Shared Stories

Statistics are indicators that help us capture trends or create best practices. They grab the attention of our funders and help us track our progress in reducing the numbers. Statistics are key to driving legislation and creating laws.

1 in 3, 1 in 6, every 68 seconds...

Statistics help us fathom the breadth of the issues related to domestic and sexual violence, stalking, and human trafficking but it is the stories that help us understand the depth of the matter.

Starting Point advocates are story receptors. They hear 100s of heart wrenching stories every year, year after year. Their training helps them hold a place marker for these stories, separate from their own if sometimes intermingled, as they connect with clients. Advocates are built to carry these stories heavy as they are, with confidentiality and respect. When stories sound unbelievable advocates lean in and let the teller know that they believe. The shock has long ago worn off our advocates and been replaced with a knowing, knowing that when we struggle to believe it’s just our humanity rebelling at the unfathomable.

Attendees of this year’s annual fundraiser Boot ’n Bling heard our speaker Jamie Oldham share his story of childhood abuse.
As Jamie disclosed, advocates in the room went into advocacy mode, scanning the room for those who may have been triggered and for those who may need support in carrying the weight of Jamie’s story. You see even at dinner Starting Point advocates are 24/7, always advocating!

There were many who were affected by Jamie’s life story. It is not unusual for attendees of Starting Point events to disclose to an advocate or to share their story of recovery with thanks and gratitude for the agency’s services. This year’s event provided a path for a good number of attendees to reach out with their own stories of disclosure, recovery, and with the want to provide further support.

When Jamie agreed to tell his story he had never spoken in public and had only just begun to fully know the story of being abused. In the telling, he helped us understand how burdensome an untold story can be as he disclosed the pressure he experienced as his story surfaced in his own brain. A brain that had protected him from the unfathomable for nearly 50 years. (Statistically men disclose between 30 to 40 years after abuse if ever.)

Jamie shared with the staff after the event that he felt an unburdening from a story he did not write nor consent to play a part in. He felt uplifted by the sharing and even more he felt lifted by those who listened and made a place in their hearts to carry his story with him.

1 in 3 is the statistic, numbers that represent stories of our family, friends, neighbors, and acquaintances. The real statistics are much more encompassing because for every “1” there are dozens who are impacted by the story as unknowing side characters or unintended protagonists.

Jamie long ago authored his own story, one of success, adventure and with a tight circle of supportive family and friends playing leading roles. Today, he is working on new chapters that include changing the story for other children and creating supporting roles for willing protagonist to get involved.

Stories shared are less weight bearing than those not shared.

As we kick off our boots and hang our hats on another year of Boots ’n Bling we are reflecting on how grateful and lucky we are to have such a
generous and supportive community.

We are particularly grateful to our many donors and sponsors for help generating packages and financial support that helped us to reach our goal. These funds will go a long way in creating a safety net for victims and their children, and in helping survivors become thriving members of our community.

Special thanks to: Rickie Tibbets, Ellen and Tony Andreano, Fran and John Latch, Jordyn and Andrew Fitzpatrick-Morey, Nora Bean-Mulkern, Bobbie Box, Bridget Reardon, and Quixote Stoddard for all the little-big things you did to make the night a huge success.

And, from the bottom of our hearts we wish to thank Jamie Oldham and his family for shining a light on the power of shared story, courage, and family strength!
Save the Date!!

With Boots ‘n Bling under our belt we are feeling hopeful about more in-person events again! We hope you will join us for some upcoming opportunities to help promote our work.

July 19, 4 to 7pm; Farmer’s Market in North Conway
August 16, 5 to 7pm; Chamber After Hours hosted by Starting Point at our new Advocacy Center at 30 Pleasant St. Conway.
Sept, TBD; Men’s Advocacy Group
Sept 22; 8th Annual Golf Tournament at NCCC
Oct 20, TTBD: Domestic Violence Awareness Month Vigil in Schouler Park, North Conway
As always please check our Facebook page or email community@StartingPointNH.org for updates or changes in scheduled events. We will continue to follow CDC recommendations and do our very best to keep our community safe and healthy.

Happy Retirement to Linda Douglas!

Starting Point is one of 12 agencies in N.H., all are members of The New Hampshire Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence (NHCADSV). Linda Douglas has served as the Trauma-Informed Specialist for the past 13 years at NHCADSV.

Advocates are special people. Linda Douglas is one who is very special and who we have been blessed to work with over the years at Starting Point, as she provided us with unwavering and empowering support.

Linda has not only provided us with a solid foundation in victim-centered, trauma-informed response and help in our work with survivors, she has also provided a safe haven for advocates and colleagues in the field to be heard, recognized and supported in their work.

Linda is an advocate's advocate!
She touched so many of our lives in so many ways, and she will be deeply missed in our everyday work at Starting Point. She leaves us better than we were and with the insight to always reach for our best as advocates, individuals, and as a team.

We wish her all the best!

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**LIBRARY CORNER:**

*We Contain Multitudes*, by Sarah Henstra

We Contain Multitudes by Sarah Henstra was chosen by Vermont Humanities as the Vermont Reads for 2021.

It is a love letter in true epistolary form. Written to lovers of poetry and romance. It contains multitudes in expressions of love including self-love, first love, love of family, love of friends, and a love of words. It explores the depths of grief, which is the consequence of great love.

Most of all Henstra offers a loving platform for LGBTQ+ youth to read of protagonists who look and sound and love like them without making the story a curriculum for love is love but instead a lesson in love being complicated in any form and worthy of our efforts.

Although categorized as a CYA (Children and Young Adults) it leans more toward young adults in content. Adults will enjoy the form and poetry, and the remembrance and joy of young love.

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**Children's Book Nook**

*Julián Is a Mermaid* by Jessica Love is a beautiful conversation about acceptance, sparse in prose and rich in illustration.

A must have for a children's book collection!
Don’t have a child in your life to buy books for? No worries we do! We are always happy to receive books to enhance our children’s library or to distribute to children in our network. Please go to our website for our book list at:

StartingPointNH.org
or go to White Birch Books
to view our list and order online.

Pride Month

Big thank you to the White Mountains Pride Festival folks for another well run and empowering event.

Starting Point spent the day at the festival and we all felt hope for our future as we interacted with attendees. Honest, heart-grounding conversations and exchanges throughout the day warmed our hearts and inspired us.

Pride Month may be over but our support continues.

If you or someone you know has suffered the abuse of oppression simply by being true to themselves please call 1-800-336-3795 to speak with an ally or go to our website at StartingPointNH.org and log on to Resource Connect to text with an ally Mon thru Friday, 8 to 4pm.
Support Groups

Advocates offer support to all clients, on the hotline and in person. One-on-one support can be ongoing or a one time crisis counseling. Starting Point support has no end date. Survivors have been known to go years without services and then connect to process some new level of their healing. Starting Point Advocates are available 24/7/365 and are adept at empathetic listening, providing resources, and empowering survivors to move forward in their lives.

We started this enews with a focus on shared stories. The power of shared stories is never more evident than in a support group. Support groups are peer driven groups that typically run for 6 to 8 weeks and often focus on self-care and healing. But it
is in the sharing that survivors find the most strength. Many times we have heard a support group attendee say, "I thought I was the only one that felt that way." And, in that simple statement we have witnessed great relief! When one is relieved of their aloneness they are able to join a community and build networks that help them heal, and in turn help others heal too.

Support groups are a form of social justice. Shining light on experiences that have been hooded and drenched in shame frees us all from the weight of oppression, allowing us to unite and stand against the oppressors. The courage it takes to break a silence that our cultural standards have collectively agreed to ignore and even deny is empowering to victims, survivors and their support networks.

Because of the pandemic Starting Point in-person support groups have been suspended. Advocates have taken on the need with one-on-one support over these past few years, but we recognize the importance of peer support and are excited to be able to offer in-person support groups again starting soon.

If you are interested in joining a support group or know of someone who is please contact us at: community@StartingPointNH.org
for more information and to register.