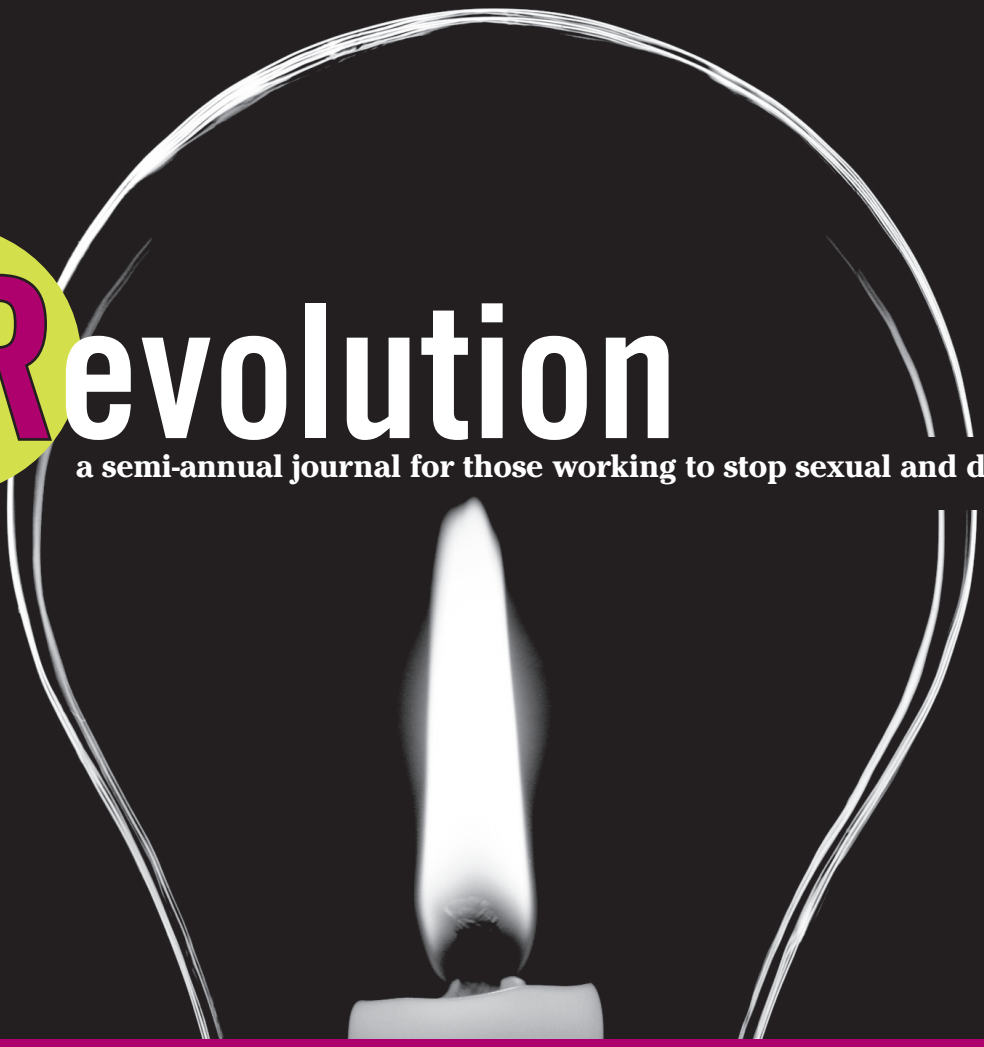
Revolution

a semi-annual journal for those working to stop sexual and domestic violence



In this edition:

Working to end sexual violence & working to end domestic violence: **intersections and differences**

Volume 1, Issue 1
Winter 2006

Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence
ACTIONALLIANCE

Revolution
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"When you invite people to think, you are inviting revolution"

Ivone Gebara,
Brazilian philosopher
and theologian ecofeminist

Next edition: Prevention in Virginia: Summer 2006

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Launch the Revolution

By Ruth Micklem, Kristi VanAudenhove & Jeanine Woodruff, Alliance Co-Directors

In October 2004 the Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance was born out of a four-year labor of love between Virginians Aligned Against Sexual Assault and Virginians Against Domestic Violence. As labor frequently is, the process was a lot of hard work—more painful than they tell you it will be—and ultimately, incredibly rewarding.

> "Sexual and domestic violence are acts of abuse of socially attained power and are deeply personal violations."

This first issue of the new Alliance journal, Revolution, invites you to ponder the differences and similarities between the work to end sexual violence in America, and the work to end domestic violence in that same culture. We have shared a few observations about our process of creating the Alliance, and Lacey Sloan graces us with a national perspective that mirrors the perspective that many of us brought into the transformation process.

> "We are on the right track addressing sexual and domestic violence when we ally with those who are working to end...other forms of social injustice... that arise out of a morally bankrupt belief that any one person is superior to another."

Sexual and domestic violence are each acts of abuse of socially attained power and are deeply personal violations. Sexual violence is deeply personal no matter the relationship with the perpetrator because of the sex—our most intimate and private form of physical contact twisted by violence. Domestic violence is deeply personal no matter the form of violence because of the relationship with the perpetrator—our most intimate and private relationship twisted by violence. Complicating things further, sexual and domestic violence are often intertwined in the lives of children, women and men.

Ending both sexual and domestic violence will require that we build communities in which people do not intentionally or unintentionally pervert sex or relationships through violence. We are on the right track in addressing intentional sexual and domestic violence when perpetrators of the violence are held immediately and clearly accountable in their families and in their communities, and when victims of the violence are supported in their healing and recovery without stigma. We are on the right track in addressing unintentional sexual and domestic violence when we provide every young person with an understanding of sex and relationships that is based on values of equality, respect, and health—and reinforce that skills that promote healthy relationships and joyful sexuality. We are on the right track addressing all forms of sexual and domestic violence when we ally with those who are working to end racism, religious oppression, hate crimes, and other forms of social injustice that like sexual and domestic violence arise out of a morally bankrupt belief that any one person is superior to another.

Here in Virginia, we are going to do that together—as one unified voice and one powerful coalition!!!

Two Movements, Two Paths, One Goal

By Lacey M. Sloan, Ph.D., MSSW

Second wave feminism of the 1960's brought attention to violence in the lives of women and girls. As women shared stories of rape and abuse, they soon began to organize to support each other through the establishment of safe houses, crisis lines, and self-defense classes. It remains unclear why violence against women evolved into separate domestic violence and sexual assault movements, but it is clear that the two movements have had different degrees of success in the convening 30 years. The successes and failures of local domestic violence and sexual assault programs and state coalitions has paralleled that of the national domestic violence and sexual assault organizations.

By the early 1970's, the separate paths of the sexual assault and domestic violence movements were set. At the local level, rape crisis and battered women's services were formally organized, usually as separate organizations. By the late 1970's, the first domestic violence and sexual assault state coalitions organized—again, separately—to provide support to the growing number of local programs (for example, the Illinois Coalition Against Sexual Assault and the Wisconsin Coalition Against Woman Abuse both formed in 1977). In the late 1970s, it was only natural that the national coalitions—the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence and the National Coalition Against Sexual Assault would form as separate organizations For the past 30 years, these two movements worked to end violence against women.

The domestic violence movement has generally been more successful with messaging, obtaining funding, and gaining societal support. Over the years, despite many successful collaborations, some tension existed at the local, state, and national levels between the two movements. The tension is primarily focused on funding, although turf has more recently become an issue. As the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) changes the landscape, more local and state organizations are examining whether or not it is time to combine resources to end violence against women.

> "It remains unclear why violence against women evolved into separate domestic violence and sexual assault movements, but it is clear that the two movements have had different degrees of success in the convening 30 years."

Funding

One of the first successes of the battered women's movement was the acquisition of state funding for battered women's shelters. Today, while every state provides funding for domestic violence programs, many states have yet to provide funding for sexual assault programs. Unfortunately, many legislators don't even realize the difference between domestic violence and sexual assault and think they have funded both when funding domestic violence programs. Most early state domestic violence coalitions not only worked for funding for local programs, but also for funding for the coalition. By including the state coalition in funding legislation, domestic violence coalitions were positioned to be more effective in obtaining additional resources for both the state coalition and local programs. For example, the Texas Council on Family Violence (TCFV) included itself in early funding legislation for shelters. Within 20 years, the amount of state funds allocated to the coalition (over $1 million) exceeded the amount of state funding awarded to all 70 sexual assault programs in the state ($350,000)[1].

For a variety of reasons, many early sexual assault coalitions did not pursue funding for themselves, focusing efforts on funding for local programs. Some sexual assault coalitions resisted forming as non-profit organizations because of concern over lobbying restrictions. Others were reluctant to pursue funding for the coalition when local programs were under-funded. Of course, this was a critical mistake, as failure to seek resources for the state coalitions left the coalitions unable to seek funds for local programs.

The failure of sexual assault programs and state sexual assault coalitions to obtain funding impacted the success of the national coalition. While the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV) was successful in obtaining funds to open a national office (and today operates two offices), the National Coalition Against Sexual Assault (NCASA) was never successful in funding a national office.

> "In combined programs, domestic violence services can receive more than tenfold the amount of funding committed to the sexual assault program."

In the early 1990's, NCASA failed to obtain adequate resources to open and maintain a national office. When NCASA was unable to accept an offer of funding to operate a national hotline, RAINN (Rape Awareness and Incest Network) was created. RAINN refused to collaborate with NCASA and although many sexual assault programs are "members" of the RAINN telephone relay system, there remains much hostility towards RAINN[2]. By 1995, NCASA's board of directors dissolved the organization, leaving the sexual assault movement without a national voice.

> "...the sexual assault movement has rarely been funded to serve children, despite the fact that 1/3 of the victims served by sexual assault programs are children who are victims of sexual assault.."

The inequality in state and federal funding creates an obvious tension as sexual assault programs remain under-funded and often feel a lack of support from their allies in the domestic violence movement. In combined (also called "dual" or "joint") sexual assault and domestic violence programs this tension may be most palpable. In combined programs, domestic violence services can receive more than tenfold the amount of funding committed to the sexual assault program. While agency directors may argue that this is due to the level of federal and state funding available for domestic violence, most of these combined programs do not designate unrestricted funds for sexual assault services, instead these funds are typically funneled into domestic violence services. There is little argument that shelter services are more costly than sexual assault services, and shelters can easily use all funds directed their way.

In addition to being successful in obtaining funding for basic services, the domestic violence movement, both federally and at the state level, was able to obtain funding to serve children. From the 1980's forward, funding for domestic violence has always included funding for the children of battered women. Conversely, the sexual assault movement has rarely been funded to serve children[3], despite the fact that 1/3 of the victims served by sexual assault programs are children who are victims of sexual assault, including incest. Today, other organizations exist that have laid claim to serving child victims.

The Violence Against Women Act

The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) of 1994 provided an infusion of funding for sexual assault and domestic violence programs across the country. The money available for sexual assault programs was a particular boost as many sexual assault programs still operated only on local funding and Health Block Grant funding. The money brought by VAWA also brought interest in sexual assault by programs that had previously done little or nothing to end sexual violence. Domestic violence programs that had not previously served sexual assault victims began to seek funding to address the issue of sexual violence. Many in the sexual assault movement were suspicious of whether or not these programs were really expanding services to include sexual assault survivors or services, or merely maintaining the status quo but counting the sexual victimization experienced by victims of domestic violence in order to obtain/retain funds.

Despite the funds VAWA brings to the effort to re-

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spond to violence against women, the disparity in funds allocated for domestic violence and sexual assault continues to exacerbate the tensions between the two movements. Ninety percent of the victims served by VAWA funds are victims of domestic violence. Several VAWA grant programs are restricted to domestic violence (i.e., Grants to Encourage Arrest Policies; Rural Domestic Violence and Child Victimization Program; Family Justice Center grants) or primarily focused on services needed by victims of domestic violence (Safe Havens Supervised Visitation and Exchange programs; Legal Assistance for Victims; Transitional Housing), even though these grant programs fund responses that could be equally beneficial for sexual assault victims. Another tension in VAWA funding is that some grant programs provide funding for the children of battered women (i.e., Safe Havens & the Rural grant program), but no VAWA funding is allowed for child victims of sexual abuse (other than victims of date rape). A final inequity is that VAWA funds Batterer Intervention Programs (BIP), but not Sex Offender Treatment programs. BIPs are considered part of the continuum of services for battered women, since many women will remain with or return to their batterers. However, the failure to fund sex offender treatment programs ignores that fact that even if a rapist does not assault the same victim more than once (although many will), he will rape another woman.

> "The disparity in funds allocated to domestic violence and sexual assault continues to exacerbate tensions between the two movements."

> "A final inequity is that VAWA funds Batterer Intervention Programs, but not Sex Offender Treatment programs."

Messaging

The true success—or failure—of the sexual assault and domestic violence movements has been in societal acceptance of the messaging of these two movements. There are several areas of messaging that have been undertaken over the past 30 years: basic identity, violence and sex, offenders, and image. Each of these are discussed below.

Basic Identity

The success of the domestic violence movement stems, in large part, in its ability to successfully market its message. By the time the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV) was organized in 1978, the first repackaging of battered women had occurred. Instead of the message focusing on battered women, this piece of the violence against women's movement had become "domestic violence."

The term domestic violence moves the focus from individual abused women to women and children. Problems affecting those who are deemed not culpable for the problems in their lives—such as children and people affected by disease—are more likely to attract funding. So, as violence perpetrated by men against their intimate partners became identified with violence perpetrated against children, the issue became much more palatable for the masses.

Similarly, by the time the National Coalition Against Sexual Assault organized in 1979, the term "sexual assault" was used to reflect the violent (versus sexual) nature of the crime. However, unlike the domestic violence movement, the sexual assault movement has not been as successful in providing a succinct message that mainstream America could embrace. And, despite the fact that 1/3 of the primary victims served by sexual assault programs are children, sexual assault programs are rarely identified with services for children. Sexual assault myths persist, with concerns about false allegations continuing to nag at the public beliefs about rape.

Violence and Sex

One of the great successes of the domestic violence movement has been to educate society that "no one deserves to be hurt." In pre-1970's, violence perpetrated in the home was considered to be a private matter. However, the domestic violence movement delivered powerful messages that helped society realize that no one asks to be hit and that no matter whether you are related to your offender or not, hitting is a crime. Nothing that looks like a slap, punch or other physical violence is consensual.

Conversely, the sexual assault movement struggles to instill an image of rape or sexual assault separate from sex. Changing terminology from "rape" to "sexual assault" left the word "sex" in the name of

the offense. Given our society's difficulty, even in the year 2006, to discuss sex, it is not surprising that society remains unwilling to discuss sexual assault. Also, the act of penetration can be either sex or sexual assault—consent is the factor that separates the two. Unlike physical violence, there is something that "looks" like sexual assault (i.e., sex). It is the concern with false allegations of sexual assault that the sexual assault movement has not been able to overcome. Although the history of disbelief of rape victims has its history in English law, the majority of people still believe women frequently falsely accuse men of rape. It is easy for many to imagine that a victim has failed to honestly communicate her intent, or to buy into the idea of the vengeful or regretting woman "crying" rape.

Offenders

There is a longstanding societal more that "men should not hit women." There are many movie scenes where the gentleman walks away or barely flinches when slapped by a woman. Many a movie hero has intervened to stop a man from hurting a woman. Despite this ideal, woman abuse has a long history and there is disagreement about society's right to get involved when this more is violated. Over the past 30 years, the battered women's movement has been successful in changing societal acceptance of violence between intimate partners as a private matter to understanding it as a criminal matter worthy of intervention. Many a sheriff, prosecutor, and politician now use language to describe domestic violence that is straight from the writings of radical feminists such as Andrea Dworkin.

> "The true success—or failure—of the sexual assault and domestic violence movements has been in societal acceptance of the messaging of these two movements."

Conversely, 30 years of anti-rape education still finds a stiff wave of belief in rape myths. Famous movie scenes romanticize rape, with the victim fulfilled by the experience (e.g. Scarlett O'Hara's rape by Rhett Butler in Gone with the Wind). The socialization of males in our society includes boys being taught that they must persuade girls to have sex, and girls are still taught that they should not agree to have sex. Of course, persuading someone to have sex is not against the law, and even coercion is rarely criminal[4]. Today, most people would agree that if one party says "no" or resists, then the other party must not make any further actions to engage in sex. Yet, there is an assumption in our society that men have the right to sexual access to women unless permission is specifically withdrawn (hence, the need for women to say "no"). However, there is some ambivalence about whether one "no" is adequate, or the degree to which resistance must be displayed. In a recent conversation with a nationally recognized violence against women expert, it was suggested that one of the reasons for the success of the domestic violence movement over the sexual assault movement is that more men have actually persuaded, coerced or forced a woman to engage in sex than have physically abused a woman. Therefore, domestic violence is an easier act for men to join against, whereas sexual assault is more difficult because of the culpability of more men. Whether this is accurate or not is unknown, but it is likely that men can more easily fear finding themselves "falsely" accused of rape than find themselves falsely accused of hitting a woman.

A final note on offenders. In both the sexual assault and domestic violence movements, women are recognized as the primary victims of crimes perpetrated by men. At the same time, both sexual assault and domestic violence programs recognize that men may be victims of either same sex or heterosexual assaults. However, with a few notable exceptions, rape crisis centers have been quicker than domestic violence programs to adapt services and outreach to male victims. This is probably due to research that indicates that until age 12, male children are victimized at similar rates to female children. Since rape crisis centers typically work with both child victims and adults molested as children, approximately 10% of the primary victims served are male. Conversely, many domestic violence programs still resist housing adolescent male children in their shelters, much less adult men.

Image

Both the sexual assault and domestic violence movements have tried to reject early portrayals of themselves as radical feminists, man-haters, lesbians, and anti-family activists. Of course, the irony is that many of the founders of the violence against women's movement were (and are to this day) radical feminists, lesbians, and activists. It has been one of the challenges with which both sexual assault and domestic violence programs have struggled: how to become viable components in the

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Transforming VAASA and VADV

Tales from a Transformation Committee member

By Alice Twining, Ed.D., LCP

As President of the Board of Directors of Virginians Against Domestic Violence (VADV) during the transformation that joined Virginians Aligned Against Sexual Assault (VAASA) and VADV in 2004, I was involved in the process from the big picture perspective as well as the personal experience of change. Discussions about joining together to form a training and meeting center had started a decade before, but the first formal step in this recent change was a joint meeting of the two coalition's executive committees in November 2000. Looking back now, the years of planning, background research and meetings with hundreds of members accomplished the goal of bringing the two organizations together as a corporation, and much more.

> "The pinnacle of the process was the early development of principles to guide us, including respect, honesty, openness, and acknowledgement of self-interest."

Almost half of the state coalitions working to end sexual and domestic violence in the United States have become single entities. Other coalitions called us and were interested in Virginia's method of joining together because of our emphasis on values, attitudes and beliefs. Participants underscored the value that local programs are the driving force of the Alliance. Concern for the thirty coalition staff was taken seriously. The importance of equity in addressing issues of sexual and domestic violence was validated, and a commitment was made to promote intentional inclusion of all voices, emphasizing those traditionally oppressed and/or marginalized in anti-violence work.

The Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance now has a mission, vision, strategic plan, and operations to carry out these goals. Alliance agencies and members have formed a larger network of individuals and groups all over Virginia who believe that ALL people have the right to a life free of violence. What does this mean to each of us, and especially to survivors of sexual and domestic violence?

Reflecting on these steps toward transformation, the journey for me was a path with dips, turns and peak experiences. The pinnacle of the process was the early development of principles to guide us, including respect, honesty, openness, and acknowledgement of self-interest. Many people drove many miles to do this work. No matter how many ideas and discussions needed to happen to help the coalitions change, the ultimate focus was that trust was essential in order for people and agencies to take the risks involved to change as well. It wasn't a perfect process. It was a very human process.

As a clinical psychologist for thirty years, sitting with women, children and other marginalized survivors of trauma and injustice, one sees the courage and struggle in each person as they move one step closer to peace and justice. In the process of encouraging survivors to access the resources inside themselves and in their communities, there is a constant awareness of the commonalities that bind us in our shared need for safety and security. We are all vulnerable to hurt and betrayal.

Transformation committee meetings sometimes reflected similar levels of vulnerability, and included the fear of losing control over organizations that had been built over decades with hope, energy and tears. Living in a world that uses power and violence systematically as well as randomly, workers in our movement have listened to survivors from all walks of life. Knowing with heightened awareness how

people and institutions can harm one another, fear sometimes filled meeting rooms like an impending landslide that started and ultimately ended in silence. Steps forward united with steps back, and as an often confused participant, aloneness gave rise to my own self-care. Sometimes my low energy was overcome with the support of many kindred spirits who were reminders of the importance of never giving up on an important journey.

Being part of this movement is not an easy path. The work to end violence against the powerless and poor, the oppressed and discriminated against is a mighty struggle. It often feels like pushing millions of boulders at the same time. Then there are moments when a boulder turns into many pebbles on the road, and a march of bodies and voices picks them up and moves them to a new place, such as watching a law in a Senate committee change to improve the criminal legal system's response to marital rape. Then the success of a movement that has coalesced feels tremendous. Boulders can, after all, turn to sand with friction.

"...the last four years feel like another major step forward in the long history of social change in Virginia, with more steps to equality and shared power still to come."

In sorting through our differences in the transformation process, it was paramount to remember the similarities in our work to advocate for safety, growth, health, and societal change for all survivors of sexual and domestic violence. I saw some of our historical differences as a result of funding sources' actions to bureaucratize and separate us into artificial entities – we had to set up shop with separate boards and bookkeepers. Our histories as grass roots movements created some different strategies that made our work look different – crisis centers vs. shelters. Some of our differences were because many, many people made the histories of each coalition. I remember my happy gasp in the first minute of the first joint meeting in November, 2000: I looked around the circle and knew most of the people! We all were the same –all healers and seekers of societal change – supportive and caring.

"In sorting through our differences in the transformation process, it was paramount to remember the similarities in our work to advocate for safety, growth, health, and societal change for all survivors of sexual and domestic violence."

Many of our transformation agreements were important to reach through consensus. As values and guidelines were unanimously supported, frozen breath was released. The fear that domestic violence work would absorb sexual assault work weighed heavily in many meetings. As people continually lifted up the value of sexual assault centers, trust grew and the paths of history transitioned into a united road that emphasized equity in funding and recognition of sexual violence work. The memories of incest survivors I'd sat with in my office since 1976 floated through my awareness every time we moved through this important issue. Their voices kept saying "we are all one." I listened.

When new and previously silenced voices sought to infuse the transformation committee with important priorities and new structures, the fear of loss set in. I could back up and shut down, feel attacked or embrace a deeper level of change. Naming this surge of new energy as a fundamental human rights movement was invigorating and releasing. The recognition that many forms of oppression intersect with sexual and domestic violence was true and right.

In perspective, the last four years feels like another major step forward in the long history of social change in Virginia, with more steps to equality and shared power still to come. As one small person in the transformation process, I could choose to feel inadequate or powerful beyond measure. As a member of the Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance, I am continually liberated from my own fear.

Alice Twining is a licensed clinical and forensic psychologist who has been working in the field since 1976. She was a psychotherapist and adult educator, teaching at the college level for 14 years. Alice joined the VADV Training Institute in 1997, and was Board President of VADV from 1999-2004. She has been the Program Director at the YWCA of Hampton Roads and at Samaritan House, where she most recently worked as Clinical Trainer.

Agency snapshots:

what are the benefits to being a stand alone vs. a joint program?

Virginia has 11 stand-alone Sexual Assault Crisis Centers, 23 stand-alone Domestic Violence Programs, and 26 "joint" (combined sexual assault and domestic violence) agencies.

We asked a few directors to describe the strengths of their approach, based on whether they were stand-alone or joint agencies. Here are their thoughts.

ACTS/Turning Points, Dumfries

Kay Mathews, Director

What are the benefits to being a stand-alone Domestic Violence Program?

We never have to question how to direct or divide resources. The community views us as the expert in the area and we can keep our message very direct and focused. Having a sexual assault program within the community allows us to refer appropriate individuals to them, where they have the expertise and can serve that victim in a focused way. When we have victims with issues relevant to both programs we can work as arms of the collective body to address both issues.

Did you ever consider becoming a joint agency?

When the program was founded (in 1981), domestic violence was the primary concern. Without doubt there were issues of sexual abuse within those relationships, but the overarching issue was domestic violence. To my knowledge there has never been discussion of merging the two programs, although there are certain advantages that could come from such a union. Enormous care and attention would need to be given that one issue not eclipses the other, and that the community could be educated to recognize the intersection of sexual and domestic violence.

Sexual Assault Resource Agency, Charlottesville

Kristine Hall, (former) Director

What are the benefits to being a stand-alone Sexual Assault Crisis Center?

As an agency with a sole focus, we are able to devote all resources to the issue of sexual violence. Additionally, since we have sexual assault in our agency name, people who have experienced sexual violence know where they go for help. This might not be the case with a joint program that is mostly known for its shelter and domestic violence programs.

In some ways the stand-alone set-up is a tangible representation of the dichotomized view of domestic violence and sexual violence in our communities—sexual assault crisis centers deal with stranger assault that affects adult women and domestic violence programs work with women beaten by their husbands. Yet, sexual and domestic violence experienced by women, children, and men in our communities are more varied than these narrowly defined terms. Sometimes community members don't recognize that crisis centers can help with child sexual victimization or sexual violence perpetrated by a dating partner, family member, or friend. Similarly, I believe they might not always recognize that domestic violence programs can help with sexual violence perpetrated by a dating partner or intimate partner, as well as the effects on children.

Did you ever consider becoming a joint agency?

Since we were established in 1974, the Sexual Assault Resource Agency has always been a stand-alone sexual assault crisis center. Currently, as well as historically, we have worked collaboratively with the local stand-alone domestic violence program to deliver effective, comprehensive, and efficient services to the communities that we serve. Approximately ten years ago, the Shelter for Help in Emergency and the Sexual Assault Resource Agency had serious discussions about joining the programs. However, the decision of the Boards at that time was to maintain two distinct organizations while identifying opportunities for joint projects and collaboration.

Sexual Assault Response and Awareness, Alexandria

Melissa Schmisek, Director

What is the benefit of being a stand-alone Sexual Assault Crisis Center?

As a stand-alone program, the SARA Program is able to focus 100 percent of its time on sexual violence, which in turn enables staff to develop an expertise in serving clients, conducting community outreach and education, and working with allied professionals. Additionally, a stand-alone program brings much needed attention to the issue of sexual violence, which often gets secondary attention after domestic violence.

The SARA Program was founded in 1975 as the Rape Victim Companion Program with the intent to serve sexual violence clients only. The SARA Program has never discussed merging with its sister agency, the Domestic Violence Program. However, departments outside the Office on Women have suggested on at least one occasion that the SARA Program and the Domestic Violence Program merge. Both programs strongly rejected this idea, which quickly ended any further discussion related to combining the programs.

Project Horizon, Lexington

Judy Casteele, Director

How did your agency become a joint program?

Project Horizon began as a domestic violence agency serving the Rockbridge area in 1982. In 1996, Project Horizon merged with the Rockbridge Area Coalition Against Sexual Assault and began providing both domestic violence and sexual assault services under one roof. Since that time, the agency has continued to strengthen its services to survivors of both family violence and sexual violence and the general community. Each Project Horizon advocate works with both sexual and domestic violence issues, which allows continuity in serving clients with multiple victimizations. Since Project Horizon was originally a domestic violence agency and there was a large community push several years ago to add a shelter aspect to our services, the public seems to recognize our domestic violence services more so than our sexual violence services. To help even out this inequity, our education and outreach efforts are coordinated to bring a greater awareness of both sexual and domestic violence throughout the year.

Project Hope at Quin Rivers

Liz Cascone, Director

What is the benefit of a joint program?

I think having a joint focus on sexual and domestic violence can provide comprehensive services for survivors of violence. So often, sexual and domestic violence occur simultaneously or within a family unit and being able to assist people who experience both meets a lot of needs, especially in a rural area like ours. Staff have training opportunities so that they can learn similarities between sexual and domestic violence, but also learn what the unique and distinct differences are. I believe that oppression is linked to both sexual and domestic violence and if you're working for peace and equality, you are working towards a world where sexual and domestic violence are not used to control other individuals.

Does the community respond to SA and DV differently?

Yes, I think that the community responds to SA and DV differently. The program is often referred to as "the domestic violence program," especially in the community. For many reasons, domestic violence has had more "popular" attention than sexual assault/abuse. Sexual assault/abuse is more silenced in the community, therefore harder to outreach those who are survivors. Program staff always are reminding others from the community that we serve survivors of sexual assault and as a program we must do outreach that is unique so that it really resonates that sexual assault survivors can seek services here. One time, during our "Awareness Week" at a local high school, I was speaking to a student and one of the administrators at the school saw me. He later told a teacher that if Project Hope talks about sexual assault with students it will "open up a can of worms." I think this illustrates how the community and culture helps to silence survivors.

"Sometimes community members don't recognize that sexual assault centers can help with child sexual victimization or sexual violence perpetrated by a dating partner, family member, or friend.

Similarly, they might not always recognize that domestic violence programs can help with sexual violence perpetrated by a dating partner or intimate partner, as well as the effects on children."

--Kristine Hall, SARA

My Perspective:
The Subtle Differences Between... a Stand-Alone Domestic Violence (DV) Program, a Stand-Alone Sexual Assault (SA) Program, and a Dual (DV & SA) Program

by Melissa A. DeDomenico-Payne

From 1995-2003, I worked at a rural "dual" program—a program that offers both domestic violence (DV) and sexual assault (SA) services. I served as Executive Director there from 1997-2003. In 2003, I moved to a more metropolitan area, where I served as Executive Director of a stand-alone sexual assault agency for approximately a year and a half. In August 2004, I returned to rural life, where I am currently serving as Executive Director of a stand-alone domestic violence program.

The information I am submitting is completely based on my own perspective and experiences within these agencies. The purpose of this article is not to provide blanket generalities that may be applied to all domestic violence programs and sexual assault crisis centers in Virginia. Rather, it is my hope that this article will serve as one point of reference for others in the field -- that they may be able to be more aware of some of the similarities and differences that exist among stand-alone and dual programs.

Finances and Development

Money does not flood through our field. However, it has been my experience that money seems to come easier to domestic violence programs. There are more grants for which we can apply because our work extends into shelter services, services for children, services to address issues of poverty, etc. In the programs I've worked, donations (in-kind and monetary) have come much more regularly to the DV and Dual programs with much less effort because (in my opinion) people in the communities (particularly churches and civic groups) readily understand the tangible needs of shelter and food even if they don't understand everything about the issues. This is not to say that the SA program wasn't well supported – but it had taken the nurturing of relationships over many years (primarily through the prior director and board members) to develop the donor base that they had. In the Dual program, the sharing of resources (such as office space, supplies, support personnel who were cross-trained in sexual assault and domestic violence, etc.) certainly aided in a much more financially stable sexual assault program. By nature of having a residential facility, the DV and Dual programs had more staff. More staff in my case meant that I was able to focus more on the administrative aspects of the program than direct services, and thus devote time to implement internal administrative systems, develop the program, and support staff so that they could do their work.

Personnel

Overworked, undervalued, and underpaid? Actually, not really. Throughout my career, I have pushed for regular salary raises and better benefits for personnel. It has always been my logic that personnel will come and go, but I never wanted them to make their decision to leave primarily based on money (or lack thereof). In the Dual program, I sometimes had to argue a little more to get people to understand the difficulty of the work, the qualifications of staff, and why we would want to pay our staff well. At the SA program, the board seemed to understand and value the staff, although they didn't always understand the difference between the work of private therapists compared to the work of our advocates.

In all three agencies, I observed the "family" atmosphere of staffing. Staff are generally passionate about their work, hungry to learn, and willing to work toward creating an environment that is enjoyable and rewarding. I work very hard at being available to staff, treating them with respect, and creating opportunities for fun and growth. Because of the issues we face, the work is difficult and it is critical that staff remain a support network to each other. In the Dual program, I encouraged the staff to work together holistically for the benefit of the clients, rather than strictly dividing the staff according to their sexual assault or domestic violence funding affiliations.

> "...donations came much more regularly to the DV and Dual programs with much less effort...people in the communities readily understand the tangible needs of shelter and food even if they don't understand everything about the issues."

One challenge that I faced at the SA program revolved around increasing the racial diversity of staff. This was interesting in that the community in which it exists is much more racially diverse than the rural areas in which I've worked, and yet it was in the rural areas that I had more success in this arena. It was my understanding that this was an historical issue for the agency and I am not sure if it is because of the area, the issue, or some other factors. I definitely had a greater number of qualified applicants apply for jobs within the SA program than the other two agencies – and I am sure that this was related to the region (i.e. a local university and a tight job market). But it was difficult to recruit qualified applicants who were of more diverse backgrounds and experiences.

Board

In my opinion, the DV and Dual programs were at an advantage by having to adhere to certification standards (created by domestic violence programs and the state coalition). Certification was helpful in mandating critical organizational evaluations, such as regular review of by-laws, long-range planning, and board training. Increasing the diversity of board members was a challenge in all three organizations. This requires constant attention and as a director, you have an obligation to bring up the

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> "The DV and Dual programs...were often dealing with residential clients who had many needs in addition to their domestic violence or sexual assault issues. As a result, I found that generally, staff [at these programs] were more familiar with a wider variety of community resources..."

diversity issue even if your board does not. Term limits are especially important for boards to change the dynamics within the group and bring fresh ideas to the table. The three organizations within which I have worked struggled with issues of racial diversity, personal diversity (i.e. groups of friends within the boards), and professional diversity (i.e. more human-service-related folks than business people). Working with a board requires building positive, professional relationships within the structure of systems that will maximize everyone's strengths to the benefit of the organization. Like any relationship, your relationship with your board will see its cycles of difficulty. However, time, effort, and skill can pay off in this arena.

Volunteerism

While all three organizations were spawned from volunteers, the SA program was the most successful at securing a large direct service volunteer base, in part because the SA program had made "Volunteer Coordinator" an integral position within the staff. There was a standard training curriculum, regular training sessions, an organized structure of volunteerism, and a large pool of willing volunteers supplied by university students (which posed a challenge when the university was not in session). When the DV and Dual programs evolved into more residential services, direct service volunteerism dwindled. The bulk of the Dual program's volunteerism was at the thrift store. My hypothesis is that residential services require much more face-to-face intense work than the average volunteer wants to commit. And both of these rural programs have had only marginal success in securing interns from the available local community colleges. In consideration of the SA program's success at maintaining an active volunteer base, I have retained a Volunteer Coordinator position at the DV program where I now work. I believe that it takes a significant amount of staff time and attention to foster a successful volunteer program.

Community Coordination

I could clearly see the success in all three organizations in coordinating with all of the typical community systems. The DV and Dual program, however, were often dealing with residential clients who had many needs in addition to their domestic violence or sexual assault issues. As a result, I found that generally, staff at the DV and Dual programs were more familiar with a wider variety of community resources and could easily brainstorm many different resources to help a client. At the SA program, clients would often come for services and would not necessarily have the need to be referred to other community agency services.

Services

When I came to the SA program, I was in awe of what they were offering. A joint project with the local DV shelter involved a group of teens facilitating sexual violence prevention in middle and high schools through the forum of theatre (VIVA). The CAP program brought child abuse prevention to local area schools. In the rural community of the Dual program, I had been told that the school wouldn't want to touch any project that mentioned "sex" or "violence." I presented on occasion to the schools there, but gained entry primarily through personal contacts. The DV program and its sister sexual assault agency have implemented a joint educational program in a local county, but it has not quite reached the level of VIVA. I've also presented to some of the local area schools, but again on a very sporadic basis. I guess we're back to money again – there seems to have been more money available for sexual assault prevention and education than domestic violence prevention and education. My current DV program received DELTA funding for do-

> "The Sexual Assault program was incredibly cutting edge in its service delivery to sexual violence survivors. It would try many different approaches with clients during their individual sessions."

"While all three organizations were spawned from volunteers, the SA program was the most successful at securing a large direct service volunteer base, in part because the SA program had made 'Volunteer Coordinator' an integral position within the staff."

mestic violence prevention, but through that we are working toward building a faith community project.

The SA program also was incredibly cutting edge in its service delivery to sexual violence survivors. It would try many different approaches with clients during their individual sessions. It contracted with local counselors to provide periodic support groups to men. At their facility, the SA program instituted a "healing garden" for clients. It had developed a very organized format for the vigil each April that highlighted the poetry, music, and statements of survivors. The SA program, unlike the DV and Dual programs, was organized by NOW and had a much more feminist, progressive, and social justice focus intertwined with its services. The DV and Dual programs are progressive in their own right, but seemed to take a more centrist approach to political issues – which can be a good survival technique for programs in more rural and conservative areas.

Public Awareness and Understanding

One thing that was extremely surprising to me when I worked at the SA program was that, after 30 years, many people still couldn't grasp that the SA program where I worked was a different organization from the local DV program, and that they each addressed separate issues. This misunderstanding went all the way to the local government, who just a few years ago during a funding cycle asked questions that were shelter-related. The community as a whole seemed obviously more aware and sensitive to the issues. While there, I maintained that if each organization could successfully sustain community support to remain separate, there would be valuable argument to remaining separate entities. Sometimes, however, I found that we were faced with donations, questions about services, and clients that were obviously more appropriate for the shelter because people had confused us.

In the region where I now work, the DV program has been in existence long before its sister sexual assault agency in a neighboring county. I'm sure that the geographic division helps somewhat with having the public see us as different entities, but we probably add some confusion with our very visible joint projects. I am fairly confident that a sexual assault crisis center could not have been created or survived separately from the domestic violence program in the locality that housed the Dual program where I used to work. The community wouldn't have been ready for it. I found on a recent trip to the General Assembly that one legislative aide referred to visitors from the sexual assault program as people from that "sex" group. There are little pockets of misunderstanding everywhere.

Facility

All three agencies were blessed to be able to acquire facilities for their programs. The Dual program started in an old house and eventually renovated the two floors above its thrift store for transitional housing and shelter. The DV program where I now work has three buildings – two owned for transitional housing and shelter and one rented for office space (although we soon anticipate building new office space). Because of the sheer numbers of people going through the facilities, we face very similar on-going issues: lice, rodents, maintenance, pipes freezing, sewer system back-ups, contagious diseases and mass sickness, etc. It's definitely not a place for someone who needs a nice, quiet, cushy office job. Because the SA program used its facility primarily during the daytime (and clients did not live there), the maintenance issues were much less. Once we had a giant lizard on our porch, but other than that we were generally free of rodents and other issues that face shelters. However, we did find that once we had our

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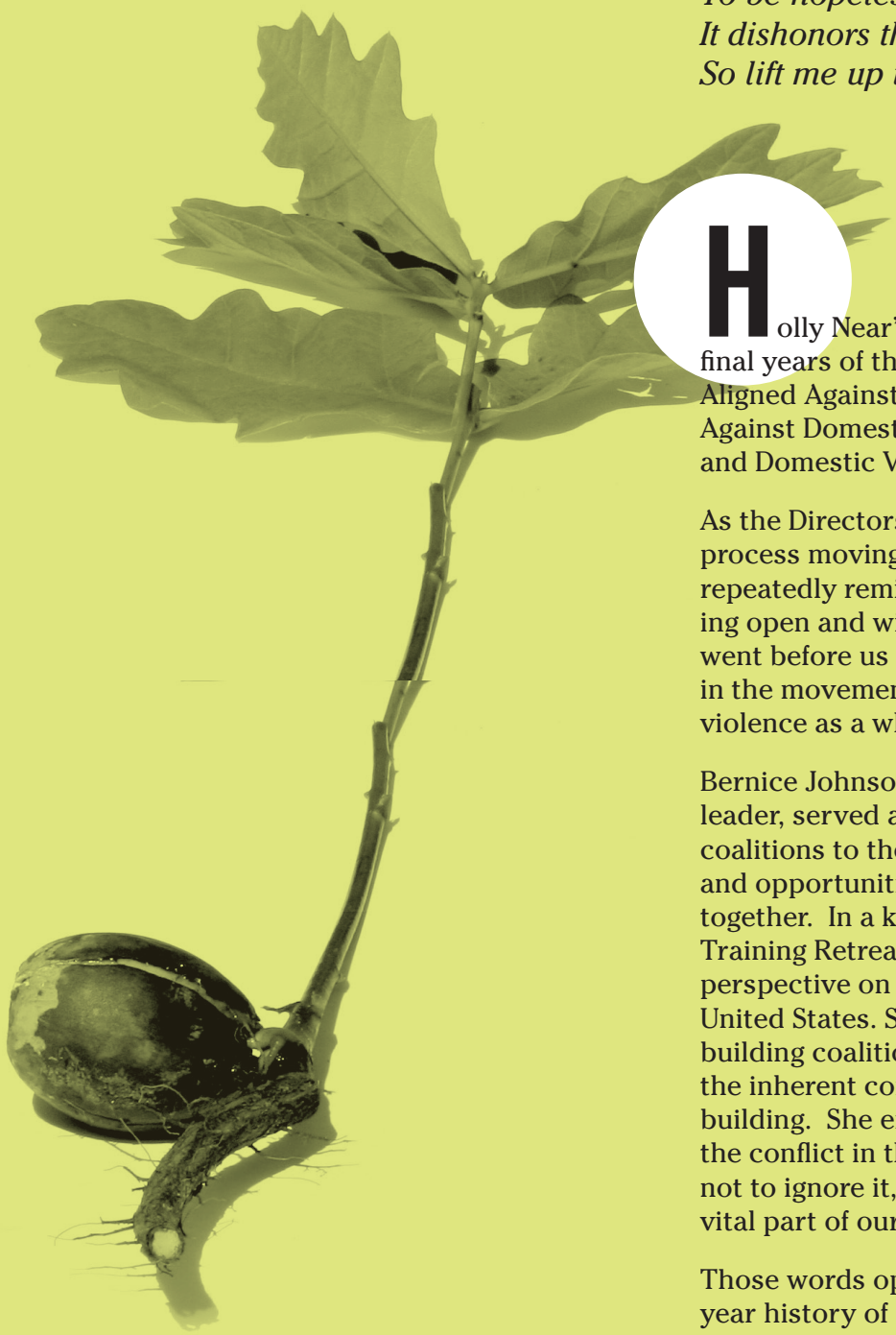
"...after 30 years, many people still couldn't grasp that the SA program where I worked was a different organization from the local DV program, and that they each addressed separate issues."

Open and Willing

The process of creating a new coalition

By Kristi VanAudenhove, on behalf of the three Co-Directors



I am open; and I am willing
To be hopeless would seem so strange
It dishonors those who go before us
*So lift me up to the light of change**

**All lyrics by Holly Near*

Holly Near's song became our anthem in the final years of the transformation of Virginians Aligned Against Sexual Assault and Virginians Against Domestic Violence into the Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance.

As the Directors responsible for keeping the process moving in a positive direction we were repeatedly reminded of the importance of remaining open and willing—and of honoring those who went before us in our respective coalitions, and in the movements to end sexual and domestic violence as a whole.

Bernice Johnson Reagon, musician, historian and leader, served as the catalyst to bring the two coalitions to the table to consider the challenges and opportunities of building a united coalition together. In a keynote speech at our Annual Training Retreat, Dr. Johnson Reagon shared her perspective on the Civil Rights movement in the United States. She spoke of the importance of building coalitions to affect social change, and of the inherent conflict that is a part of coalition building. She encouraged all of us to move beyond the conflict in the interest of achieving change—not to ignore it, or avoid it, but to embrace it as a vital part of our work.

Those words opened the door to viewing the 20-year history of collaboration and conflict between the sexual assault coalition and the domestic violence coalition in an entirely new way.

"Early on we agreed that we were not interested in simply joining our two organizations together. Rather, we decided to examine the lessons we had learned separately and together and to apply those to creating a new organization."

The leadership of each coalition came to the table to consider first whether or not, and then how, to build a new, broader and more powerful coalition to carry forward the work of ending sexual and domestic violence in Virginia.

May the children see more clearly
May the elders be more wise
May the winds of change caress us
Even though it burns our eyes

Change is often painful and difficult, and the transformation process was no exception. Throughout the process individuals and groups were challenged to explore their values and beliefs and to hear the values, beliefs and concerns of others who shared nothing more than a belief that ending sexual and domestic violence is important. There was disagreement within each coalition and between the two coalitions on virtually everything else: what we should be doing to end sexual and domestic violence, why it is important to end sexual and domestic violence, and how we should work together to achieve that end.

Although there were no children at the table (as participants!), there were women, and a few men, of all ages. Staying at the table as we worked toward a clear vision and wise decisions was perhaps the single most important change we made.

1: "Transform" vs. "merge"

A number of themes emerged as we worked together. The first was related to the decision to frame our work together as a transformation. Early on we agreed that we were not interested in simply joining our two organizations together. Rather, we decided to examine the lessons we had learned separately and together and to apply those to creating a new organization. The only thing that each coalition agreed to up front was that everyone currently employed in either coalition would be offered a job in the new coalition (although not necessarily the same job they had been doing!). The decision to transform rather than merge, and the willingness of members and staff of both organizations to participate openly in a process with no guaranteed outcomes made it possible to develop shared values and goals. Past successes and past mistakes went from being a part of the "rivalry" between "sister coalitions" to information we considered in the context of all of the possibilities for the future.

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>
> These important discussions moved the group to consider not only issues of diversity in coalition leadership, but how to truly embrace anti-oppression work as a fundamental part of our work to end sexual and domestic violence."

2: Broaden the coalition

A second theme that emerged was the importance of taking this opportunity to truly broaden the coalition of individuals and agencies working together to end sexual and domestic violence. Funds were dedicated to transformation to ensure that the true diversity of individuals doing this work could come to the table as participants and as leaders. At each meeting we paid attention to gender, age, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, the place each person called home and the groups each person was affiliated with to try to ensure that all voices were being heard. It wasn't easy to hear young women speak about not being taken seriously, to hear older women share their fear of being "put out to pasture," to hear Latinas respond honestly to being invisible when lumped into a "women of color" category, to hear men speak of the impact of feeling "suspect" in the group, or to hear many, many others speak of instances of being marginalized in their attempts to be a part of coalition work. These important discussions moved the group to consider not only issues of diversity in coalition membership and leadership, but how to truly embrace anti-oppression work as a fundamental part of our work to end sexual and domestic violence.

> "A third theme was equity for sexual violence. From the outset everyone acknowledged that more resources were available to address domestic violence... Everyone was not of one mind about how to address that inequity."

3: Equity for sexual violence services

A third theme was equity for sexual violence. From the outset everyone acknowledged that more resources were available to address domestic violence in both the private and public sectors, due in part to the fact that the public is more comfortable talking about domestic violence. Everyone was not of one mind about how to address that inequity. Did we need to commit to equal resources (funding, staff, projects) for sexual violence and domestic violence from the outset? Did we want to institutionalize any system that continued the "competition" between the two issues? How could we move forward most effectively to address sexual violence? These discussions yielded a solid, and we believe, enduring commitment to equity in our work to end both sexual and domestic violence.

4: Honor our roots

A fourth theme focused on honoring and reclaiming our roots, including valuing the voices of survivors, and accepting leadership from community Sexual Assault Crisis Centers and Domestic Violence Programs. As we talked about how we had grown away from these roots it became clear just how important they would be in nurturing the new Alliance.

5: Be the change we wish to see

One last theme that carried into all of our work was the adage to "be the change we wish to see in the world." As we considered the structure of governance and staff, as we talked about strategic priorities, as we wrote by-laws and personnel policies we struggled with issues of power, roles, relationships and our vision. We agreed to make decisions by consensus and we structured shared leadership at each level of the organization. We made a commitment to a continuous learning and teaching process to support our values. We built in accountability.

Give me a mighty oak to hold my confusion
Give me a desert to hold my fears
Give me a sunset to hold my wonder
Give me an ocean to hold my tears

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"We agreed to make decisions by consensus and we structured shared leadership at each level of the organization. We made a commitment to a continuous learning and teaching process to support our values. We built in accountability."

Celebrating our first year

In 2005, the Alliance celebrated its first year of operation as a new organization. It has been a remarkable year. The combined staff has gone through the requisite ups and downs associated with bringing two very different cultures into a one new culture—across three offices in different cities in the state! The new Governing Body has struggled with providing leadership while learning and respecting the consensus process. Our allies have spent the entire year learning to say and spell our exceptionally long name. And a few of the things we have accomplished include:

- Expanding our prevention work, holding the first ever statewide conference on preventing sexual and domestic violence and more than doubling the resources devoted to statewide prevention efforts;
- Forming a new partnership with campus sexual and dating violence prevention programs that will include a campus awareness campaign and on-line dating violence resource center (funded by the Verizon Foundation);
- Developing a five-year public policy agenda that addresses the social conditions that perpetuate sexual and domestic violence, working toward equality, peace, and social justice;
- Building consensus amongst the membership in opposition to a proposed constitutional amendment in Virginia that would threaten the safety of sexual and domestic violence victims who are not married;
- Expanding the Training Institute to include sexual violence, offering two 3-day Sexual Violence Training for Trainers, adding four new faculty members specializing in training on sexual violence, and offering a 1-day regional training on Key Elements in the response to Sexual Violence as part of an annual training calendar that included more than 50 sexual and domestic violence training events;
- Beginning a process of defining comprehensive services to address sexual violence and assessing current gaps in Virginia's response;
- Developing more than a dozen new resources, including fact sheets on the impact of sexual violence on several underserved populations;
- Conducting a 5-year evaluation of VAdata, Virginia's sexual and domestic violence services data collection system;
- Combining standards for sexual and domestic violence services and developing a new process for supporting services that meet those standards at the community level; and
- Moving forward together on our work to increase the availability, accessibility and effectiveness of services to people with disabilities, with a focus on victims of sexual and domestic violence who also have mental health or cognitive disabilities (funded by the Altria Group).

All of this would not have been possible without a great deal of support and collaboration. The process of transformation was facilitated by some truly outstanding women and men: Nancy Ross, Jim Boyd, Debby Tucker, Sandy Barnett, and members of each of the coalitions that formed the Alliance. The National Network to End Domestic Violence provided support for peer-to-peer technical assistance that allowed us to learn from other coalitions and to bring their wisdom and experience to Virginia. Members of Congress who supported the Violence Against Women Act made new funding available for state coalition work—and in Virginia we applied a portion of that funding to this process. Our primary funders in Virginia, the Department of Social Services, the Department of Criminal Justice Services and the Department of Health helped ensure a smooth transition from the former coalitions to the new Alliance.

And, of course, the women and men throughout Virginia who are members of the Alliance and were members of VAASA and VADV did the hard work to lift us all to the light of change.

Thank you also to all of the wonderful musicians who inspire us in our social justice work, and in this case, to Holly Near and Bernice Johnson Reagon!

Kristi VanAudenhove is currently Co-Director of the Alliance, was previously Co-Director of Virginians Against Domestic Violence for twelve years, and has been involved in the movement(s) to end sexual and domestic violence for over 20 years.

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response to violence against women while maintaining an understanding of violence against women as a form of hierarchical oppression (i.e., sexism, racism, etc.). In most communities, both sexual assault and domestic violence programs have become part of the formal social service delivery system.

It was inevitable that in the process of co-opting criminal justice to adopt an understanding of violence against women as a crime, that sexual assault and domestic violence programs would also have to adopt an image that was more palatable to those in criminal justice. As older sexual assault and domestic violence programs have taken their place in the community response system, new programs have developed from a social service, charity and/or religious orientation. Many domestic violence shelters are operated by various Catholic orders, such as the Sisters of Mercy. Sexual assault programs are often operated by mental health or community action agencies. And, board members of many domestic violence and sexual assault programs are frequently wealthy philanthropists whose ideological and/or political orientation may or may not be consistent with that of the staff.

As with many other comparisons of the sexual assault and domestic violence movement, local domestic violence programs have probably become more accepted than rape crisis centers as part of the service delivery system. While this may be a success as far as serving victims of domestic violence, it remains to be seen as to whether programs will use their clout to insist on additional progressive reform of practices and beliefs.

To Stand Alone or Together

If we truly understand sexual assault and domestic violence to be two parts of the same phenomenon--violence against women—then it makes sense for us to work together to end violence against women. However, given the history of inequity and lack of support between the two movements, it will take work for the two movements to join as one. This is not to say that it can not, or should not, be done. If equitable organizations can be created with a foundation of trust, it only makes sense that our combined efforts will make for stronger advocacy on behalf of the survivors we serve.

"It is disappointing to those in the sexual assault movement that our sisters in the domestic violence movement, who have more resources and voice, do not advocate for more equity for sexual assault services and victims."

I have some reservations. My own experience in dual programs has shown me that domestic violence services will be prioritized over sexual assault services. Across the country, some of the strongest sexual assault programs and state coalitions are stand-alone programs. Only in stand-alone rape crisis programs have I seen fully staffed sexual assault services with short and long term support for survivors, civil and criminal justice advocacy, and expansive prevention and education.

It is disappointing to those in the sexual assault movement that our sisters in the domestic violence movement, who have more resources and voice, do not advocate for more equity for sexual assault services and victims. It is painful to watch more funds being allocated to batterers than to victims of sexual assault. And, it is easy to be skeptical of domestic violence programs that now want federal sexual assault funding but would not work for state funding. I encourage sexual assault and domestic violence programs and state coalitions to actively work together toward a common agenda. As a true gesture of sincerity, that agenda must include more funding equity for sexual assault services. When a legislator indicates they do not understand the difference between sexual assault and domestic violence, or that these are two different programs, our allies in the domestic violence program need to take responsibility for clarification. There must also be a national sexual assault coalition to provide a voice for sexual assault programs and sexual assault survivors. I believe that sexual assault and domestic violence programs, working together in true collaboration and coalition, can achieve our mutual goal of

"If we truly understand sexual assault and domestic violence to be two parts of the same phenomenon—violence against women—then it makes sense for us to work together to end violence against women."

ending violence against women. As this collaboration grows, many organizations may find it natural to merge resources.

As VAWA was being reauthorized this year, it was encouraging to see us standing together to expand the Act and include more funding for sexual assault services. Even in this collaborative effort, however, there was conflict between sexual assault and domestic violence advocates over whether funding in the Rural Grant program should have 40% designated for sexual assault programs. If we are to work together, combine programs and coalitions, we can not work against each other. We must have some way of deciding how to resolve policy conflicts. The reauthorization of VAWA may be an excellent opportunity for our path together to begin.

Notes:

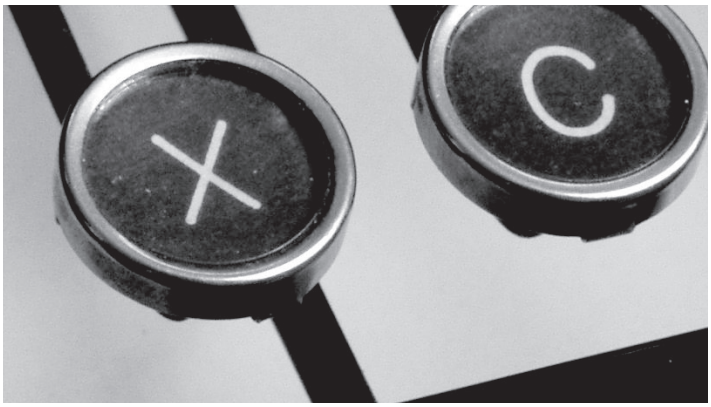
[1] The amount of state funding for domestic violence programs was over $10 million.

[2] During the reauthorization of VAWA in 2000, RAINN lobbied against federal funding for a national sexual assault hotline, an act that added to the negative feelings toward the organization.

[3] VAWA 2000 created two new programs that provide funding for the children of battered women—Safe Havens Supervised Visitation and Exchange Program, and the Rural Domestic Violence and Child Victimization Program. No VAWA funding may be used for child victims of sexual abuse except under the Rural program which can serve child victims if the parent is a victim of domestic violence.

[4] An example of coercion includes being told that if the female does not provide sex, the male will find another girlfriend, or if she does not "put out," she can "get out" and walk miles home in the dark. Neither involves physical force.

Lacey M. Sloan, Ph.D., MSSW, has worked in the sexual assault movement since 1985. She has worked in two dual domestic violence and sexual assault programs, and in one stand-alone sexual assault program. She served on the board of directors of the Texas Association Against Sexual Assault, New York State Coalition Against Sexual Assault, and the National Coalition Against Sexual Assault. About this article, she says, "I am committed to ending violence against women, and while my focus has expanded to include domestic violence, I admit my bias is with sexual assault programs."



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own facility, we were again confused with the local DV shelter.

In Conclusion

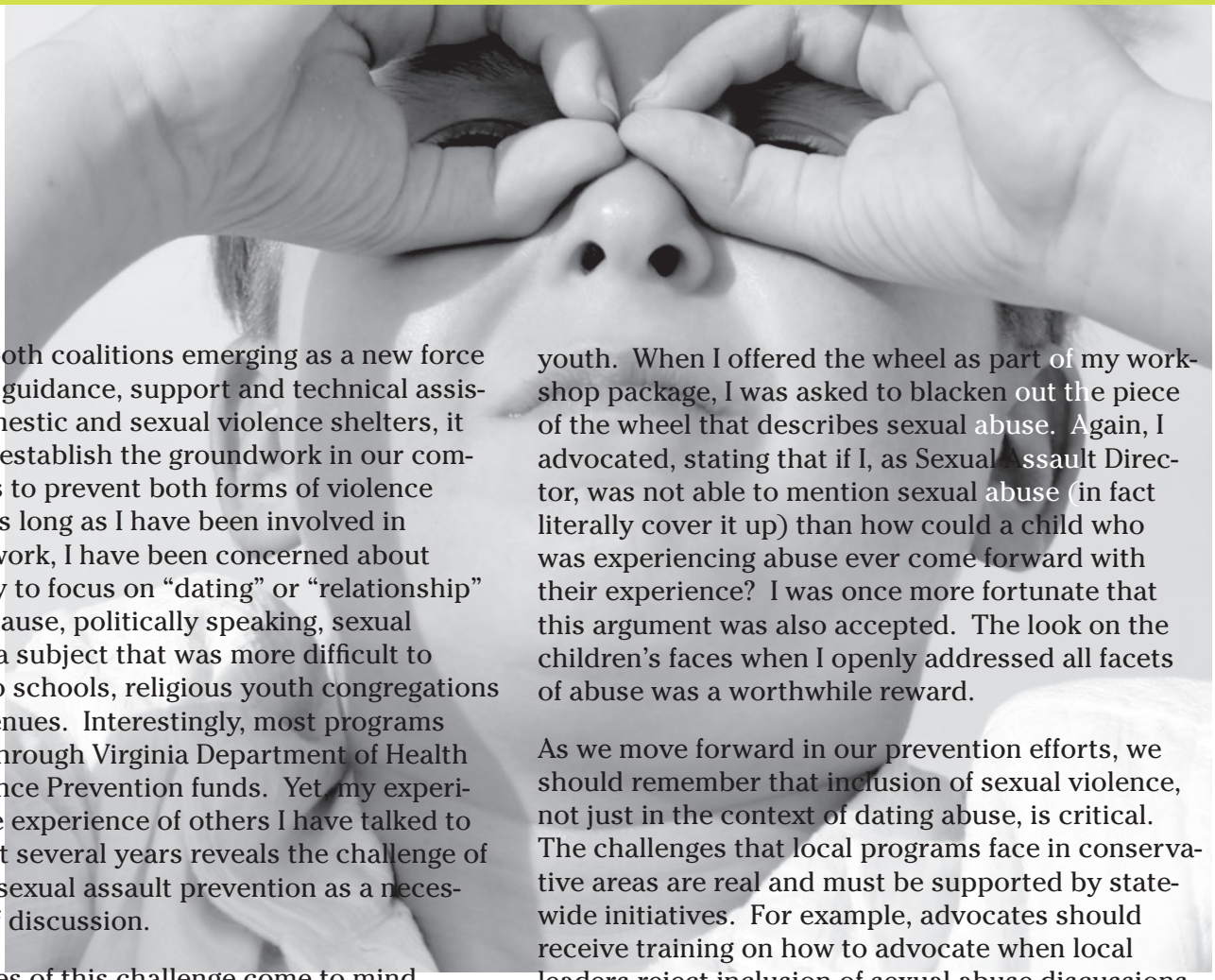
You may be asking what my logic was in moving from one type of program to another. I had many personal factors and preferences influencing my decision – too many to list in this article. I needed a life change in my move from the Dual program. In moving to a stand-alone sexual assault crisis center, I certainly was looking forward to the non-residential aspect of that program. But frankly, I missed "shelter" and began exploring other career options that would not be as easy for me in a metropolitan area. Thus, I moved to a rural DV program. From each agency, I have gained incredible insight into the issues, wonderful friends, and a deeper sense of self that probably would never have been afforded to me if I would have gone into another field. It is simultaneously challenging and rewarding.

Melissa was born in Mount Kisco, New York, but has lived most of her life in Virginia. She began as a volunteer intern in the field in 1995 and then served as Executive Director of the Warren County Council on Domestic Violence (a dual domestic violence program and sexual assault program) from 1997-2003. She served as Executive Director of the Sexual Assault Resource Agency in Charlottesville from 2003 to 2004. She became Executive Director of Services to Abused Families, Inc. (SAFE) in Culpeper in August of 2004. She has served for several years as Secretary for Virginians Against Domestic Violence and Treasurer for Virginians Aligned Against Sexual Assault. She lives in Reva, VA. with her husband, her 7-year-old son and newborn daughter. She also has three older step-sons.

Looking Ahead

The importance of balancing prevention efforts

By Tammi Slovinsky, MPA



With both coalitions emerging as a new force in providing guidance, support and technical assistance to domestic and sexual violence shelters, it is critical to establish the groundwork in our combined efforts to prevent both forms of violence equitably. As long as I have been involved in prevention work, I have been concerned about the tendency to focus on "dating" or "relationship" violence because, politically speaking, sexual assault was a subject that was more difficult to interject into schools, religious youth congregations and other venues. Interestingly, most programs are funded through Virginia Department of Health Sexual Violence Prevention funds. Yet, my experience and the experience of others I have talked to over the past several years reveals the challenge of introducing sexual assault prevention as a necessary topic of discussion.

Two examples of this challenge come to mind, although there are many others. While talking with one youth pastor who welcomed the prospect of a discussion on healthy relationships with youth under his supervision, he retorted when I mentioned sexual abuse as a component of the teen dating violence wheel. In fact, he linked sexual abuse with abstinence, stating that those discussions are not permitted. I responded by reminding him that the goal of my presentation was to prevent forced sexual activity, which is what we all hope to accomplish. Fortunately in that case, my argument was accepted as valid.

On another occasion, I met with two leaders of a Muslim congregation, who wanted me to present a workshop on healthy relationships to over 100 youth. When I offered the wheel as part of my workshop package, I was asked to blacken out the piece of the wheel that describes sexual abuse. Again, I advocated, stating that if I, as Sexual Assault Director, was not able to mention sexual abuse (in fact literally cover it up) than how could a child who was experiencing abuse ever come forward with their experience? I was once more fortunate that this argument was also accepted. The look on the children's faces when I openly addressed all facets of abuse was a worthwhile reward.

As we move forward in our prevention efforts, we should remember that inclusion of sexual violence, not just in the context of dating abuse, is critical. The challenges that local programs face in conservative areas are real and must be supported by statewide initiatives. For example, advocates should receive training on how to advocate when local leaders reject inclusion of sexual abuse discussions. We should also receive clear guidance and support on the parallels and differences between domestic and sexual violence. Our forces are now joined… let's use that power in a positive way to bring both issues to the prevention table…equally.

Tammi Slovinsky has nearly ten years of experience in providing crisis intervention and advocacy to victims of sexual assault and domestic violence. She is currently the Coordinator of Loudoun County's Domestic Abuse Response Team. She has provided training to a wide variety of allied professionals and has expertise in teen dating violence and sexual assault, child sexual abuse and providing support to secondary survivors.

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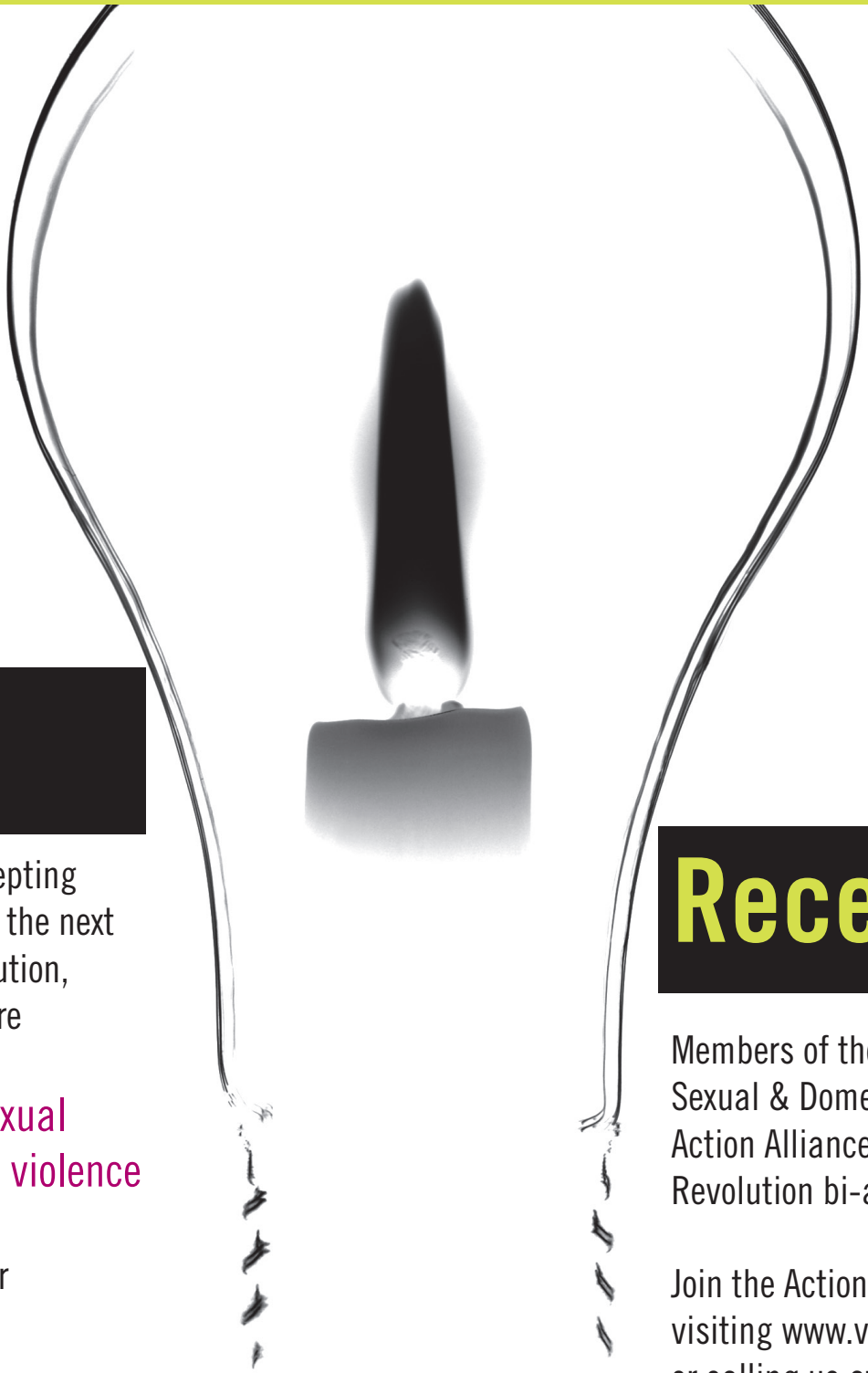

Write

We are now accepting submissions for the next edition of Revolution, which will explore the topic of preventing sexual and domestic violence in Virginia.

Please send your article ideas to Kate McCord at info@vsdvalliance.org

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