



# Springtime Resilience at Dawn's Place



## **A Glimpse into Life at Dawn's Place at a Time of Health Crisis**

Like everyone else, life at Dawn's Place has changed drastically amid the spread of the COVID-19 virus. We worked with our partner organizations to develop the Dawn's Place Coronavirus Plan. The seven current residents along with the woman living in the transition house are adjusting to this new reality. Because of sheltering down, we are not able to take two women who are potential candidates for Dawn's Place. The woman in the transition house has two part-time jobs. One of them is a work at home job during this crisis and the other she goes to on the weekends.

As you know, keeping the women on a schedule is critically important, but although they have been very cooperative dealing with necessary changes and restrictions, it is a daily challenge. Since the women cannot leave the residence, we have made numerous schedule adjustments. For example, conference calls through another facility have made IOP addiction counseling available. Our peer mentor, Ann Marie, facilitates in-house NA meetings which have worked out very well; it is also a good opportunity for the women to take a leadership role. Mary, our therapist continues with individual and group trauma counseling and mindfulness classes; she also arranged for the music therapist to continue her sessions through the use of Zoom. Alicia, the resident coordinator is working to keep schedules going and encouraging the women to keep up their hearts.

We are blessed with two hard-working, part-time staff. Joanna researches new potential grants while she continues grant applications and the required final reports. Charmian, our bookkeeper, gives us accurate monthly reports and conscientiously searches ways to ensure the frugal use of our financial resources especially these days.

Our dedicated tutor, Mary Ellen, has gone techy on us! She is working with a few residents to prepare them for successful completion of a GED through the use of Zoom. We are deeply grateful for the many volunteer hours she has spent with so many residents through

the years.

Because of covid-19, we had to suspend the volunteers who serve at Dawn's Place. Some of these volunteers have been with us for years. We miss seeing them and will welcome them back with open arms when this health crisis is resolved. Our dedicated night and weekend staff, Sharon, Janet, Brandale, and Philomena are now working extra hours to replace the volunteers since 24/7 coverage is critical. We are grateful for their service but it means overtime pay and added expense. Your financial support is even more vital at this time because of this and other additional expenses.

Because of you, our faithful supporters over these past 10+ years, we have been able to continue the mission of Dawn's Place—helping women to leave the life of commercial sexual exploitation or sex trafficking and develop the skills they need to build a self-directed life. We sincerely appreciate your concern and support for our efforts which offer hope and healing to women as they work to create new life paths. We are profoundly grateful for your continued support. Our simple “thank you” cannot match your enormous outpouring of support and concern, but please be assured that it carries our abundant appreciation for your generosity.

Finally, let us remember to pray for all those directly affected by covid-19, the medical professionals and all who care for them.

*-Sister Kathleen Coll SSJ, Executive Director of Dawn's Place*

[Visit our website to learn more about Dawn's Place](#)

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## Dawn's Place Needs Your Help!

Dawn's Place is Committed to Serving Our Residents During the COVID-19 Pandemic.



Dawn's Place has had to replace volunteers with paid staffing during the COVID-19 crisis. Any amount that you are able to donate would be so appreciated to help us keep our doors open during these unprecedented times.

[Donate Now!](#)

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## Legislative and Advocacy

# Updates

With the last newsletter, the CSE Institute provided a general breakdown of the Anti-Human Trafficking package introduced by the General Assembly in January 2020. Since then, several of those proposed changes have been signed into law by the Governor, including, [Act 1 \(2020\)](#), [Pennsylvania's Buyer Beware Act](#). This law makes several changes to Chapter 30 of the Pennsylvania Code, including some that bring Pennsylvania anti-trafficking law closer in line to the federal standard.

The Buyer Beware Act first, and importantly, adds “advertises” to the list of acts that constitute trafficking. This step increases the power of Pennsylvania’s law enforcement to take steps against traffickers. The act also expands § 3013, “Patronizing a Victim of Human Trafficking.” While the change does not yet bring Pennsylvania in line with federal law, it expands the crime to include not only “knowing” someone is a victim of sexual servitude but also those who purchase sex in “reckless disregard” that the person from who they are buying sex is a victim of trafficking. This expands the power of law enforcement to target sex buyers who drive the market for trafficking to continue. The CSE Institute is still working to amend Pennsylvania law to include “[patronizing](#)” in the list of acts that constitute trafficking, as this would bring us in line with the Federal law and give the Commonwealth a more robust set of tools to combat trafficking.

The Act also increases penalties across the board. Those who traffic minors now face up to 40 years incarceration, if the behavior is part of a course of conduct. Fines have increased both for traffickers, who now face a \$25,000 fine for a first-degree felony, and sex buyers convicted under § 3013, who face increasing fines with each conviction. Sex buyers now face a \$1,000 fine for a first offense, a \$25,000 fine for a second offense, and a \$50,000 fine for a third or subsequent offense. Some of the funds raised through these fines will go toward reimbursing law enforcement agencies investigating these crimes. The remainder will be split with 30% going toward increasing prosecution and 70% funding victim services and grants for victims and survivors.

The CSE Institute is continuing to work to assist survivors and victims of trafficking throughout the Philadelphia area, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and the United States. As we face this unprecedented global health crisis, it is imperative that we take care of ourselves, but also that we recognize the impact this is having on the most vulnerable in our population. Best of health.

*-Shea M. Rhodes, Esquire*

*Dawn's Place Board Member*

*Director and Co-Founder of Villanova Law Institute to Address Commercial and Sexual Exploitation*



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## Healing Stories

Outside of Dawn's Place, the bare branches and hard packed ground is slowly giving way to green peeping up in unexpected places. The budding greenery reminds me of all the ways that, in this work, failure turns into success.

About ten years ago, I met a client in the women's jail. Thirty-year-old Lori\* was diagnosed as bi-polar, paranoid schizophrenic, and heavily addicted to heroin. But she desperately wanted out of jail, and out of the life. Even though she had never been sent to a drug rehab, she had already been sentenced to the state penitentiary for two years on a prostitution charge. I later discovered that Lori had a problem being respectful around judges, which accounted for her being sent upstate. I sent Lori to Dawn's Place and kept my fingers crossed that she would fit in there.

Well, Lori LOVED Dawn's Place. She couldn't believe that she was being housed in a clean and beautiful home and being treated with welcoming kindness. Never in her 30 years had she been treated this well. And Lori fit in well. One evening, I went to volunteer with my then four-year-old daughter. We played board games with Lori. I was touched by how kind she was to my daughter. Even though we were there to keep Lori company, she made sure that my daughter was never bored. (She also demonstrated near genius level math skills!)

But the pull of heroin remained strong, and after a month or so, Lori relapsed on her way back from drug treatment. I found out two days later, when she called me from jail again. She had already been arrested for prostitution. This time though, Lori could control herself at sentencing enough to get a 6 to 12 month county sentence. Lori called me virtually every day of her county sentence, just to touch base, and to tell me how much she had loved being at Dawn's Place. After she was there about a week, she started introducing me to her "cellie", a 54-year-old woman named Sarah\* who had a record of 34 arrests for prostitution. I could tell that Sarah was initially reluctant to talk to me, but Lori would insistently put her on the phone every day. I found out later that Lori would harass Sarah daily about going to Dawn's Place. As Sarah later put it, "I had given up on treatment (drug and alcohol) which had failed me so many times. I was just waiting to die. But Lori wouldn't shut up, so I talked to you on the phone just to shut her up."

Sarah was also serving a 6 to 12 month sentence. But, at the end of that 6 months, the sheriff transported Sarah to Dawn's Place, where she stayed for two years. During that time, Sarah was reunited with parents that she had not seen in 40 years. It was not easy for Sarah, but she persevered. It's been eight years, and Sarah has not been rearrested once in all that time. She got the sexual trauma recovery therapy that she needed, and she has been clean and sober ever since.

As for Lori, she still calls me whenever she's in jail, and tells me how much she wishes she was still at Dawn's Place. A few years back, I was representing Lori in front of an angry judge, whose probation she had violated. I presented one witness on Lori's behalf. It was Sarah, who begged the judge to give Lori the chance that Lori had given her. Based on Sarah's testimony, the judge didn't send Lori upstate.

Lori is still in the life, and still struggling, but she remembers proudly the life that she and the dedicated staff, volunteers, and donors of Dawn's Place saved.

\*Not her real name

*-Mary DeFusco, Esquire  
Dawn's Place President of the Board  
Director of Training, Defender Association of Philadelphia*



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