



ANNUAL REPORT

2020 / 2021

"Inspiring hope and healing while ending sexual violence and human trafficking through education, counseling, and advocacy."

Our VOICE, INC

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OURVOICENC.ORG

2020-2021

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Angélica WindExecutive Director, ex officio

It is not a question of if you will survive this, but what beautiful things await you when you do. ~Chanel Miller

EXPANDING BEYOND LIMITATIONS

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

It's no small feat that during another challenging year due to Covid-19, Our VOICE has continued to thrive and deliver on our mission to serve victims of sexual violence and human trafficking. While the end of the 2020-2021 year, left us with some major funding challenges, we see a bright future.

Our organization **expanded this year to state-wide advocacy** through the Sexual Assault Kit Initiative (SAKI). When state Attorney General Josh Stein took office in 2017, he asked every law enforcement agency in North Carolina to count how many untested sexual assault kits each agency had. The total backlog was 15,000. By 2018 the North Carolina Department of Justice was awarded a \$2 million federal SAKI grant to complete their sexual assault forensic kit inventory; develop a comprehensive, statewide approach for addressing previously backlogged, untested sexual assault forensic kits; and increase trauma-informed sexual assault investigations and prosecutions.

As part of this initiative, Our VOICE partnered with the North Carolina DOJ to provide crisis services and survivor-centered advocacy to victims impacted statewide by the backlog. We provided technical assistance and victim-centered and trauma-informed training to local jurisdictions who are engaging sexual assault survivors of cases arising out of previously untested sexual assault kits. **In Asheville, the recent testing of hundreds of kits has provided leads in sexual assault cases that had previously stalled.**

In September, **the board launched a virtual Media Club** on social platforms for our community to read books and articles, watch lectures and movies, and share podcasts from some of the most inspiring people we know—former and upcoming Break The Silence Speaker Series presenters.

In November, we **hosted the 19th annual Survivor Art Show virtually**, which included an opening performance from North Carolina Poet Laureate Jaki Shelton Green, the first African American and the third woman to be selected as North Carolina's Poet Laureate. She read her recently composed poem about sexual assault called Flight

and offered encouragement to all the local artists who participated. Art is a powerful vehicle for healing, and the art show offers an opportunity for those impacted by sexual assault and abuse to share their story, which can be a vital step in the healing process.

Every spring, we bring a speaker to Asheville who is a national leader, activist, or survivor, who has worked to improve systems in responding to and ending sexual assault or human trafficking in our communities. **This year, we hosted our biggest fundraiser of the year, Break The Silence Speaker**

Series virtually with artist and best-selling author Chanel Miller, who is a survivor of the highly publicized rape case on the campus of Stanford University. Our VOICE worked with a number of universities in the area during this event to provide education and materials to advocate for campus-wide support. Thank you to all who attended and sponsored this event that helped us raise almost \$45,000. And big thanks to Quility, our presenting sponsor!



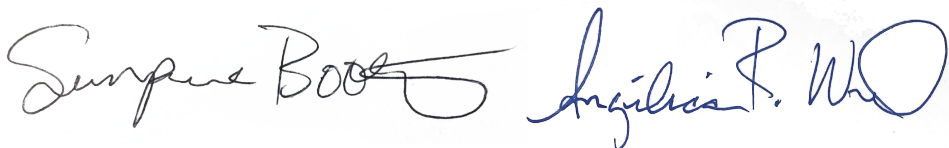
In April we hosted our annual Pints for Our VOICE event with the Asheville Brewers Alliance along with 10 local bars and breweries. Thank you to Bhramari Brewing Company, Burial Beer Co., Catawba Brewing, Cellarest Beer Project, Forestry Camp, Hillman Brewing, The Brew Pump, 27 Club, UpCountry Brewing, and Wicked Weed Brewing.

Also in April, our executive director, **Angelica Wind testified about the importance of survivors being heard, during the removal hearing of Greg Newman, former District Attorney of Henderson County.** He is only the third DA ever to be removed from office in the state. Newman was accused of mishandling cases, including sexual assault cases, and failing to prosecute felonies. Superior Court Judge Robert C. Ervin issued his order April 27, finding Newman engaged in “willful misconduct in office.” Wind testified that it is, “important for victims to feel involved in the process ... part of a victim’s sense of obtaining justice is having their day in court and being able to speak.”

Federal grants to victim services through the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) have been cut by two-thirds in the last four years, and Our VOICE, along with many local nonprofits across the country, received major budget cuts at the end of this fiscal year. However, in July, President Joe Biden signed into law the “VOCA fix,” a bill that passed the U.S. House and Senate with rare bipartisan support.

While the law provides them with much-needed long-term budget stability, we still have an immediate need to keep our programs running in the short term. We have applied to Buncombe County’s COVID recovery funding program, which received nearly \$50 million through the American Rescue Plan to distribute to the community. **And we ask that all community members who are able continue to stand with us during this time.** Visit ourvoicenc.org to support our ongoing mission and help us keep this valuable work going.

Thank you,

The image shows two handwritten signatures in blue ink. On the left is the signature of Suzanne Boothby, which is stylized and cursive. On the right is the signature of Angelica Wind, also in a cursive style.

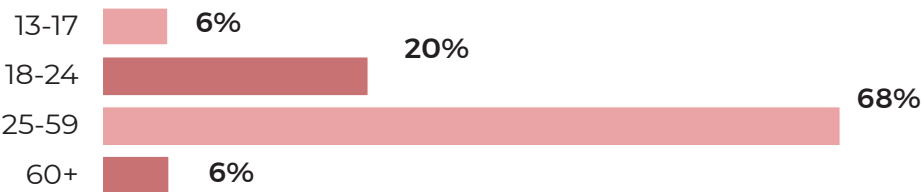
Suzanne Boothby
Board President

Angélica Wind
Executive Director

In Fiscal year 2020-2021 Our VOICE responded to and served:

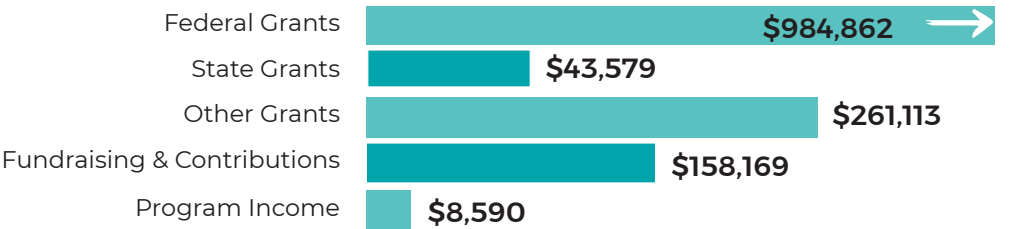
- ◆ **960** total crisis calls
- ◆ **723** total survivors served
- ◆ **11,891** total volunteer hours

Survivors Served by Age:

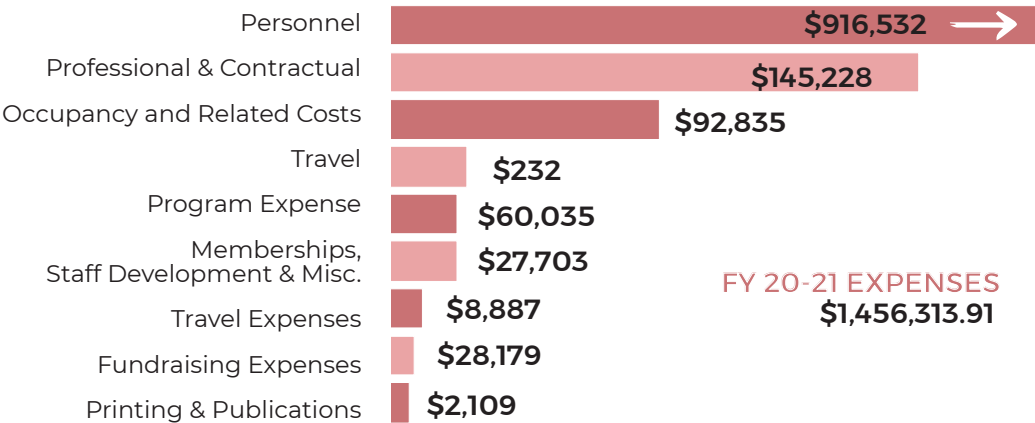


FINANCIALS

WHERE WE GET IT AND WHERE IT GOES



FY 20-21 INCOME \$1,456,313.91



FY 20-21 EXPENSES \$1,456,313.91

OUR VOICE VOLUNTEERS

Our VOICE began as a grass roots organization in 1974 with many volunteers making it possible to serve survivors. Today, volunteers remain a vital part of helping survivors heal. In 2020-21, even during the pandemic, Our VOICE was privileged to have **volunteers who gave 11,891 hours of their time**. We are truly grateful for them as they help us further the goal of a community without sexual violence.

Advocacy, organization, and a willingness to help with any task are a few hallmarks of a great volunteer. **Our VOICE hit the jackpot when Betsy White decided to bring her talents here.** Betsy began her service to Our VOICE in 2014, training to be an advocate and answering phone calls from survivors. She took calls, made visits to the hospital, and **made survivors feel safe and heard**. She continued as an advocate for more than a year and has now stepped into other roles as needed. When the Development Office committed to a



new database system, Betsy was first in line to iron out some of the initial challenges that come from implementing new technology. In fact, **Betsy has been essential to the Development Office**, coming in weekly to support the fundraising efforts of Our VOICE in multiple ways – even during the pandemic. She has continued to steward our donors, update the database, and work on our event committees to make them successful. Our VOICE would like to thank Betsy for her years of commitment to helping survivors.

We couldn't do this work without you, Betsy!

DIRECT SERVICES

Direct Services

- ◆ 24/7 Crisis Line
- ◆ Individual Counseling & Support Groups
- ◆ Accompaniment to medical services & law enforcement interviews
- ◆ Court Advocacy
- ◆ Case Management
- ◆ Support for human trafficking survivors
- ◆ Information & Referrals

Our VOICE continued to serve survivors during the pandemic in numerous ways. Our VOICE purchased a Honda minivan, affectionately named Rhonda the Honda, which has allowed us to provide transportation to survivors who otherwise would have been forced to stay in dangerous situations.

One of these instances was to provide transportation to a human trafficking survivor whose traffickers had found them in rural Western North Carolina, and we were able to safely pick them up and through the effort of our amazing case managers get them into a shelter specifically for human trafficking elsewhere. This was one of just **45 human trafficking survivors we assisted**. Our case managers can provide crisis support, safety planning, tangible items such as food and clothing, as well as partnering with other providers across the region to help facilitate wrap around services to ensure that survivors are supported and safe.

Our VOICE provided hotel rooms for **14 adults and 6 children for 65 nights** during the COVIC-19 pandemic. These survivors were often houseless and recently assaulted, or fleeing a dangerous situation.

Our VOICE worked with Mission Hospital to provide **medical telehealth advocacy services** for survivors obtaining a SANE exam in the hospital via HIPAA compliant software.

We provided **2 volunteer advocate trainings**. One was virtual in the evenings, and one was an in-person weekend intensive.

WITH EXTREME GRATITUDE

to our donors!

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Susan Leader	

...and thank you to all of our anonymous donors!

Our donors are very important to us. If we have omitted or misspelled your name, or have documented your gift incorrectly, please let us know.

PREVENTION PROGRAMS

The Prevention team hosted multiple programs for both adults and youth. **498 adults participated** in events including:

- ◆ Anti-Sexual Harassment
- ◆ 86-It
- ◆ Bar Outreach
- ◆ Serving Survivors
- ◆ Preventing Sexual Violence + Supporting Students
- ◆ Ending Sexual Harassment in the Workplace
- ◆ LGBTQIA+, Homelessness, and Human Trafficking.
- ◆ Bystander Intervention
- ◆ Human Trafficking 101
- ◆ Consent + Gender 101

Organizations that took part were ArtSpace School Staff, East Fork Pottery, Burial Beer Co., Red Oak Recovery, Climbbmax Gym, SUWs of the Carolinas, Asheville Police Department, Helpmate, Pisgah Legal Services, MAHEC, Asheville School Staff, Mars Hill College/Life 107 Ministries.

616 Youths participated in three main programs designed for them:

- ◆ Consent 101
- ◆ Code RED
- ◆ Consent is Everything Hybrid

Our VOICE delivered **20 programs to lower, middle, and high schools and community programs**, including Asheville School, Carolina Day School (Upper and Lower), Black Mountain Academy, ArtSpace Charter School, French Broad River Academy for Boys, and Youth Villages.

Program Redesign

Our VOICE worked with OUTthink Studio to redesign our **Hybrid Consent is Everything Program** so that it is now more inclusive, diverse, and engaging. It has been recreated to serve as a general OV brochure, geared towards youth so that they are aware of the services we provide them.

Human Trafficking Youth Program

Prevention staff were trained in the “Teach2Reach” program, an **evidence-informed and developmentally appropriate program that teaches students about sex trafficking and connects at-risk students with needed services.**

COUNSELING

Our VOICE counseling services moved to a **remote format** practically overnight in March 2020 and began noticing some positive changes in the ways people use therapy including **many clients began bringing their pets with them to appointments**. Individual clients have told us how grounding and nurturing it is to have the warm, supportive touch of an animal as they talk about the pain of trauma. Another positive change has been a drop in our “no show” rate, and an overall increase in engagement. Clients no longer cancel appointments due to flat tires, bad weather, illness, or forgetfulness. **They attend counseling regularly and consistently, which increases the efficacy of the work.**

Although the pandemic initially put a stop to all of our counseling groups, they felt more needed than ever; survivors often feel isolated and alone, and the pandemic has just exacerbated that sense of loneliness. **As we adapted our groups to an online format, clients joined up!** Our VOICE brought back our arts-based group, based on the SoulCollage® process. Clients join us on Zoom to collage and journal, share and witness one another, and find common themes in their healing processes. They’ve taken advantage of the online format to work in the way that best supports each individual.

We began the **“Virtual Survivors group” for female, queer, and non-binary survivors**. Participants regularly attended online sessions where they learned about different topics related to sexual trauma, and built connections and community with one another that we believe have extended beyond the confines of the group.

We offered a short-term **process group for Spanish speaking survivors**. The online format allowed clients who live far from the office to join in without needing to drive long distances, and the **bilingual counselor** provided a supportive format where Spanish-speaking survivors could connect and feel less alone.

The counseling department brought back our **6-month DBT (Dialectical Behavior Therapy) skills group**. Clients come together each week to learn coping skills and talk about how they applied last week’s skills and strategies. The online format has worked well for this educational group.

We added a new process group called **“Survivors to Thrivers”** for survivors who experienced childhood sexual abuse at the hands of narcissistic or sociopathic abusers. The group members meet each week to connect with one another, share experiences, and feel supported by other survivors with similar experiences.

We also added our **“Summer Learning Series”**, a psychoeducational group where survivors can come together and learn about skills and topics related to trauma. Our VOICE counselors take turns presenting material related to trauma, the neurobiology of trauma, the resilient zone, and many skills we ordinarily teach in individual sessions. The presentations can be recorded to go up on our website; once the recording is stopped, clients can ask questions and connect with one another.

But that’s not all the counseling department does! This past year, counselors have **collaborated with a number of organizations to deliver training and workshops**. Maria Aversa, our bilingual counselor, and Rebecca L. Withrow, our bilingual counseling program director, have developed and offered trainings in Spanish and English to multiple WNC agencies who serve Spanish speakers, including True Ridge in Henderson County, Consulta Tu Compa in Asheville, El Centro Latinoamericana in McDowell County, and the YMCA in Buncombe County. They have also collaborated with Circulo de Mujeres, an international group of Spanish-speaking women focused on mental health issues. Several counselors have presented workshops on best practices related to work with sexual violence survivors to clinicians at MAHEC. Amparo Penney, our Outreach counselor, has collaborated with the Mount Zion Home Visitors’ Guild and the CHIP collaborative, and assisted the prevention team with a collaboration with Youth OutRIGHT. Rebecca L. Withrow, our counseling program director, has led arts-based healing workshops at the Resilient Voices retreat, a weekend retreat for survivors of sexual violence, based in WNC.

Over the past year, we have said goodbye to 2 veteran full-time counselors, Jackie Sullivan and Sarah Gettys, and welcomed Amparo Penny back to our team. Jackie and Sarah will be sorely missed. But Rebecca and Amparo, though a smaller team, are **ready to keep working with new clients, training new counseling interns, and collaborating with community partners around best practices in helping survivors of sexual violence in their healing processes**.

EVENTS WITH A PURPOSE

The **19th annual Survivor Art Show** took place in November, virtually due to the pandemic. Jaki Shelton Greene, Poet Laureate of North Carolina, was on hand to read her poem 'Flight'. The visual art was on display online in a slide show format and the performance art was seen live online. The art expressions were moving pieces of healing.

The **Give!Local Campaign** was a huge success with over **\$7000** raised for survivors. Thank you to Mountain Express, Izzy's Coffee Shop, and The Hop Ice Cream for supporting Our VOICE!

In spite of Covid shutting down in-person events, our **Break The Silence Speaker Series** went on. A fully virtual event, **Chanel Miller, author of the NY Times best seller Know My Name**, was featured in a question-and-answer format with our Board Chair, Suzanne Boothby. Originally known as Emily Doe, she spoke of fighting back when she saw her assailant begin to play the victim. She has found a way to heal through her art and is writing her second book. Her story is truly inspirational.

We partnered with Jettie Rae's Oyster House & Catawba Brewing hosted an **Oyster Roast fundraiser**. It was held outdoors at Catawba on a beautiful sunny day in February and sold out before the event even started! We raised \$6500 and everyone had a great time. Look for the next one in February 2022!



Our VOICE'S 2021 virtual Break the Silence Speaker Series virtual event featuring Chanel Miller

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Betsy and Andy White
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Yolanda and Gary Parker

Marianne Metcalfe,
in memory of Brigham Metcalfe

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Cellarest Beer Project	Upcountry Brewing Company
Early Girl LLC	Wicked Weed Brewing, LLC

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Text “Voice” or “Voz” to 85511 for free, confidential,
personalized information

For more information please visit ourvoicenc.org