



Safe Inc. OF SCHENECTADY

"WHERE HOPE SHAPES THE FUTURE"

A newsletter for staff, friends and supporters of Safe Inc.

Summer 2021

....From the desk of the Executive Director

Safe Inc. had an extremely productive spring season. Our Board of Directors, Staff and sponsors hosted a successful educational forum to alert the community to how vulnerable our youth are to human trafficking. The forum was watched throughout New York State and received some national exposure. We also spent countless hours developing a 3-year strategic plan that will ensure we continue to be responsive to the needs of our youth and community.

This summer we are reinvigorating our street outreach program. We know that many of our youth lack the adult protection of parents, family or guardians and are at-risk of being sexually exploited or trafficked. Our street outreach program will work to promote our youths social and emotional well-being, keep youth safe, and connect our homeless youth to caring, supportive adults and community supports that will help them get off the streets and back on track.



Scott Brady, Executive Director



About our programs: Project Safe and Safe House

Project Safe is an outpatient treatment and referral program designed to serve individuals between the ages of 12 and 35 who have been sexually exploited/human trafficked or at risk of sexual exploitation/human trafficking. The program is tailored to meet **ALL** the needs of each individual through a network of services and referrals.

Safe House is a temporary 30-day emergency shelter that serves homeless and runaway youth ages 16 to 20 in a home like environment. A youth may come to Safe House through self-referral or through referral sources. Admission to Safe House is solely voluntary. Limited space is available for youth 14 and 15 for respite. The program is tailored to meet **ALL** the needs of each youth through a network of services and referrals.

Fun Facts:

In June 2021
Project Safe celebrated
36 years of serving the
community.



In July 2021
Safe House celebrated
32 years of housing
youth in its emergency
youth shelter.

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Schenectady
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Shelter Manager

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Residential Specialists

Meet Samantha Kardash, Service Case Manager

Samantha "Sam" Kardash began her employment at Safe House as a Residential Specialist for Safe House in the Summer of 2020 because it was a flexible position which allowed her to work around her education. She quickly became invested in the lives and futures of the clients that she met at Safe and realized that this was a group of youth that she loved working with. After finishing her Masters in Mental Health Counseling from UAlbany in December of 2020, a full-time position opened up at Safe Inc. that seemed to fall perfectly into her timeline and interests. In February of 2021, Sam was hired as the Service Case Manager. She has grown immensely both personally and professionally. She is a strong advocate for the clients and works through difficult situations daily to ensure our youth receive the services they need. Having the opportunity to work both with the population she is interested in and with such a supportive and helpful staff has made it exciting and empowering. Sam looks forward to further developing her knowledge and skills so she can continue to successfully serve the clients and the community of Schenectady County.

Did you know that May 29th is.....

National Muslim Soup Kitchen Day



Sana E, Eman K and Barbara D

Safe Inc.'s Board Member, Barbara Dworkin was honored to welcome Sana Effendi and Eman Khan to Safe Inc. of Schenectady where they brought a large box filled with hot chicken dinners for our clients and very special staff. A great big **THANK YOU** to the Islamic Center of the Capital District as we are so very grateful to you for including Safe Inc. in your community outreach efforts.

Project Safe's Street Outreach Program

Much of Safe's success can be attributed to the community outreach done by Safe's Street Outreach Workers where they educate the community to help the community to better understand the victimization of the street youth and how to help break the cycle of exploitation/human trafficking. Safe's Street Outreach Program is designed to reach youth, ages 12-21 who are in need of services and direct them to the appropriate program(s) that Safe has to offer (Shelter, Life Skills and Street Outreach). The Street Outreach Workers walk the streets daily during the evening hours and will meet over 1,000 youth on the streets each year.



Fostering Hope at Safe Inc.

CLIENT STORY (Editor's Note: This is a story of a young lady who received services from Safe's Life Skills Program. She has agreed to share her story with you.)

I was born to parents who were addicted to drugs and who were in and out of correctional facilities for most of my life. Often times when my parents were using, my grandmother took care of my three siblings and me. Unfortunately, my brothers followed my parents' direction and began to use drugs. Both of my parents were incarcerated and my father has since died as a result of all the drug use.

While in 10th grade, the court placed me in a residential treatment facility where I stayed for the next one and half years. At the age of 19, I met a man who I spent a lot of time with and one year later our twin girls were born. However, at this point he became emotionally, mentally, and physically abusive toward me and this continued for the next three years.

During these years of abuse, when I was 22 year old, I met another man who treated me quite well. He then disappeared when I told him I was pregnant. I explored my options and decided that putting the baby up for adoption was the best decision for me and the baby. During all this, police reports and order of protections were being filed on my twins' father and I finally reached my breaking point when my girls witnessed him abusing me. That is when I reached out to domestic violence advocates where I was living. These advocates referred me to Schenectady where I entered a local domestic violence shelter and met many service providers who helped me stabilize and start my new life.

It was also during this time that I met the Safe's Life Skills Case Manager. This was the beginning of my journey to independence. My goals were to obtain housing, education, child care, employment, and furniture. The Life Skills Case Manager worked diligently with me and supported me to achieve my goals. The staff at Safe believed in me and also helped me to believe in myself. Whenever I came to Safe for an appointment I was always greeted with a smile and a positive attitude. Because of their guidance and support I am living in my own apartment, have enrolled in a GED program, have daycare for my children, and have received plenty of furniture for my new apartment. My life is good due to the help I received from the Life Skills Case Manager and staff at Safe and the confidence they had in me to achieve my goals.



Photos from Christman Sanctuary in Delanson, NY

Hammocking in Central Park

Outings with the residents.....

With the warm beautiful spring weather, the Safe House staff began offering week-day outings for the clients. The first outing included a short hike to a waterfall at the Christman Sanctuary in Delanson, NY. It was a great day for a hike. It was warm enough for Jenny Hudman, the Clinical Counselor/Supervisor, Samantha Kardash, the Service Case Manager, and our clients to put their toes in the water. Another outing included hammocking by the pond in Schenectady's Central Park. Trying to find just the right trees at just the right distance apart was a little bit of a challenge but made for a fun afternoon of lounging. Robin Romines, Shelter Manager, and Samantha Kardash, Service Case Manager, took the clients on this adventure. These experiences are vital to the clients we serve. While they work hard with the staff to pursue housing and vocational goals, they are facing an undue amount of stress. Taking "down time" to relax and just be a normal kid is something many of them have not experienced due to just trying to survive.

As we offer more opportunities for client outings we are seeking your help. If you, or anyone you know, that knows of an organization that is willing to donate tickets to events or experiences, please contact our shelter so we can offer our clients more of these memorable activities.

Community Support

Safe Inc. would like to extend a big **THANK YOU** to our community members, local businesses, foundations, and grants funders who continue to support Safe's Mission and allow our staff to continue to help those in need.

Niskayuna Community Foundation ▪ The Carlilian Foundation ▪ United Way of the Greater Capital Region
The Regional Food Bank of NENY ▪ Amazon Smiles ▪ Hannaford ▪ JM McDonald Foundation, Inc.
CAP COM's Infrastructure Initiative ▪ Bagel and Bakes



On Thursday, May 20, 2021, Safe Inc. hosted "When the Sender Is A Pretender", a virtual forum to educate the community, educators, local businesses, and government leaders about the existence of sex trafficking and the vulnerability of youth in our community. It was an overwhelming success. Jermain Wells interviewed our three guests: Salka Valerio, a survivor of sex trafficking, shared her personal story and journey; Melanie Puerto Conte, Schenectady County Coordinator of Safe Harbour, talked about how our youth are more vulnerable as there is an increase in virtual activity and Kyla Guru, founder of Bits N' Bytes provided cyber security information to help us understand how to protect our youth online.

People attended virtually via Facebook and our website. While we had many local participants, we also had folks participating from all over New York State and participants from throughout the US (Grand Rapids Michigan, Jackson Ohio, Omaha Nebraska, Atlanta Georgia, and Washington DC).

We want to thank our primary sponsors, Mr. & Mrs. Gerald Wetzel, Brian Epstein, and the Meier Law Firm, PLLC as well as many other donors and supporters. We also want to thank Jake Ritz, the Owner of IronGlass Productions & Rosewick Films, who produced the forum.



How can YOU help?

Thank you to everyone that has donated to Safe Inc. Your donations have helped our youth tremendously and for that we are truly grateful.

Safe Inc. is always in need of intake clothing for our emergency youth shelter, Safe House. When a youth comes to Safe House, all items that they come to shelter with must be washed, dried and inventoried. During the intake process staff will give a youth a new, clean outfit for the client to put on after a shower while their clothing is still being washed and dried. The youth is able to keep the clothes that they were just given.

Currently here are the specific items that Safe House is in need of for its youth:

Deodorant- Men & Women

Men - Cotton Boxers (S, M, L, XL), Sweatpants/Joggers (S, M, L, XL) & T-shirts- S, M, XL

Women - Yoga Pants/leggings (S, M, L, XL) & T-shirts (S, M, L, XL)

You can also find a full wish list for the shelter at Amazon Wish List on Amazon.com.

