

SARC Celebrates 35 Years of Service!

SARC saves lives. Over the past 35 years, SARC has helped thousands of victims, women and men, overcome the violence that has affected their lives.

What would you do if your husband intimidated you psychologically, emotionally and physically? And you had three kids, ranging from a 3 year old to a sixth grader? How would you handle the situation?

Rebecca, a working mom from Harford County, faced that scenario seven years ago. Her husband's erratic behavior scared her. She was concerned about her personal safety and the well-being of her children. Rebecca took an important step forward and called SARC for help.

SARC is a Harford County nonprofit that provides hope and resources to victims of domestic violence, sexual violence, child abuse and stalking. It provides all of its services free of charge and always has since its founding 35 years ago.

One of the services SARC offers is a 24-hour helpline (410-836-8430), which Rebecca called. The counselor talked to her about safety planning and the option of removing herself and her children from their home. Luckily, Rebecca had a safe place to go. If not, she and her children could have gone to stay in SARC's 28-bed safehouse.

After moving to a safe location, Rebecca and her children began counseling through SARC. Rebecca attended six weeks of crisis intervention that focused on personal safety and the cycle of violence. Her three children attended weekly or biweekly counseling sessions, each geared specifically toward the age of the child. The 50-minute sessions included time for Rebecca to talk to the counselor about issues relevant to her children.

"SARC is a life-changing organization. They support me as a mother and give me tools to help my children transfer what they are learning from counseling and what I'm learning to create a healthy family," Rebecca explained.

Every year SARC helps about 2,000 people, and there's a waiting list for its services. Among those services are counseling, companion calls, a shelter, crisis intervention, legal services and community education, all provided free of charge.

SARC was founded in July 1978 after a woman was sexually assaulted in Harford County, and community members realized there were no local resources available to assist her. Various organizations—People Against Rape, Harford County Commission for Women, League of Women Voters and local law enforcement—came together to found SARC, which stands for Sexual Assault/Spouse Abuse Resource Center.

"The staff of SARC is phenomenal," said Luisa Caiazza-Nutter, executive director. "They have big hearts and work hard to help people so they feel whole again."

The SARC staff could not serve as many clients as they do without the 50-60 dedicated volunteers who give many hours of their time for all kinds of projects. Despite funding cuts on all levels over recent years (including Sequestration, which has impacted SARC's budget this year), SARC has maintained the same level of services to clients thanks to the dedication of its staff and volunteers.

While volunteers are always needed and welcome, donations of funds are even more important to help SARC continue the critical work it does in the community. And there are many ways to help. Make a donation at www.sarc-maryland.org and click "Donate Now." Sponsor a SARC event. Attend a SARC event—like Family Fun Day.



SARC's biggest fundraiser of the year is the 4th Annual Rising Above It Hot Air Balloon Family Fun Day on Saturday, September 21, from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. at the Harford County Equestrian Center, 608 North Tollgate Road in Bel Air.

This annual family friendly event features a mix of activities for children as well as adults including live entertainment stages, horse rides for the little ones on Clydesdales (additional fee), a scavenger hunt, moonbounces, face painting, games and more. Heckles Hoops, Hoppin Hawks and Move It with Uncle Pete are just a few of the activities planned for the day. A variety of vendors will be on site for shopping and dining.

A hot air balloon "hare and hound race," coordinated by Light Flight, is scheduled to lift off at 5:30 p.m. (weather permitting). Balloon pilots are scheduled to be on hand with their balloon baskets at 4 p.m. (again, weather permitting) to discuss hot air ballooning.

Tickets for Family Fun Day cost \$5 per person (children 5 and under are free) and may be purchased in advance online at www.sarc-maryland.org. Tickets also will be sold at the gate.

Other ways to support SARC throughout the year include participating in or sponsoring Walk-A-Mile in Her Shoes in April and attending or sponsoring the annual bull roast in March. Donations are always welcome and may be made online at www.sarc-maryland.org or by sending a check to SARC, P.O. Box 1207, Bel Air, MD 21014.