

SAFV Voices

Sitkans Against Family Violence

30 Years of Dedication and Service to Sitka

SAFV's Executive Director, Vicki D'Amico, retired this July after nearly 30 years of dedication to empowering victims of domestic violence and abuse.

Her advocacy skills, empathy, leadership, and passion for this work will be greatly missed. All of the staff feel incredibly grateful that they had the experience to work with and be mentored by such an inspiring role model who has always striven to protect the rights of women and children.

Vicki was recently interviewed about her time at SAFV.

How did you first begin working at SAFV?

I started out by going for my own survivor healing at a group at SAFV and felt very comfortable around the environment. Then I decided to take the women's advocacy training and was hired almost immediately.

When I first started in 1988, SAFV was perceived in the community as a man-hating, family wrecking agency. We've worked hard to change that perception. We've helped many dads through the years and have had several men employed at SAFV, even as front line advocates. There's recent evidence that many in the community still carry the old belief system so there's clearly more outreach work to do.

But the facts are that the majority of victims ARE women and children and that's just because of oppression and misogyny issues. Then there are

the indigenous issues impacted by colonization and internalized oppression. It's pretty complex.

We also needed to start paying special attention to those victims who were marginalized in other ways: substance abuse, mental illness, and our Alaska native women who were being targeted at an alarmingly higher rate than anywhere in the country.



Vicki D'Amico

Can you tell me about the different roles you have had at SAFV through the years?

The first 25 years were focused on direct services; meaning, working with survivors and children of domestic violence and sexual assault. Back then in 1988 when I was hired, we didn't have protective sanctions and the laws that we have today to protect women. It was substantially more challenging and we had to be creative in solution seeking. There were cases with more lethal vio-

lence then. Women were coming in with horrendous injuries and bruises and the community of helpers didn't know what to do. The court system and police department were overall uneducated at that point about intimate partner violence. So we at SAFV were the Band-Aid, the immediate intervention and response. We didn't have a good working relationship with potential community partners at the time. We hadn't built collaborations yet with other systems. So we felt very isolated and like the lone wolf at helping women extricate themselves

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SAFV News

Women's Group Offered

In August, SAFV's Direct Services staff started a new Domestic Violence course for residents and non-resident women. The gathering begins with dinner for the participants and is followed by short sessions that provide basic information about intimate partner violence.



Some of the topics include red flags for unhealthy relationships, emotional abuse, physical abuse, children witnessing violence in the home, and other relevant issues. The group is led by trained advocates. Individuals are welcome to talk and process.

Beginning in October, childcare will be offered and the course will be open to non-resident participants. The class takes place Wednesdays at 5 p.m. at the shelter. Please call 747-3370 if you need directions.

Piano Recital Fundraiser

For the third time, Sitka pianist Dave Nicholls invited the community to a lunch fundraiser, this time at the Nazarene Church. He played eight short pieces by Beethoven, Ciani, Kuhlau, Chopin, and Clemente.



A SAFV staff member who attended said how much she enjoyed the concert and that the music noticeably lifted her spirits. Dave asked the audience to donate to SAFV. He later dropped off a considerable cash donation.

This generous gift is one form in which this community shows its support for victims and survivors of violence and SAFV's work for a healthier and safer community. Thank you, Dave. Your gift of music is very much appreciated.

Crucial Conversations

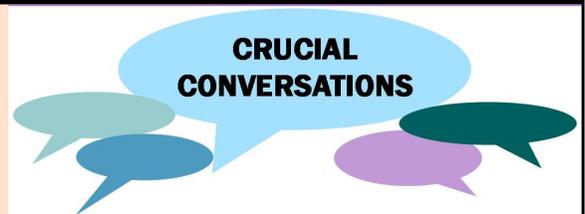
The Sitka Domestic Violence Task Force invites community members to engage in conversations about unrecognized forms of violence.

October 10, 2017, 6:30 to 8 p.m. at St. Peter's See House:
Impact of Intimate Partner Violence on Children — Moderated by Tina Bachmeier

November 14, 2017, 6:30 to 8 p.m. at Harrigan Centennial Hall:
Journey of Discovery — Tools to use when a loved one is a survivor of trauma.

With panelists Jean Swanson, Louise Brady, and Vicki D'Amico

The conversations are not appropriate for children. We will offer childcare, homework support, and refreshments.



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**Become a Youth Leader!**

The Sitka Youth Leadership Committee (SYLC) is looking for youth to join our after school leadership group. SYLC brings together student leaders from across the high schools in Sitka to create change on issues they care about.

Opportunities include travel, public speaking, outdoor leadership, stipends, and internships. Students at Sitka High, Mt. Edgecumbe, and Pacific are all encouraged to fill out the short application!

Our weekly meetings are full of fun, food, and friends. If you have any questions, please see our website or send a message to sylcintern@gmail.com.

To apply, follow the link: <http://www.sitkayouthleadership.com/join-sylc> and fill out our online application.

**Do you have a 3rd-5th grade boy at Keet Gooshi Heen?
 Then sign him up for Boys Run I toowú klatseen!**



Boys Run I toowú klatseen: Strengthen Your Spirit is now looking for participants for this upcoming season! Boys in 3rd through 5th grade have the opportunity to experience the 10-week curriculum with 20 lessons that teaches boys healthy relationship and lifestyle skills. Throughout the season, boys learn important lessons, including how to work together as a team, how to process and express emotions, and how to choose to be an ally. In addition, Boys Run integrates a strong cultural component, honoring Southeast Alaska Native culture and values to foster an appreciation and understanding across cultures for all participants.

There are two teams: Monday/Wednesday and Tuesday/Thursday. The season starts on September 25th, 2017 and will end with the 5K Fun Run on December 9th. Practices are from 2:40p to 4:00p. Transportation home after practice is available, if necessary.

If interested, there are registration forms available at the main office at Keet Gooshi Heen Elementary School and the counselor's office.

Shelter Update

SAFV currently has 9 adult and 6 child residents. At the end of last quarter and beginning of this quarter, we had very few residents and have filled up significantly since then.

We also provide walk-in advocacy services for women and men, an art group, women's group (see page 3), and 24-hour crisis line.

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month



Sitka Clothesline Project



share your experiences, feelings, and thoughts regarding violence against women

The Sitka Clothesline Project will serve as a visual aid to bring community awareness to the issues of domestic violence, sexual assault, and other forms of violence in our community. It represents a community's readiness to "air their laundry" about a topic that too often is unspoken, or under-realized as a problem. The project will be displayed in multiple spaces around town during the month of October, and will continue to grow each year.

T-shirt Decorating Workshop

October 6, 2017
3:30 to 6:30 p.m.

at the University of Alaska
Southeast Sitka Campus
Atrium.

Materials and snacks provided. Hosted by UAS.



Sitka Clothesline Displays

October 2017

Week 1: UAS Sitka Campus
Week 2: Mt. Edgecumbe High School
Week 3: Sitka High School
Week 4: Harrigan Centennial Hall

Interview with Vicki D'Amico, cont.

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and keeping them safe.

Through the years, so much needed to be developed and implemented. Bridges had to be built. Trainings had to happen. We also needed to start addressing those victims who were marginalized in other ways: substance abuse, mental illness, and our Alaska native women who were being targeted at an alarmingly higher rate than anywhere in the country.

Sitka Tribe got a grant for a Safe Start initiative and that brought a lot of people to the table to start forming partnerships. Partnerships were key in helping us move forward. Back then, there was no Legal Advocacy Program. One of the main needs for women was legal representation. There was none. We were flying by the seat of our pants often. The protective orders were almost laughable looking back now. They were called TROs, Temporary Restraining Orders. They didn't have any provisions for anything but immediate safety like they do today. There was a lot of work to do besides direct services, tending to the women who came injured to the shelter. There was movement that was happening and that we had to be involved in.

Through many years of direct services and many collaboration and bridge building efforts, relationships, and trainings, and laws changing, the progression of the movement, the bureaucracy based on funding pulling us away from our grassroots philosophy, trying to maintain a mission, incorporating primary prevention into our mission, there was just such a long movement, and after 25 years I finally decided to apply for the position of Executive Director (ED) when it had been vacant for 5 or 6 months. I was acting ED anyway, and was getting used to it and thought about reshaping the position to make it more manageable. So that is what I did. For the last 5 years my role was different and I looked at the ED position as supporting the staff to do the best they can to carry out the mission.

When we started collaborative efforts there were pros and cons. The pros were obviously that we

needed all sectors to help keep women and children safe. The cons were many didn't understand the dynamics of interpersonal violence so there was victim blaming and breaches of safety. We had to try and step up training the community partners in every area. As the years progressed, some started to get it but many still today do not.

The pre-VAWA (Violence Against Women Act of 1994) years were all grassroots efforts and work to the point of utilizing an underground system. We would have to be creative and use whatever means we could to keep women safe from their abusers. It really was like a war in the trenches.

The passage of VAWA gave us laws, funding, teeth, and validation, too. It confirmed that violence against women was real and needed to be addressed. It uplifted those of us who were at odds with systems to help protect victims. But like with most federal laws came the mandates and paper trail, and things like outcome measures and evidence based services and programs.

The work started to become bogged down over time with the increased federal mandates and if the workers in the movement weren't getting burnt out from vicarious and secondary trauma, well that added to the stress.

Were there any women you worked with at SAFV or in the community that stand out to you?

The women who were already working at SAFV, Valerie Revard, Louise Brady, and Eileen Gallagher were mentors and taught me. Val Revard was the Children's Program Coordinator at the time and then moved into the Director position. She moved us from the old Pioneer Home Building to the present location. They were my mentors. But who I really learned from were the women I was working with. The survivors who came in started teaching me how it was they survived, what they needed, how best to serve them. That's how I learned, from them, from being honored to receive their stories. I have had scores of

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Interview with Vicki D'Amico, cont.

trainings from top people in the nation on trauma and domestic violence. There was a time when IPV was all being blamed on codependency, and we were in an uproar about that. There were all these little phases in the recovery process that came up. We always fought little wars to try to stay grassroots and try to keep the focus on the fact that domestic violence and sexual assault are crimes.

How has your work at SAFV impacted you?

They say that working in direct services/trauma services should only be done for a few years. I was not good at self-care. I had personal things going on in my life that were also very stressful and crisis oriented, so I had kind of a double whammy for many years. Slowly as I aged (part of it was my age, part of it was my work), my body started breaking down, and I wasn't listening to it. Looking back, I was making more and more doctor visits and I had several emergency health crises this past year that I couldn't bounce back from. I have no doubt that the secondary and vicarious trauma, along with the compassion fatigue took its toll on my body and my adrenal system. That is just a given. I have time now to actually feel it.

Why do you believe this work is important?

Well the obvious is, because we all have human rights to be safe in our own homes and in our lives, both physically and emotionally. It's more imperative now because of the current attitudes in the

nation. I fear we are moving backwards. The work has to continue, we have to mobilize and move forward even more so to fight against these societal values that keep women, people of color, and marginalized populations oppressed. The work is more important now than ever.

Is there a best memory at SAFV or one that sticks out to you that you would like to share?

Some of my best memories are laughing with my coworkers because the laughter and the humor in that grim environment is so important, and I appreciate those times so much. And some of my best memories are impromptu conversations with women who live there, just stopping in the kitchen and chatting and a whole story would come out of the blue. There would be such a spiritual connection that made me feel so honored. To have that kind of intimacy with other women was just so very rewarding. That is what I will miss.

Is there something you would like to say to other women in Sitka?

To any women who are experiencing any kind of fear in their household, please tell someone and know that there is hope out there. To women who are empowered in their lives, active, and able to mobilize in any way, we need everyone to help stop the violence in every aspect and area of our community.

Job Opening for SAFV's Executive Director

We are hiring for a full time Executive director at SAFV. Must have experience working in the fields of domestic violence or sexual assault, program management, grant writing, personnel management and budgeting.

To apply: Send resume, cover letter and 3 references to SAFV Search Committee, PO Box 6136, Sitka, AK, 99835 by September 30th, 2017 . Salary DOE. Find links to job description, requirements and qualifications on our homepage at www.safv.org.



October 2017: 30 Years of Domestic Violence Awareness Month

Events in Sitka

October 2 through 9 — Flag display on Totem Square symbolizing Sitka victimization data.

October 13, 6 p.m. at the Sitka Public Library — Author Lizbeth Meredith reads from her book
 “Pieces of Me: Kidnapped Daughters” about her journey to get back her children
 who were abducted by their father to a foreign country.

All month — Sitka Clothesline Project

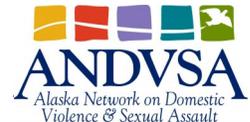
Clothesline Projects with t-shirts decorated by survivors all over the world remind people
 of the real meaning of violence statistics that are often ignored.

Displays all over town, see page 5.

T-shirt decorating workshop, October 6, 3:30-6:30 p.m. at UAS
 More information on page 5.



United Way Member Agency
 Member of the Alaska Network on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault



Sitkans Against Family Violence
 P.O. Box 6136
 Sitka, AK 99835
 Phone: 907-747-3370
 Crisis Line: 1-800-478-6511

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