



The Survivor



Spring 2021

www.thewomensctr.org

The Women's Center

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Executive Director

Martha Shum
Assistant Director

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Development Specialist

Andrea Stephens
DV Program Coordinator

Tina Porter
RCS Program Coordinator

24 Hour Hotline
618-529-2324 or
800-334-2094

TTY Numbers
866-979-6636 or 618-351-1706

Main Location
Domestic Violence Shelter
Rape Crisis Services
Administrative Offices
610 S. Thompson Street
Carbondale, IL 62901
618-549-4807
FAX: 618-529-1802

Marion Office
1111 Anker Drive
Marion, IL 62959
FAX: 618-993-3178
Rape Crisis Services
618-933-0803
Domestic Violence Program
618-997-0949

Franklin County Office
Franklin County Courthouse
Benton, IL 62812
618-438-4118
FAX: 618-529-1802

Saline County Office
Bonan Business Center
540 N. Commercial Dr. Suite 320
Harrisburg, IL 62946
618-294-8641

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Time for a change

For Tina Porter, there was a time to directly help people – over 20 years total – and a time to assist others to better provide that same type of help. Now the Women's Center's Rape Crisis Services (RCS) Program Coordinator, Porter sees her primary responsibility as "helping our counselors and advocates be more effective for our clients."

"I knew I had the ability to do the job," Porter said recalling her application for the position in the fall of 2019, "and thought with my past (church) leadership experience and my passion for and desire to see people grow, that I would be successful." That experience extends to being the Founder and Executive Director of the non-profit AP3 Hope Foundation.

After working over 20 years in human and social services, in healthcare and as a mental health counselor, the last six as an adult RCS Adult Counselor in the Women's Center's Marion office, events both professional and personal combined to point Porter towards the supervisory role of the Coordinator.

During her last six years in Marion, Porter had a second job as a therapist at a private practice focused on providing trauma therapy, marital and family counseling and grief counseling. During that time - in the fall of 2018 - her 20-year-old son Aaron was killed in an automobile accident.

"I was at a place where I needed to get away from counseling for a while," Porter said. "I had to take a step back. In the counseling that I was doing as part of the private practice I had clients who were faced with the death of their children and it was triggering," she added.

The change has been positive. "I love representing the Women's Center in the community," she said.

Throughout her six years of being an RCS Adult Counselor, Porter has conducted professional trainings and made institutional advocacy presentations with area churches and other community organizations. Porter was also a breakout session speaker and served as a task force panelist at Human-Trafficking conferences held at John A. Logan College and Southeastern Illinois College in Harrisburg.

But to be most successful in her current role, she's building on those traits and skills that brought her success as a counselor. "My past clients said I was easy to talk to and that I had the gift of building rapport," Porter said. "They said 'I trust you'".



Tina Porter
Rape Crisis
Program Coordinator

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Time for a change. . . Continued from front cover

Cultivating trust with her 11-person staff is critical as she teaches and trains them to build rapport and earn the trust of each of their clients; as she works with them to have many of the successful outcomes that she had as a counselor.

Among those successes was Porter's work with rape victims referred by the Vienna Correctional Center and the Shawnee Correctional Facility. "I remember someone who was gang-raped in prison and was referred to me. They were being treated for PTSD due to the trauma, but over the course of our sessions he achieved all of his service goal plans which helped him recover."

She regularly saw clients referred through the Prison Rape Elimination Act – a mandate that requires prisoners who are raped while in prison be directed to a neighboring Rape Crises Center. The Women's Center is the only center that qualifies in Franklin, Gallatin, Jackson, Johnson, Perry, Salline, Union and Williamson counties.

Porter smiled as she spoke of group counseling session that involved seven female sexual assault survivors that met regularly for nine months. "It's so rare for group sessions to work with sexual assault survivors for so many reasons," Porter said, "but that group just worked."

Porter spoke at length about emergency "go-outs". "Hospitals are required to call us as they begin treatment of a sexual assault survivor," Porter said, "and we meet them there regardless of the time of day or night."

Sexual Assault Awareness Month

She rejected the premise of a question to describe a "typical" emergency go-out, saying that there was no such thing. "Every situation is so different," Porter said, and although saying that the average amount of time spent with the victim is four to six hours, some are much longer. "We walk them through their medical and legal options," she said, "and more often than not it is just the counselor and the victim."

"Sometime a doctor will come in and say 'Now we're going to do this', Porter said, "but that's not the way it is; that's why we're there. It's always the client who gets to make that determination, and we let them take the time they need to make those choices."

"A counselor or advocate's first responsibility is to make sure – given the victim's trauma – that they are comfortable being in control," Porter said. "We emphasize that they have the right to choose what they want."

Although there is no "typical" go out, Porter stressed that the path that guides a Women's Center counselor is always the same. "We always take the path of empowerment."

Sexual Assault Awareness Month

We Can Build Safe Online Spaces



Background Music by John Pfeifer

The first mistake I made when doing outreach to chamber groups and service clubs after joining The Women's Center as Development Specialist was trying not to bother anyone. Bad strategy.

Rape, sexual harassment, and all forms of Intimate Partner Violence are realities. They are serious actions that hurt real people, often in more ways and for a greater length of time than we can imagine. So, if I address a Chamber lunch gathering and thoughtful listeners aren't struggling to choke down their last bite of baked chicken as I finish up, then I've not clearly communicated.

The second mistake I made was less critical but perhaps even more enlightening. Toward the end of my presentations, I share statistics; numbers of clients served in both our Rape Crisis and Domestic Violence programs, broken down by county, age, gender and a variety of other categories. Eight or nine slides of important but not visually stimulating information that often results in some of the older folks in the audience contemplating the inside of their eyelids.

Having a song playing in the background seemed like a good solution. "What if I could find a song by a recording artist who had experienced domestic or sexual abuse in their past?" I thought. A quick Google search ensued, resulting in a frighteningly long list.

Tori Amos, Tom Petty, Fiona Apple, Mary Bilge, Axl Rose, Christina Aguilera, Rihanna, Carlos Santana, Vanessa Williams, Ozzy Osbourne, Shakira, Madonna and on and on and on.

For me, the stories of two artists emerged from the list of dozens of victims, and my closing statistical slide show is now accompanied by the voice of either Chester Bennington or Amy Lee.

"One More Light" is the last Linkin Park single released that featured Bennington as their lead singer. Recorded as part of the band's seventh studio album, the single was

not released until three months after Bennington's July 20, 2017 death by suicide. His life had been a perpetual struggle.

Sexually abused by an older male family "friend" from ages seven through 13, he told no one for years, afraid of possible repercussions. His high school years were equally traumatic, with constant physical bullying. In an interview, Bennington said "I was knocked around like a rag doll at school, for being skinny and looking different."

Amy Lee, lead singer for the alternative band Evanescence for the past two decades, was involved in an abusive relationship with another member of the band. Her story, told years later, is not unlike that of many who seek services at The Women's Center.

"I'd been in a really bad abusive relationship, which had been very difficult for a long time. Part of that, for me anyway – and I think it's true of a lot of people that are in abusive relationships – part of that was about hiding it; covering for it all the time, pretending that things were good, and that I was okay, and that it didn't exist."

Unlike Bennington's ballad-like performance of "One More Light", I frequently choose the Evanescence song "Whisper" to accompany the statistics when I think the edgy rock rhythms will assist my efforts to "bother people" with the stories of our clients and the work that we do.

This section of lyrics from that song illustrate the denial that Lee and many experiencing intimate partner violence live with.

***"I'm frightened by what I see
But somehow I know
That there's much more to come
Immobilized by my fear
And soon to be blinded by tears
I can stop the pain
If I will it all away,
If I will it all away."***

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The Women's Center Board welcomes applications from Franklin, Johnson, Perry, Union and Williamson county residents.



The Women's Center Survivor's Circle of Hope is an annual giving and recognition society that provides members with more frequent updates, invitations to special events and Open Houses at our four southern Illinois offices.

To learn more
call (618) 549-4807 x. 228

610 South Thompson Street Carbondale, Illinois 62901

618-549-4807

Crisis Hotline: 800-334-2094

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Serving Franklin, Gallatin, Jackson,
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The Women's Center April Events and Outreach The Clothesline Project

Marion Town Square—Monday, April 19 and Friday, April 23—9am-3pm

To learn more, call (618) 549-4807 x.232

Or check out our Facebook page at:

<https://www.facebook.com/thewomensctr>

Thank you for your continued involvement and the support you provide.

Return this form to: The Women's Center 610 S. Thompson Street Carbondale, IL 62901

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