



ILLINOIS COALITION  
AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

# *For Better Times*

*Spring 2021*



**Together We Can Be the Voice of Change**

## **From the Desk of Vickie Smith**

The movement to end domestic violence was started by survivors. Survivors who needed safe space and respite came together in living rooms and kitchens to support, help and protect each other. Today the services and responses continue to be developed and evolve based on what people tell us would be helpful. We also seek input and advice on responses from people who do not seek assistance from existing domestic violence victims' services agencies. The

ICADV membership are very invested in making sure that any survivor here in Illinois can get the kind of help they want and need to build safety and stability in their lives. We recognize that there is a significant lack of housing, medical care and other supportive services in many parts of the state which hinder survivors of domestic violence from finding all the assistance they need. ICADV is committed to reducing barriers to safety and letting anyone who is experiencing domestic violence get the



help they seek.

It is critical to engage with and work with those that have lived experiences to create services that are actually useful and helpful. It is even more beneficial to develop responses that come from the people who need and want the services. Any response that is created that does not come from the people is not helpful and will not improve life circumstances for anyone. We who do this work are not the experts. The people we assist are the experts.

This edition reflects the voices of survivors. It also contains an article to help anyone tell their story that can help others learn how to speak up. ICADV has begun hosting a monthly meeting of survivors who have contacted us regarding the difficult and challenging experiences they have had in family and civil court after living with a person who caused them harm. Judie tells us how she used her experience to create responsive services in her community. Savannah shares how she has turned her experience into finding ways to make a difference so others might not go through what she did. SWAN is developing avenues to give survivors ways to engage in their program.

We welcome readers to contact us if one or more of these stories in this edition of For Better Times resonates with you. Let us know if you want to get connected to a local DV agency or with ICADV. The more we hear from you all that have experienced DV or know someone that has experienced DV, the stronger our collective voice is to end domestic violence in Illinois.

In Peace,  
Vickie Smith  
President and CEO

## ICADV Welcomes...



ICADV is excited to expand its network of support for and with survivors by welcoming its newest Program Council Member Agency: Ascend Justice. Located in Chicago, their mission is to empower individuals impacted by gender-based violence or the child welfare system to achieve safety and stability through holistic legal advocacy and system reform. We look forward to advancing our mission and strengthening our voice through the addition of another domestic violence victim service provider. To learn more about Ascend Justice visit [ascendjustice.org](http://ascendjustice.org).

ICADV is also excited to welcome three new members to its team of people providing the advocacy, training and technical assistance to its members:



Emily Hinrichsen joined us as ICADV's Director of Training on January 4<sup>th</sup>.



Kristen Davis joined us as ICADV's Fiscal Coordinator on February 8<sup>th</sup>.



Eric Ray joined us as ICADV's Programmatic Technical Assistance Coordinator on March 1<sup>st</sup>.

## Program and Board Member Highlights



### Stopping Woman Abuse Now (SWAN)

As is often the case in rural areas, SWAN was founded by one woman who began providing safety and refuge to domestic violence victims in a home. The year was 1981 and the original site was in Clay City, Illinois. SWAN services were moved to Olney in 1983 and the current shelter was built and opened in 1988.



### Judie Caribeaux

Judie Caribeaux joined the ICADV Board as the Program Council Representative in November, 2018. When she transitioned from her role as Executive Director at Family Shelter Services of DuPage County to Metropolitan Family Services, she also transitioned into an at-large seat on the ICADV Board.

Judie's tenure with ICADV started

Linda Bookwalter was hired as the Executive Director in 1981 and she remained in that position until her retirement in September 2020. Linda Warner, who joined SWAN in the adult protective services program in 2017, was hired as the Executive Director in September 2020. For over 20 years, SWAN has also been providing homeless prevention services as well as transitional housing. They began providing Ombudsman services in eight counties over 20 years ago and for the last 10 years they have also been providing adult protective services.

When another domestic violence victims' services agency closed, they expanded to cover that area bringing their services coverage area to 16 counties in southeastern Illinois. These counties cover 7700 square miles and include a total population of 330,000. As with many rural areas, internet connectivity and transportation are often the biggest barriers to people wanting to access their services.

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as a member program executive director then as a board member. But her work in domestic violence really started decades before when she left her first marriage and over time, realized she had been in an abusive relationship. Her journey to where she is today is typical for so many survivors partly because she didn't experience direct physical violence and partly because it takes much time and self-reflection to heal from the trauma.

Judie remembers so clearly the day she decided to leave her first marriage. Her daughter, who was in kindergarten at the time, came home upset because she thought she had done something to disappoint her teacher. The father began to question the daughter. Questions turned into interrogation. As he grilled her, he both literally and figuratively backed her into a corner until she relented and said, "You're right daddy, I did it." Judie said it was in that moment she recognized what was playing out in front of her eyes was the same abuse she had been enduring. Judie was astonished seeing a grown man bully such a little girl to that degree.

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## The Power Of Storytelling

*"Why does a victim of domestic violence stay?"* The number one question we are asked from people who do not work in the movement. We don't ask that question – there are a thousand reasons why a victim cannot leave. We ask *"why does a batterer continue to abuse?"* The batterers are the ones making the choice – every time. But still, hearing a survivor's story- their point of view, their personal narrative, in their words - is critical in helping others understand domestic violence situations and why it isn't as simple as *"Why don't they just leave?"*. By adequately supporting survivors ready to tell their story, we are able to offer them the tools to empower themselves to speak out about their experiences and this can not only help in their

healing process but can help other victims feel brave enough to seek out assistance as well.

When survivors come to domestic violence programs ready to seek services, they tell their story to an advocate. For some survivors, this could be the first time to disclose the details of the abuse suffered. Talking about the abuse and answering questions about their circumstances may be as traumatic for a victim as experiencing the violence so it is a difficult thing to do. Supporting a survivor in telling their story is an advocate's job – in telling it the first time, in telling it to a judge, and if they feel comfortable enough at some point, telling their story publicly.

As the statewide coalition, we look for ways to support survivors and advocates throughout the entire state of Illinois. One of our current priorities is building leadership in the movement to make sure our advocacy and services are strong moving into the future. We host a Leadership Academy each year which provides a cohort of participants six sessions over the course of a year, each focusing on building an area of skills and expertise needed to help advance the violence against women movement and for other oppressed populations. We have dedicated one of those sessions to helping build leadership in the area of using storytelling to amplify unheard voices in our services and provide better advocacy on survivors' behalf.

Listen For A Change, a not for profit founded in 2016, has helped us do this. Listen for a Change partnered with ICADV to engage our last several Leadership Academy cohorts in building their storytelling skills so they can take those skills and better support survivors in their own communities throughout Illinois. This has been so well received that we have invited them back this summer to do a training series outside of the Leadership Academy dedicated solely to the storytelling of survivors. They are helping lift the voices of survivors of domestic violence and others who are oppressed which is such a powerful advocacy tool. We wanted to take a few moments to highlight Listen for a Change and learn more about that organization by sharing a recent interview with its founder and Executive Director, Thai Chu.



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## Strength in Sharing & Passion for Justice

The first time I sat in courtroom 4007 was for my abuser's bond hearing. I had arrived at the DuPage County Courthouse on the morning of July 15, 2019 to obtain an order of protection, only to be whisked away by the State's Attorney's Office clerk to meet my advocate in the domestic violence courtroom. It was in that moment my eyes were opened to a world I never thought I would understand so intimately. The room was filled with survivors and their families, and defendants and their attorneys. I sat among the mix of these two groups with my advocate at my side.

For nearly two hours I watched everyone in the courtroom shuffle around like a very tense game of musical chairs. Eventually, the name of my abuser was called, and he

entered the room in an orange jumpsuit and handcuffs jingling. His eyes met mine, and with a desperate plea he mouthed the words “I love you.” Three words he had said so many times as an attempt to erase--or excuse--his abusive words and actions. But that day I didn’t accept them. While at that time I was unsure that I had been experiencing domestic violence, I certainly knew it was not “love.”

My passion for personal justice began with rejecting those unspoken, manipulative words of my abuser. And in the weeks and months to follow, I submerged myself into all the domestic violence literature I could find online. I began identifying the variety of abuse I endured in my prior relationship, and started sharing what I was learning through social media. Women I hardly knew—and some I didn’t know at all—began confiding in me their experiences with domestic violence. So, I continued to share pieces of my story, educate my followers, and initiate conversations with my community leaders.

During the week of my one-year anniversary of my survivorship, I had the privilege of participating in the 40 Hour Domestic Violence Training through the YWCA/Evanston North Shore. Within those two weeks of training I discovered the Illinois Coalition Against Domestic Violence. I quickly became a [Friend of the Coalition](#), and was thrilled to apply for membership to the Accountability, Funding and Advocacy committee. Once accepted, I was joyfully received by Christine and our committee chairs, Carol Gall and Itedal Shalabi.

I am so thankful to be a “Friend” of a coalition, and a committee, so passionate about best serving IL DV survivors. Each month I’m excited to listen, learn and even contribute to meaningful discussions on critical policy and legislative topics. In the midst of waiting for personal justice, I’m simply honored to be part of a much larger, life-long journey, alongside members who have committed their lives and careers to advocating for domestic violence survivors.

*Submitted by Savannah McKee, A Survivor of Domestic Violence*



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**Address:**

806 S. College St.  
Springfield, IL 62704



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