



THE WOMEN'S CENTER





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“Founded in 1979, The Women’s Center’s mission is to inspire and empower women, men, and children to overcome violence, crisis, and poverty. It is a place of hope, opportunity, and better futures for families of Tarrant County.”





It has been the greatest honor to work with everyone who has been a part of making this chapbook come together. When the team and I were told that we'd be making a bit of a change from past editions and speaking with the community partners that work alongside The Women's Center, we were absolutely ecstatic. We got so much more out of the experience than we could ever imagine. In the midst of a global pandemic, this year has been one of the hardest yet. However, this relentlessly passionate team of law enforcement officials, prosecutors, nurses, and advocates has continued to show up each and every day for victims and give them their best work. I'd say the thing that has impacted me most over the course of creating this chapbook is seeing how beautifully and seamlessly each and every one of these partners in conjunction with The Women's Center come together to take care of victims. In our interviews we laughed and we cried, but most importantly, we learned about the beauty of the village of people who give so willingly of their time and energy to make sure that every victim is given the utmost care. The chapbook team and I are truly in awe of the dedication of those who work for and with The Women's Center.

I would like to thank each and every one of the community partners we were able to speak with for being so ready and willing to share their stories and their passion for their work with us. Thank you for lending us your voices and for changing our lives more than you know. I would also like to thank Katharine Esser, Deborah Caddy, who was often mentioned directly in our community partner interviews, and every one of the directors and staff at The Women's Center who continue to do this vitally important work. It does not go unnoticed. Finally, I would like to thank Dr. Carlson and my staff for their care and dedication to making this project a reality. I'm so incredibly grateful for you all. Again, this project has been life changing and we are honored to showcase the work and words of these incredible individuals.

Ashley Parks
Editor-in-Chief, Spring 2021





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COMMUNITY PARTNERS

CONNIE: JPS Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner

LEAH: TCU Title IX Care

KIM: Tarrant County Criminal DA Prosecutor

GREG: APD Sergeant Over Crimes Against Children

ANDREW: FWPD Sex Crimes Detective

SHELBY: FWPD Victim Assistance

LORI: Victim Assistance Coordinator at Tarrant County
Sheriff's Office

KELLY: Victim Assistance Supervisor at Tarrant County
Juvenile Services





In general in Tarrant County, 1 in 3 women will experience domestic violence according to SafeHaven of Tarrant County.

Nationally, this is 1 in 4 women and 1 in 7 men according to the National Domestic Violence Hotline.

According to a 2015 University of Texas study, 2 in 5 women and 1 in 5 men in Texas experience some form of sexual assault within their lifetime.

In 2018, advocates responded a total of 880 times to local Tarrant County hospitals to provide accompaniment to sexual assault victims while they received a forensic rape exam. This was a 6% increase from the previous year according to The Women's Center of Tarrant County.





WORKING WITH THE WOMEN'S CENTER

CONNIE

There was no question about our commitment to caring for the victims of sexual assault. And so over time in 17 years, you...cause the people have remained the same. I've been here, Deborah Caddy's been there. And so you build these relationships and collaborations that you can grow and foster other relationships with law enforcement and you can community train. And so, that's kind of how the relationship started. But I think equally we have a commitment to care for this population, and we both do it rather well, if I will say, that it just works. And oftentimes Deborah of The Women's Center will be contacted about, "tell us about how you do this in Tarrant County. It seems like you all, you know, you've got it down," and we're both like, it's the commitment that we have to each, to each partner that has made this work. But if you put the victim in the middle and we're just...we really don't know how we did it. It's just that it works in our community. It may look different other places, but for us, those collaborations have really worked.





LEAH

And I think really building those relationships is really important, not just with the organization, but the people who work there. I think that makes a huge difference. So, I love to collaborate with The Women's Center and be able to present together or to provide training that they might need, or just kind of assist with anything that, that might be needed. But that was kind of our most recent collaboration of being able to provide students information, not only about The Women's Center, but about dating violence, domestic violence, healthy relationships, and then also like how that plays out for college students. So, I would go and, while Katharine kind of gave some of the general information, I would then give examples of experiences that students would have to make it even more relatable for the college students that were, that were watching. And so it was a great...it was a great collaboration.

KIM

So one of the things we discovered along the years, not just we, but the global we, like law enforcement is obviously any kind of case that involves a victim, it, it truly does take a village, right? The process really started with crimes against children back in kind of the late eighties, early nineties where people realized, like you have to provide services to children at the same time we're working on cases. And...I think that we've always had agencies that provided services, and we always had law enforcement, but to bring them together is relatively new, like, I mean, like the nineties on, like before that everyone was kind of their own entity in the storm, but what The Women's Center does





with us is we, in a couple of different ways, collaborate directly with them so that we can provide—a lot of our collaboration involves a lot of training, like last year, for instance. The Women’s Center and I, and some, and some police officers and Connie from JPS, we actually went on kind of a training tour of Tarrant County to teach trauma-based training to law enforcement.

GREG

And we were getting invaluable instruction. The partnership was, was highly successful. I mean, all the detectives became comfortable with the therapists and vice versa. And in exchange, I would go over to The Women’s Center one or two days a month and spend an entire day, and I would be available to any victim coming into the center that wanted to maybe ask a cop or a detective a particular question. Oftentimes I would find myself in sort of a therapy session or brought into a therapy session where they, the victim and the therapist were, you know, conducting their business. And I would answer questions and, and I think it was very beneficial because, you know, these victims oftentimes in therapy will question why detectives did or didn’t do something, and having that resource available...The Women’s Center would say, “Hey, we have a detective here right now. Do you want to talk to them?”

ANDREW

We’re not necessarily finished with it, but as the process goes on and they need more counseling or anything like that, The Women’s Center is great about kind of, you know, again, just being that ongoing support for them and giving them whatever it is that they need throughout the process.





SHELBY

Sure, absolutely. So, on a professional level as far as referring our victim, The Women's Center is one of our top referrals. Because they do offer general counseling, and it doesn't have to be specific...sexual assault, although they, you know, they think, you know, they do handle primarily sexual assault. I mean it's, The Women's Center is definitely one of our go-to, um, go-to resources. I work very closely with the directors, so that if we have a special circumstance, it's somebody that needs to get in right away, or if you have a particularly traumatic event that happens, you know I can, I can call and say, "We can rush this one in." And so, we just have a great working relationship with them.

LORI

And I talked with a lady yesterday, actually, she was calling for her daughter. Her daughter was actually an adult, but Mom was still, you know, kind of testing the waters and figuring out what's out there and what to do. And I think Mom told me about four times, she says, "I don't know who to turn to. I didn't know you existed. I, I didn't know who to call. I've never heard of The Women's Center. We've never done this before." And my only answer to her was, "I'm really glad you don't know, because that means you've never had to access the system and experience this." But I was able to give her a referral to The Women's Center and a person to talk to knowing that her daughter is going to need lots of counseling.





SHELBY

So, I put a call in...and I explained the situation, and within 10 minutes, The Women's Center team was down here at our office...meeting with myself and the team of investigators from the other country and they were explaining to them what couldn't be released based on the victim's consensual release of information. So not only were they able to educate the law enforcement from another country about kind of what our rules are as far as confidentiality, but then I was able to immediately get the victim set up with services that they continued with The Women's Center for well over a year, I believe, and it's my understanding that they came out with a very successful—completed, those services. So, point of that is they're there when I need them. At the, an instant, I mean I feel like I could call in the middle of the night and get somebody and say, "I need you to meet me here, I have a unique situation."

KELLY

Early on in our program, I remember a case we had, it was a sexual assault case, the victim was very young, I want to say three or four-years-old, probably about five when they went to court, and the victim went to counseling at The Women's Center and they received play therapy. The Women's Center had a play therapist at the time, and she is just so energetic, so enthusiastic and is great with the children. And she came to the court hearing, and they'll come—the counselors will come to court hearings if necessary for the victims. She came to the court hearing, and you could just tell how it made the victim so much more at ease, and it seemed to kind of—even at that age, you could see





they, the child felt kinda empowered about being in court and a lot more comfortable about being there.

KIM

Like children have to testify. They have to be in the same room as the defendant. They have to be cross-examined, all of those things have to happen in order for us to prosecute. And, I have victims all the time who, they desperately want the person prosecuted, but they also desperately don't wanna go into trial, because they know what that moment looks like, and I'm not going to lie to them and tell them it's going to be easy. I will work with them to get them ready for it, but it's never going to be easy, and so the more partners I have like The Women's Center helping me get her to that moment—because I'm...I need their help. And so, that's the kind of collaborative processes we have with The Women's Center that are just invaluable. Like, I, I literally couldn't do my job without them.

KELLY

I've always been very impressed with The Women's Center staff. The staff are very qualified. They always seem real eager and upbeat and willing to help. I mean...staff I see at meetings that are new to them or that have been in their agency a long time. The second thing I've noticed about their agency that I don't see with all the other agencies is they're always improving, you know, they're adapting, they're making changes. They'll find out like what counseling services are new or improved, what's evidence-based, and then they really work to train themselves, and then they also work to train the community.





GREG

It was a very novel concept for the police or an investigative unit working that closely with a nonprofit and, you know, a rape crisis entity. So that partnership continues today, even though I'm no longer in that unit, it has existed for the past 20 years or so. So, the sergeant in that unit today continues to work very closely with The Women's Center. And, it's, it's a partnership that has endured.

KIM

And so what that meant was we went out—because we know the very first interaction the victim has with law enforcement is so key to how they perceive how the system's gonna treat them. Right? And it's hard to talk to someone who's just been sexually abused, and, you know, let's say it's a guy cop who's like, "I don't want to talk about private parts." You know, it's a very, it's a very hard moment. And so to better teach that moment and to, to help them understand what the victim is doing in that moment, so they can better understand her. We went on literally...possibly did four, separate eight-hour classes for law enforcement, we ended up seeing I don't remember the full number, but it was probably about 500 different law enforcement officers to help teach them what trauma looks like and better techniques for dealing with trauma and better techniques for talking to victims who are suffering from trauma.

ANDREW

The Women's Center hosts those and, you know, we kinda go in an auditorium or whatever and we've got a round table there really of every representative





from every kind of partnership that we deal with, whether it be advocates or prosecutors or nurses, or you know, volunteer workers, law enforcement... literally everyone comes to the table, and we just kind of sit and discuss what have we been doing? What can we do better? What can we do different? I hear you're doing this, let's piggyback off that. And, so it's just a lot of, you know, really neat...everybody kind of coming together and sharing ideas and try to, try and improve the process. And then beyond that over the last couple of years, our unit in particular has kind of gotten the opportunity to kind of develop a personal relationship with a couple of the directors from The Women's Center.

CONNIE

And after some meetings and some challenges that you have in everyone's work, we came together to create this training team that was law-enforcement based. So we, as a team, were going out and training law enforcement officers who are going to be responding, first responders, to people who would call for an outcry of a sexual assault and training them on trauma-informed conversations that they may not realize verbiage really does make a difference, you know, and how you say things. And it was such a good—we trained so many officers, and we were excited to keep going and do more. And then of course COVID hit and we kind of hit a wall with any kind of outside training, but that would be a moment or a time that I could feel really proud as a community and partnering with The Women's Center that we were really making a difference, because when you go at it and you're not just training other advocates or other nurses, and





you're going out of your discipline and hitting that first responder. It's such a good thing to work together.

ANDREW

I've gotten to know Deborah Caddy pretty well and Alicia Byerly and there's several others there, but they're kind of there for us on a personal level, where you'll send her an email and, you know, sometimes it's, "Hey, we're working on this, what do you think about this?" Sometimes it's, "Hey, you know, man, what a year, right?" You know, "How are your kids?" this and that. So, you're just kind of checking in with family and stuff like that. And so having that personal relationship really makes the work part a lot easier, because you develop that relationship. And then whenever you go to these meetings and...it's kind of overwhelming, 'cause you got, you know, 50, 75 people in a room, and I'll find Deborah and I'll go sit with her and go, "Hey, give me a hug. How've you been?" and this and that. And so, it kind of makes the whole process a lot smoother. And so, there's a lot of, like I said, a lot of different levels to, to the relationship that we have, but it's all really good.

LORI

So, I'm really thankful to have the advocates at The Women's Center and have a whole team, you know, that is there to work with me and answer questions and take care of issues or maybe move somebody to the front of the line for counseling if, if that warrants it. And I feel like I can pick up the phone and, and call anybody there if I need something.





COVID

CONNIE

April was the slowest month we've ever had, nobody was coming, and it's like, I never...it was such an odd place to be in this hospital. I kept my office in the emergency department area because there was no other place for me to go. And, you know, protected and everything was different. I mean...this was an emotional thing for everybody in our...everybody. But being in the hospital, seeing your coworkers. It was a weird time. But then patients weren't even coming. There were days when there were more nurses in this department than there were patients. I'd come in and, you know, we had like 8 or 10 patients. We're the county, where are the people? And then as far as, like I said, sexual assault victims, they just weren't, they...24? We were used to seeing 50 to 60 a month.

SHELBY

Yeah. We definitely saw a rise in family violence offenses as a result. I mean people are having to stay at home, they're having to be quarantined, they're having to be around...there's really no escape. We also unfortunately saw a decrease in child sexual abuse, but that wasn't because it was not happening. We think it's because those outcries, they don't have a safe place to make those outcries. So if you have kids that are having





to learn at home virtually and not going to school, or they're not going to a friend's house, or they're not going, you know, to soccer practice or something where they can...they can talk with somebody outside of home. There's not anybody for them to outcry to, so that's kind of a scary statistic that we've seen that we're, you know, kind of watching very closely.

CONNIE

Yes! It was so odd. And then even the hospital. So May came and things opened back up and then it exploded. Our numbers skyrocketed to 70 patients in the month of May. So we were extremely busy. And so, I mean, noticeably things had changed. Things had opened up, people were out and about, and so again, we're like, "Okay, is it over? Is this over where people are afraid to report or afraid to come to the hospital?" And then it kind of leveled out. May's always been a particularly...when the weather gets warmer and people are out doing more things, it just has typically been a month when we've seen an increase, but not from 20 to 70, which was...I was glad they were comfortable in seeking services for sure. But it kind of leveled off through the summer, almost normal kind of. And then we weren't seeing any necess—we're still wearing masks, we're still....there was no change in that the pandemic didn't go away.

KIM

Obviously it's not been a secret that our intimate partner cases are cases that involve family violence between intimate partners, and we've never seen a more dangerous phenomenon than the pandemic when it comes to those cases. Right now, I believe





the last time I looked at the numbers, and I'm bad at quoting numbers, but about half of our capital murders right now involve family violence. And that's, that's an insane number. Family violence and child abuse and violence against women, such as adult sexual assault, has been dramatically affected by the pandemic, because oftentimes the person that's hurting you, you're now locked in with. And like kids can't report to their teachers, kids can't report to their camp counselors, you know, they're not in those positions. So that's happening to kids. Women are in situations where they're locked in, they're locked in the home, but they're with their kids, their husband, sometimes there's job issues. Sometimes there's money issues. There's all sorts of stuff going on that keeps people in that same house. They may not have an opportunity to go somewhere else. And so we're just seeing the explosion of that.

ANDREW

And so, it's tough to sit down and really conduct these suspect interviews and have them have the same type of effect whenever they're covered up except for their eyes. And then, like I said, it's the same thing with, with the victims, you know, if you are...and you're going through their account of everything that happened, you're also trying to pick up on emotional cues and everything like that with them. And so that can be, you know, if they're having a moment, and you can tell if they're lip is starting to quiver, like they're going to start crying...or something like that, you want to either acknowledge that, or you want to really draw out more emotion from kind of what they're going through or what they're remembering and experiencing, you kinda





direct your questions toward that physical reaction, and you can't, again, unless there's something more significant than that, you can't really pick up on that whenever everybody's covered up.

KIM

You know, I do think with the exception of that - that cat thing yesterday, I do think actually think Zoom has been very helpful with us handling certain aspects of hearings that where we really just need to like check in with the court and those kinds of things, I think... courts are always really nervous to do anything not in-person, but I think this has taught them that there's certainly the capability to do that. I, I've been able to have some really good conversations with victims over the phone, because it's been slowed down because we're not...I'm not rushing off to trial or rushing off the court. And I would hope that stays, because I will tell you, I, I know so much more about my victims than I've ever known in 20--I've been doing this 20 years--and I've always been very victim, victim and trauma based, and still, I know more in this last year about all the victims in cases I have than I knew in years past, so I hope that for me, personally, I hope I continue to take the time to get to know my victims as well as I can, even when, even when everything else starts to, to ramp up and be fast again.

KELLY

With the virtual hearings I think there's a lot of pluses for victims. There's some convenience, because they don't have to leave work or home and come up to, you know, a strange place. And there also is a big safety issue with them. They do not have to worry about





being around the offender, facing the offender, you know, it's a lot more safer to do this by camera than it is being in person or the same courtroom. Now, when victims do come to court...I think in general victims are a lot more comfortable being on video. So that's a change I would like to see continue. However, I don't think it's real likely it will. I think when, when this is done, we're allowed to go back to in-person hearings if that's what they're going to require.

LEAH

The ability to just hop on Zoom and connect with folks when we're all very busy in this work was actually really convenient. So some of that may continue. I don't know, we typically would meet and have lunch and a speaker and kind of check in, which was nice, but there may be some things that allow us more connections. So like our TCU Sexual Violence Prevention Coalition that we have representatives from The Women's Center on, sometimes it's hard for me to get people to attend that meeting, and I just schedule it for next week, and my response rate is much higher than if it was an in-person meeting. Because it's easier for people to just hop on Zoom than leave their office or leave their building if they're a community partner kind of off campus. So there are certain things I think we will look at that will allow people to connect if there are barriers such as time or distance involved.





TAKING IT TO HEART

CONNIE

And so knowing that most people don't report sexual assault, or that are contemplating not following through with law enforcement. Why would anybody make the ones that actually were brave enough to walk in feel like they're lying? It's the only crime I can think of that has such a detrimental effect on people's personal feelings about what happened.

ANDREW

We get a lot of victims that feel like they should be reluctant or feel reluctant to kind of come forward and make these, these reports because they're scared of victim retaliation or they're scared that we're not going to be able to do anything to help them out. And so it felt really good for me to kind of, at least one person at one time, be able to kind of reaffirm with her that like, you know, we, we will help you. You know, whenever I say I got your back, I got your back through the whole thing, like we'll take care of you. And so that felt really good to be able to say that, but then be able to back it up on time after time after time.





GREG

And I mean, the reality of it is, very, very, very few of them are making it up. And as strange as that might sound, sometimes truth is stranger than fiction.

CONNIE

You know, if you rob a bank, people don't feel like...well, I mean, I don't know, I've never really studied bank robbers, but...they're not, they don't feel the same way as a victim of sexual assault...or if somebody's getting robbed at the bank, let's say that. Well, they don't feel like they've got to prove it when they're asked about it. It's like, "Oh my gosh. Oh my gosh, are you okay?" We talk about sexual assault, "Well, what were you wearing? Well, how much did you have to drink?" And that kind of thing. And we still live in that era. And I can't believe it's 2021 and we're still having these conversations with people about...listen to yourself. I mean, I have parents say that to kids, their own kids like, "Well, what'd you think's going to happen? You're a stripper." I mean, trying to feed four kids so, does it matter really?

GREG

And so we went in and, she lived in the home with her younger brother and her parents. Well, you know, we told the parents why we were there, obviously they were mortified and very emotional, but not only because we were telling them their daughter might be victimized, but they recounted the story on about the date and time in question. And we knew when this happened because of photographs were time and date stamped, they said that their child, the daughter, ran





into the room in the middle of the night and said that a bad man had been in her room. They, the dad got up and searched the home. There was nothing out of place. And they came to a conclusion that most parents probably would have in that case, they believed she had a nightmare. And so, they convinced her or continued to tell her that “No, honey, you just had a bad dream.” And they weren’t bad parents. They just believed that she had a bad dream. Well, she slept with her parents for about a week. They allowed that, and ultimately they sent her back to her room, and Mom discovered that she was after that was sleeping under the bed. So, that child had, you know, each time she went to bed at night, she would crawl under the bed to sleep because she was afraid the bad man was going to come back. So here we are now telling the parents, “Oh no, there was really a bad man in her bedroom and we know who it, who it was.” And so I went out in the front yard of this home to make a phone call. I needed to brief the chain of command that we had indeed found this child, and her dad followed me out. And you know, he was very emotional, weeping and, he kept, you know, he didn’t...One might think that a person in that position would ask for 10 minutes alone with a man inside of a room, ask all those questions.

KIM

They’ve given up on themselves in ways that they think that we’re going to. And so when we don’t, it’s inspiring to watch women learn to trust themselves in the process and trust us. And it’s just, it’s such a beautiful, beautiful human story that I wouldn’t be a lawyer if there wasn’t a human story to it. I would be like a boring, boring contract lawyer, which is not my





thing. But I think there's always that one case that just like...and as prosecutors, it's funny, cause it's never the one that, that makes the news or, you know, like we've all done cases that were on Forensic Files like...that's what you think is the cool thing, and I've done that and those are cool, don't get me wrong, but like the case that, and I will never forget it, it was a little girl. She wasn't little by the time I tried the case, but, she had been sexually assaulted by her foster dad in foster care. And so she was, she...actually, the case, because of reasons not important except that the case got very old by the time I had the case. And so, you know, it happened to her when she was 15, but we didn't end up trying the case till she was 18, almost 19. And I remember when I got the case, and I met with her the first time, you know, she told me, "I'm not doing this for myself, I'm doing this because I can't ever know that he's a foster dad. You know, like I can't, I can't know that can happen again." And I thought, "Okay, well, you know, that's so brave, but this is- you know, this still happened to you." Like it's--and she just never talked about how it happened to her. There was always like, "I've got to make sure this doesn't happen to someone else."

GREG

The only thing that he asked me, and he asked it over and over, or he made a statement, you have to help my daughter. That's what he was concerned about. So, it was, that was very impactful. We were able to refer him to resources, probably Alliance for Children and The Women's Center stepped in at that point. The Women's Center was already fully engaged with the adult victims we had. So anyway, that was a, a very





impactful moment. Not only were we relieved to find this child, but didn't hear about the circumstances that she had endured. And then the dad begging me for help for that...for his child. It was something I'll never forget.

CONNIE

So, I'm a little frustrated because I'm not going to get everything done. I come to the hospital, and of course that subsides when you get here, you know. And especially when you meet your victim, and you start talking to them and realizing that I have somebody here who's the exact same age as my youngest kid. And they're homeless. And they've been assaulted. They're on the streets. They have no family, they have nowhere to go. I have nowhere to discharge them. They want to go back to the street. It's Christmas Eve. And I think the hardest thing for me ever, was to discharge her and watch her walk down main street on Christmas with nobody to go to. And so, I didn't give another thought to not having that last present. And if I could say anything, I was humbled by that experience.

SHELBY

And so, we're able to kind of be that go between, you know, we'll talk to the victim, and we can kind of explain things, and if for whatever reason there's not enough evidence to move forward, we can help explain that to them, but that doesn't mean that it didn't happen. And we always tell them that the fact that a case can't be made, does not mean that you were not victimized and you're not a survivor. And so, you know, as far as a misconception, I think a lot of us can either see us as strict law enforcement, like we work for law





enforcement, therefore everything they say, we do, or we're advocates, so we're those tree hugging advocates that believe 100% everything a victim says and fight the investigators, and that's not true. We really kind of ride that line down the middle and make sure that we advocate for the victim, but that we are also working with the district, to make sure that everything's going smoothly.

KIM

So on this..., obviously I've been a prosecutor for 20 years. I, I was kind of struggling about...there's been a lot, you know, there have been so many times that I have been moved... I've been moved, because we get to meet people in the very worst moments of their lives, and the bravery and the honesty and the forgiveness that I see in the courtroom, in 20 years, I've never...it never doesn't take my breath away, you know. Like it is unbelievable to watch families who have lost a loved one stand up and say they forgive the murderer, but it happens more than it doesn't. I don't, I don't know how to, you know...that is such a beautiful, powerful moment to watch victims of sexual assault come off the stand and tell me, and, and this also happens more than it doesn't, they say, "I'm glad I finally got to have my say." And I think that's such a powerful thing that we sometimes forget. Like victims on cases I have lost have still hugged me and thanked me, because it mattered to them that we, as a community, sexual assault community, stood up for her. And I never want to forget that. I never want to think about my, my job, my life, my career in terms of wins and losses. I always want to think of them in the human element. Like, did I leave this one person better for being there for them





in that moment? Because I know when they come to me, something terrible would happen. I don't get to meet people where something terrible didn't happen, right? Like that's, that's not my job, but I don't have to make it more terrible. You know, I can't fix it. I can't—getting, putting someone away, even for life in prison, doesn't bring closure, it doesn't make it better, it doesn't heal you, it is a part of it, but it is not the part that changes the person. What changes the person is learning that people believe in them, that people will help them when they--so many victims feel like they, they're surprised that we want to, that we want to help them. Right?





DESTRESSING

KELLY

I think it's really important, not just in our field, but a lot of fields—I mean, a lot of fields are stressful in, in you work with...in traumatic situations, but I think it's very important that you have other interests. We don't need—this doesn't need to be everything I do: working with victims. If it is, again, I think it's going to affect you in the long run, in the job you do. In the “other interests” you know, I think sometimes it helps if it's more of a fun type thing, but I think you need other, other interests.

ANDREW

Yeah. Yeah, and I think, I think that's tough for some detectives, some officers to do, and I think really early on, especially in a young officer's career, it's tough to just do cop stuff, cop stuff, cop stuff, and you're like—cause it's all really cool, but it is traumatic to go through, and then you leave work and then you want to talk about cop stuff, cop stuff, and you ignore it - and that's all you do, like you kind of make that your whole life a little bit, and, I think early on in my career, I kinda got sucked into that and kinda started developing some really unhealthy habits to, to really cope with all that. And, it really took me recognizing that you need to have, you have to have hobbies or, or things to occupy your time apart from this job. And,





I've got a wife, I've got two little kids, and I've got a three-year-old and an eight-year-old daughter, and they occupy every second of my time, so, I've got, you know, I'm dressing up like a Disney princess this hour, and then I'm watching my eight-year-old ride her bike this hour.

LORI

And my really fun destresser, and a lot of people think I'm really crazy for this, is I am a bead weaver. So I play with little tiny seed beads and make these really cute little objects and pictures and jewelry and all sorts of stuff, so that's my therapy, that's my outlet. And I just get in there and I'm like in the zone and just, you know, for hours if I need to.

KELLY

Me personally, one thing I like to do is cook. I particularly like barbecue, so I'll, I'll do that a lot. And that kind of helps me take my mind off the situation. And then, for me personally, when, you know, if I have like a real stressful case or things just seem to be getting bad, I think a couple of things: one, you have to kind of acknowledge it, be aware of it. And then, two, what- what I like is- is to be by myself. I need...I need just some time by myself to process a case, a situation, you know, it could be on a walk, it could be in my room by myself, or whatever, but I really don't need to be around other people and converse things with just some time alone.





LORI

I do lots of things. I learned early on that with this job, and with, you know, maybe whatever jobs y'all take, that when you leave at the end of the day, you leave work at work. When you hit that back door, it stays there.

LEAH

So, that's definitely something that I don't do, but—I'm trying to think what else, as far as boundaries or care... I don't know, I have a...I've developed some routines for life. I will say that has been really helpful. So I have kind of a morning routine that I go through: I spend time in reflection, prayer, that's important to me, um, physical activity—moving my body—if that's something like walking or running on the treadmill or doing yoga, that's—just kind of that holistic balance and it's interesting because it's those things that we always tell people, but it's taken me... a while to get to the point where it's routine and it's normal. But yeah, I think those would be the things that I would point to that have been most helpful.

CONNIE

And so we can't take the patient's trauma away. And as nurses, we want to fix things, right? And so, what I've told my staff is that we have to be the ones that are there for a patient in their time of need. And we have to be able to give them all of us and the best that we possibly can on their darkest day. But when that's over, you have to shut that light out and know, and you'll know because they will hug you, they will thank you, they will be glad that they came, that you did the best thing and the best job that you could for them





in that moment of trauma for them and shut the light out, drive home... and you paint, as I paint—whatever your, whatever your...thing is, whatever your Zen—is to feel better. Because again, we can't take those things away, you just have to remember that, but they're going somewhere where they need somebody to be that person right then, and you have to—if we're going to do this, we're going to do it right, and we're going to do it well.

LORI

And there's those one or two cases that get in your head and you will always take them with you. So I do various things when I really feel like I need a therapist: I call my mom, because mom is a social worker in private practice, and I tell her, "Mom, I need a therapist, I don't need a mother." And she knows to put her social work hat on and listen. So I do that—not a lot, but whenever I need it.

SHELBY

My husband is actually a sergeant in the Fort Worth Police Department; he's over at our crisis intervention team, and we've been married for—gosh we're going on almost 15 years...we're coming up on our anniversary soon...We work a lot of cases together, but we also are able to come home and we understand—a lot of people who are not married to either law enforcement or they're not married to somebody that deals with survivors, it's very hard to kind of understand everything that we have to absorb during the workday.





LORI

My husband is a police officer. He's a career cop. So he sees things from a different perspective, so if I need a little bit different perspective, just to kind of unload on and say, you know, why did this happen or why did that not happen, to kind of ease my stress level a little, I will run things by him. Uh, I also just kind of just talk at night, you know, over dinner with him if I've had a bad day, because I know he's bound to confidentiality the same as I am, especially now since we work at the same agency again. We worked at Arlington PD together, and now he's at the county with me, but I have seniority and tenure over him now.

SHELBY

My husband and I work together...So, we are able to bounce a lot of things off each other, so when we debrief, we're able to debrief each other and that other person knows what we've gone through, you know, and, and then sometimes we're also like "I don't wanna—let's not talk about work today, I don't wanna talk about work today." But definitely—you know we have two beautiful children and so our kids help distract us from everything, and you know we're, we're Netflix people, unfortunately we're True Crime Netflix people, like we watch all the stuff that we do, we don't do romantic comedies or anything like that, because that ain't realistic, ha, we watch the serial killers about, you know, all that kind of stuff, and we sit there, and we judge what the investigators do hahaha, but that's really kind of the way—honestly, I mean, that's kind of the way that we, we get through it is just bounce things off each other and just, kind of, take a big deep breath at the end of the day.





HOPE STARTS HERE

KELLY

What can I offer in a word of hope for victims? You know, I think the word “hope” is kind of it.

CONNIE

...so I hope moving forward, and actually I know this will happen, so I don't say it's a hope, but with the expansion of the population that we're going to see, that we can get more people into other services as well. We're talking about domestic, other types of abuse, strangulation, just continuing that and growing and helping more people. And that it all works and that people see that there is a need for it, and that they'll support it in any way. That's the hope. And then this one phrase thing, if I could offer...if I could give them a little bit of hope, I would tell them that, kinda like I said before, it's unfortunate that we can't take this away, but this is not a place that you have to live. Right? And you can decide with all the services and all the resources and all the support that we're going to give you, how we're going to move forward, you know, and giving them that positive affirmation that they can.





LORI

It will get better. Today may be the worst day of your life, but it will get better, and you don't have to do it by yourself. And I think that goes for all of us, even non-victims.

LEAH

But continuing the awareness and not being afraid to talk about it, because when that happens, then hopefully that will reduce the stigma and people will feel comfortable to report, if that's something they're comfortable doing.

ANDREW

I would say, just be confident in yourself and just know that you're important. It doesn't matter what your background is, what set of circumstances you come from, what you've been a victim of. It doesn't matter. Just know that you have value and just know that you do matter. I think that's, I think that's something that we all need to remind ourselves of every now and then.

GREG

There's a human being behind every one of those stories. So anyway, I think that we became much better at recognizing the human being behind the case, and being mindful of what that person needed to move on, because long after the criminal case is solved, and let's say the guy's in prison, there's still a person who has to deal with what happened.

LORI

What I would love to see going forward is that I work myself out of a job...I love what I do, but I would love not to have to do this. I would love for nobody to have





to do this. You know, and in my point of view, why can't we just get along and respect each other regardless of who they are? So, but that's a perfect world in a dream and you try to live in a perfect world, so in reality I would hope that we learn to all work together, do what is best for the people that we work for, and work with and not step on toes and not finger point and blame. You know, there's too much victim blaming going on out there to begin with. And I have to squash it in my own agency a lot. So, you know, just be kind to people. That's what I hope to see.

LEAH

Okay. What do I see for the future... and hope for the future? I think I have a couple of different responses to that. Kind of more globally, nationally, holistically, continued movement of awareness, actually talking about these issues, not being afraid to talk about them. The number of students that I've interacted with just this week on presentations is over, over well, over 300. And I also teach these students like 20 years ago, and that—I don't think we never talked about. Like, I don't remember this ever being a topic that wasn't acknowledged. And so I hope—that means you did a lot. I will acknowledge.

SHELBY

I would tell victims probably that, that you're not alone. I mean, you...I do not tend to know what you're going through as a victim. I do not understand what you're going through as a victim; however, I know that there are people that can help work through those things with you. There are support groups, there are other survivors...there's clinical resources, and so you're not





alone when it comes to getting resources. We will walk with them every step of the way until they're sick of us really, I mean, until they're like, "Okay thank you, we're good." Cuz it's hard and it's not that we're doing everything for them...they have gone through a traumatic event, which alters their brain and their thinking and their decision-making capabilities and so sometimes you need a little bit of extra help. I mean, you know, you have to put yourself in their shoes. And let's say you lose a loved one unexpectedly and now you have to sit down and plan a funeral...I mean you are going to be completely overwhelmed with that. Put yourself in the shoes of a victim: you were just sexually assaulted and do I need to report...do I really want everybody knowing what happened and what does this mean for me in the future? And so really, I would say just that you're not alone. We're going to get you to all the different places that you need to go to start doing your healing process.

LEAH

And I liked the word "journey" as the word of hope, because journey is something you can choose your path on. You can choose if you need to take a pause, if you need assistance on that journey, and not every day is going to be perfect or, you know, there's not a magic, like, date of...this makes me think of a comment that a student shared with me that their friends were not being understanding and saying things like, "Well, it's been, you know, three months why, you know why aren't you over it?" There's no end date. There's no, there's no prescribed...it's a journey, but healing can be found, and you have support and you have care as you may need it along that journey.





KIM

It's, it's the victims, they're powerful...I'm not kidding. I mean, I have seen...I have seen all kinds of things in my life, but I've never seen anything braver than someone walking up to that stand. Never.





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