Mission: To prevent both domestic and sexual violence through public awareness and education, and to serve as a resource and safe haven to those affected.

Domestic Violence in COVID times
by: Vanessa Kulick Price

It has been a year filled with tragedy and resilience. Our doors remained open through the pandemic while operating emergency shelter services at half-capacity. Our outstanding team provided counseling, housing opportunities, court advocacy, case management, support groups, education, prevention training and many more countless services. We pride ourselves in helping domestic and sexual violence survivors stabilize their lives. This year, we began to take it a step further – expanding our focus beyond the shelter into communities through non-shelter counseling services and violence prevention work.

We are thrilled at our growing partnerships across the county. Our new Lethality Assessment Program with the Luray and Stanley Police Departments and the Page County Sheriff’s Office aims to lower murder rates in cases of intimate partner violence. Likewise, expanding collaboration with Valley Health aids our quest to support clients suffering from addiction and physical ailments, while our free licensed therapy services support emotional recovery.

This year has not been without its difficulties. We turned away many calls for shelter due to lack of space in adherence with COVID-19 health requirements. Our clients also faced countless new challenges (unemployment, housing crisis, health issues, slowed court system) on their journeys to freedom from domestic and sexual violence. But, we remain humbled by community support and clients’ transformation into resilient individuals and families.

Our commitment to provide a safe haven and advocate for safe spaces in the community is stronger than ever. Our unfortunate truth remains that until we begin to truly address and transform the violence in our homes, we will struggle to develop, grow and profit at the levels our children deserve. Thank you for standing with us. Your support enables us to keep going when the times get tough and to remember why do this work.

With best regards,

Vanessa C. Kulick Price
Executive Director
Law enforcement affirm that domestic violence is a primary manifestation of violence in Page County. Each October, Domestic Violence Awareness Month (DVAM) is a recurring opportunity for Page County to recognize the plight of this issue on its citizens and participate in the national conversation of how best to reduce domestic violence in our country.

This year, the National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV) selected #Every1KnowsSome1 as its #DVAM theme. The campaign strives to highlight the prevalence of domestic violence. We know that fact very well at Choices. Clients enter our doors from every socio-economic background, gender, race and age. 15% of our clients are male. 16% have a disability. 34% are TANF eligible. Our clients are from all ages 18+ and nearly all are from Page County.

The bottom line is that domestic and sexual violence touches many lives. #Every1KnowsSome1. On average, more than one in three women and one in four men experience rape, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner. That means that if there are three women in a room at least one of them has experienced some form of domestic violence. Same scenario for men -- in a group of four, at least one has experienced abuse.

But, we do not talk about domestic violence and other types of abuse at the levels they occur in this county. It takes courage to change that reality. We implore those who are reading this newsletter to take a moment and reflect on those around you who might have been affected and begin to have those difficult conversations. We will never be able to reverse these awful statistics until we take domestic and sexual violence out of the closet. #Every1KnowsSome1

#DVAM
by: Vanessa Kulick Price

Have you noticed signs around Luray, Shenandoah and Stanley lately? We are very excited to introduce the “Love Shouldn’t Hurt” and “Home Should Be a Safe Place” yard signs for Page County. Designed by yours truly, these signs epitomize Domestic Violence Awareness Month (DVAM).

We are so pleased that all three towns and many businesses across the county have proudly placed the yard signs in plain view.

We hope that everyone is touched by the message — recognizing that truly — love should not hurt and homes should be a safe place. If not, you know where to call: 540-743-4414.

HOW TO CONTACT YOUR ADVOCATES:
24-HOUR HOTLINE: 540.743.4414
TEXTING OPTION: 540.742.9645
Rebuilding Homes
by: Jacalyn Lee

On a cool rainy day, Maria rang our doorbell asking for help. Maria had been chronically homeless since a life-threatening medical condition put her in-patient for months and left her disabled. Maria had experienced domestic violence prior to the incident. She self-medicated for the physical pain and the loss of her children (who were placed in foster care during her hospitalization) with addictive behaviors. Maria was one year sober when she came to us, facing legal charges and desperate to rebuild her life.

Choices provided a room in shelter, counselling, hours of active listening, legal advocacy and housing advocacy. The Housing Coordinator successfully vouched for Maria to a landlord who decided to give her a chance. During nearly two years of housing case management, Maria has rebuilt relationships with her children and regained custody, has maintained sobriety, fulfilled court requirements, and is moving on to subsidized disability housing. She says her life changed for the better when we opened the door and took her in.

Addiction
by: Rebecca “Becca” Frasier

Fifty percent or more of our clients struggle with substance abuse. Substance abuse has been found to co-occur in 40-60% of intimate partners violence (IPV) incidents. Several lines of evidence suggest that substance use/abuse plays a role in IPV by precipitating or exacerbating violence (Addiction Center). We accept all clients regardless of sobriety. We however enforce a strict no alcohol, drug or weapons policy in the shelter.

As such, we have partnered with Valley Health Multispecialty Clinic to provide medical assistance to those suffering from withdrawal and psychological and physical issues resulting from substance abuse. We also provide free access to a licensed therapist to support emotional healing.

In order to best support our clients, Choices staff underwent trainings in September from Northwestern on addiction and on how to use NARCAN to prevent overdoses.

We have also received advanced-level trainings on trauma and addiction (alcohol, drugs, etc.). We draw on these trainings to have informed and ongoing conversations with clients about addiction.

In addition to therapy and Valley Health, we refer clients to Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and Narcotics Anonymous (NA). We have also seen great success for clients who participate in the in-house Healing Trauma curriculum. The group-centered program allows clients to understand trauma and triggers and identify new and healthy coping mechanisms to address these issues.

Drug and alcohol addiction will likely continue to be a long-term issue with our clients and in Page County. We will play our role to support recovery and will look for opportunities to advance addiction prevention in our community.

#WeAreResilient
STORIES OF RESILIENCY IN SHELTER & RAPID RE-HOUSING

MARIA HAS REBUILT RELATIONSHIPS WITH HER CHILDREN AND REGAINED CUSTODY, HAS MAINTAINED SOBRIETY, FULFILLED COURT REQUIREMENTS, AND IS MOVING ON TO SUBSIDIZED DISABILITY HOUSING.
An Ode to Resilience
by: Vanessa Kulick Price

Many of the stories in the newsletter this month focus on resilience. There is a deep connection between resilience and the work we do. In simplest terms, resilience is a tolerance for discomfort—and yet, resilience is so much more than tolerance. Awareness, acceptance and embracing our emotional worlds are critical to navigating challenges—such as a global pandemic, health scares, unforeseen business competition, divorce and the myriad of other road bumps that emerge in our lives.

Generally, emotions are not discussed publicly. But, emotions are not “woo-woo”, predominately female, or derogatory. According to Dr. Brene Brown, neuroscience reveals that animals—to include humans—are emotional beings first and thinking beings second. Our emotions are designed to help us navigate our environments. Feelings first. Thinking second.

Is that all? Thankfully, no. Borrowing from Brene Brown again, resilient people, “recognize the critical role that relationships and story play in culture and strategy, remain curious about their own thoughts/behaviors, and are curious about how emotions/thoughts/behaviors affect relationships and perception.”

Let’s break that down. Resilient people recognize the critical role that relationships and story play in culture and strategy. It is not difficult to recognize the importance of relationships in Page County and our community narratives and stories. We’re scrappy. We love the river and to look at the mountains. We take pride in doing things the way they were always done. We are strong, stubborn and kind.

How does this relate to resilience? How do we tap into our relationships and stories to increase resilience and reduce domestic and sexual violence? Acknowledging our emotions as a community—understanding if, how and why these narratives positively and negatively impact our youth, families, jobs and health is a critical step towards resilience.

Shame, however, is the opposite of resilience. Feeling deeply flawed and unworthy of love and belonging—shame—creates conditions that entirely hamper resilience. When we feel shame or encourage shame in ourselves, our staff, our families—we are inhibiting resilience, creativity, growth and progress. Therefore, we owe it to ourselves as community members to route out shame.

Start with yourself and families. Then friends. Have conversations. Talk about emotions. Discuss how we acknowledge them. Observe and become curious about relationships—cultural and social relationships and stories within Page County that engender shame.

Shame is at the very core of domestic violence. Unfortunately, domestic and sexual violence is the primary manifestation of violence in Page County. We have above average levels of violence in comparison to other rural counties of comparable size. We also have a major addiction crisis. Further, 15% of our citizens are in poverty—that is 1.4 times higher than Virginia and 10 percent higher than averages in the United States.

People are suffering. This is part of our story. We must acknowledge the role of shame, and the systems, culture, stories that contribute to its perpetuation. It is not just up to non-profits and churches to challenge and transform these narratives and realities. Our readers—you—are in a position through your own behaviors, ideas, creations, businesses that change can happen in Page County.

So, here is a challenge: become curious, acknowledge the wisdom of your emotional world, and help to transform Page into a place of resilience.

Want to learn more about different emotions? Skip to page nine! Investigate social scientist Plutchik & his theoretical Wheel of Emotions. Remember: We can have many emotions throughout the day! Learning coping skills & grounding tools can help manage strong feelings.
Afterschool Programs
by: Makala Tate

Choices is excited to announce that we are again working with the Page County Public School System following a pause in services during the pandemic. We joined Page Alliance for Community Action (PACA) to provide after-school programs for Luray Elementary School (LES) and Page County Middle School (PCMS). We are attending LES every Tuesday and PCMS every other Thursday. We additionally continue to provide after-school programs at the West Luray Rec Center every Wednesday (see article on right) and to Page County 4-H monthly.

After a careful review of curriculums to support youth with social-emotional learning, Choices chose resilience as our first of many themes to focus activities over the course of the school year. When teaching resiliency, it is important to break down the topic into core components such as wellness, finding purpose, connections & healthy relationships, positive self-talk, and help-seeking behavior.

Students looked at us with blank stares when we first asked what resilience meant. No one knew! So, using a relatable experience—grades—we introduced the students to the concept of resiliency. Nearly every student raised their hand when asked if they had ever received a poor grade on a test or homework. We explained that instead of getting upset, resilience allows you to put in extra time and effort to improve your grade on the next go-round. We have since engaged the students in resilience activities to include magazine cut-out vision boards and role-plays on tough conversations.

Choices firmly believes that to live a full life, children need to develop their own resiliency, identify unique strengths and talents, learn coping skills, and strengthen communication and conflict resolution skills. Improving youth resiliency also plays a critical role in breaking the cycles of domestic and sexual violence that can be passed down from generation to generation.

***We are humbled to support our youth.***

"The Rec"
by: Tina Knupp

Choices began a partnership with "The Rec" (West Luray Recreational Center) this past spring. Advocates go to The Rec each Wednesday working with approximately thirty-five of Page County’s at-risk youth ages 4-17. Our activities and conversations are built around community. We do wellness activities such as gardening and nutrition bingo, and discuss how taking care of ourselves mentally and physically is important. The kids also build their self-awareness, self-esteem, and self-regulation through card games, journaling and group exercises.

Our staff discuss with the kids how resiliency can look different to each person. Our clients have shown us that everyone has different obstacles they are dealing with. Different dreams. Different struggles. Different stories. Our job is to recognize ourselves in each other, lend a helping hand. Having the grit to get up each day, take care of your younger siblings, go to school, hold an afterschool job, help your parents. We bring these important life lessons to The Rec every Wednesday.

Build your community.
Assessing Lethality

by: Leona Gander Dean

Choices and three local law enforcement agencies within the service area (Page County Sheriff’s Office, Luray, and Stanley Police Departments) have agreed to partner in the implementation of the Lethality Assessment Program (LAP)-Maryland Model. Officers spend significant amounts of time responding to domestic and sexual violence calls—many of which are repeat offenders.

This program is a multi-pronged homicide prevention intervention strategy designed to identify victims of domestic violence at greatest risk of being seriously injured or killed by their intimate partners and to connect them with their local domestic violence program. Trained police officers on the scenes of an intimate partner violence call assess a victim’s risk for serious injury or death using an evidence-based screening tool.

If found in high danger the victim is put into contact with Choices immediately. Studies show when victims are put into contact with domestic violence service providers it reduces the risk of injury and homicide. Choices and the three local law enforcement agencies anticipate that the LAP will intervene in the conflict to lessen victims’ risk of lethality while connecting them with much-needed services.

A “YES” response to any question #1-3 automatically triggers the protocol referral.

Negative responses to questions #1-3, but positive responses to at least four of questions #4-11, trigger the protocol referral.

40% INCREASE IN CALLS FOR SERVICES for agencies implementing LAP in Virginia.

45% INCREASE IN COURT ADVOCACY for agencies implementing LAP in Virginia.

138 STORIES
by: Rebecca “Becca” Frasier

According to Page County Juvenile & Domestic Relations Court (JDR), magistrates issued 138 emergency protective orders (POs) to individuals this past year.

Those POs are one-hundred thirty eight stories of courage & resiliency. One-hundred thirty eight sons, daughters, family, friends, neighbors, siblings...138 souls that have found peace.

The following numbers illustrate one-hundred thirty eight journeys toward safety. And—to a broader degree—demonstrates the cycle of violence & the power it wields.

138 EPOs ISSUED

64 TOOK FURTHER ACTION

74 No Action 55.6%

59 Fam. Abuse POs 42.8%

5 Non Fam. Abuse POs 3.6%

17% USED CHOICES’ SERVICES TO FILE A FAMILY ABUSE PO

11% USED CHOICES’ SERVICES TO FILE AN EPO

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS.

HTTPS://TINYURL.COM/TMA92ZZW

NEED ASSISTANCE OR ACCOMPANIMENT?
Email: LEONA@choicesofpagecounty.org

October 2021 Domestic Violence Awareness Month

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NEED ASSISTANCE OR ACCOMPANIMENT?
Email: LEONA@choicesofpagecounty.org
We collected the following statistics from Virginia Sexual & Domestic Violence Action Alliance VAdata (VAData) beginning in October 2020 through October 2021, focusing on hotline data, hotline services, and advocacy services Choices provided. They represent unique, individual hotline callers rather than total hotline calls.
Comings & Goings
by: Jacalyn Lee

2021 continues to see staffing changes at Choices. In May we said farewell to Robin Stevens, a core Choices staff for 23 years. Robin was our data queen, trainer, direct services case manager and supervisor of night and weekend shelter managers.

In April, we said farewell to Carrie Comer, our Child Services Coordinator for just over a year. Both ladies are missed.

We reshuffled who does what among remaining staff — tapping Felicia Housden to takeover the vacant Services Coordinator position.

Then in August, we welcomed Makala Tate to bring youthful energy to the team as an Associate Advocate. Makala comes to Choices as a Certified Medical Technician and proud Page County native.

A SHOW OF GRATITUDE
Unwavering community support makes all our work possible. Be it donations or service, your support throughout the years—especially 2020 and beyond—has fueled progress and programs that can and does change lives.

Goal planning and budgeting were new to me. But they [staff] helped me focus on the important stuff in my life.
I am not just getting by anymore.

I have really enjoyed the Healing Trauma group and didn’t realize how much my past was affecting me now.

We raised over $120,000 from October 2020 to October 2021.

One Very Kind Anonymous Donor
Blue Ridge Bank (Blue Ridge Gold Donor) & over $11,000 in in-kind donations!

Andersen Corporation & Employees
United Way NSV
The Coopersmith Foundation
County of Page

Mindrolling Charitable Society
Barb Stewart & Ken Johnson
Luray United Methodist Church

Many thanks to those donating between $1,000 & $2,999. We couldn’t do what we do without compassionate, supportive community members like you!

Luray Rotary Organization, Richard Mazzotti, Mike Salvino, Clyde Humphrey, Bill & Lucia King, Rexford Leonard, Jim & Donna Hayes, William & Mary Manefee, Walt & Sharon Suratt, BCT LLC, Christ Episcopal Church, Ida Grove Gospel Church, & Valley Care Management

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Court Advocate | Leona Dean
Housing Services | Jacalyn Lee
Associate Advocate | Makala Tate

Overnight Warriors & Shelter Managers:
Jennifer Mayhew
Mary Rothgeb
Sarah Meany

THE BOARD
Chairperson | Cathy Weaver
Vice-Chairperson | Barb Stewart
Treasurer | Amanda Story
Secretary | Gena Comer

Board Members:
Brian Plum
Audre H. Scott King
Stephanie Lillard
Eleanor Ames
Aaron Cubbage
Pastor Erich Bennett

IT ALL COUNTS.
& IT ALL MATTERS.
Donate to our mission through PayPal by searching 1210864.

Shop for yourself & support Choices through AmazonSmile. Search: Council on Domestic Violence for Page County.

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All the Feels
by: Rebecca "Becca" Frasier

PLUTCHIK’S WHEEL OF EMOTIONS

To the left is Plutchik’s Wheel of Emotions. Plutchik postulates that we have eight (8) basic emotions, and these "Basic 8" combine to create new, more complex emotions. As you explore the wheel, note—the more intense the color, the stronger the emotion.

Naming our emotions is just the beginning of learning to regulate our reactions and responses to daily life and traumatic experiences or memories. Expanding our self-awareness and self-regulation is a journey that doesn’t end when you graduate. It is never too late to learn more about yourself and how you move through this world.

NEEDS, WANTS, & WISHES

**NEEDS:**
- Shelf-stable foods
  - *Limit canned goods to 2 per donation*
- Hotel-ready meals
- Nutritious snacks
  - see list for specific wishes

**TIME FRAME:**
NOW until Nov. 30, 2021

**WHERE:**
Drop-off inside lobby
@ 230 W. MAIN ST.
LURAY, VA 22835

**OTHER:**
Complete a donation form (provided in lobby) for tax purposes & grantor financial reporting. Thanks!

Want to donate something else? Let this list guide you!

**Non-Food Items**
- Women’s Underwear
- Boys/Girls’ Underwear
- Socks
- Bras
- Shampoo/Conditioner
- Infant Care Items
- Weighted Blankets
- Guided Journals

Call for inquiries.

**Microwavable Soups**
- Microwavable Pasta/Rice
- Other Microwavable Grains
- Pasta Sauce
- Sandwich Bread
- Bagels
- Pretzels
- Fruit Cups
- Pre-cooked Chicken Breast
- Ground Beef
- Hotdogs/Sausages
- Various Lunch Meat
- Hummus
- Butter
- Cheese (varied)
- Cream Cheese
- Yogurt
- Apples
- Bananas
- Carrots
- Pre-Cut Fruit
- Fruit Smoothies
- Potatoes
- Melons
- Oranges
- Grapes

**Important: Bulk, family-size, and single-serving sizes are welcome! Please limit canned good donations.**
NOW thru 11/30/21
We’re asking for shelf-stable food items, hotel-ready meals, and more. (see p. 9)

Drop-off location in the lobby of 230 W. Main St. Luray, VA.