From our Executive Director

This was a year marked by many changes and new challenges, yet through it all, Partners served clients with dedication and compassion, and accomplished a great deal. We could not have done it without the support of you our donors, funders, trustees, volunteers, and community partners. Thank you!

The biggest change this year was my joining Partners as the Executive Director to replace the Founder/Executive Director Jane Hanson, who retired after 17 years. The leadership transition took place during the first week of the shelter-in-place order in New Jersey and our staff continued to serve our clients without missing a beat.

The big story this spring was the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on our clients and our staff. We were easily able to make the transition to work from home because of the earlier investment in our infrastructure – a client database and migration of our email to the cloud. We implemented safe and effective ways for victims to contact us for help using text messaging and email. Our attorneys and volunteer attorneys helped guide clients first through court closures and then through tele-hearings.

To provide more representation for domestic violence and sexual assault victims, we created a position dedicated to leading the Pro Bono Program. After an extensive search, we selected Victoria Nicholson, staff attorney for Middlesex County to be the first Director of Pro Bono Programs. She hit the ground running, and we are excited to see the number of clients represented by volunteer attorneys increasing.

Partners led the domestic violence legal advocacy response to COVID-19 by working with the Administrative Office of the Courts and partnering with attorneys and advocates to insure the safety of victims seeking justice and their easy access to the courts. The achievement of policy and procedural changes benefitting thousands of victims of domestic violence statewide are due to the diligence of Trish Perlmutter, Policy Counsel.

What has become clear to me as a new leader is that our staff is deeply committed to serving clients with excellence and compassion. They are doing this while their children home-school and their daycare evaporated. I am inspired by the resilience of our Partners team and cannot wait to see what we can accomplish when the pandemic is over.

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Our Impact

Who We Serve

- Hispanic: 49%
- Caucasian: 26%
- Black: 17%
- Multi-Ethnic: 3%
- Asian: 5%

What We Do

- Restraining Orders: 80%
- Child Support, Custody, Visitation: 17%
- Appeals, Relocation, Other: 3%

Outcomes

- Favorable: 88%
- Denied: 12%
Advocating for Domestic Violence Victims

Partners' advocacy priorities included:

Reducing Barriers to Temporary Restraining Orders

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, domestic violence and sexual assault victims could secure a temporary restraining order (TRO) by going to their local police station or county superior court. During the shelter-in-place order, the only option was to go to their local police station, stand on the street, and call to request a TRO. Partners worked to inform the judiciary as to the risks to victims at a time when police mistrust was at an all-time high. The judiciary developed a plan to prioritize domestic violence for in-person services and implemented a plan for the courts to take TRO applications by phone beginning on August 3, 2020.

Promoting Measures to Protect Victims While Supporting Criminal Justice Reform

The most dangerous time for a victim of domestic violence is when the victim decides to terminate the relationship. If criminal charges are brought against the defendant, protecting the victim from further danger during the time between arrest and disposition of charges is critical. Partners supported expanded use of criminal no-contact orders as a temporary protection for victims. We achieved the following successes:

- The New Jersey Supreme Court accepted the argument advanced by Partners that no-contact orders must be fully enforceable in order to protect domestic violence victims. The Court will allow prosecutors to charge defendants with contempt if they violate no-contact orders.
- The judiciary implemented a new practice to link no-contact orders with the police database. Partners is supporting legislation to ensure that victims receive a copy of the no-contact order.

Raising Awareness About the Link Between Financial Resources and Access to Safety

When victims depend financially on their abuser, they need financial resources to support themselves and their children. Although the law requires that the time between when the TRO is granted and when the hearing to grant a final restraining order occurs should be 10 days, in practice, that intervening time often extended weeks or months even before the pandemic. Partners' work to minimize the adverse effects of the delays included the following:

- We urged the judiciary to provide training to judges about the need to consider emergent relief.
- We sought financial support on behalf of our clients, including bringing motions to enforce and defend child support orders.
- We supported the Let's Drive legislation, signed into law in December 2019, to enable domestic violence victims, as well as other marginalized individuals, to obtain a driver's license and make it easier for them to obtain work in hard-to-reach areas of the state. Domestic violence victims often flee for their safety and may lack access to the required documents.

Where Our Funds Come From

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Donated Legal Services</td>
<td>23%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Businesses</td>
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<td>Foundations</td>
<td>12%</td>
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<td>Individuals</td>
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<tr>
<td>Government</td>
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How Our Funds Are Spent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Program Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fundraising/Communications</td>
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<tr>
<td>Management/General</td>
<td>16%</td>
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</tbody>
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*Donated legal services of $407,777 are included in the total expenses.

See the full financial report at pfwj.org/?p=financials
Angel’s Story

“I am forever grateful to Partners for Women and Justice. You saved my life.”

When Angela’s long-term boyfriend became increasingly controlling and abusive, texting her at all hours of the day and night, and showing up unannounced, she broke off the relationship. He would not leave her alone. One day, she found flowers on her car. Another day, a neighbor saw him sitting in his car parked in her driveway. When Angela’s mechanic found a GPS tracking device hidden under her car, she went to the police station and obtained a temporary restraining order. She came to Partners for help and pro bono attorneys Mike Long and Paul Giannoglou volunteered to represent her. Mike, Paul, and their colleagues at Lowenstein Sandler LLP reviewed hours of home video surveillance footage capturing the abuser’s stalking behavior. They also spent time interviewing witnesses, obtaining police records, and preparing Angela to testify. In total, they spent nearly 288 hours helping Angela successfully secure a final restraining order.

Thank you for your support!

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The Gloria Foundation
The IOLTA Fund of the Bar of New Jersey
New Jersey Department of Children and Families
New Jersey Division of Criminal Justice
Lois and David Sherwin

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$1,000+
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Patricia Devine-Harms and Stephen Harms
Rose F. DiMartino
Meg Fry and supporters of Love is Love is Love: A Broadway Cabaret for Valentine’s Day
Nicole Gili
Marguerite Greenfield
Investors Bank
Investors Foundation
Mary and Joel Jeffrey

The Power of Pro Bono Attorneys

This year brought many challenges, especially the COVID-19 pandemic. During the shelter-in-place order and court closings, volunteers rose to the occasion and served our clients. They quickly mastered virtual hearing platforms and continued to appear at in-person hearings. Others participated in impact appellate litigation and legislative reform initiatives to improve outcomes for all New Jersey victims. Thank you, volunteers, for your life-changing work!

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Celeste Fiore
Paul Giannoglou
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Ashley Severyn
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.

The information contained in this report covers fiscal year 2020 (July 1, 2019 - June 30, 2020).

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