



*Working to create a world free of violence & abuse*



## Co-Executive Directors' Report

### AGENCY-WIDE

Last week, Gov. Kathy Hochul committed in her first State of the State address to **provide \$500 million in funding for human services cost-of-living adjustments** (COLAs). These COLA increases will help more than 800,000 staff and employees who work at nonprofit human services agencies, many of whom are people of color.

### SHELTER

December is known as the season of giving, and our community did just that during the month. Thanks to amazing community donations, we were able to provide multiple holiday gifts to adults and children at both shelter locations, along with individuals who have recently transitioned into their new homes. We are truly blessed and grateful to all of those who help make the holidays that much better for those that we serve.

### PREVENTION EDUCATION

### **Workplace Sexual Harassment Initiative**

Co-Executive Director **Randi Bregman** and WSHI Facilitator **Chris Kosakowski** provided a sexual harassment training for the Central New York Community Foundation. CNYCF has had us do their training for a number of years. Participants commented on how our training was much more effective and engaging than other trainings they have received on this topic and that they benefited from continued conversation on how to prevent sexual harassment within their workplace.

### **Campus**

Campus Team Members **Nicole Blidy** and **Rachel Henderson** participated in a forum at Syracuse University to increase students' knowledge and awareness on resources for students and were able to answer questions and discuss the dynamics of sexual assault.

Campus Team Coordinator **Chris Kosakowski** spoke to a Fayetteville-Manlius High School senior class about sexual assault policies in New York State in order to answer their questions and prepare them to go to college. Kosakowski has also received multiple interview requests from different campus and community reporters who have requested his expertise on Title IX regulations and the impacts they have on college students.

### **Mission Story**

Kosakowski co-chairs a statewide Campus Working Group call and was able to use this partnership to get resources and connections for a parent of a client with Down Syndrome, who has not been treated well by systems.

## **OUTREACH & ADVOCACY**

Many Advocacy Department team members had the opportunity to take much needed and well deserved time off during the holidays. We are incredibly thankful for our volunteers and the Vera House staff members outside of the Advocacy Department who helped staff our emergency services during the final weeks of 2021.

We also want to extend tremendous gratitude to the community members who donated holiday items for our clients and families.

## **ABUSE IN LATER LIFE**

### **Prevention and Outreach Update**

This month, Abuse in Later Life concluded the pilot of our primary prevention curriculum, which aims to train financial professionals to use bystander intervention strategies to prevent financial exploitation of older adults. Our professional evaluator, TRX Development Solutions, is in the process of analyzing pre- and post-survey data from pilot participants to help us learn which aspects of the curriculum worked well and what we can improve upon. A preliminary review of the survey data indicates that participants reported high levels of change from pre-training to post-training knowledge and skills in many of the curriculum's target areas, including how to recognize abuse in later life and how to intervene in situations where abuse or exploitation of an older adult is suspected.

Sadly, we learned our funding for this work was not renewed by the Mother Cabrini Health Foundation. New grant funding is being sought out from the Health Foundation for Western & Central New York and we hope we will be able to secure that funding to continue this important work.

### **Elder Justice Coalition**

In December, **Mary Anne Corasaniti**, longtime co-chair of the Elder Justice Coalition, resigned from her role as co-chair. Mary Anne is known as a national leader in the field of elder abuse and will be sorely missed. The Coalition will look towards restructuring in 2022 with a new leadership team.

## **ALTERNATIVES/STEPS**

The Alternatives and STEPS Program has been holding steady in the number of referrals. Many referrals are coming from surrounding area counties. Outreach has been slowed due to the pandemic. Updated orientation information and referral information for 2022 can be found on [Vera House webpage](#).

The program is preparing to utilize more visual tools and class training for clients learning.

### **Mission Story:**

Alternatives/STEPS Program Coordinator **Desiree Williams** recently had the following conversation.

### **Community Member:**

How does it feel when someone completes the program and become a positive role model to others, given their negative past history?

### **Williams's Response:**

I feel validated that the work we do in the program is working and changing young men's and young women's lives for the better. I encourage the successful individuals to reach out and teach others in their circle the importance of learning to effectively communicate. To make it a priority to teach others what they learned. When trying to build healthy relationships, recognize the red flags.

### **Community Member:**

Do you change the program if a person just isn't changing their behavior and continues to be a negative influence on others?

### **Williams's Response:**

The overall goal of the program is to educate all individuals so that they will see the value in changing their behavior. The reality is everyone isn't a success story. Some people may reenter the program because they have re-offended and didn't value the information the first time. We don't give up on the person.

### **Community Member:**

Can I come before my relationship gets out of control or I'm mandated?

### **Williams's Response:**

Yes. I'll see you at the next orientation!

# CLINICAL

During the month of December, the Clinical program saw a total of 282 clients. The clinical team provided a total of 521 individual, joint, or family therapy sessions via Zoom, over the phone, or in-person. The Support Group for LGBTQIA+ Black & Brown Folx continues to be offered on a weekly basis.

## Mission Story

A client, who had shared challenges with identifying abusive religious environments due to her trauma history, has been working on separating what she wants her faith to be versus what abuse has taught her it to be. She struggled with letting go of toxic people or situations when it relates to her faith due to fears of being alone when she desires community and family. Client shared pushing past her fears and negative feedback from those who were supposed to support her so she could pursue things she desired for herself. Client shared that the space away has helped her to realize the abusive cycles and toxicity that were within the religious space she was connected to and how that is not what she wanted for her faith. Client shared finally being able to make the decision to leave the abusive setting she was involved with after battling with the fear of what that would mean for her socially if she did. Client shared feeling good about being able to reach a decision where she put herself first after struggling to know what to do for years.

# DEVELOPMENT

Welcome to **Andrew Miledonis**, our new Special Events Coordinator! Andrew brings many years of experience in event planning, volunteer management, and community engagement, most recently at the Alzheimer's Association.

We were the beneficiary of many generous people in our community in the last couple months of 2021 through donations to our winter appeal totaling \$135,209, as well as many in-kind donations that helped make the holidays special for many of the people we serve. Thanks to everyone who answered the calls to help our donors unload their cars and for showing our gratitude for their generosity!

We also had another year of growth in our monthly giving program.

<u>Monthly Donor Growth Summary</u>					
Date		Monthly Donors Gained	Monthly Donors Lost	Net New Monthly Donors	Total
12/31/2017					13
1/1/2018-12/31/18		6	2	4	17
1/1/19-12/31/19		10	3	7	24
1/1/20-12/31/20		27	3	24	48
1/1/21-12/31/21		26	9	18	65
2019 Revenue	\$7,425				

2020 Revenue	\$14,695				
2021 Revenue	\$25,660				

## EVENTS

We are excited to announce that JPMorgan Chase will be our presenting sponsor for the White Ribbon Campaign this year!

Our signature WRC events will be in person, so please save the dates and join us! More details to follow.

- **White Ribbon Breakfast** will be held on February 25 at 7:30am - Marriott Downtown Syracuse.
- **White Ribbon Walk** will be held on March 25 at noon - Clinton Square

**We need you!** This is an opportunity for staff and community members to work together to raise awareness about the issues of domestic and sexual violence and the services Vera House provides to the community. Please consider joining a subcommittee: Education/University, Faith, Color of Change, or Business/Organization. The subcommittees will work to bring the White Ribbon Campaign to these audiences in the community.

## VOLUNTEERS

We are excited to welcome **Olivia Watson**, Volunteer and Intern Coordinator, and **Heather Paulding**, Volunteer and Intern Supervisor! Their combined skills in advocacy, volunteer management, and training will help us grow and enhance our volunteer program.

In December, we had 15 volunteers apply to serve with us.

Additionally, 21 volunteers supported the Advocacy Program and our client services with a total of over 345 hours.

We look forward to engaging a new class of volunteers this month through our sexual assault call out training and agency orientation.

## MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

Earlier this week, Syracuse.com published a letter by Director of Marketing and Communications **Virgie Townsend** and Co-Executive Directors **Randi Bregman** and **Angela Douglas**. In it, they describe [how the pandemic has created Vera House's first-ever budget deficit](#).

With 2021 ending, Townsend reviewed Vera House's social media analytics for the year. Engagement was strong in 2021, with Facebook performing well and Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn performing excellently. Below is a visual of the posts that received the most engagement from April-December.

As a highlight, our Twitter post for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-Spirit People Awareness Day was shared by an Indigenous artist with a large following. It received 124 retweets, 86 likes, and 14,200 impressions: <https://twitter.com/VeraHouseInc/status/1389993542328754177>.

The LinkedIn post honoring former Board President Barbara Karper was also one of our highest performing LinkedIn posts ever: [https://www.linkedin.com/posts/vera-house-inc-\\_yesterday-was-vera-house-board-president-activity-6879480795354951680-abfz](https://www.linkedin.com/posts/vera-house-inc-_yesterday-was-vera-house-board-president-activity-6879480795354951680-abfz). It received 246 reactions, 24 comments, and three shares, with close to 9,000 impressions:



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