



Safe inc.
OF SCHENECTADY

“At Safe, they support you through all the scary connections and help you grow strong.”

Safe House Resident

A newsletter for staff, friends and supporters of Safe Inc.

Autumn 2017

Greetings from Safe’s President

Dear Friends,

It is with great pleasure that I announce two new members to the Board of Directors of Safe Inc., Pamela D. Carter and Daniel Smalls. Pam has served as Public Affairs Officer at the NYS Dept. of Public Service and Daniel is an attorney at the Law Office of Daniel R. Smalls, PLLC. They both bring a wealth of experience and networking opportunities that will enhance our mission of service to at-risk youth in the Capital District.

Our Annual Bowl-a-Thon will take place Oct. 29, at Boulevard Bowl in Schenectady. Please visit our website for team and sponsorship information. We owe much gratitude to Mike Scaccia and his family at Boulevard Bowl who have been consistently generous to our agency. Many thanks to our corporate sponsors and individual donors who contribute to the success of the Bowl-a-Thon and other fundraising events throughout the year. What a fabulous kick-off to the upcoming holiday season!

With Thanksgiving just around the corner, we are reminded of how grateful we are to you, our treasured donors. Many of you attended our Annual Spring Garden Party at George’s Market in Latham, which raised funds for us to expand our programs. Some of you support us by serving on our committees or donating clothing, household items, baby items, toiletries, etc. for our clients. Some volunteer as tutors and assist clients with homework assignments. Others contribute to our “Buy a Bed Night” program or our annual appeal.

To all of you, I say thanks for making a difference in the lives of our at-risk and sexually-exploited youth. Your support makes possible the programs and services which are so vital to their well-being. In this manner, you can partner with us to empower our clients to become self-sufficient citizens of the Capital District.

With warmest wishes to you and your families for a blessed Thanksgiving.

Barbara Dworkin
Board President
Safe Inc. of Schenectady



Safe Inc. Board President Barbara Dworkin, right, presents a tribute to 2017 Garden Party honorees Cathy and Brad Lewis for more than two decades of service. Cathy is a member of the Safe Inc. Board of Directors and serves as treasurer. More Garden Party photos on page 4.



Safe’s 12th annual Bowl-A-Thon is a family-friendly event and the perfect opportunity to support a great cause. Join us Oct. 29, at Boulevard Bowl, beginning at 1 p.m. Give Safe a call today at (518) 374-0166 for information.

Did You Know... Safe House provides emergency shelter for more than 200 homeless and runaway youth each year.

30 Minutes With... Michele Bergeron, Residential Supervisor



Michele Bergeron, Safe House Residential Supervisor

The walls of Miss Michele's sun-filled office are covered in a colorful assortment of drawings and paintings, each one a gift-from-the-heart from her "kids."

Officially, Michele Bergeron is the Residential Supervisor of Safe House, an emergency shelter for runaway and homeless youth. "But," she says, "these kids are like my own. There, but for the grace of God, these could be my children."

Wife, mother and longtime resident of Schenectady's Hamilton Hill neighborhood, Michele is also a tough-minded career woman whose decades of service in the US military and as a deputy sheriff at the Schenectady County Jail were "all part of the journey" that brought her to Safe three years ago.

Working within the criminal justice system, Michele said she saw the impact that poverty, homelessness and mental illness have on the lives of individuals, families and communities. She knew there was more she could do, "more I needed to do on the human services side, especially with young people.

"Over and over, I kept hearing a voice in my head," Michele recalls, "telling me to send my resume to Safe." She did and 24-hours later, Safe's Executive Director Cassie Walker called and offered her a position. "This is where I was meant to be," Michele says. "The young people were here waiting for me all this time."

Michele wears many hats at Safe House, from supervising a staff of nine and processing mounds of paperwork that help connect the shelter's young clients with essential services, to cooking up everyone's favorite meal, her famous macaroni and cheese.

"No two days are alike," she says. "No one minute is the same as the next," she adds with a laugh.

First-time visitors may be surprised by the laughter, love and overall sense of normalcy that permeates Safe House. These are, however, says Michele, effective tools in lessening "the anxiety and nervousness kids feel when they come through the door."

A 30-day stay at Safe House can't fix the long-lasting consequences of poverty, homelessness, violence and abuse," explains Michele, "but we're reaching out with open arms to welcome these kids and give them a sense of stability and hope.

"Just look at my walls," she says with pride. "It doesn't matter how long it takes or how many times they come back. Success happens."



Executive Director Cassie Walker, at right, is always looking for ways to cook up fun and fitness for her staff with an emphasis on physical and emotional health. Staff members who took part in a recent yoga session include Lateesah, Katrina, Rennetta and Stephanie, top photo.



Facing the Facts About Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation

What began in the mid-1980s as a coalition of community leaders to address concerns about teenage prostitution in Schenectady has evolved into a multi-faceted program to get young people off the streets and reduce their risk of sexual exploitation.

Since its inception, Safe Inc. has been at the forefront of providing emergency shelter and outreach services to more than 8,000 adolescents, teens and young adults.

Its two highly regarded programs – Safe House, a co-ed youth shelter for homeless, runaway and other at-risk youth and Project Safe, a continuum of services including counseling, health and wellness care, job training and life skills development – offer positive alternatives to street life where sexual exploitation and victimization are rampant.

It's hard to imagine how young people survive the ravages of abuse, neglect and despair - but they do.

And for so many, right here in Schenectady and nearby communities, it often begins with Safe.

Human Trafficking:

Defined by the US Dept. of Homeland Security as "modern-day slavery, involving the use of force, fraud, or coercion to obtain some type of labor or commercial sex act."

- Human trafficking is the third largest crime industry in the world.
- An estimated 13 million children are victims of human trafficking worldwide.
- As of mid-2017, there were 15 confirmed trafficking victims in Schenectady County, some as young as 12 years of age.

Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children:

Defined by the US Department of Justice as "a range of crimes and activities involving the sexual abuse or exploitation of a child for the financial benefit of any person or in exchange for anything of value."

- Fifty percent of human trafficking victims are children and teens under 18 years of age.
- In the Capital Region, one out of three of child runaways will interact with a pimp within 48 hours of leaving home.
- Nearly one in two of homeless youth have been physically or sexually mistreated.
- More than 200 teens and young adults receive emergency shelter at Safe House every year.

Face to Face with Young Survivors

There is an aura of calm and comfort that surrounds Kristin (Kris) Pietrocarlo, MA, Clinical Supervisor at Safe Inc.

She eases her way through difficult conversations about the abuse, violence and resulting emotional challenges that her young clients experience and offers thoughtful insight into her role as a counselor and therapist.

The Burnt Hills native says she knew early on that she "had



Kristin Pietrocarlo

a calling to provide service and support to people in crisis and to help increase community awareness about horrors that often go unnoticed in our own backyard."

An honors graduate of Bucknell University with a bachelor of arts degree in psychology and Spanish, Kris was awarded a master of arts degree in counseling psychology at Columbia University Teachers College where she specialized in multicultural counseling.

Initial encounters with Safe's clients "are often spent just listening, being in the moment with them and recognizing your own lack of understanding about someone else's circumstances," Kris explains. "Many of them are feeling shame, anger and resentment. You can't fake empathy but you can listen and learn; you can help them identify coping mechanisms and empower them to build on their personal strengths.

"It's both humbling and rewarding to contribute to the healing process," she says, "and to hear someone say, 'no one ever listened to me before.'"

Gift Giving Made Easy for Every Season & Occasion

If you're looking for the perfect gift this holiday season or at any time of the year, a \$68 donation to Safe Inc. will buy a night of shelter and support for a runaway or homeless youngster.

A gift to Safe's "Buy a Bed Night" is a unique way of celebrating holidays and other special events with friends and loved ones who say they "don't need anything." Each honoree receives a note acknowledging the gift made in his or her honor and the generous donor (with no mention of the dollar amount).

For more information, call (518) 374-0166.



Garden Party a Great Success!



Safe's 2017 Garden Party guests, photo at left: Joanne and Wayne Van Genderen with Dr. Paul Dworkin, tending bar; Photos below: from left to right, Rev. Stan Skinner, Safe Inc. Board of Directors and Drew Van Genderen, volunteer master of ceremonies; Dr. Philip Millspaugh, volunteer musician and honorary chairs Mark and Kathleen Millspaugh.

Special thanks to George's Market for hosting the 5th Annual Garden Party!



Standing Together to End Homelessness

Underway this fall are two key prevention and awareness campaigns, National Runaway Prevention Month (NRPM) and National Homeless Youth Awareness Month. Both are intended to increase public awareness of the crisis involving today's youth and strengthen the local and national network of services and support.

The NRPM 2017 theme, *Friends Helping Friends*, focuses attention on the key role played by teachers, peers and the community-at-large in identifying young people at risk and helping them access essential services and a better quality of life.

This past March, Cassie Walker, Executive Director of Safe Inc., at left, took part in the National Summit on Youth Homelessness, a legislative action day in Washington, DC, and served as an advocate for Safe Inc. and its clients.

