taught us anything, it is that we are considerably stronger together! It is because of your decision to stand with the Montgomery County Women's Center that we can provide essential 24-hour support to victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. Thank you for all you have done over the last 40 years in the pursuit of creating a safe, strong, and prosperous community for all. We are grateful for your generosity and look forward to continuing our partnership.

Sarah Raleigh

Sarah Raleigh
President & CEO

Vicky Pafk

Vicky Pafk
Board Chair

AGENCY IMPACT

BY THE NUMBERS



47,674 Crisis Calls Answered



1,056 Victims Accessed Emergency Shelter



10,628 Emergency Shelter Nights Provided



1,363 Survivors Received Advocacy



1,173 Received Legal Representation & Advocacy



819 Survivors Received Medical Accompaniment



Transitional Housing 49 Residents



2,720 Received Individual & Group Counseling



946 Presentations Reached 83,272 Community Members



1,291 Dedicated Volunteers Donated 27,050 Hours

Stories of Courage

Michelle says, "The advocate who worked with me was so kind and patient! I was immediately comfortable talking with her about my traumatic situation. She patiently provided endless answers to my endless questions. After all of the fear and uncertainty that had been my daily reality for so long, I never expected anyone to understand and care. She listened to me and said we can help you – that, for me, was the most incredible gift of hope."

Stacy says, "When I finally had the courage to leave my husband, I called the hotline and was welcomed into the shelter. Everyone was so nice, supportive, and understanding. The place was really safe, and though an uncomfortable situation in general, they did all they could to help me. With their help, I was able to get a place of my own and they furnished it from beds to dishes and towels. Thank God for this place! I finally have a life where my children and I are safe, secure, and happy. Y'all truly are a blessing!"

HIGHLIGHTS



1

178 BACK TO SCHOOL BACKPACKS

Generous community donors supported our annual Back-to-School Drive. We were able to provide back-to-school kits and new backpacks to 178 excited children.

2

19 SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED

We recognize that education and vocation lead to independence, self-sufficiency, and a life free of violence. We are fortunate to be able to offer scholarship opportunities to those we serve. The funds for these scholarships come directly from our donors.

3

132 FAMILIES PARTICIPATED IN HOLIDAY PROGRAM

Our shelter residents and community families who have experienced abuse are able to have some normalcy during the holidays. The gifts for Shelter Santa and Share-a-Family are donated by generous community donors. This year we were able to provide 132 families with the joy and hope that comes with these gifts!

Becky Barrera, Director of Residential Services

Becky has worked for the agency for eleven years—first as a Resident Advocate (RA), then as a Lead RA and the Residential Program Manager—prior to assuming her current supervisory position. As the Director of Residential Services, Becky oversees shelter operations and is responsible for ensuring the welfare of clients and staff. Since 2020, she has focused, in particular, on COVID mitigation efforts. At the beginning of the pandemic, she partnered with our leadership to obtain PPE. She also identified workable strategies for social distancing (staggering meal times and limiting room occupancy). When her staff resigned, she personally pitched in to cover their shifts. During the past few years, her motto has been to **“be flexible and roll with the changes.”** She has a reputation for working hard and for leading by example.

In the last two years, she has also focused on renewing collaborations suspended in 2020 due to the pandemic. Becky remains committed to offering services central to our mission through innovative ideas at the shelter. In true Becky fashion, she also insists on acknowledging the shelter staff. She says, **“I couldn’t have done any of this without them.”** Becky has lived in Montgomery County for more than 30 years. When she is not working, she enjoys relaxing with her family.

Linda Quiroz, Outreach Manager

With a degree in Criminal Justice, Linda began her employment with MCWC in 2016 as a Sexual Assault Advocate. Three years later, she transitioned to outreach. Linda’s advocacy experience—combined with her work in primary prevention education—prepared her for her current role as Outreach Manager. Linda is responsible for overseeing community education. This includes everything from school-based presentations to professional trainings. When Linda was promoted to her current position, she was determined to reinvent the agency’s outreach program. The previous year, she and her colleagues were forced to cancel in-person events due to school closings, social distancing, and lock-down orders. The staff quickly transitioned to Facebook Live as an approach for providing virtual presentations, using social media as a solution to maintaining and expanding our reach during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

Since 2021, the team has steadily re-connected with schools while targeting broader segments of the community: through “Coffee Talks,” webinars, radio interviews, podcasts, and resource fairs. This year, under Linda’s leadership they began facilitating more bilingual presentations, including a course for Spanish-speaking victims referred by the District Attorney’s Office. **Linda attributes the program’s success to the entire team.** A native Houstonian, she enjoys spending time with her family.

Michael Edwards, Staff Attorney

Michael has worked for the organization since May of 2022. Michael earned his J.D. from Louisiana State University. In his short tenure, he has significantly impacted survivors’ lives: As an attorney, he supports our clients in navigating complex legal systems, advising them of their rights and representing them in civil court (during divorce proceedings, protective order litigation, and custody disputes). In addition to litigating cases, he accompanies survivors to mediations and facilitates weekly legal clinics at the shelter. Michael patiently answers legal questions from spousal support to lease termination, etc. Finally, as a former paralegal, he has helped the department transition to digital filing.

One client said this about Michael: “Having Michael involved in our case has changed our lives forever. This is such a wonderful resource for struggling parents trying to get justice for themselves and their children. I feel so much safer knowing that my son will stay in my custody and be spared from the abuse and neglect he endured while in custody of his father.” He exemplifies our motto: **together we rise!** In his spare time, Michael enjoys spending time with his family and friends, reading, working out, and boating on Lake Conroe.

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SOMETHING SPECIAL

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Our mission is to lead the effort in preventing domestic violence and sexual assault through crisis intervention, assistance, advocacy, empowerment, and social change.