THE Meaning IN OUR MISSION

“When you discover your mission, you will feel its demand. It will fill you with enthusiasm and a burning desire to get to work on it.”
The Houston Area Women’s Center helps individuals affected by domestic and sexual violence in their efforts to move their lives forward. We provide shelter, counseling and advocacy to support them in building lives free from the effects of violence. We seek social change to end domestic and sexual violence through community awareness and education. Our services are confidential and available to everyone.

Our current mission statement was created in 2009 and, while it was very carefully crafted, there are words and phrases that carry much more meaning than what you might take away at face value. That’s why we’d like to take this opportunity to share the deeper meaning behind our choice of words to give you a greater understanding of who we are, what we believe, and the kind of work we do.
individuals Even though we were founded with the name Houston Area Women's Center in 1977, we serve all individuals regardless of gender, age, ethnicity, religion or sexual orientation. Domestic and sexual violence affect adults and children from all walks of life, and our services are designed — and continue to evolve — to meet the needs of everyone who takes the brave step of calling our hotlines and walking through our doors seeking hope and healing.

in their efforts Of all the elements in our mission statement, this phrase can easily be overlooked. However, it’s extremely important because it underscores our commitment to empowering survivors. We don’t tell them what to do, because that would be dis-empowering. Instead, we offer information, resources, options, and support so our clients can choose what works best for them. We believe that survivors have the right to make the decisions in their own lives. Abusers take away their victims’ power, choices, and dignity. We want to support them in reclaiming those things.

move their lives forward Every survivor has a unique vision of what life should look like on the other side of the healing process, and it’s very important to respect each individual’s measuring stick for happiness and success. Our job at the Women’s Center is to give survivors the support and resources they need so they can chart their own courses and move forward to create new lives that are free from violence and full of hope.

support Abuse can take many forms — physical, emotional, and financial, just to name a few — and every survivor’s situation is different. So what constitutes “support” can vary greatly from client to client. Some have an urgent need for shelter. Others need legal help, counseling, or an advocate at the hospital during an exam for evidence collection. That’s why we offer a variety of services that range from our 24-hour hotlines and emergency shelter, all the way to assistance with transportation and permanent housing. And, of course, the words of support that every survivor deserves to hear: You’re not alone... It’s not your fault... and Help is available.
free from the effects of violence  Domestic and sexual violence cause trauma that can result in symptoms like depression, anxiety, sleep difficulties, and disorientation. These symptoms can last for a very long time, or resurface again and again, until the underlying trauma is addressed. At the Houston Area Women’s Center, we can help heal this unique type of trauma because our counselors have the tools and the expertise. Whether the abuse took place recently, or years ago, there is a way for survivors to recover from trauma and move forward with their lives.

seek social change  Making domestic and sexual violence a thing of the past is our ultimate goal. Achieving that goal will require changing the way society thinks about violence, responds to violence, and treats the survivors of violence. All of us at the Houston Area Women’s Center are committed to creating lasting social change, and we do this in a variety of ways: by educating legislators and key decision makers about domestic and sexual violence and enacting and enforcing policies that support survivors and hold abusers accountable for their actions; by working with youth through our violence prevention programs; and through our grassroots community outreach efforts that equip all of us to play a role in ending violence.

community awareness and education  Everyone has the ability to learn how to better support survivors of domestic and sexual violence. Our job at the Women’s Center is to give people the knowledge and the tools to do so. Throughout the year, our education specialists work with law enforcement, medical professionals, faith communities, schools, and other members of the community to help them understand the dynamics of domestic and sexual violence. We also teach them how to respond to survivors in supportive ways and how to connect them to resources in our community.

our services are confidential  This phrase is in the very last sentence of our mission statement because it’s the crucial philosophy of empowerment that’s the foundation of everything we do. We make a pledge of confidentiality to our clients’ from the first moment they contact us, and it’s a promise we take very seriously. Confidentiality not only helps to ensure our clients’ physical safety, it also offers emotional safety. Survivors who come to the Houston Area Women’s Center know that they will be heard, believed, supported ... and whatever information they choose to share with us will be kept private.

From Our Leaders

As you’ll read throughout the 2014 annual report, the words in our mission statement were carefully crafted to reflect the values we hold. However, when all is said and done, without the people who carry out the mission, the statement is just a hollow collection of nice sounding words strung together. It is the collective effort of people — on all sides of the service proposition — that brings the mission to life and gives its words meaning. That effort started with the visionary volunteers who established the Houston Area Women’s Center in 1977 and continues through the talented and passionate staff and volunteers who carry our founders’ legacy forward each and every day. The partnership of people includes generous donors whose gifts support the life-changing work we do. Also key are the people working as partners in law enforcement, the justice system, social service agencies, educational institutions, and health care facilities who work with us to ensure that our mission takes hold. And most certainly, the mission is utterly meaningless without the courageous survivors we serve. Above all, it is their courage and hard work that culminate in the achievement of our mission. To all of the people who bring meaning and action to the words of our mission statement, we offer our sincerest gratitude and our highest admiration.

Sincerely,

Rebecca L. White  Sandra Ramirez Aultman
President and Chief Executive Officer  Chair of the Board of Directors

Sandra Aultman and Rebecca White
At the beginning of the year, to address one of the major barriers to reaching self-sufficiency, we launched our Moving Forward project, which provides transportation to and from employment related destinations for survivors of domestic and sexual violence.

In March, Houston Texans wide receiver Andre Johnson hosted his inaugural charity golf tournament — the Andre Johnson Foundation Celebrity Golf Classic. Johnson chose the Houston Area Women’s Center as his tournament’s sole beneficiary.

In September, we launched our first legal clinic for non-residential clients through a partnership with Houston Volunteer Lawyers and Gray Reed & McGraw, P.C. This quarterly clinic provides free legal services for Women’s Center clients.

In September and October, our agency received a record number of media requests in response to the Ray Rice video and the NFL’s subsequent domestic violence policy. This included an interview with Houston Area Women’s Center President and CEO Rebecca White on NBC’s The Today Show.

Women of Wine Charities holds several wine-related events and educational programs each year to benefit the Houston Area Women’s Center. In November, Women of Wine presented us with a $100,000 check, more than doubling the amount they raised for us in 2013.

In December, Weatherford International plc and partners presented us with a $148,325 donation. This generous show of support is a result of the first Weatherford Walks charity project, in which Weatherford matched their employees’ donations dollar-for-dollar to support our mission.
40,680 Domestic Violence Hotline Calls

4,184 Sexual Assault Hotline Calls

1,315 Adults Sheltered

868 Children Sheltered

8,576 Adult Counseling/Advocacy

3,177 Children’s Counseling/Advocacy

979 Supportive Housing Services

2,558 Children’s Court Services

22,526 Community Presentation Participants

More than 70,000 individuals in our community benefitted from the Houston Area Women’s Center’s services in 2014.
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$100,000+
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$50,000-$99,999
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The Brown Foundation, Inc.
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John M. O’Quinn Foundation
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Verizon Wireless

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Hamman Foundation
Melanie Gray and Mark Wass
Frances Powell Hawes and Greg Hawes
Diana Hudson and Lee Kaplan
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Wright Foundation

$5,000-$9,999
Vivian L. Smith Foundation

Bracewell & Giuliani LLP
The Butcher Fund
The Cormier Family Collaborative For Children
Julie Colwell
Cynthia and David Deere
Anjelita and Michael Dirden
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ERG Resources, LLC
ExxonMobil Foundation
ExxonMobil Corporation
EZCORP Foundation
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Greater Houston Community Foundation
Tina and Steve Guidry
Halliburton & Employees
Harry S. & Isabel C. Cameron Foundation
Rochelle Merfish Jacobson
and Alan Jacobson
Carolyn and John Johnson
Kimberly and Michael Johnston
Junior League of Houston
Kinder Morgan Foundation
Carolyn and Stephen Leatherwood
LINN Energy
M.B. & Edna Zale Foundation
Mary’s Memorial Hermann
The Newfield Foundation
Norton Rose Fulbright
Opportunity LLP
Nancy and Robert Peiser
The PNC Financial Services Group
Carrie G. and Paul Case
The Carrie Potter Group
Prometheus Charitable Trust
QR Energy, LP
Alicia and Shawn Raymond
Lucy L. Reiter
The Riepe Family Foundation
The Robert and Janice McNair Foundation
The Royal Bank of Scotland
Kelly and David Rose
Jan and Steve Schott

* Service concluded in 2014
** Past Chair
*** Joined in 2015
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Goodrich Petroleum Corporation
Grant Thornton LLP
Arina Guelfen
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BP Foundation, Inc.
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Tony Bravo
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Cabot Oil & Gas Corporation
Jennifer R. and Purvez F. Captain
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Brandale Gialone
Lora Clemmons
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Kimberly and Bradley Dennison
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Judith and Howard Finkel
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Fort Bend Skin Cancer Center
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Goldman Sachs Philanthropy Fund
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West Griffin
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