Since 2003, Partners has raised a total of more than $2,600,000 from its annual benefits. It all started in the spring of 2003 with 75 friends and colleagues who came to support our first benefit. That event raised $30,000. Fast forward to May 3, 2017 when nearly 450 supporters gathered at Mayfair Farms in West Orange and raised more than $350,000! The highlight of the evening was a Partners’ client sharing her story and describing the impact legal representation had on her life: “Partners gave me my life back… it made me feel some degree of safety again. This gave me the security to heal and move forward.”

At the 2017 benefit Partners honored deserving individuals who, in different ways, make the world a better place. We share with you their powerful comments about violence against women and others.

“I have to dedicate this award to my close friend and co-founder of NO MORE, Anne Glauber. It was our frustration that these issues (domestic violence and sexual assault) are at epidemic proportions and getting little or no attention. We wanted to break through and rally advocates, governments and businesses who were already working on these issues around one idea, a brand to help erase the shame, the blame, and the stigma. That’s what led to NO MORE. What’s different is that it’s an open source campaign anyone can use. What’s kind of cool is that people are actually doing it. It’s led to tremendous grassroots adoption… We are at a tipping point and really can end domestic violence and sexual assault.”

“I want to dedicate this award to the Board of Partners. It doesn’t end tonight. It only starts tonight. You have all seen the impact Partners has on an individual basis and in the aggregate in our community. Now we must recognize that the epidemic sweeping this country and the world is real: one of three women around the globe will experience violence in her lifetime. What do we do? How do we take our outrage and turn this pandemic around? Everyone must see it as a means to support our sister or mother or daughter around the world. It’s an opportunity to turn our words into action. No one can ignore this situation.”

“Partners helps restore justice and peace to families. Families come in all shapes and sizes. One thing they all have in common... they are the building blocks of society. There is a lot that families can do when violence is directed at the family from the outside. But what happens when the violence comes from within? ... That is an attack on the very fabric of the family… the fabric of society. Too long, women overwhelmingly had to bear this and suffer in silence; the family averted their eyes... We now have laws, and thanks to organizations like Partners, the law will step in. Abusers are identified. They are brought to court. They are stopped. Peace and justice and dignity are all restored and preserved. For that I thank Partners.”
From Our Executive Director

2017 marks the 15th year that Partners for Women and Justice has provided free legal assistance to victims and survivors of domestic violence, helping them move from fear to freedom. This is a significant milestone for the organization but, more importantly, it means that thousands of victims of domestic violence have secured legal protections that keep them and their children safe.

With our 2016 expansion into Middlesex County, we are helping more victims each year. Our work in the county picked up momentum in the beginning of 2017 as agencies and law enforcement learned of our services and referred clients to us. In the past 12 months, we assisted victims in more than 100 matters in Middlesex County.

Although the vast majority of our clients continue to be women, we served male victims of domestic violence this past year, reflecting our expanded mission to provide legal assistance regardless of sex, gender, gender identity or gender expression.

We have been working closely with the prosecutor and domestic violence agencies in Union County on the development of a Family Justice Center at Family Court in Elizabeth. The Center is scheduled to open in September and will provide wrap-around services for victims. Partners plans to maintain an on-site presence at the Center which will solidify our already close relationship with domestic violence service providers in Union County.

Even as we continued to offer quality legal services to individuals this year, we took time out to consider Partners’ future. Over the course of six months, a group of trustees and staff led an intensive strategic planning effort that culminated in a new strategic plan adopted by the board in May. The plan, which has energized our staff and trustees, reflects the conclusion that we must broaden our impact beyond our own clients to address systemic problems faced by victims of domestic violence. Later in this report (page 6), we share our strategic plan’s priorities for the next three years.

We hope that you will continue to support Partners as we pursue our strategic goals and work to break the cycle of domestic violence for the next generation. You, our supporters, provide a safety net for hundreds of victims and survivors of domestic violence and their children each year.

Thank you for all that you do.

Jane M. Hanson, Esq.
MARY and Tom had dated for three years and enjoyed spending time together, but everything changed when Mary became pregnant. Tom frequently directed angry outbursts against Mary for no apparent reason. The abuse escalated, and when Mary was four and a half months along, Tom punched her in the face causing her to fall to the floor—all because she was tired from her pregnancy and did not want to go out for the evening. During the assault, Tom flashed a gun and a knife and threatened to use them if Mary tried to call the police. He left her apartment and she heard nothing from him for several years. In the meanwhile, their daughter, Angela, was born.

Tom suddenly reappeared when Angela was eight years old. He called Mary and sent her texts. At first the contacts were friendly and Tom started to come by the apartment to see Angela. But things turned ugly when Mary and Tom disagreed about medical care for Angela. Over the course of a week, Tom threatened several times to kill Mary and their daughter. The threats came in person, over the phone, and via texts. They were very real; when Tom threatened Mary in person, he made sure she saw the gun he carried. Mary decided she needed protection, and she obtained a temporary restraining order in Family Court. While in court, she saw a Partners for Women and Justice flyer and contacted us for assistance. We assigned one of our staff attorneys to represent her. The attorney and paralegal gathered copies of the harassing text messages, phone records, photographs and police reports that illustrated the frightening history of abuse and harassment. Mary's case was complicated when Tom requested and obtained a temporary restraining order against her after falsely accusing her of harassment. At trial, Mary's lawyer built a strong case based upon the evidence. And Mary courageously faced the man who had threatened her with a gun. Her testimony was consistent; she never wavered on the story of abuse and harassing threats. In contrast, under cross-examination Tom admitted that he sent the threatening text messages and even that Mary did not harass him. The judge believed Mary and granted a final restraining order against Tom and dismissed the case against her.

Mary left the court filled with hope for a safe future for herself and Angela.

“If I really appreciate everything you did for me. To think I almost gave up. You gave me HOPE.”

—MARY

1 All names are changed to protect the privacy of our client and her child.
Clients Served

476

Legal Services Delivered

Child Support • Custody • Visitation • Relocation

27%

Restraining Orders

73%

Results

Matters

658

Favorable Outcomes

86%

Annual Child Support Award per Child

$5,053

Children Served

678
Partners’ Path to the Future

After several months of work in early 2017, the Board of Trustees adopted a strategic plan to guide the organization going forward and to position it for long-term sustainability. We are excited to share with you Partners’ 2017-2020 strategic priorities:

1. **Broaden Partners’ Impact**
   As the demand for Partners’ direct services will continue to outstrip its capacity to assist all of those in need, we must increase our emphasis on advocacy activities that address the systemic legal problems faced by domestic violence victims. At the same time, Partners will continue to offer its current scope of direct services (*domestic violence restraining orders, custody and child support matters, and divorce clinic*) in the geographies it now serves.

2. **Build and Strengthen Institutional Infrastructure**
   To maintain high quality legal services while evolving our advocacy program, we must improve and reinforce our infrastructure. Partners will accomplish this by adding staff where necessary, upgrading and/or acquiring appropriate technology, software and equipment, maintaining a suitable physical working environment, and improving job satisfaction and employee retention.

3. **Ensure an Orderly and Timely Leadership Transition**
   Although there are no changes planned for our leadership team, we must develop and have in place a formal succession plan so that we are prepared for a timely and orderly leadership transition.

4. **Grow and Diversify Partners’ Base of Support**
   To ensure sustained financial stability as it seeks to deepen its impact, Partners must expand its sources of support as well as increase the levels of unrestricted funding. The implementation of a donor-centric communications plan is critical to strengthening the depth of connections with donors.
The Power of Pro Bono Attorney Representation

Partners for Women and Justice is pleased to recognize one of our amazing volunteer attorneys, Aliza Sherman, Esq., an associate in McCarter & English’s Multistate Tax Group.

Since 2013, Ms. Sherman has represented several of our clients at final restraining order (FRO) hearings. During one of her early cases, the abuser lied on the stand and so upset the client that, when it was the client’s turn to testify, she became very emotional. Ms. Sherman recalls the impact it had on her. “I sat next to her, holding her hand. Through her tears and sobs, she was still able to convey what was really going on in their abusive relationship. I was so inspired by her strength and courage.” Ultimately, the judge believed Ms. Sherman’s client and granted the FRO. The judge thanked Ms. Sherman and her client for “being respectful and handling the case well.”

Ms. Sherman is deeply committed to Partners’ clients and passionate about her work with them. She gives 110% to each case, digs deep into the facts, and immerses herself in the substantive and procedural law. In the latter regard, she appreciates the availability of guidance from Michele Lefkowitz (Director of Legal Programs) who is “just a text away.” Ms. Sherman also understands the importance of being a personal advocate and taking the time to understand what her clients want and expect. Thanks to Ms. Sherman, her clients often get the outcome they want, particularly when it comes to children and safe relationships with an abusive parent.

“In representing victims of domestic violence through Partners’ program, I see the real and concrete results of having a law degree. Just standing next to a victim in court sends a powerful message. It shows that a victim has the strength to ask for help – to take the first step toward moving away from abuse.” Thank you, Aliza Sherman, for your dedication to helping victims of domestic violence find safety for themselves and their children.

Partners also thanks McCarter & English for its longtime commitment to and support of volunteer attorneys like Ms. Sherman. In 2010, McCarter & English’s Newark office launched the Domestic Violence Project with Partners for Women and Justice. Through the Project, the firm’s attorneys represent domestic violence victims, primarily at final restraining order and related hearings. Collectively, the firm has handled 37 cases for our clients since the start of the Project.

Ronnie Ann Powell Intern

In 2016, Bressler, Amery & Ross, P.C. inaugurated a ten-week summer internship for law students in honor of Ronnie Ann Powell, a partner at the firm and long-time volunteer at Partners for Women and Justice who had died suddenly in 2015.

In May 2017, Partners welcomed Chinsu Shajan, a rising third-year law student at Rutgers Law School, as the second Ronnie A. Powell intern. Reflecting on her experience at Partners, Chinsu said, “Being able to support Partners’ clients through the legal process is truly rewarding for me. The look of relief on the clients’ faces when the judge grants the final restraining order is what makes this worthwhile.”

Ronald W. Reagan Award

New Jersey Division of Criminal Justice

On April 7, 2017 Partners’ Director of Legal Programs, Michele C. Lefkowitz, Esq. received the Ronald W. Reagan Award for her dedication to providing equal access to justice for victims of domestic violence and their children. Michele joined Partners in 2012 and since then, under her leadership, staff attorneys and pro bono attorneys have helped hundreds of victims obtain final restraining orders, custody of their children, and financial stability through awards of child support and spousal support. Michele has also done significant work in helping to effect systemic changes in practices and procedures that impact the safety, well-being, and quality of life for all domestic violence victims in New Jersey.
Fiscal year ending June 30, 2017

**REVENUE**

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**EXPENSES**

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**ASSETS**

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Tina Jordan and Kevin Rendino
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New Jersey Division of Criminal Justice
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Children were involved or present during 28% of all domestic violence offenses occurring in 2015.

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Children were involved or present during 28% of all domestic violence offenses occurring in 2015.
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Our Mission
Partners for Women and Justice empowers low-income victims and survivors of domestic violence to build safe and secure futures for themselves and their children by providing equal access to justice. We offer quality legal assistance in domestic violence and family law matters.

Michelle L. Paulson
Director, Administration and Finance
Lisa Nicole Roskos, Esq.
Staff Attorney
Angela M. Valdez
Paralegal
Melgily Valdez
Program Coordinator

There were 61,659 domestic violence offenses.

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Linda Engelhardt
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Our 4th annual BREAK THE CYCLE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE event attracted 84 riders at SoulCycle locations in Short Hills, New Jersey and 19th Street, New York City. Under the leadership of the Junior Advisory Board Co-chairs, Claudia Berman and Breanne Matloff, the event raised $27,500 for Partners.

Partners thanks our sponsors: Jersey Girls Fast Pitch, SoulCycle, Partners for Health Foundation, Kings Food Markets, Thatsit Nutrition, LLC and the riders who raised $250+

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