



# Happenings at Dawn's Place



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## Dear Friends of Dawn's Place,

Since our last Newsletter, Dawn's Place has received two new residents. They have been busy settling into sharing life with the other women as well as the program and the routine of Dawn's Place. Both our resident coordinator, Alicia, and our peer mentor, Ann Marie, have spent time with our latest residents helping them to adjust and making sure they have all their necessary documents.

All of the women—including the newest residents—find that knitting during their free time is relaxing; it helps them cope with any anxiety they may have. One of the women is especially proficient and has been asked to teach knitting to women at Interim House, the site where all our residents go for addiction counseling. Another of our women finds sewing a relaxing experience. The sewing machine hums along as she makes clothes and other accessories to complement her meager wardrobe.

Mary, our therapist continues to see each woman for individual counseling at least once a week, but more often if necessary. She also teaches two classes weekly—one on mindfulness and the other on dealing with trauma.

Thanks to a grant we have received, our residents are able to work with an art therapist once a week. In addition, for many years, our faithful volunteers, Carol and friends, come once a month for an arts and craft session. The women enjoy both experiences and are proud of their artistic talents.

Our dedicated tutor, Mary Ellen, has been working with one resident on basic reading, writing and math skills. Mary Ellen also tutors another woman to prepare for successful completion of a GED. We are grateful for the volunteer hours she spends at Dawn's Place and for all the volunteers who help in so many ways.

And finally, only because of you, our faithful supporters over these past 10 years, have we been able to continue the mission of Dawn's Place—helping women to leave the life of commercial sexual exploitation or sex trafficking. We sincerely appreciate your concern and support of our efforts which can offer hope and healing to women as they work to create new life paths. That we are profoundly grateful for your continued support is

understatement. Our “thank you” carries our abundant appreciation for your generosity.

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



Visit our website to learn more about Dawn's Place

## Upcoming Events

*Finding Her Voice*

We invite you to  
celebrate with us at our  
**10TH ANNIVERSARY GALA**  
Saturday, October 5, 2019 • 6-10pm

**PENNS LANDING CATERERS**  
1301 SOUTH COLUMBUS BLVD., PHILADELPHIA, PA

 **Dawn's Place**  
safe support. new beginnings.

## “Finding Her Voice”

It only happens once in a decade! What's that you ask? Why it's the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of Dawn's Place opening its doors. Thanks to the generous support of donors like you, we have made it to this milestone.

Please come help us celebrate on Saturday, October 5, 2019, at our **“Finding Her**

**Voice”** gala. It will be held at the Penn's Landing Caterers, 1301 S Columbus Blvd, Philadelphia. This is easy access off Route 95, and there is ample free parking.

Reserve your tables now. Tickets are \$100.00 each or \$900.00 for a table of ten. There will be delightful dancing, an awesome auction, delicious dinner, bountiful bar, and of course the guests will be par excellence! In a special guest appearance, 1812 Production Company's own “Patsy from South Philadelphia” will give use the latest low down on the important issues from her stoop on Schrunck Avenue.

You can reserve your table or buy individual tickets through our website, [ahomefordawn.org](http://ahomefordawn.org).

Click on the link for Eventbrite and you won't miss out on a fabulous evening and help us keep our doors open for another ten years.

[Click here to buy tickets!](#)

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## Legislative and Advocacy Updates

In the geographic epicenter of our democracy, Washington D.C., there is [local legislation](#) pending that would completely decriminalize prostitution. This is not the first time the idea of decriminalization has been introduced in D.C. In fact, a wave of decriminalization and legalization bills have been rising in cities across the country within the context of increasingly polarized views on the commercial sex industry. So much so that the debate has even become an issue in the upcoming presidential election.

The conflict over how - or whether - the law should address prostitution is so intense that it divides otherwise cooperative schools of mainstream feminism, with some holding the belief that selling sex is liberating, and others regarding prostitution as gender-based violence.

The CSE Institute and Dawn's Place are proponents of the ideology known as abolitionism. We believe prostitution is inherently violent and exploitative and that it has no place in a just society. We reject any laws or legislation that protect buyers, traffickers, and others who benefit from the commercial sexual exploitation of another person. Although both models would make all forms of prostitution no longer unlawful, decriminalization and legalization differ in that legalization requires regulation, taxation, and so forth. In other words, decriminalization is completely unregulated, and in this way somewhat more dangerous than legalization.

Bills like the one introduced in D.C. last month that propose full decriminalization would eliminate criminal liability for all individuals involved in the commercial sex industry: those selling sex, those buying sex, and those facilitating or promoting the sale of sex. There is a single aspect of this proposal that we can agree on: that prostituted people should not be criminalized for selling sex. Trafficking victims and those engaging in survival sex (the exchange of a sex act for a basic need such as food or shelter) are forced or coerced to engage in prostitution. For others, the “choice” to engage in prostitution stems from a series of institutionalized oppressions. Those who are purchased for sex often face economic, housing, and healthcare instability.

As abolitionists, we advocate instead for the Nordic or Equality Model, which is a legal structure that emphasizes the decriminalization of prostituted people while maintaining the criminalization of the true perpetrators. The Nordic Model recognizes that the demand for commercial sex is what drives the industry. Without criminal penalties to deter buyers and pimps and brothel owners, demand will skyrocket. And when demand flourishes, so

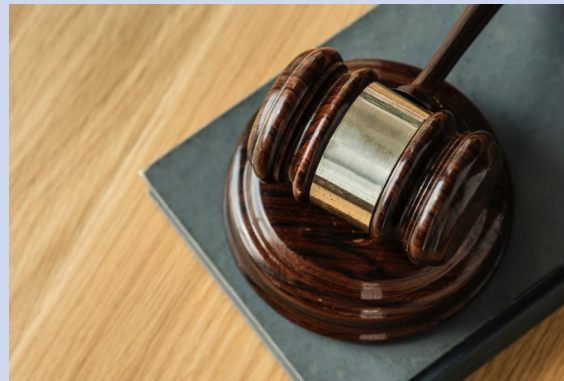
does prostitution and sex trafficking. Without criminal penalties to deter buyers and pimps and brothel owners, demand will skyrocket. And when demand flourishes, so does prostitution and sex trafficking.

<b>Legalization</b>	<b>Decriminalization</b>	<b>Nordic Model</b>
Legalizes the sale of sex	Decriminalizes the sale of sex	Decriminalizes the sale of sex
Legalizes the purchase of sex	Decriminalizes the purchase of sex	Criminalizes the purchase of sex
Regulated (e.g. health and safety, employment)	Unregulated	Provides robust exit strategies for prostituted people and generates anti-demand public campaigns

*-Shea M. Rhodes, Esquire*

*Dawn's Place Board Member*

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



## Healing Stories

Summer. The heat outside puts me in mind of summers past, and the many years I spent visiting the Summer Fair at Riverside Correctional Facility (RCF) for Women in Philadelphia. I always went carrying the same supplies: (1) A bunch of brochures on the effects of Commercial Sexual Exploitation (CSE) on women and their need for sexual trauma recovery therapy; and, (2) A photo montage consisting of real mugshots, taken over a two-year span, showing the first eight prostitution arrests for a dozen or so women.

The RCF Fair is an opportunity for incarcerated women to meet providers of various social services, and determine where to find the help that they need. The women gravitate from table to table to determine what each provider is offering. The women who came by our table could be in RCF for crimes ranging from murder to disorderly conduct. Most of them were looking for drug treatment providers.

When they came by our table, I would explain that we provided help for women victims of commercial sexual exploitation. They looked puzzled, until I said: "Prostitution". Most of them responded the same way: "Oh, I done a lot of stuff; but I ain't never done *that!*" Coming from women in jail, the contempt in their voices, never ceased to surprise and dismay me. That's when I would pull out my second tool – the photo montage. "Look," I would say, "That's the same woman across the page getting arrested over and over. Look at the first mugshot. How old do you think she is?" The result was always the same. Inevitably, contempt would melt into sorrow and compassion: "That's the same woman!?! In only two years!?! But she looks so old and beat up, and she's so young at her first arrest! She's just a little girl!!"

But satisfying as it was to see contempt morph into compassion, that's not why I would go to the RCF Fair. I was searching. I was looking for women who were trapped in CSE, who wanted out, and who had lost hope. And I would find them. I could recognize them

immediately. As soon as I told one of these women what we had to offer, tears would come to her eyes, she would lean in, and lower her voice. “That’s me,” she would whisper, “Can you help me?”

Thanks to the hardworking staff and caring volunteers and donors of Dawn’s Place, I was able to answer: “Yes. We can help you. My name is Mary. What’s yours?”

I miss the RCF Fairs. But Dawn’s Place doesn’t. I have been replaced by our far more effective peer specialist, Anne Marie. She knows RCF from the inside, and can reach these women at a level that I never could.

I first met Anne Marie at RCF. I told her that there was help and hope for her. And by her sheer determination and hard work, Anne Marie exceeded my wildest hopes. She helps women at Dawn’s Place every day, and she is renowned as a survivor speaker and advocate.

Now, at the Summer Fair, Anne Marie searches.

*-Mary DeFusco, Esquire*

*Dawn's Place President of the Board*

*Director of Training, Defender Association of Philadelphia*



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