

FALL 2024

# STANDING STRONG

## Blackburn Center News

### Why Your Support Is So Crucial

**As we welcome the fall season, we want to take a moment to express our heartfelt gratitude to all the incredible individuals, businesses, and organizations that support our agency. Your generous donations are essential not only to Blackburn Center but to the entire community. Thank you for your ongoing commitment and support!**

As the Victim Services agency for Westmoreland County, our mission is to provide vital support and services to survivors and victims of domestic and sexual violence and other forms of violence. In 2023 alone, we supported 2,832 new clients and answered 1,882 hotline calls. Throughout the year, we were dedicated to offering assistance and resources to individuals facing all forms of violence and crime.

This past fiscal year, Blackburn Center provided 4,861 shelter days to 129 adults and their dependent children at our emergency shelter. We also provided counseling and therapy, facilitated support groups, and advocated for survivors and victims through our medical and legal programs. Our staff and volunteers actively engaged in the community, and provided support in local hospitals, the Westmoreland County Courthouse, and across 16 Magisterial District Court locations.

In addition to direct services, we provided educational awareness programs for thousands of students and teachers this year, and we offered in-service trainings for professionals, including businesses and community organizations. Throughout the year, Blackburn Center staff participated in health fairs and community events, providing valuable information and resources.

As we strive to maintain our full range of services, it's important to acknowledge that both government and non-government funding for our work have been impacted by widespread budget cuts affecting many nonprofits.

Please join us in thanking our sponsors for their generous support at our 2024 Walk a Mile in Her Shoes event.

For a full list of sponsors, visit our website at [www.blackburncenter.org](http://www.blackburncenter.org).

#### UNDERWRITING SPONSOR

Tuscano Agency Inc.

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#### BIG STRIDE SPONSORS

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#### GO THE DISTANCE SPONSORS

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Mary Gawelek- In Memory  
of Frank Kleshenski

Are you ready to  
#WalkBlackburnCenter

Save the date – April 26, 2025  
The 14<sup>th</sup> annual Walk a Mile in her  
Shoes event will take place at St.  
Clair Park in Greensburg.



**BlackburnCenter**  
Standing together to end violence.

Continued....

When funding sources experience shortfalls, the effects ripple throughout the state, including at Blackburn Center. In these challenging times, your donations become even more crucial to our organization.

Your contributions enable us to provide trauma-informed services to survivors and victims of gender-based violence and crime. With your support, we can meet with clients to assess their needs, develop safety plans, offer support groups, provide counseling and therapy, and offer medical and legal accompaniment and civil legal services. We can provide educational awareness programs in schools and in-service trainings to professionals that incorporate primary prevention work aimed to address the root causes of gender-based violence and crime. We can answer the call when someone in crisis reaches out to our 24-hour hotline. We can provide a safe refuge for families fleeing unsafe situations, but we can only do this with your help.

We cannot thank you enough for your unwavering support of our mission. We are truly grateful for you!

## Service Snapshot 2023/2024

### Housing Advocacy & Emergency Shelter

81 Clients received housing relocation services



129 New Shelter clients  
4,861 Shelter days provided

### Counseling & Therapy

An average of 21 women attended the weekly support group for Intimate Partner Violence



5,564 Hours of supportive services provided through our Counseling & Therapy Department

### Professional Trainings



45 Trainings  
1,717 People trained

### Legal



189 New Civil Legal clients

### Medical & Legal Advocacy

Support, resources, and options provided to 141 clients in emergency rooms



1,695 Legal Advocacy clients

### Education

Primary Prevention Programs:  
745 K-12 & College Programs with 11,243 Students reached



School Programs:  
213 classes with 4,587 students

# ANNUAL APPEAL 2024

With each new day, survivors and victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and other crimes face overwhelming challenges. They often struggle with vulnerabilities deeply tied to their experiences. For many, this can mean losing everything—homes, loved ones, jobs, and a sense of safety.

At Blackburn Center, our dedicated team works tirelessly to provide the tools and resources survivors and victims need to reclaim their power and rebuild their lives. We recognize that overcoming the trauma of violence requires more than just physical safety; our services extend well beyond offering a safe place to stay.

In addition to our emergency shelter, Blackburn Center provides a 24-hour hotline, individual and group counseling, support groups, legal and medical advocacy, civil legal services and more. Our counselors, advocates, and therapists collaborate with each person to create a personalized safety plan, empowering them to take control of their lives and move forward on their own terms. **We rely on the support and generosity of donors like YOU to continue offering these essential services.**

Your donations can profoundly impact the lives of those affected by violence and crime, making your generosity incredibly valuable. Contributions to Blackburn Center enable us to extend our support and services to survivors and victims across Westmoreland County. Please consider making a contribution to Blackburn Center today.

You can donate by using the enclosed envelope or by visiting [blackburncenter.org/donate](https://blackburncenter.org/donate). Together, we can create a world where survivors and victims of violence find safety, feel supported and empowered. **Thank you for your kindness and charitable contribution in supporting Blackburn Center's mission.**

Sincerely,



*Renee N. Reitz Executive Director*

## Blackburn Center's All Occasion Greeting Cards

For over two decades, Blackburn Center has provided a meaningful way to honor important events and special people in our lives through the purchase of an All Occasion Greeting Card. Visit our website to choose from a variety of cards to send.



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## 2024 Annual Appeal Enclosed

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*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.*



## LOOK AT OUR LIST AND CHECK IT TWICE

Please consider items from our Needs List, located on our website in your Holiday gift giving this year. Your generosity throughout the year provides support to Blackburn Center and positively affects those in need throughout the community and creates a more comfortable stay for our shelter residents. Additionally, you can support survivors and victims by providing them with basic household items as they establish a safe home for themselves and their children. Donating is also a unique and wonderful way to honor someone special on your holiday list.

Please put the items listed in **BOLD** at the top of your shopping list, and help Blackburn Center manage donations by bringing **ONLY NEW ITEMS - NO CLOTHING PLEASE**. If you have used items to donate, the agency can provide a list of thrift shops in the area that make goods available to Blackburn Center shelter residents at no charge.

Thank you for your kindness and generosity.



### **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 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 or our hotline at 724.836.1122 or 1.888.832.2272.