A MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO

I hope this newsletter finds you and yours in good health and as well as we can be in this challenging time. I am so glad to be issuing a new and improved Hotline Happenings newsletter and there is no better time than Domestic Violence Awareness Month! You are a critical part of our mission, and keeping you informed of our work and trends in relationship abuse is important — especially right now.

This year has been a roller coaster of experiences, emotions, tragedy, and inspiration. I want to recognize that since the on-set of the COVID-19 pandemic, hundreds of thousands of people have lost their lives. We share our deepest condolences with all those who have lost loved ones to this awful illness. Our nation also faces the harsh realities of a second pandemic — racism. The murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and too many other Black members of our community ignited outrage and action across this country, as they should.

The Hotline strives to be an anti-racist organization, and as such, it is not enough for us to abstain from racist practices and policies. The Hotline is actively working toward dismantling the systems that oppress Black, Indigenous, and non-Black communities of color that far too often impact many of the survivors we work with daily, in addition to our own colleagues. The Hotline will continue to advocate for Black lives through our work every day, be it through working with survivors on the lines, our policy initiatives with Members of Congress, ensuring that our workplace is a safe space for Black staff, and through deepening our journey of being an anti-racist organization.

As we all do our best to find a way through this difficult time, the work of The Hotline has never been more important. The Hotline’s entire team, more than 165 people, began remote work in mid-March to ensure that we can continue to provide critical, life-saving services for hundreds of thousands of survivors — no matter what happens. We know that any external factors that add stress, isolation, and financial strain can create circumstances where a survivor’s safety is further compromised. Our advocates are providing critical safety planning and resources for instances such as this.

We also work in collaboration across our field to serve as the backup for other local and regional hotlines and providers forced to suspend services due to COVID-19, hurricanes, or other emergencies. Some organizations have already transferred their lines to us, and we are prepared to receive more as needed. Even when the immediate threat of the virus is over, the long-term effects on the health, safety, and financial security of survivors will continue to be a priority for The Hotline.

No matter what is happening in the world, our mission remains the same — to support and shift power back to those affected by relationship abuse 24 hours a day, seven days a week. You make that mission possible. Every dollar you donate, every time you share our number with someone who needs support, every note of encouragement you send our way — it changes lives. In fact, last year it changed 362,897 of them. We are eternally grateful for all you do to support The Hotline and to make the world a better and safer place.

Katie Aley Jones

Bumble Partners with love is respect

Big news — we are thrilled to announce a multi-year partnership with Bumble. You may know Bumble best as the dating app that made it necessary, and therefore acceptable, for women to make the first move. Bumble’s guiding mission has always been to foster a world free of misogyny, where all relationships are equitable, healthy, and safe — starting with each first move made on their app. Unfortunately, intimate partner violence remains an epidemic affecting millions of people and it comes in many forms; digital abuse, one of its most pervasive forms, has risen 30% during the COVID-19 pandemic. In response, Bumble is making its first multi-year pledge as the presenting sponsor of love is respect.
ADVOCACY IN THE TIME OF COVID-19

Answering the call to shift and support power back to survivors has taken on new meaning and a renewed sense of urgency and purpose in the era of COVID-19. Survivors’ needs have changed significantly in light of the pandemic, and our responses have shifted to meet them.

In the early spring, as the number of individuals affected by the virus grew, we began to hear concerns from survivors about the impact of the virus on their lives and safety. Survivors reported that their abusive partners were using the virus in unique ways to exert power and control — in some instances to limit their movement or access to children and family members, and in others to threaten their health and safety. In addition, survivors reported that it was more difficult for them to reach out to resources and legal remedies as shelter-in-place happened throughout the country. The pandemic also increases economic stress, a factor that substantially contributes to increased intimate partner abuse. Access to financial resources is critical to a survivor’s path to safety.

We had to make sure our advocates had the tools needed to respond to contacts remotely for the first time in our history. We created new materials and facilitated training sessions to teach advocates how to support survivors with unique needs related to sheltering-in-place, dispelling myths related to COVID-19, accessing healthcare, and reduced access to resources like shelter.

We are incredibly proud of the way The Hotline has stepped up in the service of survivors this year, and we are deeply grateful to you for helping us fulfill our mission. A special thank you to everyone who contributed to our COVID-19 Relief Fund — because of you, we never lost one moment of answering calls, chats, and texts from those needing support.

Author: Peggy, Director of Program Services

MORE ON BUMBLE PARTNERSHIP

You may know Bumble as the dating app pioneer that changed the narrative around women making the first move in their relationships. Bumble was also amongst the generous supporters who made The Hotline’s transition to remote status possible. That’s why we are proud to share that Bumble is the presenting sponsor of our program love is respect.

“We’re committed to helping our community forge healthy relationships both online and IRL, and we’re grateful to partner with love is respect as we work towards this shared goal” — Cybil Zhang, Strategy & Social Impact Associate Director at Bumble

Together, Bumble and love is respect will team up to respond to the growing demand for healthy relationship tools and prevention services. The two Austin-born organizations are leaders in shifting the public view of healthy dating. We look forward to connecting and empowering young people regardless of race, sexual orientation, or social status. Through Bumble’s Honey Ambassador Program, we will have a unique opportunity to co-develop education on relationships that are positive, healthy, and free from violence on college campuses across the U.S.

Over the course of our multi-year partnership, Bumble and love is respect will be disrupting the culture of intimate partner violence for young people in innovative and strategic ways. Bumble is an ideal partner as we launch the refreshed love is respect program, and we look forward to all that we will do together.

FVPSA Funding

The National Domestic Violence Hotline has been funded through the Family and Youth Services Bureau, or FYSB, within the Administration on Children, Youth and Families with the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). FYSB supports programs that provide shelter, supportive services, and education for youth, adults, and families. For 35 years, HHS and FYSB have been committed to supporting organizations like The Hotline providing critical resources and support to individuals and families affected by domestic violence and dating abuse.

We are thrilled to announce that The Hotline has once again been awarded Family Violence Prevention and Services Act, or FVPSA, funding for the next five years (through 2025). This funding includes financial support for StrongHearts Native HelpLine and Abused Deaf Women’s Advocacy Services. While this funding does not cover the full cost of our programs and services, or any of our policy initiatives, our work would not be possible without it!

FVPSA has provided over $78 million to The Hotline since our inception. As a result, The Hotline has answered more than 5.5 million phone calls, online chats, and text messages from people affected by domestic violence over the course of nearly 25 years. We are so grateful for this strong support and our partnership with FVPSA, and we are proud to serve the US as the only 24/7 national domestic violence hotline.
ADVOCATE SPOTLIGHT

JaTasha Austin joined The Hotline in July 2019 and has been supporting survivors through our live digital chat and text platforms ever since. JaTasha’s dedication to our mission and survivors is evident to those we serve, and her fellow advocates — who routinely turn to her for advice about community resources and how to practice good self-care in their own work. JaTasha has a unique capacity to empathize, develop creative strategies for staying safer, and connect deeply with survivors.

When asked why she chose to work at the Hotline, JaTasha shared, “It’s inspiring — the amount of hope that is created during interactions between us and those on the other end of the line. Being able to answer the call, chat, or text at any given hour for those who are reaching out and to be a safe space for them to share their experiences without judgement are the reasons I do this work.”

JaTasha was recently promoted to be one of The Hotline’s new Shift Support Specialists. In her new role JaTasha will be the first point of contact for advocates — sharing her experience and knowledge to assist advocates in doing their best work and to ensure that all survivors receive excellent support.

JaTasha’s message to our supporters is this: “Thank you for supporting our mission and believing in the work that we do! It’s such an amazing feeling to know that you’re there. There’s strength in numbers, and I’m so grateful that you’re working with us!”

Author: Rich, Program Services Manager

“**It’s inspiring — the amount of hope that is created during interactions between us and those on the other end of the line.**”

SURVIVOR STORIES AS TOLD BY OUR ADVOCATES

Today I chatted with a 40-year-old who had been with their partner for over a decade. Eight years ago, their partner forced them to stop working, and forbade them from seeing or even speaking to their family. ”I apologize I keep typing but I’ve been holding these things in for 11 years. I’ve told no one.” The chatter was looking for reassurance and encouragement. I helped them understand the dynamics of abuse and identified options available for support. At the end of the chat, they said, ”Thank you so much! You have just made me an ounce stronger than I was an hour ago. I’ve known the answer, I guess I just needed clarification to see that I am better and deserve that. This hotline gave me hope again for a better life and I’m going to start today.”

I received a call from a person in their mid-20’s calling for their sibling, who was in a highly abusive situation. Their sibling was in another state, and was only able to communicate via text message. The caller was very scared for the survivor’s safety. Their sibling had been working with a local shelter with a plan to get out, but had just texted the caller that things had escalated and they needed out tonight. I called the shelter and they informed me that while they did not have texting capabilities, if the survivor could get to a safe location and call the shelter, they would send a cab to pick them up. The caller and I explored options for the survivor to try to safely call the shelter, including using a neighbor’s phone or walking to an open store to use their phone. The caller thanked me for my help and disconnected to continue planning with the survivor.

Tonight I spoke with a young survivor experiencing emotional abuse, isolation, and imprisonment by their partner. They are never able to leave their home and their communication with family has been cut off. They talked with their partner about divorce, returning home, or even just leaving for shelter, but their partner told them none of those things would happen. The survivor is Black and Muslim, and expressed hesitation to involve police because they did not feel it would be safe for them. We explored whether they would feel comfortable reaching out to a local shelter or legal advocate, and they did, so I provided them with those resources. I also provided a resource that helps Muslim survivors of abuse, since they had concerns around receiving culturally-sensitive assistance. Our conversation was cut short because the chatter’s partner had returned home, but they expressed gratitude for the resources before disconnecting.

If you or someone you know is affected by relationship abuse 24/7 support is available at 1-800-799-7233 or thehotline.org
WAYS TO DONATE

Your donation to The Hotline directly supports every survivor who reaches out for help.

Checks can be sent to National Domestic Violence Hotline P.O. Box 90249, Austin, TX, 78709

Make a gift online at: thehotline.org/2020Newsletter

There can be advantages to donating through:
- Donor-Advised Funds
- Stock or Mutual Funds
- Mandatory IRA Distributions
- Estate or Planned Gifts

Donate your truck, car, or other vehicle through CARS at bit.ly/TheHotline-CARS (link is case sensitive).

If you would like more information, please contact Donor Relations at development@thehotline.org or (737) 234-6464.

Thank you for your generosity!

25TH ANNIVERSARY — SNEAK PEEK

On February 21, 1996, the first call rang into The Hotline. Since then we’ve answered more than 5.5 million calls, chats, and texts from survivors across the country. Looking ahead to The Hotline’s 25th anniversary in 2021, we are inspired by the courage and strength of survivors.

Much has changed since that first call. Advances in technology have greatly expanded our reach. We began providing services through digital chat and text, and millions of people visit our websites for resources each year. Where once advocates looked up shelters and legal services in the “blue book,” we now have a digital referral database of 5,000 local service providers and resources across the U.S. and its territories. In 2007, we started our love is respect program to serve teens and young adults in a space designed just for them.

Throughout 2021 we will be marking our history and those who have played a vital role in answering the call to support and shift power back to those affected by relationship abuse while we look to what’s ahead. Our exciting plans to bring The Hotline community together include:
- Inviting survivors to share their stories and what The Hotline means to them.
- The opening of the very first online store featuring Hotline merchandise — so you can show your Hotline pride wherever you go.
- Hosting an exciting array of virtual events, informational sessions, and gatherings.

You are a key part of our history and our future.
Throughout next year, we look forward to honoring the bravery and dignity of survivors and commemorating this milestone with you. Together, we are making The Hotline’s vision of a world where all relationships are positive, healthy, and free from violence a reality!

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