



SEEDS of CHANGE

Where the healing begins



Working to create a society free of domestic and sexual violence

SPRING 2021

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Letter from Our Executive Director

To me Spring has always represented growth, change, and new beginnings. At Mutual Ground we are constantly growing and changing, but this year has been a special one. It is special for many reasons, least of which is the pandemic we are all living through. While the pandemic has made growth and change slower and more complicated than normal, it has also opened our eyes to an issue that has always been present, but has not been given proper attention. That issue is racism.

At Mutual Ground, we have taken this year to begin a journey toward becoming an anti-racist organization. This means that we have reached out to experts, implemented a whole agency assessment, and now begin the real work of changing our culture to learn and address racial disparities within our organization for both clients and staff. Our Board of Directors and leadership team are committed to this process that will result in many changes throughout our organization over time.

Another significant and exciting change we are still moving through is merging Breaking Free's outpatient addiction treatment and prevention services under the Mutual Ground umbrella. This was a huge undertaking in normal circumstances, but in the midst of a pandemic, a merger was

- and still is -more complicated. We have overcome many obstacles and are now in the very beginning stages of using Mutual Ground's expertise in program development, public awareness and education, and service excellence to break down the stigma of addiction. We bring a trauma informed lens to the issue of substance use and bridge the silos that are often present for individuals and families facing complex issues when reaching out for help in the world of social services.

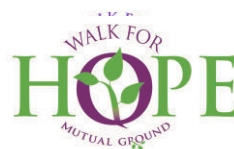
Thank you for helping us lift the voices of individuals and families who are victims of violence, and those who struggle with the disease of addiction - we know these issues are happening throughout our community and that the pandemic has only intensified these issues. We strive to break down the barriers for clients to receive help and continue to be the beacon of hope that our community has come to rely on over the last 46 years.

Sincerely,

Michelle Meyer

Michelle Meyer
Executive Director

Mutual Ground's Walk for Hope is on May 16, 2021!



Mutual Ground
418 Oak Ave.
Aurora IL 60506

mutualground.org
(630) 897-0084



What
13th Annual Walk for Hope

When
Sunday, May 16th

Time
Drop-in between 10:00 AM - 4:00 PM

Where
Batavia Riverwalk | 140 First Street, Batavia, IL



SCAN ME

To register or donate to the event visit www.mutualground.org and click on "Walk for Hope" or scan the code on your smartphone to go directly to our Walk for Hope website!

What the Walk for Hope will look like this year...

This event is free of charge and family-friendly! This year the event will be hybrid, attendees can participate virtually or in-person (socially distanced with safety precautions in place). On Sunday, May 16th we will kick off our Walk for Hope with a virtual presentation emailed to all registrants and posted on our social media pages in the morning. Our in-person event will be hosted from 10:00am to 4:00pm. Participants can stop by the event anytime during these hours to pick up their packets, view our victim impact displays, and listen to music. We will also be providing all participants with a one-mile map of the Batavia Riverwalk for those who wish to take their walk during the event. Participants wishing to participate virtually, can take their walk at any time in a place of their choosing! More details will be emailed closer to the event.

Is sexual assault still a problem in 2021?

As April approaches so does the reminder of sexual assault awareness. For all involved in supporting victims on a daily basis, we are very aware of the causes, the repercussions, and the trauma involved when sexual violence takes place. Sexual assault is a vast issue that impacts all people whether it is obvious or not. This awareness is very different from what others not involved in sexual violence prevention perceive. It is this disconnect from what victims and their supporters understand and what the general public perceives that reinforces an indifference among the population. A daunting reminder of this is how 1 in 5 women, 1 in 21 men, 1 in 4 girls, and 1 in 6 boys experience rape, or how 90% of sexual assaults that take place on college campuses are not reported. Looking at those statistics you would imagine that we as a society would harbor greater urgency towards a resolution or prevention yet these experiences and statistics lay in the background not phasing the public until they are individually impacted by the effects.

A Personal Perception of SA as an Advocate and an Individual

This fact stays in the back of my head while I walk through my college campus, when I go on long distance runs alone, when I pick a parking spot in a crowded lot, or when my niece tells me about how her school treats boys and girls differently. I also think about what my position is within this divergence of attitudes towards sexual assault and within the environment of Mutual Ground. Then outside in my daily life, to be conscious of the signs of sexual violence and understand how vast trauma can be and how it presents itself through various victims. To acknowledge that I, a single individual,

cannot prevent every potential assault from happening or protect every victim. One of the facts that is most difficult to grapple with is that there cannot be a dent made in those numbers of people victimized unless there is broadened social change.

A Solution to Draw From

Some productive methods to altering this predicament may be to expand positive attitudes to those around us through symbolic interactionism in order to broaden the understanding of how to be a part of a supportive system and how to understand what sexual violence looks like. Many victims become isolated and feel they do not have support in their personal life, these victims are held to the expectation that they will have to get over this traumatic experience and re-assimilate eventually. This expectation puts the pressure on the victim and reduces accountability everywhere else. Autonomy and a respect for individuals as their own persons is a lesson everyone of all ages should be aware of. Creating an environment where respect of personal space and physical touch can alleviate the anxiety some victims may feel while simultaneously creating a norm for boundaries that others can learn from. Aside from respecting physical boundaries, sometimes support and the way victims are perceived publicly can be silencing rather than encouraging. When you speak not only to known victims but all people, you want them feeling comfortable to confiding in you. Do not present the plethora of doubts and judgements that may come to mind, instead understand that they are not telling you a story to receive scrutiny; rather this is vulnerability that should be met with an understanding of the gravity of their situation.

Not all victims will or are capable of describing details in an objective manner but it should also be understood that this is a situation that comes with great emotion. For the month of April and the months beyond that, consider the ways you may become part of a supportive system and collectively we may create more empathetic and encouraging environments for all.

Ways to Create Trust and Support for Those Affected by Sexual Violence

- Respect boundaries both physically and emotionally
- Speak about the situation only when they are comfortable doing so
- Emphasize that you are a person to confide in
- Look to resources they may need but are not aware of
- Maintain a neutral position when hearing their story as this is not the time for doubts to be voiced
- Normalize believing survivors and recognizing how their lives may be impacted (*this may also extend to their loved ones*)
- Recognize the groups most likely to be victimized and why they may need specific resources

Written by:
Kass Gonzalez | Victim Advocate at Mutual Ground

April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month

April 2021 marks the official 20th anniversary of Sexual Assault Awareness Month, a time to draw attention to the prevalence of sexual assault and educate individuals and communities about how to prevent it. Sexual harassment, assault, and abuse can happen to anyone, anywhere, in any community — including in online spaces.

At Mutual Ground, we understand that sexual harassment, abuse, and assault are widespread problems in our communities. We listen to sexual violence survivors....we believe them...we support them throughout their journey.

Throughout the last fiscal year, the Mutual Ground Sexual Assault Department worked endlessly to support victims of sexual violence throughout their journey. Our advocates supported victims during their time of need responding to **93** sexual violence hospital calls. Our counseling services provided **184** sexual assault victims with **1,006** hours of individual counseling and **44** hours of group counseling. In addition to survivors, **20** significant others received **238** hours of counseling. Our Sexual Violence Hotline answered **593** sexual assault crisis calls. Our court advocates assisted survivors with legal procedures. And all these services are offered free of charge.

If you or someone you love is a victim of sexual violence, we are here to help. Call our 24-hour Sexual Violence Hotline at (630) 897-8383.



Tips to Show Support for Survivors of Sexual Assault

According to RAINN (*Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network*), Every 73 seconds, an American is Sexually Assaulted. When a friend or family member tells you that they have been sexually assaulted, it can be difficult to know what to say to them. We encourage you to be as supportive and non-judgmental as possible since it can be very difficult for a survivor to disclose to someone they care about. **Here are a few phrases that can help you show support through a survivor's healing process:**

- “I believe you.”
- “It took a lot of courage to tell me about this.”
- “It's not your fault.”
- “You didn't do anything to deserve this.”
- “You are not alone.”
- “I care about you and am here to listen or help in any way I can.”
- “I'm sorry this happened.”
- “This shouldn't have happened to you.”

Thank You Volunteers!

Thank You Volunteers!

During National Volunteer Week, April 18-24, Mutual Ground wishes to thank ALL of our very important Ambassador Volunteers, Direct Service Volunteers, Group Volunteers, Student Advisory Board members and Board of Directors! Our volunteers prepared backpacks for our student clients, helped us prepare, organize and run our Winter Wonderland Client Shoppe, sorted countless donations, assisted with our Clothing Closet, spent time gardening our

large outdoor space, dropped off needed donations, provided meals to our client families, supported our virtual Main Event gala, called businesses on our behalf, provided food for our shelter, helped with facility projects like moving furniture and painting, provided support to victims, checked in on our agency during the shelter in place order and so much more. We appreciate each and every one of you, your time and your skills!

Thank you to our Corporate Partners!

Thank you to our Prevention Partner... Amazon!!!

Amazon is guided by four principles: customer obsession rather than competitor focus, passion for invention, commitment to operational excellence, and long-term thinking. Customer reviews, 1-Click shopping, personalized recommendations, Prime, Fulfillment by Amazon, AWS, Kindle Direct Publishing, Kindle, Fire tablets, Fire TV, Amazon Echo, and Alexa are some of the products and services pioneered by Amazon. **For more information, visit amazon.com/about and follow @AmazonNews**

Thank you to our On-going Support Partner... Advocate Construction!!!

Advocate Construction is a residential and commercial construction company with locations in six states throughout the Midwest. By prioritizing the satisfaction of its customers and the personal fulfillment of its employees, Advocate has quickly become a leader in the construction industry. The Advocate team prides themselves on being an excellent company with which to do business; they not only adhere to the highest standards in the trade, but also commit to being a part of the communities they serve.



If you are interested in becoming a Mutual Ground Corporate Partner contact Kathy Melone at kmelone@mutualground.org.

Mutual Ground has been evaluated by Charity Navigator!

We're excited to share some news! Mutual Ground has been evaluated by Charity Navigator through their revolutionary Encompass Rating System and received a 100 out of 100 rating!

The Encompass Rating System is a comprehensive evaluation tool that analyzes nonprofit performance based on four key indicators. Charity Navigator's third-party accreditation validates our organization's operational excellence.

This milestone achievement for Mutual Ground couldn't have happened without you and your support. Thank you for being part of our family as contributors, funders, and volunteers. Your trust in us is what makes the difference to us and the individuals and families we serve.



Thank you for being an integral part of our mission!

Why Be a Volunteer?

It's not for money. It's not for fame.

And it's not for any personal gain.

It's just for love of fellow man.

It's just lending a helping hand.

It's just giving a tithe of self.

That's something you can't buy

with wealth.

It's not the medals worn with pride.

It's just for the feeling deep inside.

It's that reward down deep in your heart.

It's that feeling that you have been a part

Of helping those who need it far and near.

That's what makes you a volunteer.

~ Author Unknown

Support Mutual Ground's Mission



Donate Here

As part of our mission, Mutual Ground is dedicated to supporting survivors of sexual violence every day of the year—but for the month of April, in support of Sexual Assault Awareness Month, we are asking YOU to join our cause. During SAAM, we ask individuals and organizations throughout our community to learn more about sexual violence, share information, volunteer, and donate to help raise awareness of this issue. Together, we can support survivors and change the way our communities respond to sexual violence.

Listen. Believe. Support.

Support Mutual Ground's mission today, every dollar helps us provide services for victims of domestic and sexual violence. We could not do what we do every day without your support.

Mutual Ground is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization that relies on contributions from individuals, organizations and corporations to fulfill its mission. Donations are 100% tax deductible.

Mutual Ground
418 Oak Avenue
Aurora, IL 60506

Non-Profit Org
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit #40
St. Charles, IL



Upcoming Events

Mutual Ground Walk for Hope

Sunday, May 16, 2021

Drop in between: 10:00am – 4:00pm

Batavia Riverwalk

140 First Street, Batavia, IL, 60510

Mutual Ground Gala

Friday, October 16, 2021

Details to come!

Follow us on social media!



Mutual Ground

Give us a call for more information about our services

Contact Us

418 Oak Avenue
Aurora, IL 60506
(630) 897-0084

Visit us on the web at
www.mutualground.org