



**20
17**

Annual Report
 **DVSAS**
Domestic Violence and
Sexual Assault Services

Our Mission

We support individuals affected by domestic violence, sexual assault, and sexual exploitation, and lead the community towards ending these abuses of power.

We envision a safe, equitable community, free from the oppressions that lead to gender-based violence, where all individuals feel valued and respected.

Our Vision

Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Friends,

This has been a year of hope for me. I deeply admire the brave women and men who are coming forward in droves to publicly share their experiences of exploitation, abuse, and assault. It seems that our country may finally be ready to take a hard look at this epidemic and see that the key to change is a responsibility shared by all.

Domestic and sexual violence are deeply rooted in our cultural beliefs about gender. Our society strictly divides human behaviors, characteristics, and emotion into masculine and feminine categories. Being strong and tough is masculine; while being pretty and helpful is feminine. Then, through years of conditioning, we all come to accept, on some level, our assigned roles. Rigid gender roles limit the full expression of our humanness and some of us become so strictly indoctrinated into these roles that they become deeply damaging.

When boys and men devalue, and even deny, the characteristics and emotions in themselves that are “feminine” and overvalue those that are “masculine”, the gender role becomes what is known as “toxic masculinity.” Similarly, when girls do the same it is “toxic femininity.” The effects of toxic masculinity can compel some men to become violent and controlling, driven by a belief that they are entitled to get what they want, especially from women.

Toxic masculinity does not allow for males to express tenderness, grief, or vulnerability, and can make men feel out of control when they have these natural experiences. When we do not feel in control, we search for ways to feel powerful. That, coupled with a society that encourages anger and violence in men, creates a dangerous combination that can result in the seeking of power through violence, abuse and exploitation.

We need to stop looking at each incident of abuse separately. These crimes are deeply rooted in our culture and are shaped by social constructs and systems of oppression. This doesn't mean that they are natural or inevitable, but it does mean that the answers lay in deep cultural change. Encouraging full emotional expression in our children, refuting rigid gender roles, standing up to bullies, and listening to survivors will go a long way in creating this change.

Every day I am inspired by the courage, strength and resilience of our community. I am excited and honored to be on this journey of change with you.

Sincerely,

Karen Burke

Karen Burke





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Ask an Advocate

Volunteer advocacy counselors generously donated 12,178 hours of their time in 2017. Volunteers allow DVSAS the ability to provide confidential services 24-hours a day, free of charge.

We recently sat down with volunteer advocate **Kyle Sullivan**, who has been with DVSAS since Spring 2017. Kyle is graduating this June from Western Washington University.

How did you find your way to DVSAS and advocacy? I was looking for experience in community service, particularly one-on-one advocacy, because I hope to get a Master's degree and be a licensed mental health counselor some day. When I learned more about DVSAS, met with Amber [the 24-hour Services Manager] and completed the training, I knew this would be a good fit for me as a volunteer.

What do you like about volunteering with DVSAS? I believe in the DVSAS mission and that everyone deserves safety and respect. I am committed to advocating for and participating in socio-cultural changes that lead to a more

humanistic and fair society. Domestic and sexual violence are ubiquitous in our society and yet also difficult topics for many people to talk about. Countless friends of mine and fellow human beings cope with these realities on a daily basis yet our political system is slow to address the underlying issues with a socio-economic culture that rewards dominance, objectifies women and glorifies having power and control over others.

What can others do? Be the change you want to see in the world. It often feels like individuals don't have the power to affect socio-cultural change on the scale we would like to and this can make us cynical about social justice. It helps me to remember the importance of individual acts of compassion and empathy. You probably won't change the world, but on an individual level, we can make a world of difference in survivors' lives.

Anything else you want to add? My fellow advocates and the staff members have created a supportive and humanizing culture in the office and are instrumental in supporting our local community, you are all awesome. Thank you!



**12,178
hours**

2017 Volunteers

Together these volunteers donated 12,178 hours of time. That is the equivalent of nearly 6 full-time staff. We could not do it without them.

Thank you to:

Amanda Ott

Amy Ryan

Ann Bernstein*

Ann MacDonald *

Annabelle Wagar

Annarose Krug

Ashley Hill*

Ashley Lynes*

Aurela Sequoia

Autumn Simmons*

Blair Murphy

Brea Thomas

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Lynne Castle*

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Maggie Wilson*

Marion Jewell

Marleigh Noska

Martin Prado*

Mattie Bly

Meg Hansen

Megan Smith

Melissa Michaels

Micah Hurtt

Morgan Sicilia*

Pam Hunnicutt*

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Shannon Jack

Sheila Browne

Simon Grant

Skye Levari

Sophii Rebecca-Marie*

Spencer Bond

Sydnee Preedy

Tanner Feemster

Tara Tosoni

Tavleen Aulakh

Tess O'Reilly*

Tessa Jones

Thea Nauss

*2 or more
years of volunteering



**Esther Faber and Ann Bernstein
have been volunteering for over
6 years!**



Services

DVSAS services are available for anyone impacted by domestic violence, sexual assault, or sexual exploitation, 24/7 and always free of charge. Whether someone is looking for information on how to support a friend, family member, or themselves, we are here.

Immediate Help

- 24-hour helpline
- Support center walk-in services
- 24-hour forensic exam support

Ongoing Support

- Advocacy counseling
- Legal advocacy
- Support groups

Safe Housing

- Confidential shelter
- Homelessness prevention services
- Housing case management

Education Program

- The Empowerment Project
- 3-session prevention program for middle & high school students*

2017 in numbers:

2296

total clients served

15416

total hours of advocacy

(15% increase over 2016)

3855

hours spent in support groups

126

clients found safety in the Safe Housing Program

2794

students received prevention education

(50% increase over 2016)

"Thank you for empowering me when I was at my lowest. [My advocates] gave me hope when I thought I had lost it all." -Annie L.

A Day at DVSSAS

Have you ever wondered what a day at DVSSAS looks like? DVSSAS operates a downtown support center, two confidential shelters, and provides advocacy information throughout Whatcom County.

On Wednesday June 7, 2017:

Prevention Education Specialist, Blanca, presented The Empowerment Project to four different classes at Fairhaven Middle School. Throughout the day, 113 students learned about healthy and unhealthy relationships.

Claudia, Support Group Coordinator, facilitated "New Beginnings," a support group for women currently or previously in an abusive relationship. Six women participated that night and four kids participated in the Safe Start Children's Program during the group.

Advocacy Counselor, Veronica, facilitated "Platicas," a Spanish-speaking support group for women who have experienced violence.

Rural Advocacy Coordinator, Devin, tabled at the East Whatcom Regional Resource Center's weekly coffee meet-up. She shared information about DVSSAS and abuse with county residents.



A close-up photograph of two young children, a boy and a girl, smiling and looking towards the camera. The boy is on the left, wearing a plaid shirt, and the girl is on the right, wearing a colorful patterned top. The background is softly blurred, suggesting an outdoor setting.

Program Growth

Mobile Advocacy

After 10 years as a private travel guide to countries like Russia, Iran, Mongolia and North Korea, Devin Connolly moved to the sleepy town of Bellingham. An avid and professional world traveler, she was worried that in a small community she would not find a profession that would incorporate her language skills (she speaks English, Russian, and Spanish fluently), her love of travel, and her ability to build bridges across cultures and communities.

Fortunately, as the DVSAS Rural Advocacy Coordinator, Devin gets to do all three! Since May 2017 she has offered the same range of services included at the downtown service center, but adjusted for rural clients' location and specific needs.

Devin offers ongoing advocacy in any mutually agreeable public location, provides court support for clients who have legal matters in rural jurisdictions, and assists with preparing protection order petitions. Most importantly, she ensures survivors in rural Whatcom County are aware of what other resources are available to them, especially those that can be

accessed without a costly trip to Bellingham. Devin provides a consistent presence for DVSAS at the Foothills Food Bank at St. Peter's Catholic Church on Mt. Baker Highway and during Community Coffee and Tea, held Wednesday mornings at the East Whatcom Regional Resource Center. These events allow conversations to happen with survivors and other members of the community, promoting cross-community partnerships.

A traveler at heart, Devin loves the mobile aspect of her job. She loves jumping in the car on short notice and meeting with a survivor who needs support from DVSAS. Being mobile requires a certain amount of creativity and an ability to forge relationships with the larger community. While many meetings take place in coffee shops or the library, Devin is also able to arrange for advocacy in places closed to the public, because of her presence and professional connections. There is never a boring, or normal, day as the Rural Advocacy Coordinator.

"I saw an opportunity to finally see if advocacy was right for me while continuing to use the cultural bridge-building skills I developed in my traveling life. I am grateful to be doing this work." -Devin

Program Growth

Safe Housing Program

2017 was an exciting year of growth for the Safe Housing Program. We hired a new Safe Housing Program Manager, Aaron Foss, in February, and two additional Safe Housing Advocates in June, bringing the number of Safe Housing Program team members to six.

In June, thanks to a grant from Bellingham Bay Rotary, we opened a new safe shelter facility at our Baker Place campus, allowing us to provide emergency safe housing to four additional women made homeless by domestic violence.

We secured a grant in June from the Employees Community Fund of Boeing to help complete the renovation of a 11-bed facility in that same location, with a planned opening of Summer 2018. This house needed significantly more work to make it livable, including raising the roof (literally!) so the attic could be converted into living space.

We also performed extensive renovations of our original 21-bed Safe Shelter, replacing

its worn, old carpet with new flooring and repainting all of its interior walls.

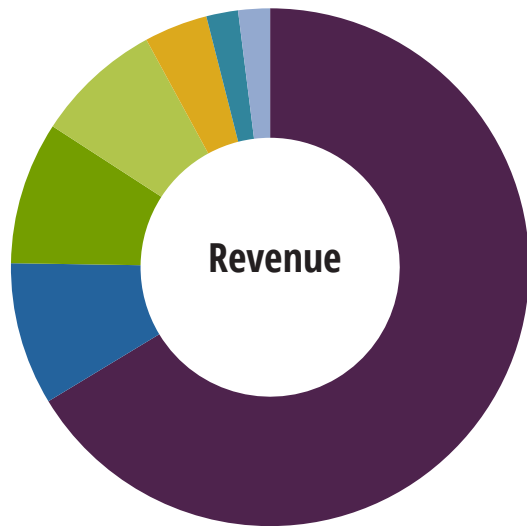
Throughout the year, the Safe Housing Program served a total of 82 adult survivors and 44 children by providing a safe place to stay for up to 90 days and advocacy-based counseling while survivors are there.

Additionally, through our partnership with Lydia Place, we were able to secure transitional or permanent housing for 63% of survivors and their families.

The Safe Housing Program continues to be a very successful and important program. Upon leaving the shelter, 89% of clients felt they had what they needed to live without their abuser. One shelter client even said "They made us feel like family and they have been so helpful in meeting our needs. It's so bittersweet leaving - we feel like we're losing our family."

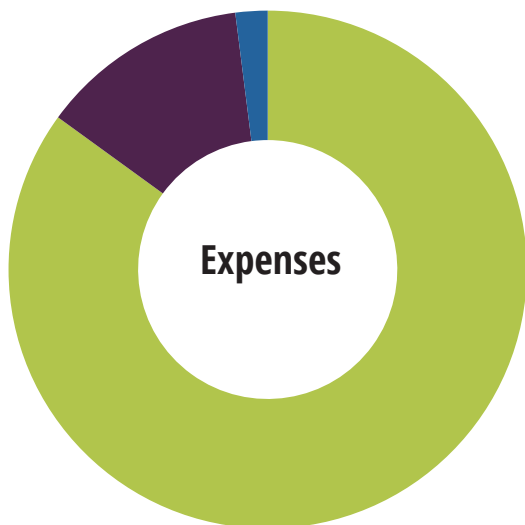


Financials



- 67% - Government Grants
- 9% - Corporate & Foundation Contributions
- 9% - Special Events
- 8% - Interest & Fees
- 4% - Commercial Rental Income
- 2% - Endowment Income
- 2% - Individual Donations

Total Revenues: \$1,745,537
Total Expenses: \$1,745,537



- 88% - Program & Services
- 8% - General Admin
- 4% - Fundraising Activities

*These numbers are unaudited for 2017
 Audited statements are available on www.dvsas.org

For a family or individual experiencing the chaos and fear of violence, nothing feels safer than stability.

Thanks to diversified funding, a healthy endowment, and rigorous accounting practices, our community can count on DVSAS to provide that stability to victims and survivors for many years to come.

Balance Sheet		Total
Cash and cash equivalents	\$137,618	
Grants and pledges receivable	\$271,147	
Endowment	\$1,445,562	
Property and equipment, net	\$1,341,888	
Other Assets	\$8,504	
Total Assets		\$3,204,721
Accounts payable	\$47,027	
Accrued liabilities	\$64,292	
Note payable	\$252,324	
Total Liabilities		\$363,643

Groups and Foundations

Capital Campaign Supporters

Bellingham Bay Rotary Club
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\$20,000+

Northwest Children's Fund
Superfeet Worldwide
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\$1,000-\$4,999

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