

2012-2013 annual report

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Berks Women in Crisis

safety. life. hope.

our message

Now that we have fully transitioned to our BWIC Center at 255 Chestnut Street, we have begun the process of visioning our work over the next three to five years. We will return our focus to the core of our work, ensuring safety, life and hope to the women, men and children in the Berks County community struggling with the impact of domestic violence and sexual assault.

Last year's Strategic Planning process afforded us to the opportunity to face the challenges brought on by the increasing needs of our community and ever-shrinking funding streams. We are committed to providing the services that our clients want and need most – those that empower them to reach their own goals.

We begin 2014 determined to increase our connections to the Health Care community as one of the most important gateways to services and resources for our clients. Both the Centers for Disease Control

and our local Health Systems partners recognize that domestic violence and sexual assault are serious and preventable public health issues. Whether we discuss the cost to provide care, or the lost opportunities for those impacted, it is clear that we cannot wait to further advance this important work. We hope to share more of our efforts in the coming years.

We are cognizant of the challenges we face, and we feel confident that we have the community support to be successful in our endeavors. As always, it is your support and advocacy that makes it possible for those of us at BWIC to do the work we love and to make the Berks County Community a better, more peaceful, place in which to live and work.

Mary Kay Bernosky, Esq.

Executive Director

our new associate director



“ I am grateful for the opportunity to serve an organization that is so dedicated to advancing the equality of women and girls, and the principles of justice for all people. Every day is a new learning experience, and I look forward to helping make BWIC an even more responsive and valuable asset to the Berks community. ”

Director Mary Kay Bernosky to renew her focus on development activities. Christine's new duties include overall supervision of the Counseling, Residential Services, and Education & Community Outreach departments; organization of the agency's Systems Advocacy and Medical Advocacy efforts; and new program development.

Christine, who has been a BWIC staff member since 2001, served as an agency volunteer from 1987 – 1999 and a member of the Board of Directors in 2000. As Director of Education & Community Outreach, she made her mark by creating and launching a number of initiatives, including CAMPpeaceworks, a teen alliance for Social Justice, now in its eighth year.

In May 2013 Christine received the Governor's Victims Service Pathfinder Award for Prevention Education and Community Outreach, and completed continuing education programs at the Nonprofit Center at LaSalle University's School of Business, earning certificates in Nonprofit Management, Marketing & Communications, Fundraising, and Financial Management. Christine is passionate about her work.

In January 2013 **Christine Gilfillan** assumed the newly-created position of Associate Director at Berks Women in Crisis. 2013 was a transition year, with Christine assimilating new duties while still directing the Education & Community Outreach Department. In January 2014 BWIC hired Tasha Isaac to direct the department, and Christine transitioned fully to Associate Director.

The creation of the Associate Director position supports the agency's need for succession planning, and supports the efforts of Executive

86% of BWIC clients surveyed agreed they **increased** their **ability to cope** and sense of **empowerment**

our new director of education and community outreach

Tasha Isaac, a Community Educator in PeaceWorks for nearly five years, was recently selected to fill the position of Director of Education and Community Outreach, a high-profile and extremely busy position in and outside the agency.

Tasha is passionate about her work at Berks Women in Crisis. She did not begin college with a human services direction. She originally thought she would follow in her mother's footsteps as an accountant. What she quickly realized, after taking a class in psychology, was that she was more interested in the people who needed help than the numbers on a ledger. Her community also meant a lot to her and Tasha believed that the education she was pursuing should help her to make a difference as well as necessary changes wherever and whenever possible. Her beliefs have come to fruition; she makes a difference every day at Berks Women in Crisis.

After Tasha earned her Associates Degree in Psychology at RACC, she worked for a few years in the Reading School District. She then returned to school to earn her Master's in Human Services from



Lincoln University in 2007. Soon thereafter, she joined the staff at BWIC as the Children's Advocate in the shelter.

When asked about her goal in the new position, she stated that she "would like to expand our reach. We have our hands in lots of different things, but I want to create a stable handle on awareness of domestic violence and sexual assault in the community. We can talk to children all day long but they still have to go home where they may encounter violence, or perhaps pass it on the street, and watch it on TV. To change a community you must reach students and their parents simultaneously – not an easy task."

If she could wave her magic wand over Berks County, she would also like to address the "inequity in education. There is a huge disparity (in resources) among the school districts. Some issues are linked to funding, and others are related to more careful and wise utilization of the resources available."

Please join us in wishing Tasha the best in her new position at BWIC!

86% of BWIC clients surveyed agreed **symptoms** related to victimization **have improved** since starting services.

nature explore® classroom



access for all BWIC residents. The Nature Explore Classroom is a unique outdoor learning environment that is specially designed to help children develop a profound connection with nature while healing from the trauma experienced from witnessing abuse in their homes.

Research shows that nature buffers the impact of life stress on children and helps them deal with adversity. Nature-based classrooms have been found to lower aggression in children, reduce the effects of chronic mental fatigue and increase the coping ability of children living in poverty. It also helps build resiliency, a critical skill for the estimated 3-4 million children who witness or experience domestic abuse each year in the United States.

Nature Explore Classrooms are traditionally constructed in areas where children have regular access to schools, parks and child care centers. However, children living in domestic violence shelters do not have access to these public areas because their safety could be jeopardized.

BWIC is the first women's shelter to receive a Nature Explore Classroom in Pennsylvania, a gift funded by Mary Kay Inc. and The Mary Kay Foundation. The \$1.2 million partnership with the

On November 21, 2013, **Berks Women in Crisis** officially dedicated its *Nature Explore® Classroom*, a roof top garden space with safe

unique outdoor learning environment

Arbor Day Foundation is the largest corporate collaboration for Nature Explore Classrooms delivering 20 of the unique outdoor spaces to women's shelters in 13 states over the past four years.

In addition, Kirsten Gappelberg, who attended the Ribbon Cutting on behalf of Mary Kay Foundation, presented BWIC with a \$20,000 check to support BWIC Safe House programs. Kirsten recognized the community support BWIC receives as evidenced by the attendance of many state and local representatives at the Ceremony and the innovative programs that BWIC offers, both factors weighed heavily by the Mary Kay Foundation when determining funding priorities.

The Mary Kay Foundation was created in 1996, and its mission is two-fold: to fund research of cancers affecting women and to help prevent domestic violence while raising awareness of the issue. Since the Foundation's inception, it has awarded nearly \$34 million to shelters and programs addressing domestic violence prevention and more than \$20 million to cancer researchers and related causes throughout the United States.



*Pictured: BWIC E.D. **Mary Kay Bernosky** and **Kirsten Gappelberg** of the Mary Kay Foundation (front), along with representatives of our state coalition, and our state and federal elected officials (rear)*

\$20,000 from The Mary Kay Foundation and Mary Kay Inc. in support for Berks Women In Crisis to help children heal from trauma

our services

crisis services

- 24-Hour Hotlines in English and Spanish
- Rapid Response – 24/7/365 response by a counselor/advocate to the courthouse to assist a victim seeking an Emergency Protection from Abuse order
- Medical Advocacy – 24/7/365 response by a counselor/advocate to assist victims of domestic violence and sexual assault in the local hospitals and health clinics

counseling

- Trauma-informed empowerment counseling for victims and survivors, family members, and significant others
- Support groups

housing

- Emergency Safe House for 50 individuals for up to 30 days
- Bridge House for six families for up to 2 months
- The Emma Lazarus Place – transitional housing for 3 months to 2 years
- Housing Advocacy – assist clients with securing safe, permanent housing options

legal services

- Representation by an attorney at final Protection from Abuse (PFA) order hearings
- Court Accompaniment to interviews, hearings, trials, and sentencings
- Legal Referrals
- Civil Legal Clinics – information sessions by local attorneys on custody issues

education & community outreach

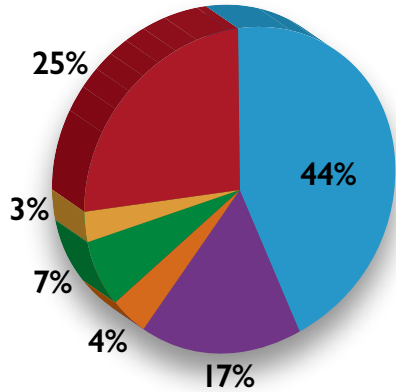
- Programs for children and youth in schools, colleges and universities, and community settings
- CAMPpeaceworks: Teen Alliance for Social Justice
- Professional trainings for systems partners, law enforcement, employers
- Programs and initiatives that raise awareness of DV/SA in the community

systems advocacy

- Advocating for best practices and a victim-centered response to domestic violence and sexual assault
- Advocating for the rights of victims, and offender and systems accountability
- Advocating for justice for all survivors of DV/SA

Our services are confidential and free of charge with the exception of transitional housing. All services are available in English and Spanish, and provided without regard to race, gender, ability, religion, immigration status, or socio-economic status.

operating income and expenditures

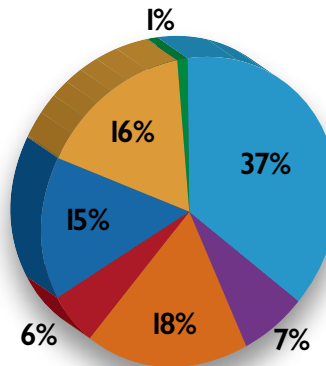


Operating Income:

Federal	1,026,439	(44%)
State and Local	389,888	(17%)
Other, foundations	86,187	(4%)
United Way	153,829	(7%)
Other income	85,364	(3%)
Contributions	598,451	(25%)
TOTAL	2,340,158	(100%)

Operating Expenditures:

Safe House	866,241	(37%)
Counseling	151,511	(7%)
Legal	420,147	(18%)
Transitional Housing	134,915	(6%)
Community Education	352,860	(15%)
General & Administrative	381,680	(16%)
Fundraising	19,608	(1%)
TOTAL	2,326,962	(100%)



woman's exchange **it's a gift**



The Woman's Exchange of Reading is one of several Woman's Exchanges throughout the United States. These non-profit gift shops are staffed by volunteers and sell mostly artisan goods, many crafted by local artists. The origin of the "exchanges" dates back to the 1800's when women "teamed up" to make some money by selling their hand-made goods.

Last year, the Board of Directors of the Woman's Exchange decided to revamp the store to create the look of a high-end boutique, renaming it "**It's a Gift!**" The shop now sports a black and white striped canopy and a brightly-colored gift as its logo. All of the merchandise is new – a combination of quality manufactured merchandise and unique artisan craftsmanship including home décor items, infants and children's clothing and toys, locally made high quality hand-crafted jewelry pieces, and a unique collection of scarves and accessories. As you shop to find the perfect gift, It's A Gift! volunteers will offer wonderful customer service to make your experience truly memorable.

Stop in and see why Berks County residents are praising It's A Gift!'s new boutique atmosphere and unique merchandise as the best kept secret on Penn Avenue. **Remember, each purchase benefits BWIC!**

For more than 50 years, a purchase from the **Woman's Exchange of West Reading** has been a gift that gives twice – once to the recipient, and a second time to local charities who receive all of the profits. For the past two years, that beneficiary has been Berks Women in Crisis.

83% of BWIC clients surveyed agreed they **increased knowledge of safety** and community resources available.

eitc program

EITC Donations Fund BWIC's Ready to Read Program!

We wish to acknowledge the businesses that made a contribution to Berks Women in Crisis through the PA Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) program in 2013-14:

Carpenter Technology Corporation

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By participating in the EITC program, a company not only supports a worthy cause, but also gains the appreciation of its employees by helping an organization that helps the community. The EITC program offers tax credits equal to 75% of the contribution, or 90% if it is the same amount for two consecutive years.

EITC contributions to BWIC support "Ready to Read," a literacy development program within which BWIC provides both instruction and assessment for children in our Residential program and is aligned with many Berks County School Districts. Our outcomes for this program show marked improvement in reading proficiency for our children, a necessary element for success in school.



*left to right, are: **Jim Ferry**, Central Region retail bank director, National Penn; **Pam Cicero**, Childrens Counselor Advocate, Berks Women in Crisis; **Mary Kay Bemosky**, Executive Director, Berks Women in Crisis; **Marjorie Ahrens**, Berkshire Boulevard Branch Manager, National Penn, and some of the children who attend the program*

Thank you, EITC contributors!

berks women in crisis **safety. life. hope.**

In the 2013 Fiscal Year, **Berks Women in Crisis** provided:

More than 3000 adults with **supportive, trauma-informed counseling** for domestic violence

More than 800 adults and children with **immediate safe shelter** in our Safe House

More than 1000 Hotline callers with **immediate support and connection** to community resources

More than 600 adults with **legal representation** in Final Protection from Abuse Act Hearings

More than 2000 adults with support through the **Temporary Protection from Abuse Process** or through criminal proceedings

More than 700 adults with **supportive, trauma-informed counseling** for sexual assault

100% Victims/Survivors of DV or SV surveyed **received the in-person support they needed** from BWIC in time of crisis.

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our mission

***Berks Women in Crisis** provides a safe haven and ongoing support system for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. Our advocacy and education programs increase awareness and promote the prevention of domestic violence, sexual assault, and all forms of oppression.*



Berks Women in Crisis
Safety. Life. Hope.

255 Chestnut Street, Reading, PA 19602

610-373-1206

www.berkswomenincrisis.org