

Long Island Volunteer Hall of Fame
Archive Project
Inception to Induction

Nassau County Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCCADV)
Founded as Coalition for Abused Women (CAW)

Year of Founding: 1976

Issue(s) Addressed: Domestic Violence/ Battered Women, Sexual Assault

Induction Category & Year: Emergency Services, 2002

Founders: Beverly Merkinger, Dr. Sherry Radowitz, & Arlene Siegelwaks

Personal Quote from Sherry: “From synergy, came magic.”

History: At a meeting of the Levittown Inter-agency Coordinating Council in 1976 a momentous coming together of the right people at the right time occurred. Sherry Radowitz, who was chairperson of Nassau NOW’s new Task Force on Household Violence/Battered Women and Associate Director of the Action Council of Central Nassau had just recently moved back to New York from Colorado where she was involved in the Fort Collins NOW chapter. She entered into a conversation with Beverly Merkinger, Mental Health Worker, and Arlene Siegelwaks, Assistant Director of Consultation and Education, both employed in the Community Mental Health Center at Nassau County Medical Center (now NUMC), about battered women on Long Island. They concurred that not much was known about the issue. A social worker began going into the community to talk about violence against women. This small effort fueled a survey to Nassau County agencies and organizations to determine if battered women were asking for services and what was being offered.

An initial planning session was held in September of 1976 with organizational representatives to determine a strategy for making services available to victims. Members of this planning session formed the nucleus of the Coalition that was named at the first meeting, the Coalition for Abused Women. Beverly and Sherry shared the administrative responsibilities in the initial phases and co-chaired the Coalition with goals of improving communication and increasing membership to strengthen the organizational structure. Sherry then became the first President.

As it was determined that no agency could provide the direct services needed, the Coalition initiated steps toward incorporation to obtain grants to provide services. Through the efforts of Arlene, Nassau County Medical Center provided donated space and Comprehensive Employment & Training Act (CETA) workers, supervised by Arlene, for the initial staffing. Sherry took hotline calls at her home until the Coalition in 1977 started its hotline staffed by volunteers. The Coalition’s first grant was from the VEATCH Foundation for a phone device to enable the hotline to be available 24 hours a day and volunteers could have the calls diverted from the emergency room at the hospital to their home throughout the night.

Sherry, Beverly and Arlene served many years on the Coalition's Board of Directors, shouldering the responsibility for organizational direction and fiscal oversight. The dedication, hard work, contributions of time and energy and their combined wisdom assured the creation of a stable organization that sets a benchmark in quality services for victims and is a standard for the community.

Agency Mission: The Nassau County Coalition Against Domestic Violence provides comprehensive services that focus on the safety and well being of victims of domestic violence, and sexual assault. We also work to ensure societal accountability, improve institutional responsiveness to victims, and increase public awareness in order to prevent domestic violence, and sexual assault.

Scope of Activities: NCCADV is the hub of services for victims of domestic violence, dating violence, elder abuse, or sexual assault in Nassau County and an energetic advocate for social, systems and legislative change in the county, state and nation. It provides 24 hour, staffed hotlines on domestic violence and sexual assault, an emergency shelter, transitional housing, counseling, legal consultations and services, court and hospital advocacy, educational services and training for professionals. The police, probation, parole, sheriffs, courts, drug and alcohol, health and mental health systems all depend heavily on the Coalition to provide services for the victims and training within their systems. All services are without a fee. From inception to the 2002 induction (25 years), the organization has responded to over 151,000 hotline calls and provided services to over 16,000 victims. In addition, 180,000 people have participated in educational and training programs.

Volunteer Involvement: From inception, this organization has and continues to utilize volunteers in a variety of capacities – governance (board and committees), direct services (hotline, client advocacy), fundraising (events, donations) and legislative/public policy efforts.

Submitted by
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