



# NEWS

SERVING BERKS SINCE 1976

FALL 2019

YOU ARE INVITED TO JOIN US AT THE 2019

Celebration of

# Peace

**Monday, December 16, 2019**

**6:00-8:00 pm**

**at DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel**

**701 Penn St., Reading, PA 19601**

**\$75 PER PERSON**

**TO REGISTER:**

**Visit [www.SafeBerks.org](http://www.SafeBerks.org), click on Events, or reply to invitation.**

**Questions: Email [Peace@SafeBerks.org](mailto:Peace@SafeBerks.org) or call 610-373-1206**

**To sponsor: Contact Mindy McIntosh at 484-869-5293 or [MindyM@SafeBerks.org](mailto:MindyM@SafeBerks.org).**



**VISION FOR PEACE  
AWARD HONOREE**

*Jim Boscov and Boscov's  
Department Store*



**VOICES FOR CHANGE AWARD HONOREES**

*Moms Demand Action and  
Timothy Marks, MSN, MBA, RN, CEN, NEA-BC*



*Photo by Brittany Vermeer Photography*



The Safe Berks Celebration of Peace is an annual tradition that brings together staff, board members, volunteers, donors and advocates, all committed to building a Safe Berks!

Jim Boscov and Boscov's Department Store will be honored with the *Vision for Peace* Award. This award was created to recognize those who have made justice and peace their life's work. "Jim Boscov has always been there to support Safe Berks and to help us achieve our mission," said Mary Kay Bernosky, Esq., Safe Berks CEO. "We are so grateful for his leadership as an individual, and for our partnership with Boscov's Department Store. The entire Boscov family has always truly cared about helping survivors and building a safe and supportive community."

Safe Berks will present *Voices for Change* Awards to Timothy Marks, MSN, MBA, RN, CEN, NEA-BC, and to Moms Demand Action. This award honors individuals and institutions whose work makes a significant contribution to furthering the mission of Safe Berks.

Timothy Marks, a former member of the Safe Berks Board of Directors, played a pivotal role in the growth of the Healthcare Advisory Committee and the Medical Advocacy Partnership Program (MAPP). Safe Berks now employs three full-time MAPP Advocates, who are integrated into local hospitals and health centers. The MAPP Advocates provide direct, compassionate services to victims; help connect victims to Safe Berks and other community resources; and deliver training to medical staff.

Moms Demand Action, powered by passionate volunteers, is the largest gun violence prevention organization in the country and in the state. In Berks County, there are 200 active members. Moms Demand Action led a successful lobbying effort to pass the PA Domestic Violence Protection Act, signed into law Oct. 12, 2018, which quickly disarms domestic abusers and safely secures their firearms.

**Congratulations to these amazing award winners! We are also very grateful to our Host Committee, led by Al Weber. We hope to see you on December 16!**

## A Message From Our CEO

October was Domestic Violence Awareness Month. Each year we commemorate this month with a variety of programs to educate our community and raise awareness of the realities of domestic violence. One of the most moving of these displays is our Silent Witness Project which allows us to remember those whose lives have been lost to this scourge in our community. Our Silent Witness March and Dedication took place on October 22, beginning at our Center on Chestnut Street and ending at RACC for our program and dedication. **We dedicated five new Shields:**



### **SUZANNE RUDIN • Age 58 • February 17, 2018**

Suzanne was strangled in her home on North Fifth Street in Hamburg. Almost one year after her death, her husband, Gary M. Lenkiewicz, 57, was charged with first-degree murder, aggravated assault, and assault involving strangulation. He is currently in custody at Berks County Prison awaiting trial. Authorities reported that there was a history of domestic violence in the home.



### **MAUREEN TAULKER • Age 74 • June 6, 2018**

Maureen died of smoke inhalation in her home on Shamrock Avenue, Centre Township, after her house was set on fire. Her husband, Scott Taulker, 57, also died in the fire. The fire was initially viewed by neighbors as an accident. After a six-month investigation, authorities said Scott set the fire intentionally to commit suicide; and ruled the deaths a murder-suicide. Investigators said Maureen was asleep when the fire started.



### **RANCIEL NATERA • Age 30 • November 5, 2018**

Raniel was shot to death outside his apartment building on Hill Road, near City Park, Reading. His former girlfriend, Danishka Otero-Velez, 24, of Reading, was charged with first and third degree murder, aggravated assault, witness intimidation, and making terroristic threats, and is currently in custody at Berks County Prison awaiting trial. Otero-Velez initially fled to Miami, where she was apprehended by U.S. Marshals and returned to Berks County to face charges.



### **FARRAH WERTZ • Age 42 • March 29, 2019**

Farrah, of Boyertown, died of a pulmonary embolism in Lehigh Valley Hospital. Two weeks before her death, on March 11, 2019, Farrah was assaulted in her home, rushed to the hospital, and had surgery for a broken fibula. Her boyfriend, Scott Wiley, 46, of Easton, was charged with simple assault and harassment. After Farrah's death, an autopsy concluded that she died as a result of complications from the March 11 assault. Scott Wiley was then charged with third-degree murder and involuntary manslaughter. He is currently out of custody on a bond, awaiting a hearing.



### **JOY STRUNK • Age 62 • July 9, 2019**

Joy was shot to death outside her home on Creeks Edge Road in Oley Township. According to police, her husband, Stefan Strunk, 62, shot his wife, and then set their 19th century farmhouse on fire. As firefighters arrived, Stefan Strunk turned the gun on himself and committed suicide. According to police, Stefan Strunk had a history of abusive behavior toward Joy.

We grieve for the loss of these beautiful lives, taken all too soon. We will miss them deeply. But it is left to us, the living, to ensure that their deaths are not in vain and to rededicate ourselves to eliminating this violence and creating a truly Safe Berks for us all.

*Mary Kay Bernasky*



## Safe Berks Reaches Out to Local College Students

Nationally, young people ages 18 to 24 are at elevated risk of sexual violence. On college campuses across the country, 1 in 4 females, 1 in 5 transgender students, and 1 in 20 males experience rape or sexual assault while in college, according to the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN), the nation's largest anti-sexual violence organization. Dating violence, which often starts as controlling behavior, is also a significant problem among college students and young adults.

In 2016, Safe Berks created a full-time position to take our free services directly to college students. Stacey Jordan, Campus Advocate/Paralegal, has served in this position since 2018. She provides Safe Berks services to students, faculty and staff of local colleges including Albright College, Alvernia University, Kutztown University, Penn State Berks, Reading Area Community College, and the Berks Technical Institute.

Jordan offers counseling, safety planning, assistance with Title IX issues, and information about Protection from Abuse Orders (PFA). She also provides legal advocacy through the process of filing for a protection order, court proceedings, or police interviews. Working with the Safe Berks Education & Outreach Department, Jordan offers education and training opportunities on topics related to interpersonal violence, with the goal of preventing these crimes.

"I am working with faculty members and students across Berks County to end domestic violence, dating violence and sexual assault on our local college campuses," said Jordan. "I am super excited to be a part of this amazing team!"

**To contact Stacey Jordan, email [StaceyJ@SafeBerks.org](mailto:StaceyJ@SafeBerks.org).**

*"I am super excited to be a part of this amazing team!"*



*Stacey Jordan, Campus Advocate & Paralegal*

## Victim Advocate Training Changes Lives

Every Monday evening, a dedicated group of staff and volunteers meet at Safe Berks for Victim Advocate Training. This training includes education about the history of Safe Berks, the many free services we offer victims of domestic violence and sexual assault, how to help victims navigate the legal system, how trauma affects the brain and people's lives, how to answer a call to the Safe Berks hotline, and much more.

The classes are taught by experienced Safe Berks staff, and all staff members are required to complete the training. Volunteers are also encouraged to enroll in the course. After graduating from Victim Advocate Training, staff or volunteers can provide direct service to Safe Berks clients. Graduates of the training can also apply to serve as interns at Safe Berks.

"Victim Advocate Training covers a lot of material, but the essence of the course is about listening to victims without judgement, and offering compassionate, trauma-informed assistance," said Lisa Tumbleson,

Director of Education & Outreach at Safe Berks. "A lot of the learning takes place through interactive exercises, by asking questions, and through open and honest conversations about domestic violence and sexual assault. We learn from each other."

Devi Jagadesan, a volunteer currently enrolled in the class, said the training has opened her eyes to how often violence happens within every race, gender, and economic demographic.

"I am taking the training because I'm a survivor of sexual assault, and it is important to me that others be aware and have access to resources that I didn't have during a difficult time," said Jagadesan.



*Safe Berks staff and volunteers gather each week for Victim Advocate Training.*

"I believe it is important for me to empower and recover through activism, and to learn ways to stop it from happening to anyone else."

**To learn more about Victim Advocate Training, or to register for a future course, contact Lisa Tumbleson at [LisaT@SafeBerks.org](mailto:LisaT@SafeBerks.org) or 610-370-7811.**



## Safe Berks Seeking Volunteers to Cook & Wrap Gifts!

Thanks to all the dedicated volunteers who cook delicious dinners for the residents of Safe Berks! Shown in photo, the United Way of Berks County Loaned Campaign Specialists (LCS) surround Mindy McIntosh, Safe Berks Director of Development. To volunteer to cook at Safe Berks, contact Mindy at [MindyM@SafeBerks.org](mailto:MindyM@SafeBerks.org) or 484-869-5293.

Safe Berks is gearing up for our third annual Gift Wrapping fundraiser which will take place at the Berkshire Mall from December 1-24! All donations benefit Safe Berks and help provide free services to survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault. To volunteer to wrap gifts, contact Safe Berks volunteer Heather Fink at [giftwrap@SafeBerks.org](mailto:giftwrap@SafeBerks.org).

## Photo Voice Project Reaches Out to LGBTQ+ Survivors

Local survivors of domestic or sexual violence who are members of the LGBTQ+ community are invited to participate in our newest Photo Voice Project. The Project offers survivors the opportunity to find support and build community among people with similar experiences and is offered by a partnership between Safe Berks and the LGBT Center of Greater Reading.

This is the second Photo Voice Project at Safe Berks. The first expressed the experiences of Latina survivors, and can be viewed online at [www.safeberks.org/photo-voice-project/](http://www.safeberks.org/photo-voice-project/).

Each participant will be given a digital camera and photography instruction. The group of up to 10 survivors will meet for six two-hour sessions, held every other week at the LGBT Center of Greater Reading. The group leaders will include Safe Berks bilingual staff, trained in trauma-informed counseling, and an LGBTQ+ educator. The Photo Voice Project is free, and all information is confidential.

As the Project continues, the participants will be encouraged to capture images that convey their

experiences, as well as their community's needs and strengths. At the conclusion, participants will be invited to exhibit their photography in local galleries and at community events, as well as on a Safe Berks website page.

"The Photo Voice Project is incredibly important to the LGBTQ+ community," said Michelle Dech, Executive Director of the LGBT Center. "It's a platform to share important stories of survival and perseverance. Those stories may be too difficult or painful to put into words; but can be understood visually through the photographs taken. It is my hope that the survivors who participate will recognize their strength and be empowered to continue to share their journey and advocate for those who have no voice."

Mayra Morales was a participant in the Photo Voice Project for Latina survivors. That experience led her to working at Safe Berks, first part-time in the Safe House, and then in a full-time position as a MAPP Advocate.

"This Project is important because it gives you the opportunity to express your story," said Morales.



Photo Voice Project facilitators, from left, Jo'e Simons, Safe Berks Community Educator, Michelle Dech, Executive Director of the LGBT Center of Greater Reading, and Mayra Morales and Letty Vazquez, Safe Berks Medical Advocacy Partnership Program (MAPP) Advocates.

"You start to understand how you process your pain, and you learn how to heal from your trauma. I hope that every person who participates in this Project continues with their life as a survivor, not a victim."

**For more information or to register contact Letty Vazquez at 610-373-1206 ext. 136 or [LettyV@SafeBerks.org](mailto:LettyV@SafeBerks.org).**

Safe Berks services are free, confidential, and available in English and Spanish.

Toll Free Hotline:  
**844-789-SAFE (7233)**

or

**Text SAFE BERKS to 20121**

Available 24/7/365

[www.SafeBerks.org](http://www.SafeBerks.org)  
610-373-1206  
[Peace@SafeBerks.org](mailto:Peace@SafeBerks.org)

Follow Safe Berks



## Congrats to Safe Berks CEO Mary Kay Bernosky!

We are so proud of our CEO, Mary Kay Bernosky, Esq. as she was recently honored by Alvernia University, receiving the 2019 Distinguished Alumni Award. This prestigious award has been given to one person each year since 1995 and recognizes individuals who demonstrate valuable contributions to their profession, their community, and their nation.

Mary Kay has served as CEO since 2005. She is a graduate of DeSales University; received a Juris Doctorate from the Marshall-Wythe School of Law of the College of William and Mary; and received a Master of Business Administration from Alvernia University in 2003.

During her tenure as CEO of Safe Berks, Mary Kay managed the successful construction of the new Safe Berks Center, which opened in 2012. Primarily financed by private funds, our Safe Berks Center

houses all services in the same building, a first for our organization. The Safe House provides emergency shelter for up to 50 people, a greater than 50 percent increase of available beds for victims of domestic violence or sexual assault.

Under Mary Kay's leadership, we have grown to provide increased services to victims of sexual assault, outreach to college campuses, expanded prevention programs, and economic empowerment opportunities. In 2016, Mary Kay guided us through the process of changing our name to Safe Berks. Most recently, Mary Kay led the effort to establish the Safe Berks Medical Advocacy Partnership Program (MAPP), which connects Safe Berks staff and services to local hospitals and health centers.



Mary Kay Bernosky, Esq., Safe Berks CEO, and John McCloskey Jr., Alvernia Senior VP & Chief of Staff.

## Safe Berks Partnerships Enhance Support Groups



Safe Berks offers seven different free Support Groups for survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault. Support Groups are offered for: Females; Males; Teens; Bilingual Adults; Adults in the LGBT Community; Adult Females in Recovery From Addiction; and Safe Berks Residents.

All groups are coordinated by Safe Berks staff who are experts in providing trauma-informed counseling. Support Groups are limited to 10 people to ensure each person has time to share their story in a safe and confidential environment. Safe Berks also offers free individual counseling for survivors.

"We are honored to partner with Centro Hispano to offer our new Support Group for Spanish speaking female survivors," said Danielle Palermo, Director of

Counseling at Safe Berks. "This group meets at Centro Hispano for six group sessions. Many bilingual adults already visit Centro Hispano for other services and resources, so we feel bringing forth the Support Group at Centro Hispano will provide survivors a safe place to continue to gain resources while also bonding with compassionate peers and professionals from Safe Berks to heal from the trauma they experienced."

"Safe Berks is also proud to partner with the LGBT Center of Greater Reading to offer our Support Group for adult survivors in the LGBT community," said Palermo. "Meetings are held at the LGBT Center in Reading. The Center is a warm and welcoming space, which includes a library and other resources. By offering the Support Group at this location, victims and survivors within the LGBT community have a

place where there is a sense of comfort to begin and/or continue their healing process."

The other five Support Groups are held at Safe Berks, 255 Chestnut St., Reading. Each Support Group meets for six sessions, gathering every other week. Three months after the end of each Support Group, a Reunion is held to bring the group back together.

**For more information or to register for a future Support Group, contact Danielle Palermo at [DanielleP@SafeBerks.org](mailto:DanielleP@SafeBerks.org) or 610-373-1206, ext. 120. Information is also available at [www.SafeBerks.org](http://www.SafeBerks.org), on the Counseling page.**

**The vision of Safe Berks is:  
Berks County is free from  
domestic violence and  
sexual assault.**

- ▶ **Crisis Services**
- ▶ **Residential Services**
- ▶ **Education & Outreach**
- ▶ **Counseling**
- ▶ **Systems Advocacy**
- ▶ **Legal Services**

### **Board of Directors**

Nina Bohn, President  
Amanda Jackowski, Vice President  
Carlixa de la Rosa, Treasurer  
Diane Duff, Secretary  
Mary Kay Bernosky, Esq., CEO  
Beth Garrigan, COO  
Jasmine Suarez, CFO  
Jamal Abadalo  
Mandy Acuna  
Carey Babczak  
Sherry Berricker  
Barbara Boland  
Karen H. Cook, Esq.  
Denise DiMascio  
Jonathan D. Encarnacion  
Alneasa Jordan  
Dr. Eve Kimball  
Jay Mahoney  
Michele McCartney  
Helen Najarian, Director Emeritus  
Steve Ohnsman  
Michele Pole  
Julianne E. Wallace

NON-PROFIT ORG  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
READING, PA  
PERMIT NO. 155

**YOU ARE INVITED!**

**Monday, December 16, 2019 • 6 to 8 pm  
DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel, Reading, PA**

**Celebration of** *Peace*

**Online registration available at [www.SafeBerks.org](http://www.SafeBerks.org), click on Events.  
Any questions email [Peace@SafeBerks.org](mailto:Peace@SafeBerks.org) or call 610-373-1206.**

### **Gifts to Safe Berks**

The Give Now button, located on our website at [www.safeberks.org/donate/donate-now/](http://www.safeberks.org/donate/donate-now/), is a convenient way to support Safe Berks. Receipts are generated immediately via email. The official registration and financial information of Safe Berks may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll free, within Pennsylvania, 1-800-732-0999. Registration does imply endorsement.

### **Contact Us**

Safe Berks  
255 Chestnut Street  
Reading, PA 19602

[www.SafeBerks.org](http://www.SafeBerks.org)  
P: 610.373.1206 | F: 610.372.4188  
Email: [Peace@SafeBerks.org](mailto:Peace@SafeBerks.org)

Toll Free Hotline:  
844-789-SAFE (7233)  
Or Text SAFE BERKS to 20121



United Way of Berks County