

## **The Change Our Advocacy is Making**

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The month of June marks the end of many endeavors, including fiscal years and school years. But for those of us who follow the legislative process in Delaware or nationally, it also means a time of frenzied activity. Delaware's General Assembly is finishing up the 149<sup>th</sup> session and budget mark-up is underway in the U.S. Congress for the coming year. Both provide ample opportunity for DCADV and members to advocate for victims of domestic violence and for the lifesaving services state and federal budgets help support.

Our advocacy within the state began last fall with budget presentations; however, things really geared up in January when our legislators returned to session. Throughout the session, DCADV hosted resource tables, provided testimony at the Bond and Joint Finance Committees, and made public comment at a number of House and Senate Committee meetings. Our advocacy covered a host of issues, including the need for new Family Court buildings for Kent & Sussex Counties and for expansion of services like shelter/housing, legal representation, and economic support. In conjunction with Trauma Matters DE partners, we met with legislators to discuss ways to better use information about trauma. Often, advocacy was needed to address concerns when pending bills contained language that would potentially impact victim confidentiality, privacy protections, and safety. As we approach the final week of the session, we will continue to advocate for services to be increased in the state's budget.

Washington, D.C. is also abuzz in June, and Capitol Hill is a great place to visit to help raise awareness of the needs of victims of domestic violence. Typically, June is budget mark-up time at the federal level. In addition to (usually) being lovely weather, our partners at the National Network to End Domestic Violence hold an annual Advocacy Day event in which Coalitions from across the states and territories come together to discuss the coming year's policy and budget priorities. At the national level, there will be two significant policy initiatives underway in the coming year: the reauthorization of the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA); and, the Violence Against Women's Act (VAWA). Delaware's very own Representative Lisa Blunt-Rochester has signed on to be a lead sponsor for the reauthorization of FVPSA and we are grateful for her commitment in getting this important legislation passed. FVPSA, along with VAWA, provide a variety of protections (confidentiality, housing, firearms, immigration) to victims, but also provide significant program and service funds. Senators Carper and Coons will also likely sign on to support the passage of these bills as they begin to be worked in Congress. Their support of these programs, along with grant programs like the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA), has increased access to funds for prevention and direct services in Delaware. However, the truth that many victim advocates know too well is that needs continue to outpace demands for help.

June may mark an ending, but it also helps us recognize the progress made. Our advocacy has led to increases in state and federal funds for the coming year and has helped shape public policy. As we finish up in Dover, we will also be getting ready for July with it a new list of priorities and activities to attend to. The new fiscal year will begin and DCADV will renew its commitment to strengthen partnerships to end domestic violence and to help those affected by it so that everyone can be respected, loved and safe.