



Become a Sustaining Member of the WRC: Give Monthly



Help support survivors by becoming a Sustaining Member. Receive special updates, be a part of our community, and make a lasting impact.

\$30 One month of financial assistance for a survivor staying in our safe shelter

\$50 One week of surveillance/security at our safe shelter

\$80 One day of covering basic costs to keep our shelter open

\$100 One day of answering our 24-hour crisis hotline

With Gratitude

We would like to thank these community partners for helping to raise funds and awareness for the WRC.

- DTE Foundation
- 4 Front Credit Union
- Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation
- Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation Youth Endowment
- Rotary Good Works
- Oleson Foundation
- Access Title Agency
- Miner's North Jewelers
- Trattoria Stella
- Michigan State Federal Credit Union



- House of Dank
- Workshop Brewing
- Independent Bank
- Oryana Community Co-Op
- Timken Foundation
- Towsley Foundation
- Earthen Ales
- Grand Traverse Resort and Casinos
- Outpost
- Just Between Friends
- Evo Athletics
- Grand Traverse Bay YMCA
- Just Be You Yoga
- The Little Fleet
- Cheboygan Brewing Company
- Black Rocks Brewery
- Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians

If you would like to know more about how you can support the WRC, please contact Jamie Bell at 231-941-1210 or jbelle@wrcgt.com.

WOMEN'S RESOURCE CENTER

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Juliette Schultz

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Chair, Ruth Bloomer
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Treasurer, Ed Carlson
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WRC THRIFT SHOPS

Thrift Shop - South Airport
1331 W. South Airport Road
231-421-3033

Thrift Shop US-31
3030 US-31 South
231-946-4180

Monday-Saturday 10am-6pm
Sunday 11am-5pm

CONTACT

Main Office

720 South Elmwood, Suite 2
Traverse City, MI 49684

Phone: 231-941-1210

Web: womensresourcecenter.org

24-hour Helpline: 1-800-554-4972

Follow us on social media





**To protect, shelter,
and empower people
impacted by domestic
and sexual violence.**

NEWSLETTER | MARCH 2024

WRC's Inspiring Origin Story

By Jane Hayes
WRC Board Chair

I arrived in Traverse City in 1979 from Worcester, Mass and grew up in a small town outside of Pittsburgh, similar in size to Traverse City. This was a time in our culture when domestic violence and sexual assault were not mentioned in polite conversation. It was a time when marital rape was legal, as it would be until 1993. Michigan did not pass domestic violence legislation until 1994.

Having grown up in a small, working class, conservative town, I wondered how a Northern Michigan community came to open a shelter. I discovered the answer when I began an internship at the Women's Resource Center Shelter as a Master of Social Work student. It was there that I heard the story of the murder trial of Jeanette Smith, a British woman accused of stabbing her husband to death after a long history of domestic violence.

On May 12, 1978, Smith murdered her husband in Kalkaska, MI. She was charged with second degree murder and moved to the Grand Traverse County Jail. While incarcerated, Smith was interviewed



Jane Hayes, WRC Board Chair

by a young reporter at the Record-Eagle, Kathleen Stocking, who provided Jeanette's detailed story of repetitive abuse and torment. The story shocked the community and captured the attention of Mary Sutherland and a few of her friends who were described by the Record-Eagle as the local chapter of the National Organization for Women. They raised \$20,000 to bail Smith out of jail.

The story caught the attention of Dean Robb, a civil rights attorney living in Traverse City who was joined by Janet Prater out of the Detroit Defender's Office to provide her defense. According to Bob Sutherland, Mary's son, Jeanette lived with their family after she was released. During the trial, other local families opened their homes to house her.

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When the Women's Resource Center opened its doors in 1975, it was a place for women to come together to develop workforce skills, feel empowered, and learn to be self-sufficient. Over years, the organization's mission shifted.

The Jeanette Smith trial was a turning point for the WRC. While job skills were important, it became apparent that there was a more pressing issue to be addressed—the issue of domestic violence.

Then, many women had nowhere to go as a result of violence at home. The Smith trial helped to lift the veil and shed light on this issue impacting our community.

Today, we continue to serve survivors of domestic and sexual violence. We know that for people to feel empowered and inspired, they must first feel safe.

WRC's Inspiring Origin Story *Continued from cover*

The trial was conducted in Gaylord, MI over a 5-week period in March and April 1979. Mary Sutherland, Molly Weeks, Patty Sutherland, Mary's daughter, and others were in the courtroom in support of Jeanette every day. Jeanette was found not guilty by a jury of 6 women and 6 men. Lorraine Anderson, court reporter for the Record-Eagle, won an award for her coverage of the trial. For those

involved with the trial and the community, it became obvious that a shelter was needed. In 1984, it opened on Eighth St. in Traverse City. In 1992, the shelter was named Helen's House in honor of Helen Milliken, women's rights activist and wife of former Governor Bill Milliken.

We remember and thank those who in their efforts to support Jeanette Smith

responded to a need in our community to provide a shelter for those fleeing from violence. In 2022, the shelter housed 102 people and provided 3,649 nights of safe housing. The Women's Resource Center continues its mission to protect, shelter, and empower people of all genders impacted by domestic and sexual violence.



"As one of the founders of the WRC over 40 years ago, I feel a strong connection to the WRC mission and want to help make a difference by addressing inequalities within our community and society."

RUTH BLOOMER, CHAIR



"I've personally seen the positive difference the WRC has made in the lives of survivors and their families. And the fact that through our thrift shops we provide goods free to anyone in need — not just those who use their services — touches my heart."

SUE KENSINGTON, VICE-CHAIR



"The WRC is not only a vitally important safety net for our community with 24-hour emergency assistance and shelter, but by offering employees competitive pay, flexible hours, training, and support, it is committed to ensuring its staff are the best they can be in order to fulfill their mission."

ED CARLSON, TREASURER



"The mission of the WRC resonates deeply with me. I believe in creating a world where women are safe, supported, and empowered. Serving on the board allows me to contribute to that vision. The WRC is more than shelter and supportive services; it is a beacon of hope and a catalyst for change."

AMY PETERSON, SECRETARY



Board of Directors Q&A

We asked a few of our members to share what serving on the WRC board means to them.

“Why Don’t They Just Leave?”

By Heather Patterson
WRC Grant Administrator

One pervasive and harmful statement that often surfaces in conversations about domestic violence is the question, “Why don’t they just leave?”

This question distorts the complex dynamics of abusive relationships and places blame on the survivor, rather than addressing the root causes of the issue.

According to a report by the National Domestic Violence Hotline, on average, it takes a survivor seven attempts to leave an abusive relationship before successfully breaking free. Statistics like these underscore the numerous barriers and challenges survivors must navigate, highlighting the need for a more empathetic understanding of their experiences.

The question “Why don’t they just leave?” fails to recognize the many obstacles survivors face, including financial dependence, fear of retaliation, social isolation, and psychological manipulation. Instead

of perpetuating this harmful narrative, it is crucial to foster a supportive environment that encourages survivors to disclose their experiences without fear of judgment. Here are some key ways to shift the conversation.

1. Acknowledge the Complexity

Recognize that leaving an abusive relationship is a complex process that involves various factors. It is not as simple as packing a bag and walking away.

2. Listen without Judgment

When someone discloses abuse, listen attentively and without passing judgment. Avoid making assumptions or blaming the survivor for staying in the relationship.

3. Offer Empathy and Support

Express empathy and offer support without pushing for immediate action. Survivors may be dealing with a range of emotions including fear, shame, and uncertainty.

4. Provide Information on Resources

Familiarize yourself with local and national resources available. Share this information in a non-coercive manner, allowing them to make informed safety decisions.

5. Respect Autonomy

Respect the survivor’s autonomy and decision-making process. Avoid pressuring



Heather Patterson,
WRC Grant Administrator

them into making decisions they may not be ready for and let them know that support is available when they are ready to take action.

By dismantling the “Why don’t they just leave?” narrative and promoting a more compassionate and informed approach, we empower survivors and hold perpetrators accountable. Domestic violence is a prevalent issue requiring a collective effort to address, and begins with understanding and supporting those who have experienced abuse.

Staff Spotlight

By Jamie Bell
WRC Director of Donor Engagement

It is our pleasure to introduce Azia Gilbert (they/them pronouns), Volunteer Coordinator.

In the height of the pandemic, the WRC put the volunteer program on hold. We had to minimize contact, and like many nonprofits, we had limited resources. The work we do here at the WRC is endless. We are always busy. There is always a need. We are proud to finally be back on track and strengthening our organization by once again utilizing volunteers.

A natural fit for the WRC, Azia came to the organization with a background in non-profit program development and volunteer coordination. Recently, Azia was in Colorado coordinating an Americorps VISTA program through the United Way. Additionally, they have a background in Women and Gender Studies and a passion for empowering others.

Azia is detail oriented and loves planning. Right now, our Volunteer Training is being revamped with sustainability in mind. When asked, “Why is Volunteering important?” Azia responded, “It provides an opportunity for people to connect with community on a deeper, relatable level.”

When they are not planning and organizing, Azia enjoys fire spinning and gaming.



Azia Gilbert, WRC Volunteer Coordinator

If you are interested in volunteering, email Azia at: agilbert@wrcgt.com.