



SEEDS of CHANGE

Where the healing begins



Working to create a society free of domestic and sexual violence

FALL 2020

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Letter from Our Executive Director

Continuing to operate our vital services during an unprecedented year...what a task!

Mutual Ground has always had what it takes to thrive under immense challenges. This year has been extremely challenging to say the least. But as I look back on the past months, I am confident that this year's events are once again making us stronger.

COVID has been really difficult on our clients AND staff. Imagine having to bring your family to a shelter during a pandemic (which could be traumatic pre-pandemic) knowing that you are increasing your family's risk of exposure. Unfortunately, sometimes there is no choice when domestic and sexual violence is tearing apart your lives. We have taken many steps to make it as safe as possible for our residents. We intentionally decreased our shelter capacity from approximately 30 to about 17 to allow for more social distancing and are following all CDC guidelines. Our walk-in counseling services saw a slight dip as we shifted our ability to offer virtual counseling and telehealth, as well as in-person counseling when appropriate. We have stringent safety precautions in place, and are now seeing our numbers on the rise once again.

Our staffing has also been affected by the pandemic due to contact tracing and self-quarantining for a period of time. This has been especially difficult as our employees' children go back to school and come into contact with exposed individuals. Also, a number of our staff are either single parents and/or can't find childcare and/or need to help their children with remote learning.

I could go on and on about how difficult operating a front line 24-hour-a-day, seven-day-a-week non-profit is during a pandemic, but you already know. You are also dealing with some of the same challenges that our clients, staff and volunteers are facing every day. They say that with challenge come opportunity. And I truly believe that.

The racial injustice and inequality that has been happening for years, but finally remains front and center after the murder of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and so many others also created an opportunity for Mutual Ground. We are taking a long hard look at how we operate and what we believe to be the core issues intersecting with our work in domestic and sexual violence, and now substance use disorder. To that end, the leadership of the organization has made a commitment to become an anti-racist organization. In the coming months we will be embarking on a journey to help us in this effort.

We have seen so much strength from our clients, staff, volunteers and our community. We are learning and growing! We want you to know how important you are to us, and we hope that you and your families are safe and healthy.

Sincerely,

Michelle Meyer

Michelle Meyer
Executive Director



Mutual Ground
418 Oak Ave.
Aurora IL 60506

mutualground.org
(630) 897-0084



Event Update!! What's Going on With the Gala and Walk for Hope?

At Mutual Ground we have had to shift gears many times over the last couple of months. We were disappointed to have to postpone our springtime gala and reschedule it to the fall, but we wanted to do everything possible to try and celebrate the successes of Mutual Ground in person. Alas, we finally had to admit that it was not going to be possible to celebrate in-person in 2020. Due to the ongoing effects of COVID-19 we made the decision to **reformat the Friday, October 16th gala to be a virtual event**, with on-line festivities occurring from 7-8pm that evening.

The good news? We are now offering tickets to the virtual event! Those who have already purchased tickets for the original event or sponsored (thank you!) will be receiving special care packages and an entry into an amazing raffle. But others now have the opportunity to participate!

In honor of our milestone of serving the community for 45 years, for a donation of \$45 to Mutual Ground you will get

access to the AMAZING on-line silent auction, participate in the virtual gala on Friday, October 16th, and be entered into a special raffle for a \$300 Visa gift card! To participate visit www.mutualground.org and get the party going!!

So what does this mean for our annual Walk for Hope? You're probably used to seeing us promote this event during this timeframe. We made the difficult decision to push the Walk for Hope to the springtime and we currently have secured the date of Sunday, May 16th at Blackberry Farm for the walk. We're hoping for some lovely spring weather and being able to get together with our wonderful supporters to walk in solidarity with the victims of domestic and sexual violence.

We cannot tell you enough how much we appreciate your support of Mutual Ground. **Please consider joining us for our first ever virtual gala. We need your support now more than ever....and it's going to be fun!**



Legal Advocacy services at Mutual Ground

Legal Advocates are available to assist victims of domestic and sexual violence obtain protective orders in court. Petitioning for an Order of Protection or a Civil No Contact Order is a formal legal proceeding that requires your appearance in court. A Legal Advocate can accompany a victim in court, explain the process, help complete the petition for the protective order and ensure that it's drafted with the safety and security needs of each individual.

Patricia (a pseudonym) is a recent client who's been married for 10 years and is a stay-at-home mother to 3 children. Patricia has not worked outside the home in over 5 years and is financially dependent upon her husband. They both agreed that financially it was in their family's best interest for Patricia not to work but her husband continued to berate her, call her names and belittle her for not contributing. There was an episode of abuse that included pushing, shoving and restraining the day Patricia came to court looking for help. We helped Patricia obtain an Order of Protection that granted her exclusive possession of the family home and prohibited her husband from returning home for the duration of the order. Patricia was also granted temporary legal custody of the children, allowing them to remain in the home under her care and supervision. After addressing Patricia's



immediate safety concerns, we focused on her financial security. Patricia's request for child support was granted in the protective order. Patricia left the courthouse feeling that she would be safe at home and that her children would be provided for as long as the court order was in place. Patricia also felt that she was not alone through this process because her Mutual Ground Legal Advocate was able to accompany her to all of her court proceedings.

In accordance with recent Covid restrictions courthouses have looked for ways to reduce the amount of time anyone may spend in court. It's possible to start an

Order of Protection petition prior to going to the courthouse which would reduce the time spent in court before appearing in front of a judge. A Mutual Ground Legal Advocate could assist by connecting with you virtually to help facilitate the process of completing the online petition.

For more information please call Mutual Ground @ 630-897-0084 and ask to speak with a Legal Advocate. You can also reach out to a Legal Advocate by sending a confidential email on the Contact Us page of Mutual Ground's website.

Our Impact in Fiscal Year 2020

Mutual Ground's mission is to provide education, awareness, and life-changing services that empower individuals, families, and communities to end the cycle of domestic and sexual violence. Last Fiscal Year, Mutual Ground provided more than 14,000 hours of service to clients from more than 6 Illinois counties. In light of COVID- 19, Mutual Ground remains open to provide free services for individuals and families impacted by domestic and sexual violence. If you or someone you know wants more information about our services, please contact us at (630) 897-0080.

Here are a few highlights of what Mutual Ground accomplished in the last fiscal year:



1,352

Adults and children helped with our life-changing services



29,580

Student participants in our Prevention Education Program



10,302

Nights of shelter provided to 244 adults and children



170

Domestic and sexual violence hospital calls responded to by medical advocates



239

Orders of Protection prepared and filed with our assistance



6,726

Hotline calls answered by advocates

Meet Our Three Newest Members of Our Board of Directors!



Yahara Chavez is a long-time volunteer at Mutual Ground that has served as a Victim Advocate for sexual assault and domestic violence victims. She has extensive experience in the corporate world, working for a Fortune 500 company in training after graduating from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. She is the youngest of six children and first Latina in her immediate and extended family to graduate college. She is “overjoyed to be serving on the Board of Directors, and I will do so with deep empathy, genuine compassion and active listening.”



Katie Frazier is Senior Director, Store Operations Business Development at Ulta Beauty. Katie is responsible for core store operations as it relates to communication, business analytics, workload planning and integrated operations. Prior to joining Ulta Beauty, Katie held leadership roles at Gap Inc., where she served as a Store Manager in both the Atlanta, Georgia and Cedar Rapids, Iowa markets. Katie lives in Oswego with her husband and two daughters. She says, “Being on the board at Mutual Ground is the perfect opportunity to both grow personally as well make an impact and a difference in the community.”



Paroma Mukherjee is a fundraising professional, and currently the Director of Development at The Network: Advocating Against Domestic Violence. She has been working in fundraising for over 15 years, prior to which she was a public policy analyst. Paroma’s entire career has been dedicated to working with nonprofits, both in the US and internationally. Paroma has a Masters in International Relations and a second Masters in Public Policy from Purdue University. She joined the board of Mutual Ground to give back to an organization with a mission that resonates with her and that is impacting her community. She is currently a resident of Naperville, where she lives with her husband, two teenage kids, and mom.

Volunteer Spotlight

When their summer mission trips were cancelled due to the pandemic, Flowing Forth United Methodist Church looked for an alternative. They decided to partner with local community organizations, including Mutual Ground, with a goal to serve somewhere, to embody love, and to spread hope and joy. Flowing Forth members learned more about Mutual Ground’s mission and the important work we do. They also served on-site for two days, making Mutual Ground more functional and welcoming. One team installed new lighting in our main shelter hallway, donating an electrician’s time and over \$200 in light fixtures. Other members cleaned up the grounds, transplanted plants and weeded. Even



heavy rain showers did not stop this crew from finishing the job! When asked about safety, Pastor Derek Rogers said, “We felt very safe volunteering at Mutual Ground. We prioritized working outside where we could spread out in the fresh air. Those who worked inside also felt safe, and a lot of that was because of the guidance and atmosphere created by the staff and other volunteers at Mutual Ground.”

If you are interested in volunteering as a group at Mutual Ground, please email Julie Ford at jford@mutualground.org. We do our best to make it a rewarding experience.



“Although many of our plans changed unexpectedly, I am so happy that Flowing Forth Church was able to serve at Mutual Ground this Summer. It reminded me how important community is, especially in this difficult time.”
- Flowing Forth UMC Member

Thank You, Mutual Ground Donors!

Thank you to these special donors who recently donated meals to our shelter residents! Ajilla Foundation, Blanketlife, The Byrne Family, Bocaditos Café, Custom Culinary, 5Bs Catering Service, Gamma Phi Omega Alumnae Chapters, Gwen Mance and Wesley United Methodist Church of Aurora.

those who donated school supplies, especially Jatsiri Camarillo, We Can Do Better, and DePuy Synthes! Thank you to Rotary Club of Aurora who helped us pack the backpacks and to the Crate & Barrel Outlet for holding a Back to School Snack Drive for Mutual Ground.

To kick off the school year, we distributed new backpacks filled with school supplies to our client students and their siblings. We are so grateful to

If you are interested in donating to Mutual Ground, please visit our website at www.mutualground.org.



October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month

Throughout the month of October, we recognize Domestic Violence Awareness Month. According to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, on average, nearly 20 people per minute are physically abused by an intimate partner in the United States, which equates to more than 10 million people per year.

Mutual Ground is committed to ending the cycle of domestic violence by providing a wide range of services to residential and non-residential clients. Last fiscal year, Mutual Ground provided domestic violence services to 1,145 adults and children.

Mutual Ground Domestic Violence Services include:

- Emergency Shelter
- 24-Hour Hotline
- Group and Individual Counseling
- Legal Advocacy
- Family Services
- Medical Advocacy
- Case Management

Mutual Ground is a safe, inclusive and affirming environment. Services are provided in Aurora, Batavia, Oswego and Yorkville. If you or someone you know wants more information about our services, please contact us at (630) 897-0080. Spanish speaking advocates are available as well!



MUTUAL GROUND

Where the Healing Begins

Upcoming Events

Mutual Ground Main Event

Friday, October 16th, 2020
Virtual Event!

Walk for Hope

Sunday, May 16th, 2021
8:30 AM - 11:00 AM
Blackberry Farm
100 S. Barnes Rd, Aurora, IL

60-Hour Domestic and Sexual Violence Certification

February 2nd – March 11th
Mondays, Tuesdays,
Wednesdays, and Thursdays
Virtual



Contact Us

Give us a call for more information about our services

Mutual Ground

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

Visit us on the web at
www.mutualground.org

Follow us on social media!



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Mutual Ground
418 Oak Avenue
Aurora, IL 60506