

THE WOMEN'S CENTER



**HOPE**  
STARTS HERE



## RAPE CRISIS & VICTIM SERVICES

### MICHELLE: SUPPORTED TO SUPPORTER

Volunteer victim advocates, who support survivors of sexual assault at the hospital, pursue this work for many reasons. For Michelle, the reason was personal.

Several years earlier, her 12-year-old daughter, McKenna\*, was sexually assaulted while out for a jog. Michelle took McKenna to the hospital for a sexual assault exam where they were met by a victim advocate from The Women's Center. She recalls how the advocate made them both feel safe, believed and supported in their darkest moments. Michelle decided that she would like to be that person for someone else in need.

McKenna has received a continuum of services at The Women's Center, from counseling to support throughout the criminal justice process. Michelle not only advocated and supported her daughter through her journey, but she now volunteers as a victim advocate to help others in similar situations. She provides crisis services on the 24-Hour Rape Crisis Hotline and onsite at the hospital. Even during the pandemic, Michelle continues to take volunteer shifts on a weekly basis because she understands the difference an advocate can make in the life of a victim.

"The Women's Center has become a huge part of who I am! They have given me purpose. **What better way of showing your gratitude but to give back to those that have helped you?**" said Michelle.

\*not her real name



## VIOLENCE PREVENTION & EDUCATION

### PLAY IT SAFE!<sup>®</sup>: VULNERABLE TO EMPOWERED

The Play it Safe!<sup>®</sup> Program teaches kids in pre-kindergarten through high school how to recognize abusive behavior, respond to threatening situations, and report abuse to a trusted adult. For more than 30 years, the program has helped children protect themselves, stop perpetrators and get help to heal from the effects of abuse.

In 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, Javier\* heard a Play it Safe!<sup>®</sup> presentation, where he learned how to recognize abusive behavior and to tell a trusted adult if it happens. The following year, when he was asked to send nude photos to a man during an online game, he knew he needed to tell his parents. Javier learned the same thing was happening to his friends—who were also playing the game—and encouraged them to tell their parents. The parents worked with the school counselor to report the incidents to law enforcement and identify the perpetrator. When a Women's Center trainer came to present to Javier's 4<sup>th</sup> grade class, he and his friends proudly told her what happened to them and that they knew **exactly** what to do because of Play it Safe!<sup>®</sup>!

During a virtual high school presentation of Play it Safe!<sup>®</sup>, trainers spoke with students about dating violence and acquaintance rape. Taylor\* was one of those students. Although she did not make a disclosure that day, a few days later her mom called The Women's Center to say that Taylor disclosed a date rape to her. **"Thank you because without hearing Play it Safe!<sup>®</sup>, Taylor may never have disclosed her assault to me. Police have already picked up the offender, and he is in custody!"**

\*not their real names





## EMPLOYMENT SOLUTIONS

### PRINCESS: UNEMPLOYED TO SELF-SUFFICIENT

Princess, a single mother with a Bachelor's Degree, was laid off in 2019 as her company experienced hardship. When circumstances forced her to apply for public assistance, she came to The Women's Center for help to regain control and change her life for the better.

As she began working with her coach, her priorities were to narrow her job goals, secure employment, and support her family without public assistance.

Princess completed the Jobs NOW! seminars and attended mock interviews, giving her the confidence needed to interview for a position, where she was hired "on-the-spot"! She is now employed full-time working for a local realtor organization and earning a living wage. She is working with a financial coach to help stabilize her family's financial situation and save for the future. She attributes her new found success to the coaching she received from The Women's Center.

"This non-profit was a Godsend! I can see a huge change in the way I think about my career options. At first, I felt so lost, but this program was a tool that helped me gain clarity on the direction in which I desire to walk. If you go into this program with an open heart and mind, and come with an expectation to learn and grow, you will get out of it what you put in. **I left feeling empowered to be and do anything I put my mind to**, and you can to!"

# GENERAL COUNSELING



## ALBERT: ISOLATED TO CONNECTED

Albert started the PEARLS Program last year after struggling with depression. Isolated from family and friends, he was also suffering from health issues and living with chronic pain.

As he began to make progress, his counseling was interrupted when the pandemic hit in March 2020. As his in-home sessions switched to a virtual format, Albert worried he wouldn't be able to continue since he didn't have a computer or smart phone. The Women's Center stepped in to provide a tablet for him to continue virtual sessions.

As his treatment progressed, Albert's counselor encouraged him to engage with others by attending PEARLS Connect group events virtually. But, he always found an excuse not to attend. After finally admitting that he was nervous, Albert and his counselor discussed ways for him to comfortably participate.

His initial plan was to attend but not say anything. However, once the event began, he slowly began to feel comfortable. As his confidence grew, he began to engage with others in the group.

Albert had this to say, "I enjoyed myself so much and can't wait for the next one!

**PEARLS has helped me address my loneliness, and I've enjoyed meeting new people.** And I know that's what PEARLS Connect was designed for!"



## MISSION

**Inspiring and empowering  
women, men and children  
to overcome violence,  
crisis & poverty**

The Women's Center does not do this work alone. We depend on the support and generosity of our volunteers, donors, program partners and those who champion our mission. Most importantly, and at the foundation of our clients' success, is what **they** bring to the work:

- The remarkable resilience of the human spirit;
- The capacity to hope and grow and recover;
- The willingness to engage in the long, hard work to triumph over desperate circumstances; and,
- The courage to transform their lives.

The Women's Center is committed to meeting the needs of our growing and changing community. And in that effort, your support is the reason we will continue to ensure that Hope Starts Here.



THE WOMEN'S CENTER

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**VIOLENCE PREVENTION & EDUCATION**  
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