



FALL 2025

STANDING STRONG

Blackburn Center News

Stand with Survivors: Why Your Support Matters Now

Most of us have felt the pinch of rising costs in recent years. Whether it's a higher insurance premium, unexpected grocery bills, or an electric bill that keeps climbing, inflation has touched every part of our lives. The same is true for nonprofit agencies like Blackburn Center.

While rising costs stretch our resources, level funding has made it even harder to keep pace with community needs. Despite ongoing needs, funding streams have not increased or have decreased, and many programs are feeling the impact of stagnant funding alongside other financial challenges and funding cuts.

Flat or decreases in funding means fewer resources for survivors and victims. It means the possibility of cutting programs that educate tens of thousands of students and adults across Westmoreland County each year. Most importantly, it means survivors and victims may not have the critical support they need during difficult moments.

Blackburn Center's Critical Work: Survivor Stories

As the only agency in Westmoreland County providing comprehensive services to survivors and victims of violence, as well as to the community as a whole, our work is vital.

Every day, we answer hotline calls around the clock to deliver crisis counseling, resources, and referrals, provide emergency shelter to those fleeing intimate partner violence, provide counseling, therapy, and support group, and offer civil legal representation specific to the type of victimization.

“I’m not a victim anymore. I’m a survivor - a mother a business owner, and a strong, independent woman.”

-ALICIA, BLACKBURN CENTER CLIENT

Furthermore, we offer accompaniment for survivors and victims to provide support in hospitals and legal settings, offer education and awareness programs to students and adults, and deliver in-service trainings to professionals across the county. All of our client services are offered free of charge, and each of these services represents a step toward hope, change, and healing.

This is the story of an anonymous Blackburn Center client, whom we'll call 'Alicia'.

When Alicia was just a child, she came to Blackburn Center's emergency shelter with her mother, who was fleeing an abusive relationship with her partner. As an adult, Alicia found herself facing similar struggles and returned to the shelter multiple times, seeking safety and support. Most recently, she came to us while pregnant, fearful for her life and the safety of her children. During her stay, she found not only shelter, but also support, baby items, food, and the open arms of staff and advocates who stood beside her.

Continued...

With the help of our Housing Advocate, Alicia secured safe housing and gave birth during her shelter stay knowing she and her baby were safe.

Today, Alicia is living in her own apartment with her children. She says she feels stronger, more capable, and determined to raise her children to be both resilient and compassionate. In her words: "Give yourself a chance. It takes a lot of strength to ask for help, but it doesn't have to be so hard. Hold on. It gets better. You deserve more."

How You Can Help

Flat or reduced funding at the state and federal level may feel like a challenge too big to solve – but you can make a difference.

1. Donate today. Blackburn Center depends on the generosity of individuals, community groups, and businesses to keep services available. Every dollar you give provides safety, healing, and hope right here in Westmoreland County.

2. Advocate with us. Your voice matters. If donating isn't possible right now, consider reaching out to your state legislators to urge them to increase funding to support survivors, victims, and centers like Blackburn Center.

3. Volunteer. You can make a difference! Join us and help support survivors and victims in our community. Opportunities are available – learn more at www.blackburncenter.org/volunteer.

If you or someone you know needs support, call our 24-hour hotline at **1-888-823-2272 (TDD available)** anytime to speak with a trained crisis counselor. No matter what, please know: Blackburn Center is here for you. We remain committed to supporting survivors and victims, and strengthening our community – always.



85% of domestic violence victims are women.



Nearly every 1 in 2 women and more than 2 in 5 men reported experiencing intimate partner violence at some point in their lifetime.

2024 Break The Cycle. <https://www.breakthecycle.org/domestic-violence-statistics/>

Thank You

2025 Walk a Mile in Her Shoes Sponsors

Underwriting Sponsor:

Tuscano Agency

Finish Line Sponsor:

Charley Family

The Extra Mile Sponsor:

Lisa Hildenbrand, M.D.

Big Stride Sponsors:

Janice Garlock
Joseph G. Gibson

Go The Distance Sponsors:

First Presbyterian Church of Greensburg
Helen Hopkinson
Delaney Chevrolet
Seton Hill University
Grossman Yanak & Ford
Leo Bacha Funeral Home
The Rob DePasquale Charitable Fund

A full list of sponsors are available on our website:
www.blackburncenter.org



Leave a Legacy of Support and Healing:

Planned giving is a meaningful way to create lasting impact in the lives of survivors/victims. By including Blackburn Center in your will, trust, or estate plans, you can help ensure that critical support services like counseling, therapy, advocacy, civil legal, education, and emergency shelter remain available for those who need them most.

Whether large or small, your planned gift is a powerful statement of hope and healing for future generations. To learn more about planned giving options or to speak with someone confidentially, please contact Jenny at jennyQ@blackburncenter.org.

ANNUAL APPEAL 2025

Every day in Westmoreland County, someone is reaching out for help – fleeing abuse, processing trauma, or trying to find a path forward after violence has changed their life. At Blackburn Center, we are here to answer that call. We know that survivors and victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and other types of crime face not only physical and emotional pain, but also the loss of safety, stability, and in some cases, everything they once knew. That's why our services are designed to do more than respond in a crisis.

We are here for the long haul – to walk with survivors and victims through healing to provide critical support, while also working to prevent future violence through education and outreach.

We offer a 24-hour hotline for crisis counseling and referrals to anyone impacted by violence, and when someone needs a safe place to escape intimate partner violence, our emergency shelter becomes that refuge. But safety is only the beginning.

Our team works tirelessly to provide trauma-informed services in all aspects of our work that meet the needs of survivors and victims wherever they are in their journey. Whether through direct services - such as counseling, therapy, advocacy and accompaniment - or through efforts beyond direct service, like education, training, and community outreach, we ensure individuals never have to face these challenges alone.

Please consider making a donation to Blackburn Center today. By working together, we can prevent violence before it starts and ensure that anyone affected has the resources and support to move forward with strength and hope. You can donate online by visiting our website at www.blackburncenter.org/donate, or by returning the enclosed envelope. Together, we're creating lasting change – thank you for making it possible.

Sincerely,



Renee N. Reitz,
Executive Director

Services Provided July 2024 - June 2025

**3,125 Shelter
Nights**

**6,052 Hours of
Counseling & Therapy**

**2,882 New Clients
1,931 Hotline Calls**

**144 Medical Advocacies
1,817 Legal Advocacies**

**1,778 School-based Programs
24,478 Teacher & Student Participants**

Shelter Needs:

How You Can Help



You can view our current shelter needs list by scanning the QR Code or visiting our website. Donating items from this list directly supports our clients by providing essential household items. Gift cards are also greatly appreciated, as they offer flexibility to meet individual needs for clients in counseling, therapy, shelter, and support group. Every donation makes a meaningful difference in the lives of those we serve.

Thank you for your generosity!



Nonprofit Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit NO. 648
Greensburg, PA

Annual Appeal Enclosed

2025 - 2026 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Hilary Bacha-Senerius, President
Cara Palmiere, Vice President/Secretary
Amber Pinskey, Treasurer
Lyzona Marshall
William Stankay
Anjali Nair
Emily Wano
Renee Reitz, Executive Director



Blackburn Center is funded in part by United Way of Southwestern Pennsylvania, PA Department of Public Welfare funds, including Title XX and Act 44 funds, foundations and local contributions. A copy of official registration and financial information for Blackburn Center may be obtained from the PA Department of State by calling within Pennsylvania 1-800- 732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

UPCOMING EVENTS



Domestic Violence Awareness Month **Strike Out Violence!**

October 28th, 2025
6:00 PM - 10:00 PM
814 Lanes & Games

4589 PA-136, Greensburg, PA 15601

- \$25 Entry includes bowling & more
- 50/50 Raffle Baskets (6:00 PM - 8:00 PM)
- Food & Drink available to purchase

Scan the QR code to register here:



Westmoreland County's 15th Annual **Walk a Mile in Her Shoes**

Join us on
April 25th, 2026
at St. Clair Park - Greensburg

Team up with family, friends, or coworkers to stand with survivors/victims and support Blackburn Center.

For sponsorships or more information,
please contact:

jennyq@blackburncenter.org

Blackburn Center's Mission Statement

Blackburn Center advocates for the rights of all individuals to live free from domestic and sexual violence and other forms of violence by eliminating root causes of this violence and providing for the well-being and safety of survivors/victims.

If you'd like to learn more about Blackburn Center's services, volunteer opportunities, or make a donation, please contact us at 724.837.9540.