A note from our Executive Director

As you read through this annual report, I hope you are as moved as I am by the life-changing work of the Vera House staff, the dedication of our many volunteers and the incredible support of our caring community. I think Sister Mary Vera would be very proud of the organization we are, forty years after her vision came into reality.

Yet, there is so much more work to do.

If you have a television, a computer or a smart phone, you have heard of the #MeToo Movement and the hundreds of thousands of people who have identified as victims of sexual harassment, sexual assault and relationship violence in its wake.

#MeToo resonated for all of us at Vera House. Every person who has walked through our doors for forty years has been saying #MeToo, but often times we were the only people who heard them. Many of us realized we had our own #MeToo stories even if we had not identified as survivors previously.

Thank you to Tarana Burke, a community activist, for founding #MeToo more than a decade ago to help survivors of sexual violence, particularly young women of color from low wealth communities, find pathways to healing.

#MeToo has reminded us that sexual harassment, sexual assault and relationship violence are embedded in our culture. Counseling victims or holding perpetrators accountable is not enough to ever end these assaults.

That is why we launched our #IWill Campaign which you can read more about on pages 4 & 5.

Each of us can be part of creating “a world free of violence and abuse”, and it will take a commitment to hard work for all of us. We have to use the power and privilege that many of us have to challenge those in our own circle of influence.

Often, we tend to talk mostly to those who passionately agree with us, but the conversations we must have to end violence and abuse are the harder conversations, the ones with people who don’t agree with us. They are the ones that might make people angry with us or confused or disappointed. They are the ones that connect sexual and relationship violence to other forms of oppression – racism, homophobia, transphobia, sexism, ableism and many more. They are the conversations that can change the world.

#IWill speak up and use my power and privilege to change culture.

#WillYou?
Renovations to our new administrative and outreach offices are complete and we are finally home!

This project was especially close to our hearts, and the result is a warm and welcoming place for all who enter. In addition to providing support to individuals and families in crisis, Vera House’s administrative and outreach offices are the gateway to all of our services. Within these walls our advocates, counselors and educators support thousands of people annually. Our new building offers a larger, more comfortable space to receive our clients, staff, boards and community partners, and our new location is accessible, conveniently located on bus routes and within walking distance from downtown Syracuse and the northside.

As you can see from our photos, our new space is bright, uplifting and energizing. Our focus was to make the space more trauma-informed, by offering well-lit, comfortable, calming and child-friendly areas to help individuals feel physically and emotionally safe.

We are excited to be able to offer comfort and healing in our new home and we hope you find it just as welcoming as we do.

“Since we settled into our new offices, I have heard from countless survivors, many of them speaking with tears rolling down their faces, that when they walk through our doors, they feel that they have come home.”

Randi Bregman, Vera House Executive Director

Photos courtesy of King + King Architects
The #MeToo Movement has been a powerful force in our society. #MeToo was founded by Tarana Burke more than a decade ago to help survivors of sexual violence, particularly young women of color from low wealth communities, find pathways to healing. #MeToo has now brought the truths of tens of thousands of survivors into the open and challenged norms that have been perpetuated through silence.

The sheer quantity of the #MeToo posts on social media has left many of us feeling powerless and heartbroken. Vera House launched our #IWill Campaign in late 2017 as a proactive response to #MeToo. We called on community members to publicly state their commitment to ending sexual violence and sexual harassment. We had a wonderful response from community leaders, Vera House Board
Members, Foundation Trustees and allies. However, our work is not done - we need your commitment so our #IWill efforts may one day prevent the next #MeToo.

We’re calling upon you to lend your voice and help us share an important message focusing on violence prevention. Help us be a part of the solution…we have varied voices and together we can go beyond awareness. Share YOUR personal commitment of what YOU will do to help end sexual violence in the form of an #IWill statement.

See the photos on these two pages for inspiration and share your photo with your #IWill statement on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram tagging @verahouseinc.
Alternatives Program

Alternatives Program Background

The Vera House Alternatives Program started in 1989 to provide a forum to hold men accountable for their abusive behavior and to educate men:

- that they have no right to control their partner
- that each person is completely responsible for his/her own behavior
- what domestic violence is and how it affects the victim and children

On a brisk March afternoon, men file one-by-one into a building off of E. Washington Street in Syracuse. The men sit in a circle and are mostly silent as the facilitators chit-chat.

“I told him, go home and hug your son, and if your son thinks something is wrong, that will tell you everything that you need to know,” one facilitator said to the other.

The men are here to learn alternatives to violence. The Vera House Alternatives Program has provided a forum for men since 1989. At Alternatives, men learn (through a series of activities and discussions) that they have no right to control their partner and that each person is completely responsible for their own behaviors.

There is also a STEPS program offering similar education to women with abusive behaviors. Alternatives and STEPS work closely with the criminal justice system, advocating that perpetrators be held accountable for their abusive behaviors. Approximately 400-500 individuals complete the programs each year; 90 percent of participants are mandated to complete the program. In recent months, we have seen an increase in self-referrals to the program.

Attending Alternatives in no way ensures that participants will stop their abuse and violence, but it does offer them information and options for not choosing violence in the future.

What is Alternatives

Alternatives is a 15-week program with classes that run for an hour and a half. Attending Alternatives in no way ensures that the person will stop their abuse and violence.

When is Alternatives

Orientations are held the first and third Wednesday of each month at 5:15 p.m. Registration is required.

Program Costs

Fees are on a sliding-scale based on take home pay.

Are There Programs for Women?

Vera House also offers a program for women who have been abusive to their partners or ex-partners called STEPS. Visit www.verahouse.org for more info or call (315) 425-0818.
Desiree Williams, Alternatives Program Coordinator and Syracuse native, often finds herself working with people in her community, which makes her more invested in her work.

“The most important thing is facilitating change in their lives, and helping them to be able to make better decisions,” Williams said.

Williams was the first in her family to go to college and earn a master’s degree. She graduated from Syracuse University with a master’s in social work. Growing up in the housing projects, she never thought she’d be able to attend SU, but her parents instilled a need for education in her. Williams became a Vera House staff member in 2009, and has served as the Alternatives Program Coordinator since 2016.

Williams knows that there is no excuse for abuse, but there are cycles to violence. Fighting may become a survival instinct when you grow up in a rough neighborhood or experience abuse within your family. Alternatives helps individuals take responsibility for their own actions and get out of chaotic situations safely.

Desiree Williams, Vera House Alternatives Program Coordinator with former Alternatives Program Facilitator and Vera House Prevention Educator, Eric McGriff.

LOOKING AHEAD...

"RISE UP" Program

Rise Up is a Healthy Relationship and Violence Education program designed to challenge the beliefs and attitudes of young men and women between 12 - 17 years old who have been determined to be at risk in their homes, schools and community. The goals of this program are to:

Goal #1: Educate youth on healthy relationships

Goal #2: Promote personal responsibility

Goal #3: Teach youth cultural competency and life skills

The objective of this program is to educate youth on some core themes to promote healthy relationships.
Shelter Program

Comprehensive emergency shelter services for individuals and families in crisis, at two confidential locations.

8,949

# of bed nights provided in 2017

2017

Program & Service

STATISTICS

24-Hour Crisis & Support Line

Help is available 24-hours a day, 7 days a week

• (315) 468-3260
• (315) 484-7263 - TTY Crisis Line for the Deaf community during business hours

6,198 calls were answered in 2017

SANE

Vera House’s Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner program encompasses a specially trained team of nurses who provide timely and compassionate care with 24-hour response for victims of sexual assault.

317 responses in 2017

Therapy Program

THERAPY GROUPS FOR ADULTS

7

• 1 Men’s Survivor group
• 2 Women’s Survivor groups
• 1 Art Group on Shame & Vulnerability
• 3 Trauma Informed Parenting groups, one of which was specifically for foster parents & relative placement caregivers

THERAPY GROUPS FOR TEENS & CHILDREN

3

• 2 Teen Survivor groups
• 1 Trauma & Loss in Children group

Our Therapists provided 3,220 therapy sessions to 610 adults and...

counseled 516 children during 3,310 individual counseling sessions.

For both adults and children that attended 6 or more therapy sessions, 90% reported a decrease in a trauma-related symptomology.
Alternatives, STEPS & DVIP

Domestic violence education and accountability programs designed to challenge the beliefs and attitudes of individuals who have been abusive to their partners and/or ex-partners.

- **340** male Alternatives participants
- **57** female STEPS participants
- **25** Domestic Violence Intervention Program (DVIP) participants

> **75% of participants**

reported that this program has bettered their personal lives.

- **> 85% of participants**

indicated they were able to identify one way abuse has impacted their life.

Outreach & Advocacy

Short-term counseling, support groups, and advocacy with legal, medical and social systems for victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and other crimes.

- **1860** # of individuals served through Vera House's Advocacy Program in 2017
- **21%** increase over 2016

- **63%** of the individuals provided referrals for legal assistance made a connection with that service

Volunteer

- **81** active volunteers provided
- **8,581** volunteer hours in 2017

Our volunteers assist in a variety of ways:

- Crisis & Support Calls
- Family Court
- Sexual Assault Advocacy
- Health Fairs
- Shelter Assistance
- Special Events
- General Office Help & More!

This is the equivalent of **4.4** full-time employees.

Prevention Education

School-based, community and professional education and prevention programs are offered on a variety of topics including: sexual abuse prevention, domestic violence awareness, consent, healthy relationships, dating violence and elder abuse.

- **19,858** people reached

Our Prevention Educators were present in **54** schools in addition to local community groups.

- **97%** of elementary participants could identify two ways to protect themselves if someone tried to touch a private part of their body.

- **95%** of middle & high school participants changed their attitudes and beliefs consistent with not supporting or condoning dating or sexual violence.

- **78%** of adult participants indicated they learned something new about domestic and/or sexual violence or elder abuse.

- **1860**

21% increase over 2016

63% of the individuals provided referrals for legal assistance made a connection with that service

Domestic violence education and accountability programs designed to challenge the beliefs and attitudes of individuals who have been abusive to their partners and/or ex-partners.

340 male Alternatives participants
57 female STEPS participants
25 Domestic Violence Intervention Program (DVIP) participants

> 85% of participants...

indicated they were able to identify one way abuse has impacted their life.
In 2017, Vera House recognized 40 years of service to the Central New York community. That’s forty years of providing preventative, crisis and support services to adults and children who have experienced domestic & sexual violence and elder abuse.

**Our work began in July of 1977.** A group of concerned individuals led by Sister Mary Vera, recognized the need for emergency sheltering for women. We had humble beginnings as illustrated by this quote from Sister Mary Vera, “I had hoped someday to have a place with a warm homelike atmosphere where women could come and receive counseling, encouragement, and support in solving their problems.”

Vera House has grown and expanded over the past 40 years to meet the needs of our community. We have sheltered over 10,000 individuals and families, provided advocacy and counseling to more than 50,000 survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault and elder abuse and answered over 100,000 calls to our 24-hour crisis & support line.

Everything we do, comes back to the vision on which we were founded – creating a safe space. A place where people find compassion and respect. A place where people can find the power within themselves to obtain freedom and rediscover who they are.

**2017 marked a new chapter in our history** – with the help of our supportive community, we renovated and moved into our beautiful new office space located at 723 James Street. If you haven’t visited us yet, our beautiful space is featured on page 3.

As we continue to grow, we are placing a focus on primary prevention to help us achieve our vision of creating a world free of violence and abuse. **We’ve come far over our 40 year history and we can’t wait to see what’s next!**

---

**SANE Program Recognized for 20 Years of Service**

Since 1997, the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) program has provided an invaluable service to sexual assault victims in Onondaga County.

The program utilizes registered nurses with extensive education who are available 24 hours a day to respond to local hospitals when a victim of sexual assault presents. They work collaboratively with the hospital staff to meet the patients’ medical and forensic needs.

The program is also an approved clinical skills training site and follows the International Association of Forensic Nurses (IAFN) curriculum. There are currently seven per diem SANE’s in our program. They have all achieved SAFE Certification through the New York State Department of Health, and some are nationally certified through the IAFN. In 2017, our program responded to 317 call outs.

While sometimes a challenging role, it can also be incredibly rewarding and most importantly can make a difference to the patients we serve.

**VERA HOUSE IS LOOKING TO EXPAND OUR POOL OF AVAILABLE NURSES, AND WE COULD USE YOUR HELP!**

To become a sexual assault nurse examiner, individuals must be active registered nurses with a minimum of one year of recent acute care hospital experience as an RN.

Qualified candidates will complete a 40-hour SANE Course which fulfills the didactic component of the education, followed by the 16 hours Clinical Skills Lab which allows the hands-on opportunities that completes their training. They will also complete an orientation that provides additional training under the supervision of advanced providers and concludes with several activations to hospital call outs with an experienced SANE.

If you are interested in exploring the possibility of becoming a SANE, please contact Colleen O’Brien at (315) 425-0818 or cobrien@verahouse.org.
The following individuals have made a commitment to support Vera House through our planned giving initiative.

Elizabeth & Charles W. Beach
Kathleen Bice
Caroline Brust
Margery Burstein
Peggy Clark
Sharon Conway
The DeAugustine Family
Virginia Denton - in honor of my parents, Dr. Henry & Grace Rieger
Joyce Edmonds: For a Life Well Lived!
  In Memory of Ralph E. Edmonds
Julie & Irwin Flack
Mr. & Mrs. Sean J. Foran
Miesje & Bill Havens
William Kendrat: In Memory of Beverly Kendrat
Antje Bultmann Lemke:
  In honor of Dorothy C. Witherill
Jonathan B. Levick Family
Robert & Naomi Penney
Warren Wolfson: In Memory of Rosalind W. Gingold

The following individuals have made a commitment to support Vera House through our planned giving initiative.

Frances P. DiBella Charitable Remainder Trust
Sondra and Steven Goldberg
Eileen & John J. Murphy Jr. Fund

Charles and Beth Beach
Randi K. Bregman and Ted Gottbrecht
Estate of Rosemary Curtis
  Mark and Polly Fuller
  Neil and Helene Gold
Lynn and David Horowitch
Lorraine McGee
Pierre and Joye Morrisseau
Ruth Ruffer
Warren D. Wolfson

Caroline and Nicholas Brust
Margery Burstein
I. Stephen and Kathleen Davis
Anne Ruffer and Dr. Mickey Lebowitz

Rachel Galusha Apicelli
Amy and Andy Breuer
Carol Charles
Carroll Clark
Julie and Irwin Flack
Lisa Greenia
Kimberly and William Jeffery
The Leitgeb Family
Richard and Brooke Maxwell
Patricia J. Numann MD
Christine Streenstra
Russell and Sara Sturtz

If you are interested in including Vera House in your estate plans, please contact Vera House Development Director Cindy Britz at (315) 425-0818 or cbritz@verahouse.org
Cornerstone . $25,000 & Up
Allyn Family Foundation
Central New York Community Foundation
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Drs. John Epling and Cynthia Morrow
Green Family Foundation
Solon Quinn
The Dorothy & Marshall M. Reisman Foundation

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Rev. Pascale L. Williams
Wolff’s Biergarten
Thomas Young

Vera House recognizes the generosity of donors who gave $500 or more for the 2017 fiscal year and authorized us to publicly acknowledge them. We apologize to anyone inadvertently omitted.
# Financial Summary

## Statement of Activities* for year ending December 31, 2017
*Reflects the combined financial totals of Vera House, Inc. & Vera House Foundation, Inc.

### 2017 Support & Revenue:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government Fees &amp; Grants</td>
<td>$3,146,709</td>
<td>59%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Private Donations</td>
<td>$1,393,749</td>
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<tr>
<td>United Way</td>
<td>$222,428</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fees</td>
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<tr>
<td>Return on Investments</td>
<td>$434,010</td>
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<td><strong>Total Support &amp; Revenue</strong></td>
<td><strong>$5,338,381</strong></td>
<td><strong>26%</strong></td>
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### 2017 Expenses:

#### Program Services

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Service</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emergency Shelter</td>
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<tr>
<td>Counseling</td>
<td>$892,017</td>
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<tr>
<td>Outreach &amp; Advocacy</td>
<td>$552,160</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prevention &amp; Education</td>
<td>$1,018,109</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner</td>
<td>$296,888</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alternatives &amp; Steps</td>
<td>$165,619</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Program Expenses</strong></td>
<td><strong>$3,947,657</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

#### Supporting Services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fundraising</td>
<td>$205,474</td>
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<tr>
<td>Administrative</td>
<td>$135,737</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Supporting Services</strong></td>
<td><strong>$341,211</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Expenses</strong></td>
<td><strong>$4,288,868</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Increase in Net Assets**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$1,049,513</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Vera House, Inc.
Administrative & Outreach Offices
723 James Street
Syracuse, NY 13203
Phone: (315) 425-0818
Fax: (315) 425-8942
www.verahouse.org

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Deputy Director
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Associate Director
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Outreach & Advocacy Program Coordinator
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Prevention & Education Director
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Clinical Program Supervisor
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Development Director
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Director of Communications & Special Events
Chris Benton • Ext. 2248 • cbenton@verahouse.org

Director of Shelter Services
Shakina Bowman, MS • Ext. 4205 • sbowman@verahouse.org

Campus Project Coordinator
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Vera House is committed to ensuring our programs & services are welcoming to everyone.