

Upward Together

2022 Impact Report



Like a kite that needs the air beneath its wings to fly, the gifts of our generous and kind donors support survivors and their families, Safe+Sound Somerset, and our entire community as we move *Upward Together*.



Message from the CEO

Michele E. Boronkas, MSW

Safe + Sound Somerset is celebrating its 45th anniversary in 2023, providing a natural moment to reflect on the connections between the organization's logo, the healing journey of survivors, and the continued transformation of the organization. The logo, a kite lifted and carried by the wind, represents the journey of survivors who are impacted by the winds of abuse and violence, feeling powerless and directionless. Through the guidance and support of Safe + Sound Somerset's programs and team, survivors begin to fly in the direction of their chosen path, creating the life they want. The tether, which represents the connection to their support systems and communities, helps keep them grounded as they climb higher and further away from living with abuse and violence. Each element plays an integral role in the survivor's quest for freedom from abuse.

Similarly, Safe + Sound Somerset is on a parallel trek, charting its best path through societal upheaval. The organization's kite is pointed towards survivors, but it has been tossed around by the gusts of the pandemic, increased violence, and racial reckoning. Through the guidance of transformational programs, renewed capacities, and strategic leadership, Safe + Sound Somerset has kept pace with the 100% increase in survivors while staying in flight. **The tether to its foundation is its community partners, volunteers, and donors who are part of the vital connections that keep Safe + Sound Somerset simultaneously grounded and sailing.**

Our 45th anniversary is a milestone that provides a moment to reflect on the healing journey of survivors, the transformation of the organization, and the vital connections. **Safe + Sound Somerset's transformational programs, renewed capacities, and strategic leadership keep the organization in flight, while its community partners, volunteers, and donors keep it grounded.**

This year's Impact Report details the programs and statistics, stories and investments that have enabled survivors and Safe + Sound Somerset to fly. May we continue the path of the kite, *Upward Together*.

In Deepest Gratitude,

Michele E. Boronkas

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Michele E. Boronkas, MSW,
Chief Executive Officer

Safe+Sound Somerset
prevents and responds to
domestic and sexual
violence with programs
that provide safety,
support and education for
individuals, families and
the community.



Innovative and Survivor-Centered

Safe+Sound Somerset provides an array of cutting-edge and compassionate, evidence-based and individualized services in a welcoming setting to help survivors achieve stability and healing wherever they are in their journey. Our innovative services are continually evolving based on the needs of clients, current best practices, and latest research.

Our team of compassionate staff and volunteers provide comprehensive support, programs, and tools – from emergency crisis intervention to long-term efforts of independent living and healing – that enable survivors and their families to soar in lives free from violence.

Accessible 24/7 through the call and text helpline, our services are available to survivors, their children, and community members at no cost throughout Somerset County and the region. We are committed to providing anti-racist, inclusive services that are culturally and linguistically accessible, affirm and support sexual orientation and gender expression, and adhere to the highest standards for confidentiality and safety.



Our survivor and family services include emergency safe house, domestic violence response team, sexual assault response team, legal advocacy and court accompaniment, financial literacy and coaching, housing advocacy and support, and individual and group therapy and educational forums.

Our in person and online community services include community workshops, school-based prevention programs, Safe Spaces for faith communities, and professional development and training on a variety of interpersonal violence and trauma related topics.



Rose's Story

When Rose and her children entered our safe house fleeing abuse, it was a scary and turbulent time for them. Coming from out of state left everyone feeling isolated and created so many changes. At the beginning of counseling, Rose was so overwhelmed by the trauma she struggled with keeping her appointments and being consistent in her practices. Her two children also uniquely struggled – her daughter with anger and disrespectful behaviors and her son with depression and withdrawing from new school peers.

After a few weeks of treatment, significant changes began to happen for all them. Mom was able to concentrate and complete her goals – leading them to stable housing with the assistance of the financial empowerment program. Her emotional health improved so drastically that staff was able to visibly see her transformation as the anxiety and trauma symptoms were alleviated. She made such progress she no longer met PTSD criteria after just a few prolonged exposure sessions.

Her children also completed TF-CBT. Her daughter shifted to someone who would help around the house and manage her anger through healthy coping skills. While her son increased his confidence and was able to be open with his counselor about how the abuse he witnessed made him feel. Overall, the family was able to connect in a healthier way than ever before.

Now, rather than being burdened with trauma symptoms, they spend their time volunteering in their community and playing sports together.



2022 Impact



In 2022, we served 12,006 individuals in Somerset County with direct service and community programs.

[Click to see our
2022 Detail of Services](#)

Highlights of our Newest Innovative and Survivor-Centered Initiatives:

- **Safe Spaces:** A partnership with local faith-based organizations to build their capacity to support survivors.
- **LGBTQIA+ SV Prevention Coordinator:** Chosen as the lead for the Central NJ region to coordinate the provision of sexual violence prevention information and education for the LGBTQIA+ community.
- **Coordinated Intake Services:** Increased access and navigation to needed services for survivors and their families through a streamlined, single-entry process.
- **Nonfatal Strangulation Response Team:** Founding member of the Somerset County Strangulation Response Team, working with county partners to provide the special care and support needed for survivors who have experienced strangulation violence.
- **Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) Services:** In collaboration with the Somerset County Prosecutor's Office and Somerset County Jail, in support of this nation-wide initiative, provide crisis stabilization through helpline, SART responses at the hospital, and counseling to inmates who are survivors sexual violence and assault.

We couldn't have done it without our donors, volunteers, and community partners!

Crisis Response

Safety for survivors and their children is the priority of our crisis response services. We providing life- saving crisis intervention services around the clock for those seeking physical and emotional safety from the impacts of domestic violence and/or sexual assault. Only after safety and stability are attained can survivors focus on creating a path of healing from their trauma.

Our crisis response services include:

- 24/7 Call and Text Helpline
- Emergency Safe House
- Domestic Violence Response Team
- Sexual Assault Response Team
- Nonfatal Strangulation Team
- DV Liaisons (Department of Child Protection & Permanency Somerset/Hunterdon)



100% of Survivors Calling our Helpline Received Vital Planning and Resources to Keep Themselves and their Families Safe

Helpline Advocates Answered Calls in 8 Languages. Callers Speaking Arabic, English, Japanese, Mandarin, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, and Tagalog Accessed the Assistance They Needed



Advocacy

Our Advocacy programs work with survivors to reclaim their power, create safety, and journey forward on the road to self-sufficiency.

Advocates help survivors navigate the complexities of life after violence victimization by providing tools to obtain financial solvency, housing access and restraining orders.

Advocacy services include:

- Legal Advocacy
- Family Advocacy
- Financial Empowerment
- Housing First

72% of Clients who Received Court Preparation and Accompaniment by a Legal Advocate Obtained the Legal Support they Needed to Move Forward in their Lives



Counseling

On their quest for wholeness, survivors are able to find the path of healing that's most appropriate for them by choosing from our wide array of specialized trauma specific counseling therapies. Through this work, survivors reduce the impacts of trauma in their lives, freeing them to create peace-filled futures of their choosing.

Our adult and child survivor centered counseling services include:

- Traditional Talk Therapy
- Cognitive Behavioral
- Play Therapy

Trauma specific therapies for those with PTSD symptoms include:

- Prolonged Exposure (PE)
- Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR)
- Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TFCBT)



90% of Survivors Achieved One or More of their Personal Goals during their 12 Weeks in Counseling

100% of Adults and 84% Children of who Completed Trauma Specific Counseling Demonstrated a Reduction or Alleviation of Symptoms of PTSD



SPEAK Community Education & Prevention

Domestic violence and sexual assault will only be eradicated through the power of community. Our outreach and prevention services are designed to create those vital partnerships and educate all facets of our communities to recognize, react and respond to intimate partner violence.

Through the information and tools of our educational workshops, interactive school presentations and professional development, we facilitate collaborations that work to bring an end to abuse once and for all.

80% of Students from Bound Brook High School Participating in our Media Literacy Education Reported that The Program Was Helpful to Them

Comments collected from school participants:

"We all have a role to play in stopping sexual violence."

"We need to be taught more about this and not just in our senior year."

"You don't deserve to feel unsafe."

"Gender stereotypes have been around for so long that we subconsciously feed into them."

Doing What Matters

With Susan Gaits, Safe + Sound Somerset Volunteer

After settling in New Jersey 25 years ago, one of the first things Susan Gaits did was to become a volunteer for Safe+Sound Somerset, known as The Resource Center for Women and Their Families at the time. Although our name has changed a few times since then, Susan's commitment to survivors has not and she remains a dedicated volunteer with us today.



[Read More on Susan's Work with Clients Here](#)



If you are interested in Doing Something That Matters for survivors, Check Out Our Volunteer Opportunities Online at <https://safesound.volunteermatters.org/project-catalog>.

Our 60-hour Volunteer Advocate Training, which is required for client interaction, is provided multiple times during the year.



2023



CIRCLE of HOPE

Extraordinary Giving
Extraordinary Impact

We define *Hope* as the belief that, regardless of present circumstances, the future is full of possibilities.

Survivors of domestic abuse realize this hope at Safe + Sound Somerset as the possibilities of a thriving future becomes evident. ***Circle of Hope*** members make this a reality by funding transformational change through consistent giving that demonstrates their commitment to our mission.

Safe+Sound Somerset is pleased to recognize the 2023 members of our Circle of Hope for their extraordinary giving, supporting extraordinary impact.

[Click for 2023 Members](#)



If you are interested in helping, please consider a gift to support our mission.

A monthly donation provides consistent funding for the programs that offer safety, hope and healing to survivors.

All gifts make a difference!

Visit safe-sound.org/donate to donate online or mail your contribution to:

Safe+Sound Somerset • PO Box 835 • Somerville, NJ 08876

safe-sound.org

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