

April 2019

# Peace Talks

## Newsletter

Issues of importance to friends of  
the Women's Resource Center of  
the New River Valley.

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incite  
safety



## From the Executive Director



Anymore, each month has its own litany of awareness campaigns and we are constantly reminded of the work left to do. April, and the causes we champion here at the WRC, are no different. Each year in April, we pause for Sexual Assault Awareness Month. While the connection between sexual assault and stalking is not often made, we have learned from over the years that we must broaden our definitions of sexual and domestic violence to include other violences, like stalking. What we hear from sexual assault victims is that healing from the assault itself is far more difficult if the abuser continues to stalk them. As a community, we tend to relegate stalking to a crime of no real consequence but for our clients, they are not totally free from an abuser who continues to stalk.

A piece of this work has always been learning from the victims and survivors who cross our thresholds. We hear from them that stalking is another weapon used by abusers, it is another piece of the larger picture and threat of sexual and domestic violence. Therefore, part of what we continue to do, part of what we continue to talk with each of you about, is that we as a society must hold abusers accountable for all of the ways in which they control and harm their victims, including stalking behavior.

The broadness of our work must include raising awareness of and building support for the sustainability of our services. It is with your help that we are able to meet the needs of thousands of individuals each year in this New River Valley. It is with your help that we are able to continue connecting victims of sexual assault, domestic violence, and stalking, with free and trauma-informed services right here in the New River Valley.

We are honored to be your partners in this work.

*Pat Brown*, Executive Director



# STALKING

## *In The New River Valley*

### What is Stalking?

**The Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) defines stalking as “engaging in a course of conduct directed at a specific person that would cause a reasonable person to fear for his or her safety or the safety of others or suffer substantial emotional distress.”**

In a discussion with Kelly McCoy, the Women’s Resource Center’s Domestic Violence Program Coordinator, she shared that “Stalking has such a broad definition because there are so many things that you can do to stalk a person that are subtle.” The broadness of the term can make it difficult for those who are trying to figure out if what they are experiencing is stalking.

### Stalking and Technology

“When you look at how stalking has changed over the years, the biggest change or challenge is the addition of technology,” said Mary Beth Pulsifer, the Women’s Resource Center’s Transitional Housing Coordinator.

Our staff has worked with victims in the New River Valley who have had tracking devices on their cars, phones, and information from their social media accounts used to track them. Kelly says that the use of technology, social media, and the traditional form of driving by a place are the forms of stalking that clients experience most often.

Ways to be cautious of the use of technology for stalking include considering what is shared on social media and when it is shared. If a person feels they may have a tracking device on their car, Virginia State Police is able to check vehicles for devices. Changing your phone number, if your stalker had access to it, is a good precaution to take as well.

### Gathering Evidence

“It used to be almost impossible to get a conviction on a stalking case,” said Mary Beth. “The law has made it easier to reach that threshold.” For example, if a victim

gives notice to the stalker to stop, they’ve drawn the line and now have prima facie evidence. <sup>§1a</sup>

Ways that someone can document when this harassing or threatening behavior occurs include: saving audio recordings, voicemails, and text messages; taking pictures of the stalker when they show up at places you are or when they drive by where you are; and jotting down dates and times of when you are seeing them.

“We distribute no trespassing letters, which can serve as prima facie evidence,” said Mary Beth, as one way that the WRC helps clients who are victims of stalking. Having a great relationship with the Radford City Police, and their quick response if the staff feels someone is a victim of stalking, is also helpful.

### Advice From Our Partners

One woman had a stranger pop in and out of her life for ten years. Three women noticed pictures being moved in their home, along with other things that seemed off. Two different cases of stalking in the New River Valley, but each just as dangerous.

“A lot of times people don’t take it as seriously as they should,” said Mary Pettitt, the Commonwealth’s Attorney for Montgomery County. “They think, ‘That’s okay, that was bad, but it could have been a lot worse.’” This frame of mind is worrisome for a victim’s safety.

Mary advises that if you think you may be a victim of stalking, you should tell as many people as you can about what you think may be going on. Neighbors are helpful because they can keep an eye out for suspicious activity near your home. Friends and family are also great people to tell. Changing patterns and routines are other ways to protect against stalking.

1 in 6 women and 1 in 19 men have experienced stalking victimization at some point during their lifetime in which they felt very fearful or believed that they or someone close to them would be harmed or killed by the stalker.

\* Prevalence and Characteristics of Sexual Violence, Stalking, and Intimate Partner Violence Victimization – National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey, United States, 2011

7.5 million people are stalked each year in the United States.

\* Prevalence and Characteristics of Sexual Violence, Stalking, and Intimate Partner Violence Victimization – National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey, United States, 2011

<sup>§1a</sup> legally sufficient to establish a fact or a case unless disproved



*The Vision of the Women's Resource Center of the New River Valley is a community free of sexual and domestic violence.*

## Immediate Crisis Services - *"Taking care of today, focusing on tomorrow."*



### 24 - Hour Crisis Hotline 540-639-1123

Our crisis hotline, 540-639-1123 or 800-788-1123, is available 24 hours a day with trained crisis intervention staff and volunteers answering all calls. Translators are available via Certified Languages International for our non-English speaking callers. People who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing can access our hotline by using Virginia Relay (711).



### Emergency Advocacy

The Women's Resource Center provides a 24-hour emergency response system for victims of sexual and domestic violence. When requested, Emergency Advocates meet victims at hospitals, law enforcement agencies, and other public locations (universities/college campuses, K-12 schools) in the New River Valley.



### Emergency Shelter

The Women's Resource Center offers temporary emergency housing for adults and their children who live in the New River Valley and are fleeing intimate partner violence. Our shelter is a comfortable, attractive home with facilities for 26 women and children. We also provide shelter for men and LGBTQ+ individuals.

## *Sexual Assault & Domestic Violence Programs*

**All of our services are trauma-informed, free, confidential, and available to any person in the New River Valley.**

If you need immediate service, please contact our 24-hour crisis hotline at **540-639-1123**. For more information on WRC Programs and services, please call or visit our website, [wrcnrv.org](http://wrcnrv.org).

#### Transitional Housing

Families who have experienced sexual or domestic violence and desire a supportive living environment have the option of applying for transitional housing apartments before stepping out on their own.

#### Lethality Assessment

This program is a partnership between the WRC and local law enforcement agencies. During domestic violence situations, officers utilize a screening tool to determine the level of risk and offer to link victims to our hotline.

#### Legal Advocacy

We provide justice related assistance to individuals experiencing sexual violence, domestic violence, or stalking by offering trauma-informed support as they navigate the criminal justice system.

#### Counseling Services

Our counselors are trained to address the needs and concerns of survivors of sexual violence, domestic violence, and stalking. Counseling is available whether the violence occurred recently or in the past.

#### Community Education

The WRC offers a variety of educational programs about sexual and domestic violence. Topics are tailored to the interests of the audience.



# STALKING

## Safety Planning

When calling the Women's Resource Center, the first question we greet you with is "Are you safe?" and this is no different when working with victims of stalking.

The number one concern when it comes to stalking is the safety of the victim. "If someone drives by my house two or three times, that's not going to necessarily worry me. If you are a victim of domestic violence and an abuser drives by your house two or three times, the implication of danger is very high," says Kelly McCoy, the Women's Resource Center's Domestic Violence Program Coordinator. Whether or not someone is a victim of past violence is something that is taken into consideration when safety planning with an individual.

Safety planning is something we do every day at the WRC. It is a course of action designed to keep the victim as safe as possible. When creating a safety plan, staff and volunteers never assume the safest course of action for a victim. The victim is the expert on their own safety.

### Questions we ask can include:

- How do you define safety?
- What do you consider dangerous?
- What safety concerns do you have?
- What needs to happen for you to be/feel safe?

**If you or someone you know is in need of safety planning services, the WRC offers 24/7 support. You can reach us by phone at 540-639-1123 or visit [wrcnr.org](http://wrcnr.org) for more information.**

"Are you safe?"



## Let's Incite Safety

An Awareness Fundraising Event to benefit the

**Women's Resource Center**

*of the New River Valley*

**Help end Sexual and Domestic Violence in the New River Valley**

**Tuesday**

APRIL 23 2019  
11:30 A.M. TO 1 P.M.  
Radford

**Thursday**

MAY 9 2019  
11:30 A.M. TO 1 P.M.  
Blacksburg

The WRC is our community's only organization dedicated to preventing interpersonal violence and sheltering and supporting victims. This is a free inspirational luncheon for those wishing to Incite Safety in the NRV by supporting this organization. Although guests will be asked for a contribution, giving is optional.

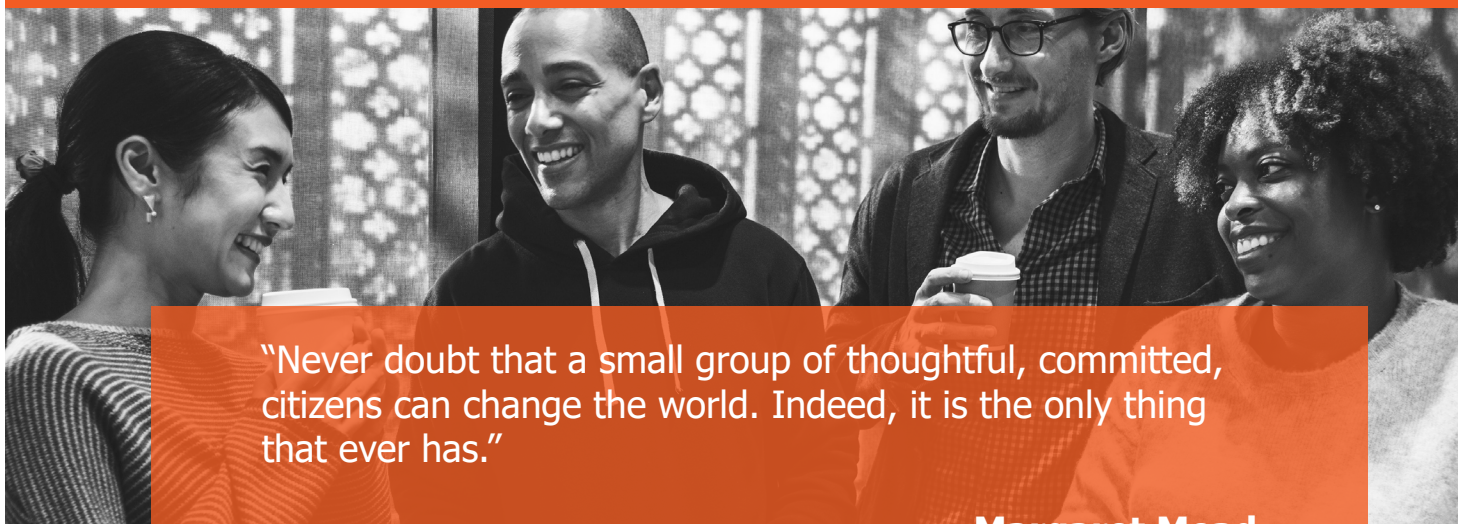
RSVPs are required by April 10th. Contact Laura Beth Weaver at [assistantdirector@wrcnr.org](mailto:assistantdirector@wrcnr.org) or 540-639-9592.

Women's Resource Center  
*of the New River Valley*

P.O. Box 477 Radford, VA 24143

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"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

- Margaret Mead

This issue of *PeaceTalks* will get you talking about stalking.

Hotline: 540-639-1123 | Office: 540-639-9592 | Fax: 540-633-2382  
director@wrcnr.org | wrcnr.org | Mailing: P.O. Box 477 Radford, VA 24143