One Event — One Mission
Join Us at the Combined Celebration of Peace & Walk For NO MORE!

While the COVID-19 pandemic caused Safe Berks to postpone several events, we can’t wait to celebrate in person by combining our Celebration of Peace and our Walk For NO MORE!

This fun and festive event will take place outside in West Reading and will kickoff the annual Art on the Avenue celebration. Before the Walk, we will enjoy breakfast, honor our award winners, and thank our generous sponsors.

Safe Berks is proud to honor John and Lisa Gallen with the Vision for Peace award. It is the highest honor awarded by Safe Berks. For many years, John and Lisa Gallen have generously supported Safe Berks as a couple and through Ethosource Office Furniture. They have helped us solve problems, so that we can deliver services and help survivors rebuild their lives.

The United Way of Berks County and Blankets of Hope have been chosen to receive the Safe Berks Voices for Change awards. This award honors individuals and institutions whose work makes a significant contribution to furthering the mission of Safe Berks.

For decades, the United Way of Berks County has provided essential assistance to Safe Berks. We are honored to be one of their 35 partner agencies. Their support strengthens and empowers the entire Berks County community.

Blankets of Hope, led by founder Marc Goldstein, has provided hundreds of new blankets and dozens of twin-size beds to Safe Berks clients. These generous donations provide warmth and comfort to residents of our Safe House, and also travel with them to their new homes when they leave Safe Berks.

Following the presentation, our award winners will lead the walk down Penn Avenue. Award winners, Host Committee members, Board members, PeaceTrust members, sponsors, donors, volunteers, community advocates, and our dedicated staff will join together to say — NO MORE domestic violence! NO MORE sexual assault!

More information will be provided on our website and on social media as plans develop. There will be opportunities for all to raise funds before this event, and T-shirts will be provided to all participants.

Congratulations to these amazing award winners! We are also very grateful to all our generous sponsors, and to our Host Committee, led by Ann and Don Moll. We hope to see you on June 19!

SAVE THE DATE
Saturday, June 19, 2021

For More Info, to Register or to Become a Sponsor visit: www.SafeBerks.org, click on Events. If you have any questions, please contact Mindy McIntosh, Director of Development, at 610-468-9637 or MindyM@SafeBerks.org.

Safe Berks will continue to monitor COVID-19 protocols, and will share event updates on our website and social media.
A Message from our CEO

People who know me well know that I love my job leading Safe Berks, I love my family, and that my family includes my beloved fur baby, Murphy. On many occasions, you can even find Murphy “working” at Safe Berks!

It is heartbreaking when survivors of domestic violence are forced to choose between their own safety and the safety of their beloved pets. It is a story we have heard too many times. A victim chooses to stay in an abusive relationship because they cannot bear to leave their pet behind.

With these painful stories in mind, we are building a stronger collaboration with Humane Pennsylvania, the region’s largest partnership of animal welfare organizations.

Already, we have begun offering Pet Wellness Days. We help connect survivors with animal experts from Humane Pennsylvania, who provide free services including vaccinations, flea and tick treatments, ear cleaning, nail trims, microchipping, and much more. Survivors can also receive free expert advice, and free pet products such as beds, collars, and ID tags.

Humane Pennsylvania has also provided us with an abundant supply of Good Packs and Pet Packs to share with clients. Good Packs are backpacks filled with toiletries, socks, T-shirt, and a cozy blanket, and Pet Packs are filled with pet food, treats, a toy, a leash, and a water and food dish. The smiles on the faces of our clients, when they receive assistance for their pets, are all we need to know that these programs are essential.

I want to take this opportunity to thank Humane Pennsylvania, and to thank all our donors, sponsors, volunteers, Board members, advocates, community partners, and our truly amazing staff! Despite the many challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have continued to provide our free, lifesaving services 24 hours every day. We could not do this work without the support of the community.

Despite the pandemic, Safe Berks continues to find innovative ways to improve services to survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault. From our expanded relationship with the Berks County District Attorney’s office, to the return of Safe Berks advocates to Night Court, to our outreach to local college students, we are always here to help.

Thanks to your support, we are building a Safe Berks.

Respectfully,

Beth Garrigan

Safe Berks Seeking Volunteer Cooks!

Safe Berks is seeking volunteers to prepare and deliver dinner to residents, every evening of the week. Another option is to sponsor dinner for Safe Berks residents from a local restaurant. This also helps local restaurants, who have been hit hard by the COVID-19 restrictions.

We are so grateful to all the volunteers who have provided dinners for residents. Together, we are building a Safe Berks!

For more info, or to schedule a dinner, please contact Mindy McIntosh, Director of Development, at 610-468-9637 or MindyM@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

Counseling 610-373-1206, ext. 606
Legal Services 610-373-1206, ext. 107
Peace@SafeBerks.org

www.SafeBerks.org
Follow Safe Berks
Safe Berks Advocates Return to Night Court

Imagine dealing with the trauma and terror of domestic violence – and on top of that – trying to request an Emergency Protection From Abuse (EPFA) order at the Berks County Courthouse in the middle of the night. Alone.

“Recently a victim came into Night Court to file an EPFA,” said Macy Lluberes, Director of the Safe Berks Medical Advocacy Partnership Program (MAPP). “It was directly after a domestic violence incident and she was terrified. I introduced myself as a Safe Berks staff member, and she just started crying because she was so relieved that she did not have to apply on her own. Due to COVID-19, victims are not allowed to bring in a support person to the Courthouse. She knew that due to our presence, she would be supported, listened to, and helped.”

Beginning Dec. 1, 2020, Safe Berks has been providing advocates to victims of domestic violence who request EPFAs at Night Court. This service is offered through a partnership between the MAPP Department and the Legal Department.

Lluberes said the advocates are assisting about 10 survivors each week.

“Filing for an EPFA is scary, confusing, and overwhelming,” said Lluberes. “Our assistance allows the victim to feel supported. We can answer questions they have, and we can be in the room with them while they talk to the judge. This allows the victim to feel safe through a really difficult process.”

Safe Berks offered this service in the past, but due to budget cuts, it was discontinued in 2017. However, it was always the goal of Safe Berks to bring back this important advocacy for survivors.

Jennifer Sawyer, Legal Advocate Coordinator, and a member of the Safe Berks Legal Department for more than 20 years, played a major role in bringing this service back. Sawyer met with Special Courts Administrator Faith Phillips and Magisterial District Judge Andrea Book regarding the need for advocates to return to Night Court. MDJ Book spoke to the minor judiciary and all were excited for Safe Berks advocates to return.

“We are grateful for the support we received from the courts to get this program up and running again,” said Sawyer. “The decision to bring Safe Berks Advocates back to Night Court to assist victims with the Emergency PFA process was met with great enthusiasm, and the ease of collaboration with these system partners demonstrates confidence in the services that Safe Berks provides, as well as a continued commitment to the victims we serve.”

Safe Berks - Reaching Students at Local Colleges

The COVID-19 pandemic has created new challenges for everyone, including students at local colleges. Many classes and other activities have moved to virtual delivery online.

Stacey Jordan, Safe Berks Campus Advocate/Paralegal, has continued to provide free and confidential services to students, faculty, and staff of local colleges throughout this health crisis.

“Although services may be delivered a bit differently, Safe Berks staff is ready and willing to assist survivors of interpersonal violence and sexual assault,” said Jordan. “COVID-19 has brought a set of its own challenges, but we, at Safe Berks, remain steadfast and focused on our goal of ending violence and oppression in Berks County. Should you have any questions or need assistance, please feel free to contact me at Stacey.J@SafeBerks.org or 484-651-9745.”

For crisis assistance, the Safe Berks 24-hour Hotline is 844-789-SAFE (7233) or text SAFE BERKS to 20121.

“Each campus has their own COVID-19 policies regarding visitors on campus, so while I still provide in-person services on some campuses, there are other campuses where services must be provided either virtually, or at another location such as our office in Reading,” said Jordan. “I am still providing in-person accompaniments to law enforcement interviews at the local police departments, public safety offices, and the District Attorney’s Office, as well as court accompaniments to the Berks County Courthouse to assist with the process of filing for protection orders.”

Working with the Safe Berks Education and Outreach Department, Jordan also co-facilitates education sessions for college students, faculty, and staff on topics related to interpersonal violence, with the goal of ending these crimes on campus. Since the pandemic began, some of these educational activities have been transformed into virtual events, while some have been held in person, utilizing masks and social distancing.
Happy 15th Anniversary to PeaceTrust!

Throughout 2021, we are celebrating the 15th anniversary of the Safe Berks PeaceTrust!

We are very grateful to our current PeaceTrust leader, Andi Funk, and to Carolyn Holleran, who founded this Women’s Leadership Giving program in 2006.

Special thanks to all the members for sharing their gifts of time and treasure with Safe Berks. Members of PeaceTrust donate funds to support Safe Berks and our free 24-hour services for survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault. They also provide a crucial network of community leaders who share a passion for preventing these tragic crimes and building a peaceful community, where no one is abused.

Each PeaceTrust member commits to donating $500 to Safe Berks each year for five years. There are also opportunities for new Junior members and young adults to become “Link” members.

We hold special events for PeaceTrust members, which include time for these inspiring advocates to connect with each other and with Safe Berks leaders and staff. Due to COVID-19, we are planning for our next PeaceTrust event to take place virtually this spring. We look forward to holding in-person events in the future, when it is safe to do so.

“No more than ever, during these challenging times, we greatly appreciate the support and generosity of our PeaceTrust members,” said Beth Garrigan, Safe Berks CEO. “In addition to providing much-needed financial support, PeaceTrust members share insight and ideas with Safe Berks, based on their community connections, careers, and experiences.”

To learn more about PeaceTrust, or to become a member, visit www.SafeBerks.org/donate/peace-trust/ or contact Mindy McIntosh, Director of Development, at 610-468-9637 or MindyM@SafeBerks.org.

Safe Berks Email News

We are updating our database. Do you receive email news blasts from Safe Berks? We send these about twice a month. If not, please email your contact info to FrancineS@SafeBerks.org or sign up at www.SafeBerks.org, click on Get Involved. Thanks for your support and we look forward to keeping you up to date with Safe Berks news! You can also hear the latest by following Safe Berks on social media — Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn!

Safety First! Safe Berks has added many safety features to protect residents and staff and reduce the risk of COVID-19.

Photo shows Safe Berks CEO Beth Garrigan sitting at front desk, where new acrylic up mounts were installed to ensure health and safety. These new acrylic up mounts were also installed at the second floor front desk and all staff offices. In addition, partitions have been placed between employee workstations. Other safety procedures include masks, social distancing, frequent hand washing, daily temperature checks of staff and clients, use of hand sanitizer, and intensified cleaning and sanitation procedures throughout the building.
Safe Berks & District Attorney’s Office Expand Partnership

Whether you know it or not, someone important to you has been the victim of sexual violence. Despite being one of the most invasive and traumatic experiences an individual can have, sexual assault is one of the crimes that is most underreported to law enforcement.

Safe Berks and the District Attorney’s Office have joined forces to change that in Berks County.

While Safe Berks and the DA’s Office have a long history of working together to serve crime victims, their partnership has recently expanded with the creation of a County-wide Sexual Assault Response Team (SART). Formation of the SART Team was formally approved by District Attorney John Adams, and is headed by Meghan Sager, the Safe Berks SART Coordinator. The Team had its first meeting in July 2020 and meets every month.

“Our Office recognizes the importance of having a multidisciplinary approach to the investigation of sexual abuse and that is what the SART team provides,” said Adams. “Safe Berks provides a safe haven and support for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. When a victim’s emotional and physical well-being is cared for, it makes our job of providing justice for them easier. Working closely with Safe Berks is a logical partnership that we are happy to continue.”

Meghan Sager, the Safe Berks SART Coordinator, said sexual violence is much more common than most people realize.

“Many of the victims disclosing sexual abuse at the local hospitals choose to never report to law enforcement”

According to the Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network (RAINN), 1 in 3 women and 1 in 6 men will be the victim of a sexual assault in their lifetime. However, most sexual assaults are not reported to police, with only an estimated 230 out of every 1,000 reported, said Sager.

In Berks County, the number of sexual assault victims reporting to local hospitals has increased significantly since the COVID-19 pandemic struck and quarantine restrictions were put in place, said Sager. “The Berks County SART Team will work to make reporting sexual assault to law enforcement and participating in the prosecutorial process less traumatic for victims.”

One of the goals of the SART Team is to prevent revictimization of survivors who have already endured significant trauma. The Berks County SART Team members are all trained professionals experienced in working with victims of severe trauma.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the SART team utilizes remote technology to hold monthly meetings.

“Safe Berks is very excited about this new initiative and opportunity to partner with the DA’s office and other community stakeholders to improve our community’s response to sexual assault victims,” said Diane Ellis, Esq., Director of Legal Services at Safe Berks.

Core Team Members of the SART Team include:
- Meg McCallum, Esq., Supervising District Attorney and supervisor of the Domestic Violence and Child Abuse Unit
- Molly McDonough, Esq., Assistant District Attorney and the Stop Violence Against Women (STOP) Prosecutor
- John Solecki, Berks County STOP Detective
- Amy Sundstrom, Berks County Victim/Witness Unit Supervisor
- Cheryl Pentheny, Captain of Investigations from the Reading Police Department
- Eleanor Delewski, SANE nurse from Tower Health/Reading Hospital
- Shanna Richwine, Leader of the SANE Team and SANE nurse from Tower Health/Reading Hospital
- Heather Owen, SANE nurse from Penn State Health St. Joseph
- Jessica Collins, Clinical Supervisor from Berks County Prison Jail System
- Stephanie Smith, Deputy Warden for Treatment from Berks County Prison Jail System
- Meghan Sager, Safe Berks SART Coordinator
- Diane Ellis, Esq., Safe Berks Director of Legal Services
- Jennifer Sawyer, Safe Berks Legal Advocate Coordinator
- Macy Lengle-Lluberes, Safe Berks Medical Advocacy Partnership Program (MAPP) Director
- Stacey Jordan, Safe Berks Campus Advocate/Paralegal
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

Gifts to Safe Berks
The Give Now button, located on our website at 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
P: 610.373.1206   F: 610.372.4188
Email: Peace@SafeBerks.org
Toll Free Hotline:
844-789-SAFE (7233)
Dr Text SAFE BERKS to 20121