



Summer Sparks Hope at Dawn's Place



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

Dawn's Place provides a comprehensive, year-long program for victims of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking that includes housing, trauma-informed therapy, case management, education, and access to a wide variety of services that support residents in their recovery.

We continue to adjust to life imposed by the COVID-19 virus. We are in compliance with and are grateful for our Governor's regulations which have prevented the spread of the virus here. The six women currently at Dawn's Place have been patiently adjusting to this challenging situation. We have not yet opened to new residents but will make appropriate adjustments as soon as Philadelphia moves into the "green" zone.

Meanwhile, one of our residents has excelled in on-line software courses. As a reward for her success and competence, the company gave her a set of computer tools as a graduation gift. Occasionally, we ask her to help with our computer problems, so she has become our "in-house tech person." Recently, a woman who completed the Dawn's Place year-long program, moved into the Transition House and is working full time for Philabundance after completing their six-month training program. While looking for an affordable apartment near her new job, she works daily at Philabundance. In the last Newsletter, we

featured another woman in the Transition House who works two part-time jobs and was able to rent a house and be re-united with her family. She often expresses her gratitude to Dawn's Place for giving her the opportunity to start a new life with her family.

In a recent community meeting with the residents, they articulated their weariness with sheltering-in. The staff has worked diligently to keep the women on schedule with their therapy and one-on-one addiction counseling and group sessions as well as other services including NA meetings—all done through Zoom. It is understandable that they are frustrated with not getting out and especially not being able to see their families. However, each one of them has expressed beautifully their appreciation for all that Dawn's Place has provided for them. They said that they know of no other place like Dawn's Place and they are thankful to be here.

Dawn's Place is blessed with expansive and beautiful grounds behind both houses. However, recent extreme weather with its heavy rain and strong winds damaged the trees and caused them and large branches to fall blocking the path leading to our exercise room. We are most grateful to one of our faithful foundations who heard about our situation and offered to pay the landscaper's fees to clear the area.

We are currently engaged in a staff transition process. Mary Shay, our therapist assumes the additional role of Program Coordinator; Ann Marie Jones moved into the Resident Coordinator position; and Brandale McAfee was hired as Ann Marie's assistant. Since Brandale's arrival, we now have two full-time graduates on the staff of Dawn's Place. Both Ann Marie and Brandale have had many similar experiences as our current residents; they also went through the program and now are able to lend their voices as survivors to strengthen our program. We are most grateful to Mary, Ann Marie and Brandale for their insights and dedication to the mission of Dawn's Place.

Our committed night and weekend staff, Sharon, Janet, Philomena and Linda support the women by their presence and concern. They are more than paid staff; their dedication has enabled Dawn's Place to continue its mission of actively supporting women affected by commercial sexual exploitation and its abuse. Hopefully, we will soon be able to welcome back our dedicated volunteers. We have missed them and look forward to their return. Dawn's Place is funded solely by private donations and foundations. We are profoundly grateful for your continued support over the past 11 years and value you as partners in our mission. Your support has strengthened our capacity to assist survivors of trauma, abuse and oppression in navigating the challenging road to freedom, choice and independence. Thank you.

Finally, let us continue to pray for all those directly affected by COVID-19, the medical professionals, all who care for COVID patients, first responders and all those working on research that will bring this dreadful disease under control. We remember also the many family members who have lost loved ones to this virus and were not able to be with them as they died.

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



Visit our website to learn more about Dawn's Place

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!](#)

Legislative and Advocacy Updates

The recent protests and political action taken by Black Lives Matter and similar organizations has brought systematic racism to the forefront of the American psyche. There is much that needs to be done to provide justice to the Black community, and we are only seeing the beginning of necessary changes to systems that disproportionately impact and punish the Black and Brown community. In the past few months, the Pennsylvania General Assembly has proposed several important legislative changes to address some of these issues:

Act 53, formerly Senate Bill 637

On July 1, 2020 Governor Wolf signed Senate Bill 637 into law. This law makes significant and important changes to our state system of professional licensure. Prior to this change, criminal convictions could result in rejection for any state professional license based on vague references to “moral turpitude” or “good moral character.” However, this law updates our license system in a way that will directly impact survivors of trafficking. Survivors of trafficking often have a criminal record as a result of their victimization and this record can prevent them from obtaining meaningful long-term employment.

First, and importantly, the law requires that applicants can only be denied for convictions **directly related** to the practice or profession or where the record demonstrates a substantial risk to coworkers or customers. The law also requires the Bureau of Professional and Occupational Affairs to publish a list of crimes considered “directly related” to certain occupations as well as a guide to describe the steps to prove that the

individual does not represent a substantial risk.

Secondly, the law expands the current system for license application in two ways. First, it allows for an applicant to request a preliminary decision relating to their convictions, prior to spending time and money on training and education. Second, applicants who otherwise would be rejected based on their record can present evidence of their fitness for the occupation.

Finally, the law expands job access for those who received training in correctional institutions. They may, upon completion of their training obtain a restricted license, where they previously would be denied. After working under supervision for 1 or 2 years, a full license can be granted if the individual demonstrates suitability for the job.

This change will enable criminalized trafficking survivors to seek out more meaningful and higher paying careers.

[For more information, visit the CSE Institute's website](#)

Police Sexual Misconduct

Recently sent to Governor Wolf on July 14, 2020, House Bill 256 makes many changes to our criminal justice system. In part, it makes it illegal for peace officers to engage in sexual conduct with those in their custody. Another piece of legislation, [House Bill 1841](#), signed into law as Act 57 on July 14, takes steps to increase officer accountability by creating employment reporting requirements for law enforcement. While both these pieces of legislation are positive steps, they fail to fully address the serious issue of police sexual misconduct, which particularly affects prostituted persons and victims of trafficking.

Rep. Joanna McClinton will soon be introducing legislation to create the crime of ["Sexual Assault by a Peace Officer,"](#) which will be comprehensive and address the initial crime, employment consequences and ensure that confidential informants are covered as well. [For more information, visit the CSE Institute's website.](#)

Sexually exploited women and girls deserve the protection of our legal system not the criminalization, abuse and exploitation they have seen over the years. The Pennsylvania General Assembly is beginning to take steps to right these long-standing, systematic wrongs.

-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

Well, it's July and things are slowly opening back up, but I'm still working from

home. Even working from home, my clients still call me to tell me what is going on in their lives. My latest call is from Tanya*.

I met Tanya about 6 years ago in the women's prison. Long brown curls and blue eyes clashed with her tense jaw. As Tanya began telling me her story, one lone tear spilled over from her left eye. She brushed it away angrily. Tanya's story, unfortunately, is not uncommon among the women survivors of commercial sexual exploitation (CSE). When she was a little girl, Tanya was sexually abused by her father. Tanya's reaction was uncommon. She found the courage to testify against her father. But that courage came at great cost.

Tanya was estranged from her family, she was in jail for prostitution and she was heavily drug addicted. Unfortunately, Tanya was not ready then for sexual trauma recovery therapy. She wanted only drug treatment, and that is what I was able to get for her. Since then, Tanya has kept in touch, calling me sporadically.

Since our first encounter, Tanya has been in and out of prison in a number of jurisdictions. She is now open to sexual trauma recovery therapy, but unable to come to Dawn's Place for various logistical reasons. I wish it were not so. I wish that every woman survivor that I met were able to come to Dawn's Place and receive the treatment, services, and love that they need to thrive.

I sit and daydream about what the calls from Tanya would be like if she had been ready to go to Dawn's Place when I first met her. I don't have to imagine very hard, because I do keep tabs on our some of our graduates. I am so proud of what they have accomplished in their lives; and, I'm so grateful to our dedicated staff, volunteers, and donors who have done so much to rebuild the lives of our women.

*-Mary DeFusco, Esquire
Dawn's Place President of the Board
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