STANDING STRONG
Blackburn Center News

STANDING UP FOR RACIAL JUSTICE

At Blackburn Center, our mission is to advocate for the right of all individuals to live free from any form of violence. In support of this mission, we remain committed to the work of ensuring and participating in racial justice, equality, and social transformation. We stand in solidarity with the Black community and communities of color, and we share in grieving the loss of lives to racist violence.

It is essential that we acknowledge and prioritize the fight against racism at this moment in history, as a community and as a nation. We must challenge any message that minimizes the oppression that Black communities are experiencing and, instead, work to shed light on that injustice so that it can be destroyed. We also need to engage in difficult conversations about both individual and systemic racism and call attention to the significance of the violence and loss that they cause.

Safe communities cannot exist where racism is present. Blackburn Center is committed to addressing the root causes of violence and challenging social norms that perpetuate violence; therefore, we are dedicated to incorporating racial equality and justice in our plans for services to victims, outreach, education, advocacy, and other community activities. We strive to make Blackburn Center more inclusive at all levels of the organization, and we understand our responsibility to listen to and learn from the Black community and communities of color.

WE’RE STILL HERE: PROVIDING SERVICES IN A PANDEMIC

In March, a national emergency was declared in the United States in response to the novel coronavirus that was spreading throughout the country. This pandemic has affected all areas of our lives — including how Blackburn Center provides services.

As it became clear that the way we have provided services for more than 40 years would need to change, we developed strategies to maintain continuity of service while ensuring the health and well-being of our staff, volunteers, and clients. We pivoted to remote work, limiting times that staff was physically on site in order to minimize contact and prevent community spread. We then adapted our approach to services to allow us to help victims, survivors, and the community in a safe way.

Many of our client services are provided in-person. This includes counseling and therapy, trauma-informed yoga, medical and legal accompaniment, support groups, and our emergency shelter. While some services had to be paused to avoid gathering in groups, our staff found innovative ways to provide other services in an effective, socially-distanced manner. For example, while we cannot bring people together for group counseling sessions, we can — and do — offer tele-counseling to make sure that our clients continue to receive support during the pandemic. We were especially mindful of vulnerable populations, such as older adults, and made arrangements to offer services in ways that would not jeopardize their health.

If you, or someone you know, needs Blackburn Center’s services, call the 24/7 Hotline: 724.836.1122 or 1.888.832.2272.

All of our services are CONFIDENTIAL, can be ANONYMOUS and are offered at no charge to clients.

- 24/7 Hotline
- Support Groups
- Shelter for Victims of Intimate Partner Violence
- Education and Prevention Programs
- Counseling and Therapy
- Medical and Legal Advocacy/Accompaniment

Over the past 8 months, our lives have changed radically. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is unprecedented in modern history. Unrest and protests over racial injustice have forced many Americans, for the first time, to confront the racism that is at the core of our society. Our experiences have changed the way we see — and live — in this world. In some instances, we’ve learned lessons about our resilience and creativity. In other cases, we’ve uncovered some unsettling truths about what needs to change to make our world a safe and just place for all. These concepts are at the core of Blackburn Center’s mission and values; we stand with the community in embracing the changes ahead and working for a better tomorrow.
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We also had to adapt the way that we provide services to the community. Typically, our education team goes to schools, community organizations, businesses, and other groups to provide education and training programs to thousands of children and adults each year. With schools closed, limited access to business settings, and no group gatherings, we needed to find ways to reach the community virtually. One notable example of how we achieved this is our Empathy program. Previously, we offered this popular program at schools, libraries, and the Westmoreland Museum of American Art. Our education team pivoted and transformed the content that we would normally present to young children in person to a series of YouTube videos. These videos feature books, yoga poses, characters and more. You can find them on our website (www.blackburncenter.org), or by visiting our YouTube channel.

Our annual Walk a Mile in Her Shoes event was scheduled for April. Because of the size of the crowd that attends this event, we unfortunately had to cancel the 2020 walk. We are currently planning our 2021 Walk, with back-up plans in the works for a virtual walk should that be needed. Keep an eye out for our date in April 2021 — and be sure to watch our website and social media for updates on how you can be part of Walk a Mile in Her Shoes 2021.

Blackburn Center’s work includes a core component of supporting people in their journey from uncertainty and instability to a place of greater stability. In these difficult times, our commitment to supporting people whose lives have been affected by violence and crime is unwavering. During the pandemic and beyond, we’re still here.
Help Us Help Others – Safely!
We appreciate your generous ongoing support of our services and our clients. We are currently unable to accept in-person donations of items for our programs as a cautionary measure due to COVID-19; however, there are still ways that you can help! You can make a monetary donation online or send a check to Blackburn Center (P.O. Box 398, Greensburg, PA 15601). Or, if you want to purchase items needed for our shelter and counseling programs, you can shop from our wish list on Amazon.

Your donations throughout each year help Blackburn Center sustain the shelter program, which includes counseling and support groups for victims and their children, and other services for victims. We also make items available to clients who are starting to establish their own homes and are in need of basic household items.

THANK YOU!

Please join us in thanking these sponsors for their generous support of our 2020 Walk a Mile in Her Shoes event. We’re especially grateful that they sustained their support even when the event had to be canceled!

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Toyota of Greensburg
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Dr. Terrance E. DePasquale in memory of Margaret McFeeley

Walk a MILE in Their His Her Our SHOES®

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Lori A. Stripay
Susanna and Bussy Bowman
Charitable Fund in memory of Mabel
George & Michelle Toohey
Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Ligonier Valley
Westmoreland LGBTQ Community, PFLAG Greensburg and the Westmoreland LGBTQ Interfaith Network in honor of the LGBTQ Community

Please scan here to access the wish list.
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 and providing for the well-being and safety of survivors/victims.

Tell your friends, family, colleagues, and neighbors about this important – and FUN – event at St. Clair Park in Greensburg. And be ready for an adapted event, in case we are not able to have a large gathering; we have plans underway for virtual activities that will be educational, entertaining and inspiring.

For individual and team registration information, and details about sponsorship opportunities, call 724-837-9540 X144 or visit our website to learn more (www.blackburncenter.org). And please thank the 2020 sponsors listed in this newsletter – they continued their support even with an event that wasn’t able to happen!

Volunteer Opportunities
Blackburn Center has volunteer positions available.
To learn about these opportunities, call our office: 724-837-9540, x114.

Trainings Available for the Community
- Creating Safe and Thriving Workplaces: A Comprehensive Approach to Preventing Harassment
- Bystander Intervention: A Community Model for Interrupting and Preventing Violence

To schedule either of these trainings, please contact Kristin at 724-837-9540, x114 or kristinm@blackburncenter.org.

To reduce costs and environmental impact, we will be posting Blackburn Center’s Annual Report on our website: www.blackburncenter.org. The full 2019/2020 report will be available for your review in November. Please let us know if you’d like a hard copy sent to you; call 724.837.9540, x144.