After More Than 500K Women Tweeted #MeToo, Men Are Responding With 4 Words: HowIWillChange

Matt Lauer Fired By NBC News Over Allegation Of “Inappropriate Sexual Behavior”

Jury rules in favor of Taylor Swift in groping case

Uber Lawsuit Lists Actionable Changes Uber Could Make to Prevent Sexual Assault

Harvey Weinstein Paid Off Sexual Assault Accusers for Decades

After Weinstein: 71 Men Accused of Sexual Misconduct and Their Fall From Power

Anthony Rapp: Kevin Spacey accuser says he was inspired by women in Hollywood to speak out

#MeToo Highlights the Disturbing Prevalence of Sexual Assault

Terry Crews on his fight against sexual assault: ‘This gives my life meaning’
“The momentum is unlike anything I’ve ever seen,” says Executive Director Karmen Carter, Editorial

Sexual violence is not a new concept. The mental, physical and emotional trauma it causes for victims and their loved ones is frighteningly commonplace. Sometimes it can feel overwhelming: this horrible violation keeps happening and we often feel powerless to change it. It’s frustrating to see statistics, year after year, grimly announcing that there are hundreds of thousands of survivors walking among us each day. We are making strides, but in order to achieve true culture change, we need entire communities to stand up and activate.

This past year, however, has felt closer to culture change than any time in memory. With the strength of the MeToo movement, survivors are coming forward in record numbers, finding support from their communities and helping those who choose to stay silent, know that they are not alone. Young people are stepping up in new ways, encouraging one another to challenge the status quo and reframe how society thinks and talks about sexual violence. People all over the world are harnessing the power of different platforms from social media and beyond to spread messages of support, education and awareness. It has truly been an exciting and inspiring time to do this work.

I’ve been inspired by each of you, too. The request for our therapeutic services and prevention programming unsurprisingly skyrocketed last year in response to the cultural momentum. And you, our incredible donors, responded with unmatched generosity. Some of you contributed for the first time, many of you increased your donation amount and many became monthly or quarterly donors.

Though there is still much work to be done, we are on the right track. You should know with certainty that you are making a difference to survivors, students and your community. As we see these cultural changes taking place, know that you are an integral part of that change. We hope you will continue your support and stand with us as we see sexual violence eliminated from our community.

With admiration,

[Signature]

In this issue

Opinion............................1
Community......................2
Health & Wellness.........3
Education........................5
Finance.............................7
Philanthropy...................8
Calendar........................10
40 benches & counting: awareness campaign spreads through Denver

Thanks to the community’s overwhelming response to The Blue Bench Campaign, schools, businesses and hospitals have placed a bench with an engraved plaque in the community to proclaim their support for survivors of sexual assault. Each bench is equipped with a personalized plaque as well as the website and the phone number to our 24/7 support hotline in both English and Spanish.

When we began The Blue Bench Campaign in 2016, it was our goal to create a community symbol for culture change, and with more than 40 benches sold and many already placed in their new homes, we are proud to witness so many community members, organizations, businesses and more become part of the movement. Here are just a few of the places you’ll see a blue bench:

1st JD DA’s Courage Garden
Denver Broncos Mile High Stadium
University of Denver
Regis University
Auraria Campus
University of Colorado - Co Springs
DSST High School- Stapleton
North Suburban Medical Center

Dill, Dill Carr Stonbraker & Hutchings
Channel 9
East High School
Meadow Lark Apartments
Fox Hill Apartments
Tower at Speer
Monarch Investment & Mgmt. Group
Colorado Insurance
Since 1983

Closing the Gap: new staff position helps survivors find closure after court cases

At The Blue Bench we believe in meeting people where they are in their healing process. In 2017 we added a Post-Conviction Victim Advocate (PCVA) to our staff—a new position not just here at The Blue Bench, but in the state of Colorado—to further support survivors through the overwhelming time after their perpetrator is convicted, adjudicated or takes a plea.

Following a criminal justice process, and after an offender has been sentenced, survivors can often feel lost and unsure of how to attain information that will make them feel safe. Historically they have only received information required through the Victim Rights Act, which provides the necessary notifications regarding critical stages in their judicial process. They may, however, have additional questions concerning offender probation requirements or updates on their progress in offender treatment. They might even have lingering questions about the crime and sentencing that took place in the trial that has left them wondering “Now what?”.

The PCVA helps to fill that gap by creating an avenue for victims to have their voices heard and by providing input to the offender’s supervision and treatment team. This increases perpetrator accountability by ensuring that the survivor’s experience is never absent from offender rehabilitation and clarification work—a practice in which offenders write letters to their victims, taking responsibility for the assault and the impacts it had on the victim. Through the PCVA, victims can respond to this letter, asking for more information to help them understand and come to terms with the crime as they heal. The PCVA can even meet with an offender face-to-face, if the victim so chooses, to address the content of the letter.

In the inaugural year of the position, the PCVA provided support and guidance to 77 survivors, many of whom found empowerment and a sense of regained control in knowing more about their perpetrator’s sentence.

The PCVA attends sentencing hearings, sex offender management board meetings and probation team meetings with the goal of not only highlighting the victim experience, but when appropriate, sharing updates and information with survivors. This much-needed bridge between offender accountability and survivor healing helps The Blue Bench ensure that our clients are supported throughout their healing journey.
Survivors are recovering from PTSD through therapy

When hearing the term “Post Traumatic Stress Disorder”, many first think of the emotional hardships soldiers face when returning from war zones. But what about survivors of sexual assault, who have also been through intense trauma that can affect their day to day lives? The Journal of Traumatic Stress and the American Psychiatric Press report that 94% of women who are raped experience symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) during the two weeks following the rape and 30% of women report symptoms of PTSD 9 months after the rape.

Based on data collected from clinical measures at The Blue Bench, 67.8% of clients met the criteria for PTSD when beginning therapy. That means more than two thirds of the 333 survivors we served last year were experiencing symptoms like trouble sleeping, nightmares and frequent memories of the assault, any combination of which can be debilitating and greatly affect a survivor’s mental, physical and emotional well-being. Analysis indicates that clients experienced a statistically significant decrease in these symptoms over the first three months of therapy and that this trend continued at the six month and nine month marks as well.

What do we mean by “statistically significant”? Statistical significance is the likelihood that a relationship between two or more variables is caused by something other than random chance. It shows that survivors didn’t randomly see a decrease in PTSD symptoms, but that they experienced a decrease in these symptoms because of the therapy they received and the coping skills they learned.

How do we know it’s working? Survivor progress is measured based on self-assessments they are given at different points throughout their therapy journey. Questions pertaining to trauma symptoms, coping, interpersonal relationships and general functioning give a picture of how a survivor is progressing from their own perspectives. While our therapists feel rewarded by seeing clients make positive strides towards healing, it is even more rewarding when survivors begin to recognize that strength in themselves and harness it to transition from victim to survivor.
A culture shift is happening--and students are leading it

Children are our future and never has that been so clear as it has been in 2017. This past year our Prevention & Education team facilitated 100 more programs than in 2016, more than three quarters of which have shown scientific evidence for effectiveness.

Following the MeToo movement, an already busy year saw an even bigger spike in requests for prevention education programming for students in middle school and higher, many of which included schools looking to provide programming to entire grade levels.

When schools have administrative and departmental buy-in to educate their students about consent, being an active bystander and knowing how to respond to survivors, they are setting a precedent for culture change. They are making sexual violence prevention a cultural value of the school and sending a message to their students that it’s important.

A preliminary analysis of data following our high school-based program, Bringing in the Bystander®, suggests there were increases in overall knowledge of sexual violence, bystander action and willingness to intervene. Surveys given to students before and after going through programs include questions specific to knowledge about sexual violence and consent; behaviors contributing to rape culture (i.e. rape jokes, victim-blaming); recognition of situations where sexual violence could occur/is occurring (i.e. an acquaintance at a party is incapacitated and being taken to private location); and responding to a survivor if sexual violence has already occurred (i.e. accessing help and resources for a friend who shares they have been sexually assaulted).

These increases are promising factors towards the overall goal of shifting the social norms that have allowed the kinds of previously mentioned behaviors to go
(continued from above) unchecked or considered “normal.”

Instead, when students learn how to empower themselves to respond to sexual violence, potential perpetrators feel unsafe to commit crimes because they know they will be called out and held accountable for their actions.

Students who know their classmates are also getting this education, are more likely to adopt the principles they learn into their everyday life and have the confidence to call out problematic behavior that may have been ignored prior. And that’s exactly what we’re seeing.

Classroom settings allow for students to engage in important discussions about their role in ending rape culture by looking out for one another and changing the way they think and talk about sexual violence.

For some students, they see this shift happen before their eyes. “The way people changed their opinions on certain topics was very comforting,” said one student. “I wish everyone in the world had this class.”

Students are invested in the way their generation can work together to affect real change. In fact, we partnered with numerous school-based youth groups to help them amplify their voices in the community. Together, these students have taken on art installations, video projects, activism groups and more, with the goal of empowering their peers and creating safer, more supportive environments in school and beyond.

With this kind of momentum and energy from the next generation, we inch closer to a world where sexual violence does not exist and where entire communities, starting with young adults, are prepared to take a stand.

“\textit{The way people changed their opinions on certain topics was very comforting. I wish everyone in the world had this class.}”

-Student
2017 financials* show increased revenue

With significant increases from individual donors, Foundations and Donor Advised & Charitable Gift Funds, The Blue Bench saw a 26% overall increase in revenue for 2017. We thank you for your generosity and sustained commitment to ending sexual violence in such an important year for this issue worldwide.

REVENUE SOURCES

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<td>Special Events</td>
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<td>Programs</td>
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EXPENSES

- Administration: 7%
- Fundraising: 15%
- Programs: 78%

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<th>SOURCE</th>
<th>AMOUNT</th>
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<td>Administration</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fundraising</td>
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<td>Programs</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
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*These financials are preliminary numbers based on 2017 audit estimates. Our fully audited numbers will be available on our website as soon as they are completed.
In 2017, for the very first time, our door-to-door canvassers raised more than $1 million in donations. This Colorado Gives Day was our most successful yet, raising more than $64,000, surpassing our $40,000 goal. Our end-of-year mail campaign was also our most successful to date, raising nearly $24,000. There is no denying it. We could not do this work without the generous support of the metro Denver community. Thank you!

$10,000 +
1st Judicial District VALE Board
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Michael Hoover
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 Mitchel & Margaret Morrissey
Pamela Peters

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Altarar Young
Andy Burgess
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Xcel Energy Foundation

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PHILANTHROPY
The Blue Bench
2017 Annual Report
Since 1983

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John R Hardesty
Judith Armstrong
June Fuller
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Karen Hinkel
Kathryn Schorr-Winchell & Atsu
Winchell
Kelli Theis
Kendall Karle
Kent Wells
Linda Kriebel
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Louden Family Foundation
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Marilynn J Ducker
Martha & Damon Graham- Haradon
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Michaela & Alon Waisman
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Michelle Murray
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Sue Lapierre
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Terri Curtis
The Agape Roasting Project
Joanne Davidson
Thomas Miller-Freutel
Timothy & Monica Fuglei
Wells Fargo Foundation
Wendy LeClair
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Thank you to our Board for their support and leadership in 2017

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Amy Gaines*
Community Volunteer

Kirstan Borne
Colorado Department of Transportation
Chris Vanderveen
9 News/TEGNA

*Term ended in 2017

We apologize for any unintentional errors.
THE BLUE BENCH THING  APRIL 26, 2018  6-8PM  DENVER FIELD HOUSE

Our fun event with a serious mission! We spend 365 days a year working to end sexual violence in our community, but each April, for Sexual Assault Awareness Month, we gather to celebrate the progress we’re making together.

Round up your friends and join The Blue Bench for drinks, hors d'oeuvres, drawings for incredible prizes (our lotto scratch ticket jar is back!), gorgeous views of the city from a cool venue and a special performance by Jill & Andy!

HEART OF THE MATTER GOLF TOURNAMENT  AUGUST 10, 2018  THE HOMESTEAD AT FOX HOLLOW GOLF COURSE

Head to The Homestead at Fox Hollow Golf Course to celebrate 12 years of supporting The Blue Bench on the green! Breakfast, lunch, a golf cart, range balls, and prizes are included, so gather your friends and family to help us change the conversation about sexual assault and provide hope for survivors and supporters alike!

CHANGING THE CONVERSATION LUNCHEON  SEPTEMBER 20, 2018  LOCATION TBD

Each year we gather the community to engage in a dialogue about sexual violence in metro Denver. This year, we are thrilled to announce that we will be joined by the founder of the MeToo movement, Tarana Burke. The simple yet courageous #metoo hashtag campaign has emerged as a rallying cry for people everywhere who have survived sexual assault and sexual harassment – and our conversation with Tarana, creator of what is now an international movement that supports survivors, will move, uplift, and inspire you.

SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES ARE AVAILABLE FOR EACH EVENT. TO LEARN MORE, CONTACT TERESA DEVINE AT TDEVINE@THEBLUEBENCH.ORG OR CALL 303-329-9922
What The Blue Bench Believes...

The Blue Bench (formerly RAAP) is metro Denver’s only comprehensive sexual assault prevention and support center.

We believe in the power of our community because that’s how we began. In 1983, the friends of a survivor, after learning that there were no support resources in Denver, banded together to raise enough money to start a 24-hour hotline. We believe in the power of our community because that’s how we began.

We believe that young people are the key to changing the conversation around sexual violence. That’s why we partner with dozens of metro-Denver area schools to provide prevention programming to students in middle and high school.

We believe healing is possible for all survivors, which is why we provide therapy programs like individual, group, art and yoga at low to no cost. We also provide dedicated case managers who can help survivors with dedicated case managers who can help.

We believe that sexual assault is a community issue that demands a community response. We hope you’ll be part of the response.

Text BENCH to 41444 to provide therapy for survivors and prevention education programs for students.

Or visit our website at www.thebluebench.org