Healing through the Years

Through the years, many survivors have shared their personal stories of struggle and healing in our newsletter. Each story is different, yet they all share unmistakable similarities. The reoccurring feelings expressed by each survivor — fear, shame, isolation, hopelessness, helplessness — expose the cycle of power and control that offenders rely on to abuse their victims.

The truth is undeniable, and in our advocacy we must expose and hold abusers accountable by sharing survivors’ stories told in their own words.

As you read these excerpts from previously shared stories, contemplate the courage and the strength it took each survivor to put their words on paper for all to read, and how their tremendous strength stands in stark contrast to the behavior of their abusers.

Over the next few editions of our newsletter, we will be sharing additional excerpts of courageous stories of survival. Some of these stories bear repeating, others are new. In every case, let’s continue to listen.

“I am a 57 year old survivor of childhood sexual abuse and domestic violence and finding myself back in the loving and validating hands of the greatest group of women I have ever encountered, The Susan B. Anthony Project.

I knew at the age of 3 that this was not my destiny. Between the beatings and the mind control and the painful nightly visits in the dark under my covers, I was dazed and confused. I was told to always do what you are told within these family walls. It is what you are here for. You are everyone’s pretty little toy. This is your role.

As an adult my only hope is that I can help others to survive by telling my story and reminding everyone to never give up. I am here to speak out to those who label and judge those of us who have survived. We are not going away. We are survivors standing up, proud and strong, healing with every lesson along the way. Most of all knowing it was not our fault!”
— Susan

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Board of Directors
Maria Salomone, President
Nancy Boland, Vice-President
Matthew F. Oneglia, Treasurer
Sarah Worden, Secretary

Meet Our Board

MARTHA BERNSTEIN
I have known about the work of Susan B. Anthony Project almost since the beginning of my time in Litchfield as a weekender, now more than 30 years ago. As I became a full-timer and began to be an active participant in the community, I became a supporter and learned not only more about SBAP services but also how important our organization is as a partner with others in the area. I was pleased and proud to be asked to join first the Advisory Council and the Finance Committee, and later the Board of Directors. I continue to be impressed with the outstanding competence and dedication of our staff, particularly in providing uninterrupted services through the pandemic as victims and survivors faced increased challenges.

EFFIE MWANDO
My roots in organizing run deep. As a mother in the 1980s, I became active in the Upper Albany Avenue Neighborhood Collaborative, where I brought residents together to get to know each other, improve safety and the quality of life on local streets, and move toward justice and betterment for all.

Once settled in Torrington, I organized a group called Women on the Move, for divorced and single mothers, which enabled participants to support one another, get children involved in educational and cultural opportunities, and also educated women on how to invest and become homeowners. In 2017, I co-founded Our Culture is Beautiful, which advocates for cultural diversity and social justice throughout the state, a reaction to learning that African American history was not being offered in our schools.

Through the years, I’ve spoken with many survivors of violence, and referred many of them to Susan B. Anthony Project, which has been a great resource to women and children in the community. My efforts to help individuals end domestic violence and heal from trauma led me to teach the curriculum Living Safely Without Violence to women in the Torrington area.

All of these past and current experiences led me to the doorstep of SBAP, when in 2020 a Board member spoke with me about joining. It was my honor to get involved, and I am grateful to be a part of the SBAP team. Not one child or person should suffer from emotional or physical abuse. SBAP is a second chance for families to live safely and in peace.

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Honoring Victims and Survivors

In April 2021, SBAP held a virtual Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM) vigil in order to honor victims and survivors of sexual violence and recognize community members who have gone above and beyond to assist SBAP in providing services to victim/survivors.

To view the virtual vigil, visit: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=V3o6os5K3-E](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V3o6os5K3-E)

Two community members were recognized this year:

**RC3P Tech** — A company founded by two SBAP volunteers, Priya and Rob Crum, who were instrumental in helping SBAP adjust to technological challenges during the pandemic and ensuring our clients were always able to receive the services that they needed.

**Leah Chapin, Torrington Department of Children & Families** — For always going above and beyond with compassion and dedication for families whose lives have been impacted by sexual abuse. Leah really understands the impact that sexual abuse has on a victim and their non-offending family members. She plays an important role in helping other DCF investigators manage complex cases of child sexual assault and uses her years of experience as an investigator to assist them along the way.

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Healing Through the Years (continued from page 1)

“I remember watching my father pummel my mother into such a state to where she thought she could find safety while hiding behind the bottom of an empty glass or bottle. This continued for years until somehow my mother found it in herself to take a stand and fight for her life. Leaving the only man she has ever known, my mother left her abuser and took her two small children with nothing but the clothes on our backs and maybe a small box of memories to start a new life.

This is the point in my life where I was introduced to one of the things that saved my family...the Susan B. Anthony Project. My mother moved us into the shelter where she was surrounded by women who made the same choice she did in leaving their attackers and starting a fresh new life.

Then my first good memory happened. I believe it was Christmas and I remember wanting the brand new Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles action figure set. What can I say? I’m an 80s baby. I remember running downstairs and seeing the tree and diving head first into a pile of presents that would make any kid jealous.

I remember thinking to myself that none of this would have happened if it weren’t for an agency like this to help and support battered women and give them a new start.”

— Jason

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Making a Difference!

Thank you to everyone who participated in Torrington High School’s Raider Rally! We were so grateful to be chosen once again as one of several community organizations to receive a generous donation from the event, along with 700+ non-perishable items for our shelter and community clients. Pictured are Gina Devaux, SBAP Director of Development; Erin Sullivan, English Teacher at THS; and Matthias Ekstrand, SBAP Community Educator.

Mike Ronalter and clients from Baroco Corporation in Torrington delivered a very generous donation of personal protective equipment and cleaning supplies, which Baroco received from BJ’s Wholesale Club in Torrington. Accepting the donation are Siobhain Craemer, SBAP Administrative Assistant and Ashley Cerruto, SBAP Business Development Associate.

SBAP was honored to be included as one of six community organizations to receive a gift through O&G Industries’ Spring Giveback program. The program was created to help the nonprofit community recover from the impact of the pandemic. Pictured are SBAP Finance Director Cheryl Wallace, SBAP Executive Director Jeanne Fusco, SBAP Development Director Gina Devaux, O&G Industries Assistant VP & SBAP Board of Directors Treasurer, Matt Oneglia, and O & G Industries Administrator, Lydia Babitt.
Thank you to everyone who supported Walk a Mile in Her Shoes®, The Virtual Experience!

May 17–28, 2021

Thank you to all who participated, and to those who graciosly donated your treasure, time, and talents to make the Walk a success!
THANK YOU TO OUR VIRTUAL WALKERS!

Jennifer Abbott-Tilou – Jen’s Men
Michael Aeschliman – Leg Hair Don’t Care
Scott Anderson
Erick Bailey – Dymax
Rabia Baz – Dymax
Tamara Bellino – Dymax
Celina Bennett – Dymax
Robert Bernstein
Jim Boulidin – Dymax
Elizabeth Bourne – Hiking Heels
Jude Celebi – Momma’s Boys
Garrit Cerruto
Kristen Cramer
Patience Deacon – Hiking Heels
Evan Dennison – Dymax
Edward Devos – Momma’s Boys
Louis Donne – The Rhinos
Robert Dulin
Mark & Nancy Famiglietti
James Farker
Christopher Freimuth – Heel the World!
Meghann Furtado – Dymax
Kathleen Genera – Dymax
Ryan Gentile – Dymax
Erin Herlihy – Dymax
Ronald Hoinsky
Deb Iannacito – Dymax
Graham Ince – Momma’s Boys
Alison Jeannin – Dymax
John Kleeman – The Rhinos
Michael Kovalchik – The Rhinos
Stephen Lewis – Thomaston Savings Bank
Cheryl Lindstrom – Thomaston Savings Bank
Aaron Mambrino – Dymax
Luke Martin – Momma’s Boys
Niisa Moquette – Dymax
Erick Olsen – Haystack Heels
Roland Orth – Dymax
Taylor Pepin
John Pepper – Dymax
Jessica Petrovits – Dymax
Robert Piersa – Leg Hair Don’t Care
Dolores Ramirez – Dymax
Yachai Reilly – Legal Aid
Adam Seifert – Leg Hair Don’t Care
Nico Sorce – Momma’s Boys
Jeremy St. Pierre – Leg Hair Don’t Care
Paul Sweeney – The Rhinos
Sam Wieder – Momma’s Boys
Nat Worden – Jen’s Men
We’re thrilled to welcome Thomaston Savings Bank as a Susan B. Anthony Project 2021-2022 Agency Sponsor! Our friends at Thomaston Savings Bank have shown incredible commitment to SBAP’s clients over the years, and in the past year alone, they have volunteered their time to help with projects at our residential locations...sponsored our Walk a Mile in Her Shoes event...supported our wreath sale and volunteered at Wreath Day...provided hot meals to our residential clients through their Community Kitchen Project...and awarded SBAP with their Act to Impact Employee Giving Grant. As our partnership grows, so does our appreciation for all that Thomaston Savings Bank does to stand with victims of violence, and for our community as a whole. Thank you, Thomaston Savings Bank!

Prevention of domestic and sexual abuse is an integral part of Susan B. Anthony Project’s mission, which is why we’re so grateful to Charlotte Hungerford Hospital for its continued support — CHH has joined us as a 2021-2022 Prevention Education and Outreach Sponsor! This sponsorship helps fund our efforts to reach children and community members wherever they are — schools, summer camps, businesses, civic organizations — with important information on a range of age-appropriate topics, including conflict resolution, personal safety, healthy relationships, sexual harassment, and more, and allows us to share information about SBAP’s services available to victims. Thank you for partnering with us in this initiative, Charlotte Hungerford Hospital!

Join us in welcoming Christina’s Consign Mint and Hairspray Salon, SBAP’s two newest HEROs! Christina’s and Hairspray are collecting funds from customers and staff on our behalf, and have made important outreach information about SBAP’s survivor services available at their businesses. Is your business interested in becoming a HERO? Find out more by contacting Ashley Cerruto at 860-489-3798.

Give Local 2021, a 36-hour online giving challenge hosted by the Connecticut Community Foundation, was held on April 20-21, 2021, and successfully raised over $2 million to support the vital work being done in Greater Waterbury and the Litchfield Hills. Every dollar raised during the 36-hour giving campaign was amplified by matching funds and prizes secured by the Connecticut Community Foundation, totaling $16,471 to support victims of domestic and sexual violence who come to Susan B. Anthony Project for help. Thank you CCF and our loyal donors for your generosity!

You can help Susan B. Anthony Project every time you shop on Amazon! This holiday season, visit smile.amazon.com, and designate Susan B. Anthony Project as your charitable organization, and we will receive 0.5% of your purchase.
Happening Now

HOLIDAY WREATH SALE
We are holding our holiday wreath fundraiser this year with all of our safety in mind. Please visit our website for details!

- Small Wreath (23”) – $20
- Medium Wreath (28”) – $35
- Large Wreath (36”) – $50
- Taper Centerpiece – $30
- Pillar Centerpiece – $30
- Grave Blanket (40” x 28”) – $50

Phone Orders: 860-489-3798  Fax Orders: 860-482-6268
Online Orders: www.sbaproject.org

To become a Wreath Friend and volunteer to sell wreaths on our behalf, contact Denise at dtorson@sbaproject.org or 860-489-3798.

ORDERS DUE: November 1st, 2021
WREATH PICK-UP HOURS:
Saturday, November 20: 9 AM – 12 noon curbside pick-up
Monday, November 22 – Wednesday November 24, 9 AM – 4 PM
(Visit our website for details)

Thank you to Lily & Vine Floral Design!

If you are interested in adopting an individual or family this year, we are requesting donations that are monetary and/or gift cards (in $25 increments). Donations can be mailed to us at 179 Water Street Torrington, CT 06790 ATTN: Adopt-a-Family or dropped in our sanitized outer lobby that is secure from 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Gifts will continue to be received right up until Friday, December 24th.

For answers to your questions, please contact Siobhain at screamer@sbaproject.org or 860-489-3798. Thank you!

Coming Up

Please join us for Cocktails & Jazz in the Barn on Sunday, October 17th from 3:00 - 5:00 pm at the Inn at Mount Pleasant in Torrington. Register online at www.sbaproject.org or call 860-489-3798. Tickets: $100 each.

Please save the date for our 5th annual Walk a Mile in Her Shoes
Sunday, May 22, 2022
on the Litchfield Green!

Thank you to Tind-All Creative Marketing, Tia Fejzo LLC, Oak Solutions LLC, and Turning Point Realty for organizing a wonderful event, Bosses and Brews, with proceeds benefiting SBAP! We were so grateful to connect with an inspiring group of local businesswomen, with the common purpose of empowering women. Pictured are Tia Fejzo; Deirdre Tindall of Tind-All Creative Marketing; Ashley Cerruto, SBAP Business Development Associate; and Kerri Ouellette of Oak Solutions.

Maya Vasquez, a member of Butterflies with Voices delivered bags of toiletries collected for our clients. Accepting the donation is Gina Devaux, SBAP Director of Development. Butterflies with Voices is a non-profit serving at risk youth through empowerment, knowledge, and sisterhood in the states of CT, VA and NY. Their mission is to unlock the potential of young women by instilling self-awareness, humbleness, wisdom, kindness, faithfulness, motivation, and loyalty.

Business Development Associate Ashley Cerruto represented SBAP at the Community Health and Wellness Center’s community event in Winsted in August, to recognize National Health Center Week. Ashley is pictured with CHWC Patient Access Representative Shelley Barber.
I came to SBAP two years ago after completing an internship at the agency, having jumped at the opportunity to join the team when a position became available. My current roles are Domestic Violence/Sexual Assault Advocate, and advocate for the Domestic Violence Rapid Rehousing Program. I also run SBAP’s Transitional Living Program (TLP). I work with clients to help them find safe and affordable housing, whether that be as part of our TLP, or in market rent units. These clients may be currently housed in our emergency shelter and ready to transition to their next residence, or they may be coming from anywhere in the community, and currently in service with SBAP.

While each client’s story is unique, there is always the common thread of feeling unsafe, and so often the dangerous conditions a victim experiences exist within the victim’s home. Assisting these clients with important services, including safety planning and helping them find safe housing, can be so rewarding. The first time they walk into that new apartment, which doesn’t hold the memories of abuse or anxiety that their previous living arrangement had...you can visibly see the relief and joy on their faces, knowing they are in a safe place and can begin a new chapter in their lives. I feel so lucky to be a small part on their journey, and enjoy witnessing all the ways our clients are able to transform their lives and reach their full potential.

Anyone coming to SBAP for help should know that they are going to find a team of advocates who will support them along every step of the way with compassion and guidance; that they will be listened to, and never be judged for their choices; and that they have a right to safety and respect. I’m grateful to be part of such an amazing agency, working alongside many wonderful individuals to make a real difference in the lives of victims in our community.

“...the first time they walk into that new apartment, which doesn’t hold the memories of abuse or anxiety that their previous living arrangement had...you can visibly see the relief and joy on their faces, knowing they are in a safe place and can begin a new chapter in their lives.”