



NO NEWS

From the Executive Director's Desk

Dear Friends:

I want to thank each of you for your support of SASSMM, and speaking out on behalf of survivors.

As some of you know, I will be leaving SASSMM in mid January. Some call it "retirement," I am calling my departure "semi-retirement." While I will not be working full time, I do plan on being involved in time limited projects that allow me to continue speaking out and working towards healthier, safer communities. But first, I will spend some time taking naps on a warm beach - so maybe that is retirement!

More seriously, it is difficult to find the words to accurately express what my years at SASSMM have meant for me. I have worked for, and with, some of the most amazing staff, volunteers and Board of Directors that I have had the privilege to know in my career. An Executive Director can never influence change or create appropriate services without the entire team working together for a common mission, both locally; and statewide, with other centers and the Maine Coalition Against Sexual Assault.

During my 19 year tenure, SASSMM has grown from providing services for 2.5 counties to serving 4.5 counties, our office space has expanded, our services have grown to be more inclusive of all ages and genders, and we have developed programs that have received national recognition. To accomplish all of that, staffing and budgets have grown as well.

Over that period of time that those logistics were underway, (and will continue to be), most importantly we have reached 3,830 survivors of sexual violence (unduplicated count), 20,697 contacts have been made to our support line and our educational programs – both in school and in the

community – have reached a total of 124,523 individuals.

Although those numbers can be overwhelming, I find them to be comforting in that individuals have reached out for support and our communities have identified the need for sexual violence awareness, education, response and prevention. In reality, those numbers reflect real people who live in our communities; they are so much more than a statistic. They are the faces of sexual violence and remind us that until we are all safe, we have much work to do.

As I reflect back during my time at SASSMM, I see the faces of many survivors who have entrusted us to be part of their healing process, and in some instances, allowed me to be their advocate and to support them as they move forward in reclaiming their lives.

I am leaving SASSMM confident our agency will continue to grow and respond to the needs of survivors and our communities. I am leaving SASSMM as a different person from when I joined the staff in 1995. It is impossible to be engaged in this work without a sense of gratitude for opportunities to serve others and to have the good fortune to meet incredible individuals along the journey.

In gratitude, and deep respect, for your presence in my journey, my best regards to each of you.

Be well.

Susan Hall Dreher (Sue)
Executive Director

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Mission Statement

Sexual Assault Support Services of Midcoast Maine is an agency of professionals and trained volunteers dedicated to providing advocacy and support for survivors, families and concerned others affected by sexual assault, sexual abuse and sexual harassment. SASSMM offers services to improve awareness and response by providing prevention, education and risk reduction programs throughout Eastern Cumberland, Lincoln, Sagadahoc, Knox, and Waldo Counties.

Sexual Assault Support Services of Midcoast Maine
 P.O. Box 990
 Brunswick, ME 04011-0990
 Phone, Brunswick Office: (207)725-2181
 In Rockland: (207)594-8580
 In Belfast: (207)338-4622
 Fax (207)798-6943
 24 Hour Support Line 1-800-822-5999
 TTY 1-888-458-5599
 Website: www.sassmm.org

Grant Announcement

We are excited to announce that we have received a grant from The Maine Women's Giving Tree. Their support will allow us to offer a Recovery Education and Creative Healing Group (REACH). This group is an experiential support group for adult female survivors of sexual violence and will provide an educational, individual, goal-focused group that offers skill-building, life-coping techniques that can provide group participants with a greater sense of personal power over, and within, their lives.

“The Maine Women's Giving Tree is a philanthropic organization committed to improving the lives of people in our region through the provision of grants to non-profit organizations whose programs and services improve the quality of life for women, children and families in Bath, Brunswick, Harpswell, Topsham, Freeport, Phippsburg, Wiscasset and Woolwich.”

Thank you to The Maine Women's Giving Tree for their support and the difference they are making for families within our communities.

For more about our REACH group, see below.

Experiential Support Group for Survivors of Sexual Abuse

Sexual Assault Support Services of Midcoast Maine (SASSMM) is excited to announce **REACH** (Recovery, Education and Creative Healing), an experiential-based support group for female identified survivors of sexual violence who have done some previous healing work and are interesting in moving forward in their healing journey. This group began the first week of November 2014 and aims to promote personal awareness, growth and healing through a series of activity-based group sessions. Activities may include but are not limited to self-care, journaling, expressive arts, yoga, nutrition and wellness.

The REACH group is free and took place in the Brunswick area. Individuals must attend a pre-group screening interview prior to the start of the group. If you are interested in learning more about future groups, please call Kayce or Molly at 207-725-2181, 207-594-8580 or 207-338-4622.

A Glance at SASSMM's History

The first few years...Did you know?

Summer 1983: Organizational meeting to determine if the community could establish a rape crisis center. The leaders of that needs assessment were Gloria Leach, Nan Patterson and Cathy McDaniel.

Fall 1983: First Board meeting was held for the "Brunswick Rape Crisis Center"

September 1983: Budget was \$500 total.
Expenses: Pagers-\$315
Printing-\$75
Telephone-\$110
(2014 Budget was \$447,782)

February 1984: First school-based presentation offered.

The first quarter of reporting hotline calls
January 1984 to March 1984—9 calls
(January 2014-March 2014—323 Client Contacts)

May 1984: 12 trained Helpline Advocates. The first volunteer advocate training was 25 hours.
(Now 47 hours)

March 1985: Moved into first office.

July 1986: First Coordinator hired for 25 hours per week.

July 1989: Hotline moves to an answering service. Midcoast Hospital had been our answering service up until that time.

December 1989: The agency had 6 pagers total
(As of December 2014—21 Pagers)

1989: Became a member of Bath-Brunswick Area United Way (now United Way of Mid Coast Maine)

More To Be Continued in Next Newsletter...

SASSMM Receives a grant from the Alfred M. Senter Fund

We are pleased to share that we have received a grant to replenish our loan out library. Due to the support of The Alfred M. Senter Fund, we will now be able to add 56 new titles to our library, and replace 51 that were signed out, however, not returned to our library. And that is okay. Sometimes survivors, and concerned others, become attached to the book we loaned her or him and that resource becomes a new friend. Thank you to the Alfred M. Senter Fund for their support and the contributions they make to enrich our communities.

Support Line Advocate Training

Would you like to make a positive difference in the lives of sexual assault and abuse survivors? Sexual Assault Support Services of Midcoast Maine (SASSMM) has openings for Per Diem Volunteer Advocates to provide coverage for our 24-hour crisis and support line. Volunteer Advocates receive an hourly stipend for being on call and carrying a pager. The hourly stipend amount increases during a support line call, hospital or police accompaniment call. Please email clientservices@sassmm.org to learn more.

A 'Your Voices' Column written by C. Kay

His Secret—My Life

I hadn't realized that I was doing it until I read an article in the February 2014 issue of Psychology Today about the "identity-warping nature" of keeping someone else's secret. That's when it dawned on me that by keeping his secret of my abuse I was hurting me and keeping him safe.

I was keeping his dirty secret because I was afraid of what he would do to me if I revealed the truth about the abuse. After all, he'd threatened to kill me if I ever left him. For 13 years I'd listened to stories about things he had done to others who had 'crossed' him. Now I understand these stories were intentional subversive threats to keep me quiet. I was in the car when he ran over a cat in the road without making any attempt, at all, to avoid it. When I reacted horrified, he simply looked at me nonplused and asked, "What?". He laughed during gruesomely violent films. His dog was afraid of him. Our cats were afraid of him. I adopted his lifestyle because he didn't like the same things I liked. He didn't want me to work, I didn't work. We moved every two to three years. He controlled the money and I let him. He, of course, needed our only vehicle since he had a job so I stayed home and waited for him. He effectively isolated me then treated me like a non-person, a servant whose job was to wait on and please him. It was like being duped into a hostage situation with a legal document called a marriage certificate that gave him permission to hold me captive. I had no identity except through him. I was miserable and ultimately developed a serious chronic illness which has left me medically disabled.

The twisted thing about this is that I really loved him and did not see this lifestyle as abuse until I looked back at it from a perspective of personal freedom and choice. Now I realize how my own co-dependent personality traits were assisting in the dynamic that was keeping me tied to the abuser.

Another reason I was keeping his dirty secret is because of his position as a pastor of a small, local church. The one thing we seemed to have in common, during our marriage, was church. While we were married, he became an assistant pastor and then a pastor. As a good Christian wife, I fell into what I refer to as the religious dogma trap, that is, trying my best to be a submissive wife hopeful that God will change the man I married into the husband I believed he could become. I think Christian women suffer needlessly at the hands of abusive, self-proclaimed Christian men because we have been conditioned by the church to believe that we should accept abusive behavior from husbands in order to maintain the marriage rather than take care of ourselves and stay safe. There was nobody I could confide in about the abuse in my marriage.

It was a small non-denominational church. There was no Board of Directors, no women's ministry and the church was not connected to a larger organization. Besides, who would believe me? Everyone thinks he's such a wonderful, loving husband. After all, he's constantly telling the congregation he loves his wife "so much it hurts". Exposing his secret was too terrifying to even consider.

Because I loved him and wanted to believe in him and because I wanted to be a "good" Christian wife and because he wasn't ALWAYS mean, instead of relying on the pure Word of God and sound clinical psychological counseling, I chose to stay in the marriage and hope that things would get better. I knew he was seeing other women.

I knew he was a chronic liar. I knew he was heavily into pornography. His behavior Monday through Saturday was in direct contradiction to the words he preached in pulpit. But I chose to keep believing in him and tried to convince myself that I was imagining things. It wasn't until he physically attacked me that I left him and ended the marriage. Physical abuse was the one thing I had promised myself I would never allow since escaping a tyrannical father. If any man ever hit me, he'd only get a chance to do it once.

The physical attack was the last straw. I clearly recognized being hurt by someone else's hands as abuse. Unfortunately I did not recognize all the other ways I was being abused and how my psyche was being warped and my body was getting sicker and sicker in response to the abuse. I was afraid to reveal the truth about him because I was afraid of what he might do to me. Leaving him wasn't even a consideration before he attacked me. I had no place to go. He was the one with the power. At least that's what I believed. Now I know that's what he wanted me to believe.

I am a survivor of abuse. This is my third year of personal freedom and recovery. I say recovery because I feel like I'm just beginning to come out of some weird coma. Like I'm waking up from a 13-year-long bad dream and seeing things from a whole different perspective. I made a conscious choice to survive my abuse and now to recover from it. The recovery journey is ongoing and at times extremely difficult yet also highly rewarding. Getting emotionally and mentally healthy is the best choice I've ever made for myself. So worth the effort. I expect I'll be on this journey for the rest of my life and that's cool with me. It is so much better than trying to live someone else's secret.

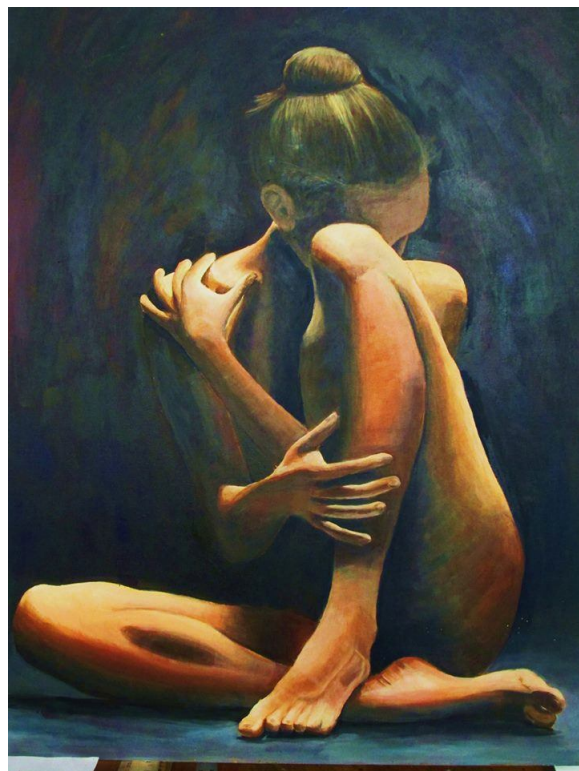
Would you like "Your Voice" or an artwork contribution to be included?

SASSMM welcomes written work and artwork contributions from individuals who have experienced sexual violence. We respectfully welcome poetry, short articles, artwork or letters that give "Your Voice" the opportunity to speak to the realities of surviving sexual violence. Actual names of the authors will not be used unless you make that choice. Please submit "Your Voice" via email to administration@sassmm.org or by mail to SASSMM, PO Box 990 Brunswick, ME 04011, Attention: Paula (Please include your phone number for editing questions) Thank you.

Artwork Contribution by A Friend of SASSMM

Acrylic on Canvas

"shame" by Elizabeth Connolly



A 'Your Voices' Column written by William Racine

The Young Boy

I lean against the wooden door frame, arms crossed,
staring silently into the dimly lit basement bedroom.

Old bard boards, grayed from decades long exposure to harsh New England winters,
adorn three of the walls, a fourth covered by sixties-era paneling.

A small twin bed covered with a faded blue spread
is pushed against the far wall, a simple chest of drawers at its foot.

A young boy sits in a wooden swivel chair
snuggled up to a dark oak rolltop desk that came from his grandfather's general store.

An array of small drawers and cubbies rise up in front of him
some with the names of store vendors printed on now faded, yellowing labels

Tall, ornately scrolled sideboards frame the desktop, creating an intimate, private space,
a place for the young boy to do his schoolwork and be alone with his thoughts.

Today the young boy sits quietly,
blithely flipping pages in the latest edition of Sports Illustrated.

The last song from an LP record ended some time ago,
the speakers still pick up the crackling sound of the needle stuck on the last track.

The boy's mind is in a different place, perhaps a different time.
Maybe he wants to be somewhere else. For now, this is his space.

The late afternoon sun peaks through the narrow window in the top corner of the bedroom wall,
It's warm outside, but cool and comfortable in the basement.

Maybe that's why the boy sits inside by himself.
Maybe there are other reasons.

The silence is broken by a door opening on the first floor,
heavy, muffled footsteps cross the full length of the small ranch-style house.

The footsteps stop at the far end, his parents' bedroom.
Another door closes.

The boy abruptly closes the magazine and tosses it on the end of his bed.

He reaches to turn off the record player, sliding the LP into its well-worn sleeve.

Then leans down to pick up his sneakers tucked under the bed, black canvas with white rubber trim, laces them quickly and grabs his favorite baseball cap.

Anxious. Maybe a little nervous. He knows it's time to leave.

It's time to find a different place to be alone. Not here. He knows what's going on.

The young boy stops beside me at the doorway. Perhaps he can sense something.

I reach out with both arms, smothering him in a big bear hug.

There's no reaction. He walks past me, up the carpeted stairs, and out of the house.

He wheels his bicycle out of the garage, past his father's car, and down the driveway.

I call up the stairs in my loudest voice - "It's going to be all right. You're going to be OK.

Please, you have to believe me."

I know he can't hear me. It will be many decades before he can hear my voice.

But some day he'll be fine.

If only the young boy could know that now.

For I am the young boy.



Save the Date

**Mark your calendar
for these SASSMM events in 2015:**

**12th Annual Celebrity Gala
and Silent Auction:
Saturday March 14, 2015**

**14th Annual Ladies' Open Golf Tournament:
Thursday June 11, 2015**

SASSMM Support Groups

&

Additional Advocacy Services For Survivors, Parents and Concerned Others

Support Groups: A Piece of the Healing Process.

Survivors of sexual violence are often left with deep feelings of shame, guilt and embarrassment. Many feel they have no one to turn to for support and assistance.

SASSMM provides a casual and non-judgmental environment for individuals to connect with others who have been through similar life events. Participants share personal experiences, discuss information and exchange resources.

Groups focus on healing and moving forward. A variety of survivor-centered groups are offered.

Call 1-207-725-2181, 1-207-594-8580, or 1-207-338-4622 to schedule a pre-group appointment.

SASSMM also offers the following services:

- **One-To-One Support**

- For individuals waiting for a group to begin, or simply looking for information and support, SASSMM offers meetings on a scheduled basis.

- **24-Hour Crisis and Support Line**

- 1-800-822-5999, from a cell phone call 1-207-725-1500
- TTY dial 1-888-458-5599

- **Specific advocacy and assistance around law enforcement and legal proceedings.**

- **Informed advocacy services for people with disabilities and older individuals.**

All of SASSMM's advocacy services are confidential* and free of charge. Services are available to survivors of sexual violence and the people who care about survivors, no matter when the violence occurred. We look forward to speaking with you.

*SASSMM advocates are mandated reporters and in some cases information shared may not be able to remain confidential.



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