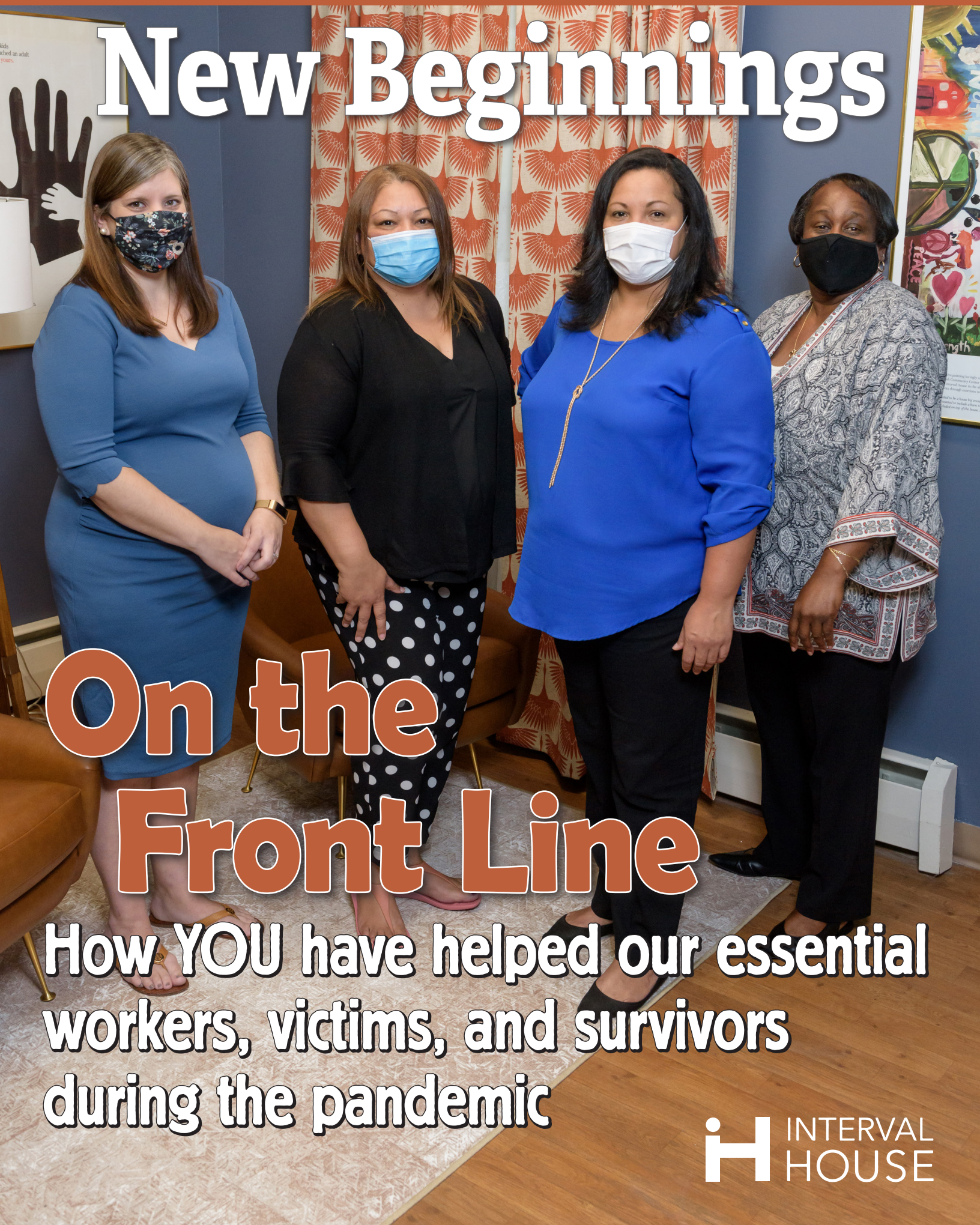
New Beginnings



On the Front Line

How YOU have helped our essential workers, victims, and survivors during the pandemic

INTERVAL HOUSE

On the Front Line

On March 16, with a public health crisis looming, a swift directive sent 28 of 36 Interval House employees home to work remotely. This action, which was focused on the health and safety of both clients and staff, required that eight essential advocates remain working onsite to ensure the safety of current clients and those we didn't know yet. What has transpired since is a testament to those who choose to work in the service of others. Our front-line staff has never wavered in their dedication, providing 24/7 coverage of our hotline and Safe House, and making sure all clients in the courts receive the advocacy they deserve. In this year's annual report, we pay tribute to our front-line workers and their counterparts everywhere by sharing the thoughts of four of our colleagues who have showed up every day without fail.

Heather Flannery

Assistant Director

What was a typical day like for you before the pandemic, and how has the outbreak affected your day-to-day work?

It's almost tough to remember! A typical day pre-pandemic involved checking in with advocates about any crisis situations or ongoing client concerns. We'd strategize about the best way to address those together, and plan for any upcoming events or activities in the Safe House. My work also involved a lot of attendance at in person meetings in the community, representing Interval House among other emergency shelter and housing provider partners to support consistency and best practices across our coordinated access network and other service areas. Many of these meetings still take place, but over the phone, or a Zoom call, and the pandemic has changed the frequency of them so that everyone can be as responsive as possible to the changing health and safety conditions. There's been a very diligent and sincere effort on the part of community partners in the Greater Hartford area to ensure that the needs of victims and those most vulnerable have been prioritized during the pandemic, while still protecting the well-being of essential workers.

What has impressed you most about your team this summer?

I am constantly impressed and grateful for the dedication and commitment that our team of front-line workers has shown over these challenging months. Many have put their personal schedules and concerns on the back burner to keep showing up every day. Without this generosity, we would not have been able to keep the safe house and other essential services operating throughout the pandemic, limiting the already scarce options for women and children fleeing domestic violence. I remain deeply appreciative of the courage and stamina shown by our team this summer, and consider it an honor to serve alongside them.

What do you miss most about "normal" times?

I miss the connections that we have with so many others that support our mission. In the past, we've had regular volunteers share their time and talents to support our clients in so many ways. Cancelling "day of caring" events and turning away donation drop-offs has been heartbreaking for an organization like Interval House that relies on donor support. People have been incredibly understanding of our need to protect and limit contact, but we've truly missed the encouragement, energy, and good will of those that share our commitment to the mission. I'm grateful for the ways that so many have stayed in touch with us through this unprecedented time, and can't wait to welcome them back when it's safe for everyone!

Maria Mojica

Safe House Manager

What is the biggest challenge you have faced in your role over the last few months?

The biggest challenge for me has been not always knowing what is going on, but having our clients look to me as someone who has the answers. The pandemic took us all by surprise, and even the experts didn't know what was happening at first. In the beginning when residents started to panic or get scared, I did not always know how to calm their fears because I also was anxious.

What about your job is giving you hope right now?
I am seeing our clients cooperate more than usual. They are working as a team to clean the house, remind each other to wear masks and wash hands, and just support one another. It's a pleasure to see everyone pitching in during this time.

What do you miss most about "normal" times?
I miss the other staff! It is usually like a family around here but with so many people working remotely, we don't have coworkers popping in to say good morning or elevate the mood when things get tough.

Mercedes Johnson
Domestic Violence Hotline Supervisor

What is most worrying to you about helping victims during the pandemic?
The thing that has worried me most is finding shelter for all the people calling in. With the Safe House always full, we need to use hotels for overflow. But with the City of Hartford placing homeless people in hotels, our usual partners had to turn us away. So we had to find another option. I can tell you, though, this has been the most wonderful thing. The new hotel with which we are working is wonderful! The hotel staff has been amazing, and so easy to work with. They are some of the best people I've ever met. You know, the way a hotel should be. It's really been a blessing in disguise, and I am hoping we can continue to work with them even after the pandemic.

What motivates you to continue working onsite during the pandemic?
I get out of bed in the morning knowing that I will come here and will help at least one person. I will make a difference in their life. Also, talking to the women living here—they need to talk. They feel we care about them when we are here in the building. For that reason, I can't be home—I prefer to come to work.

What do you miss most about "normal" times?
I really miss that connection with the staff that you have when you see them every day. I used to be able to run over to our adult advocate's office or go upstairs to see Mary-Jane or Amanda or Hailey. I miss that interaction. I think we take things for granted...we take people for granted. Not now. Life is short.

Karen Gaston
Family Violence Victim Advocate Site Supervisor & Docket Advocate

How has the pandemic changed how you help clients in the court system?
The pandemic has made my job very challenging. As soon as the courts started closing in March, hearing dates were cancelled or changed, but victims were not notified and had no idea what was going on. Personally, I felt like the clients were no longer the focus. My fellow advocates and I had to scramble to communicate with them—to let them know about rescheduled dates. It really interrupted their lives, because they have to take days off from work to come to court.

How are you balancing stressors at home with work as we continue to face this crisis head on?
My family is doing a good job of staying motivated, keeping in touch with one another, and being supportive of one another. This is especially true of my brothers and me, as we lost our mom to COVID a few months ago. We definitely feel the need to be closer. And we know that it could be worse. We still have our jobs, roofs over our heads, and food to eat. Being grateful helps when things get tough.

What do you miss most about "normal" times?
I definitely miss being able to visit loved ones whenever I want. For me personally, with my mom passing and having older aunts and uncles, we have to be so careful with their health. I miss being able to visit them and hug them. I just miss connecting in that way. At work, I miss the old way...seeing people. Court is so empty. I just want to go knock on the judge's door, stop by her chambers, or go to the state's attorney office.

What do you want those reading this to know?
I want our donors to know that you have helped us tremendously! We couldn't do what we do without you. In this line of work, it really helps to know someone has got your back. Thank you!

You helped:

6,534 victims in total - **5,114** new clients and **1,420** continuing clients

5,567 clients navigate the complex waters of the criminal and civil courts

755 high-risk victims through our partnerships with local police departments

84 victims with services tailored to the dynamics of immigration through Project: Hope Beyond Fear

399 victims from outside of our service area

Our clients were:

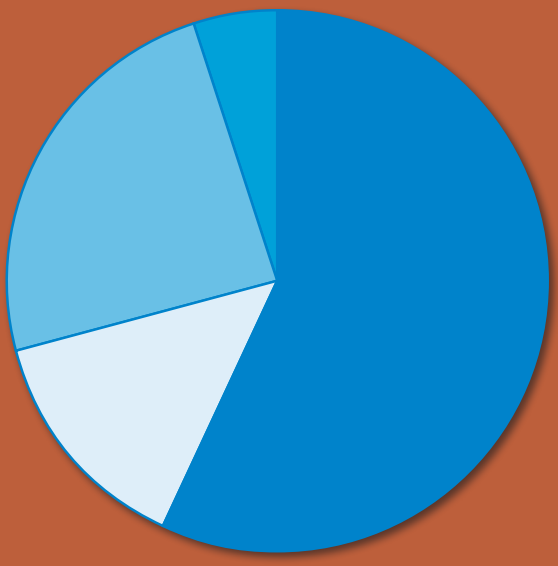
78% female and **22%** male

67% between the ages of 25-59

32% Black, **32%** Hispanic, and **23%** White (**13%** Asian, Native American, and Other)

We reached:

13,509 people through community education presentations and outreach events



Revenue

- Government Grants [57%]
- Foundation & Corporate Grants [14%]
- Individual Donors (You!) [24%]
- United Way [5%]

We provided:

14,496 total contacts (incoming and outgoing calls) with clients

8,401 bed nights for **167** victims in shelter (includes 770 hotel bed nights)

189 children with safety planning, counseling, support groups, childcare, play groups, and art and music therapy

25,203 meals in our Safe House to victims and their families

We did all of this with support from you and a team of **31** advocates and **5** administrators. Of us:

26 are full-time and **10** are part-time

10 are dedicated to hotline crisis response

4 assist victims in the Safe House

10 work in criminal and civil courts

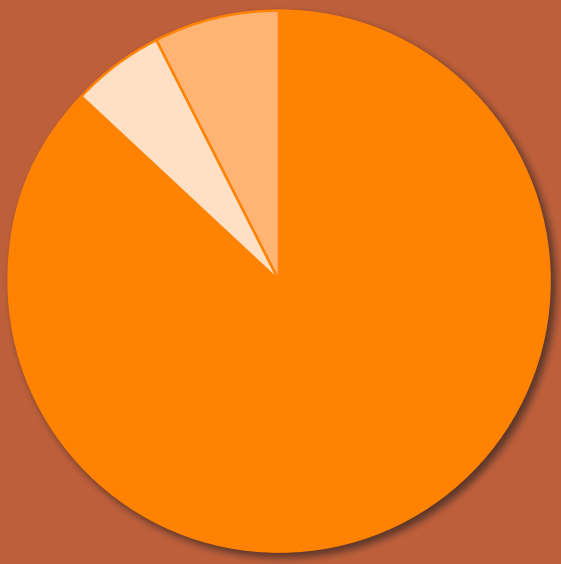
3 work specifically with immigrant and refugee victims

3 work in police precincts, facilitating direct collaboration with law enforcement

1 is devoted to community outreach and education

8 have served our clients as essential, frontline workers throughout the pandemic

28 have been working remotely, ensuring constant support for our clients through the wonders of technology



Expense

- Program, Assistance to Individuals and Outreach [87.58%]
- Management [5.5%]
- Fundraising [7.4%]

A Message from Mary-Jane: Amid Despair, a Shower of Blessings

Dear Friends,

It is difficult to look back over the past year with clarity. Hard to imagine that just a year ago we were out for our first ever walk to end domestic violence and celebrating together at the Riverview the growth of programs and services and outcomes at Interval House. And then, despite the pandemic, a virtual gala where we flew by the seats of our pants and all of you were there to catch us.

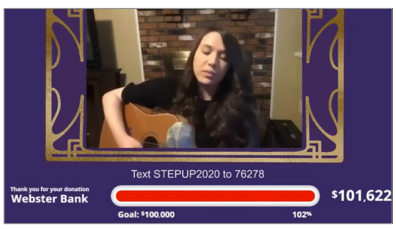
Life has changed. It has been a year all about desperate need and a year about how all of you have stepped up and made it happen. The crush of need, the increase in violence, the heartbreaking calls for advice - How do I get through this? What do I do next? Where is it safe for me to go? You were there for us and I am profoundly grateful.

The last six months have been challenging at Interval House. The hotline has been ringing off the hook. We are hearing from victims who are trapped at home with abusers and whose needs are increasingly complex as the stressors of the pandemic—isolation, job loss, plummeting household income, school closures, food scarcity, and the threat of eviction—hang in the balance. Staff has seen a staggering 58% uptick in contacts—that is incoming and outgoing calls—since April compared to the same period in 2019 and has risen to meet a 25% increase in the individual number of victims seeking help.

Walk to End Domestic Violence, October 2019

Breakfast of Champions, October 2019

Rachel Louise Snyder addresses the room at The Hartford Club, February 2020



Step Up & Stay In, one of the first virtual galas of the pandemic, May 2020

Our Safe House is full and more families have been placed in hotels than ever to manage overflow and ensure social distancing. Our hotel bills over the last six months are just over $57,000. So many violent cases are out there and come to us through our partnerships with local law enforcement. Being referred to us are nearly 100 women each month who are being stabbed and beaten with fists and increasingly, objects. They are at high risk for homicide. Immediate response on every level is required to save their lives.

We all are grappling with our own hardships brought on by this public health crisis and the heavy, heavy weights of social turmoil. But through all of this turbulence and chaos, one thing remains the same: **You.** It is your support that keeps our ship afloat. Never forget that **you** are not only changing lives, **you** are saving them. It is **you** that guarantee we continue to keep more victims safe and give them a life without fear. Thank you. A year that could have been spectacularly difficult was made whole by **you**.

With clean hands, an ever-present mask, and a most grateful heart,

Mary-Jane Foster

Thank you for your blessing of support last year.

You can continue to help victims now with a tax-deductible gift at intervalhousect.org/donate today.

Thank You

In addition to the hundreds of generous individuals and trusts that supported our mission this year, we would like to thank those corporations and organizations that provided us vital financial backing through grants, sponsorships, and tithes:

100 Women Who Can - Farmington Valley
Abigail Phelps Chapter DAR
Accounting Resources Incorporated
Albertus Magnus College
Alpha Chi Omega
Apex Refrigeration, Cooling and Heating
Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses
Asylum Hill Congregational Church
Aurora Women and Girls Foundation
Bank of America
Bank of America Foundation
Berkshire Bank Foundation
Blessed Sacrament Parish
Buckingham Congregational Church UCC
Candlelight Writing Workshops
Cantor Colburn
Center Congregational Church-Missions
Charities Aid Foundation of America
Charles Nelson Robinson Fund
Charter Oak Health Center
Church of Christ Congregational UCC
Church of the Holy Trinity
City of Hartford
Colchester Federated Church
Community Child Guidance Clinic
Community Healthcare Credit Union
Congregation Beth Sholom B'nai Israel
Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence
Connecticut Department of Housing
Connecticut Department of Social Services
Connecticut Natural Gas
Connecticut Online Computer Center
Connecticut's Children
CT Pest Elimination
East Granby Congregational Church
Eastern Connecticut Association of Realtors®
Farmington Bank Community Foundation
Federal Emergency Management Agency
First Church in Windsor
First Church of Christ Congregational UCC
First Church of Christ Congregational
First Congregational Church
First Congregational Church of Granby
Fox61
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Harper Collins Publishers
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Hartford Marathon Foundation
Hartford Behavioral Health
Hartford Foundation for Public Giving
Hartford Healthcare Medical Group
Hartford Steam Boiler
Hartford Union of the King's Daughters and Sons
Highland Park Families Foundation
Hoffman Auto Group
Holy Trinity Church
International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers
J. Walton Bissell Foundation
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Kelser Corporation
Kevorkian & Associates
Labyrinth Brewing Company
LARRABEE Fund Association
Liberty Bank
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People's United Community Foundation
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Robinson + Cole
Samuel Roskin Trust
SBM Charitable Foundation
Sharon O'Meara Fund
Sheehan Hilborn Breen Funeral Home
Silk City Coffee
Simsbury United Methodist Church
Sisterhood of Congregation Beth Israel
Sisters Talk Plus
South Congregational Church UCC - East Hartford
South Windsor Moms Club
South Windsor Rotary
Stanley D. and Hinda N. Fisher Fund
St. Bernard Church
St. James Episcopal Church
St. John's Episcopal Church
Target Corporation
Temple BethSholom Nursery School
The Ahearn Family Foundation
The Maximilian E. & Marion O. Hoffman Foundation
The Petit Family Foundation
The Riverview
The Village for Families & Children
Town of Avon
Town of Canton
Town of East Hartford
Town of Ellington
Town of Glastonbury
Town of Manchester
Town of Simsbury
Town of South Windsor
Town of West Hartford
Town of Windsor
Travelers
Trinity College
Trinity United Methodist Church
TRUMPF
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UBS Realty Investors
UConn Medical Center
Unico Manchester Foundation
Unitarian Women's Alliance of Hartford
United Bank Foundation
United States Department of Justice, Office for Victims of Crime
United Way of Central & Northeastern Connecticut
United Way of Coastal Fairfield County
United Way of Greater Waterbury
Walter J. Dyber Fund
Wapping Community Church
Webster Bank
West Hartford Exchange Club
Westminster Presbyterian Church
Widows Society
William and Alice Mortensen Foundation
Women's Fellowship First Baptist Church
Workers Compensation Trust
WTNH TV Channel 8

INTERVAL HOUSE
working to end domestic violence

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PURPLE WITH A PURPOSE

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS MONTH

All photos by Nick Caito Photo

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month. Raising awareness is an ever-present goal at Interval House, as we know that education can prevent and break the cycle of abuse. Register online to form a Purple with a Purpose fundraising team and save the dates below to join us *virtually* as we rally to end domestic violence. More details at www.intervalhousect.org.

October 1 – 4
Jennifer Farber Dulos Memorial Walk to End Domestic Violence

October 11 @ 11am
Brunch With Champions

October 14 @ noon
Lunch & Learn with Kica Matos of the Vera Institute of Justice

Sunday, October 25 @ 7pm
Tell Me Another: Survival, a Virtual Storytelling Event with Terry Wolfisch Cole