Greetings from the Director — Coalition Building

There is no way to capture the scope, breadth and dedication of the staff of the Vermont Network Office, the staff, volunteers and survivors of the Network Programs, and of the innumerable allies who all contributed to and are members of the greater coalition of those who seek to create a safe and peaceful world. This report represents only a small part of the range of services provided by the Vermont Network.

The Vermont Network sits at the nexus between member Programs and the survivors of domestic and sexual violence they serve, and our greater community including statewide allies, national partners, and Congress. We support the success of the Network Programs through our services and representation, and by ensuring that all of our actions, decisions and positions are informed by the voices of survivors. The member Programs and Vermont Network constitute a coalition that is devoted to the idea that we can create a society without domestic and sexual violence.

This year has been an exciting time. The Network Programs established operating Standards. When the Program in Newport discontinued providing services, the three surrounding Programs stepped in to ensure that seamless services to survivors continued, collaborating with the community to rebuild comprehensive, locally-controlled services.

The voices of survivors were represented by Network Programs during the legislative session, resulting in the landmark Omnibus Domestic Violence Law, and again during the legislative hearings on child sexual abuse.

— Karen Trongard-Scott

Karen Trongard-Scott
Director
Jennifer Matthews
Finance/Grants Manager
Sarah Kenney
Public Policy Coordinator
Alex Bottinelli
Library/Resources Coordinator
Bethany Pombar
Education/Outreach Coordinator
Chani Waterhouse
Program Support Coordinator
Rebecca Shea
Creating Access Team Coordinator
Jill Richard
Economic Justice Project Coordinator
Lisa Brown
Advocacy Project Coordinator

2008 Annual Report

Vermon t Network
Against Domestic and Sexual Violence

P.O. Box 405
Montpelier, VT 05601
802-223-1115
E-mail: vtnetwork@vtnetwork.org
Website: www.vtnetwork.org

Statewide Hotlines
1-800-489-7273 (for Domestic Violence)
1-800-228-7395 (for Sexual Assault)
The Vermont Network is a feminist organization committed to eradicating domestic and sexual violence through advocacy, empowerment and social change.

Who We Are
The Vermont Network is a coalition of 15 local Programs located throughout the state, and a statewide Network Office located in Montpelier.

From the Board of Directors
The Board has been diligently working toward the completion of the Policy Governance Ends Statements and has made great strides toward this goal.

These are trying but promising times at the Network. While we know much ahead of us, we are confident, that, together with our allies and with victims and survivors, the social change that is needed in our state will come – an environment in Vermont that is healthy, safe and supportive for all its citizens.

The Programs of the Vermont Network
As a membership organization, the Vermont Network exists to support the capacity and promote the visions of our member domestic and sexual violence Programs through policy advocacy, program coordination, technical assistance and training. In times of economic hardship and prosperity alike, Network Programs identify financial barriers and resource scarcity as primary challenges facing survivors struggling to increase economic safety and access to services. These programs are exploring new ways to address these issues, embarking on a pioneering project to design and implement economic empowerment programming within Network Programs. This project is a partnership between the participating member programs, the Network Office, Vermont Works for Women and the National Network to End Domestic Violence, with funds from the Allstate Foundation.

Program advocates know that many survivors have complex and urgent legal needs, and limited or no access to retain qualified legal services. The Legal Access to Victims program is a grant-funded collaborative arrangement between the Network Office, all the Network Programs, Vermont Legal Aid and several private attorneys to provide direct legal assistance to survivors of domestic and sexual violence.

As busy as programs’ holiness and shelters are, we know that many survivors, due to additional barriers, will never get to a support group, stay in a shelter or even call a hotline. Since 2003, Network advocates, in collaboration with the Network Office Outreach/Training/Education Department, from the Department of Corrections, have offered educational support groups for incarcerated women, providing what is for many participants their first opportunity to access good information about domestic and sexual violence and available resources, and to discuss these issues with other women.

Two Network Programs, in partnership with the Network Office, Green Mountain Self-Advocates and the Vermont Center for Independent Living, are building formal relationships with disability rights organizations in their areas to develop specialized disability agencies’ responses to survivors who are Deaf or have disabilities.

Network Programs work hard to increase awareness of domestic and sexual violence in their communities and in the Vermont General Assembly, to increase funding for programs and services for survivors of these violence. The Network Office responds to and supports this work, designing campaigns that can utilize in their outreach and awareness activities.

Landmark Domestic Violence Legislation Passes
In May, Vermont’s legislature, led by the Senate Judiciary Committee, passed a groundbreaking bill addressing the issue of domestic violence in Vermont. The bill takes a comprehensive approach to preventing domestic violence, supporting survivors, protecting children, and holding perpetrators accountable. It includes over 21 different initiatives including prevention programs, increased penalties; mandated law enforcement training; increased reporting requirements of an independent state Council on Domestic Violence; and funding for services, prevention and training. The Network presented the Senate Judiciary Committee with a Social Change Award at our annual meeting in recognition of their direct legal assistance to survivors of domestic and sexual violence.

Responding to Sexual Violence Against Children
The kidnapping, rape and murder of Brooke Bessone, a 13-year-old during the summer of 1994 in Vermont, has persuaded advocates in Vermont to take a more proactive approach to preventing and addressing the needs of children who are victims of sexual abuse.

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In partnership with statewide partners, the Network Office addressed in the following ways the economic barriers that challenge survivors seeking to increase emotional and physical safety.

- With the passage of S. 337 the Vermont legislature established: an ad hoc study-committee on women’s equality, an independent state law review, and a state-mandated training to address gender and other forms of discrimination against survivors of domestic abuse and sexual violence, which provides an analysis and suggested remedies.

Economic Justice Advocacy
In partnership with statewide partners, the Network Office addressed in the following ways the economic barriers that challenge survivors seeking to increase emotional and physical safety.

- Also included in S. 337 is a provision that expands eligibility to victims of domestic violence who have lost or will lose health insurance as a result of domestic violence to apply for an exemption to the waiting period for Medicaid.

- With the support of the Department for Children and Families Office of Economic Opportunity, the Network has issued over $9,000 in small housing assistance grants that will help survivors of domestic violence maintain and access safe and affordable housing.

Accessiblity Project Needs Assessment Report
The Vermont Coordinating Team, made up of the Network Office, the Vermont Center for Independent Living, and Green Mountain Self-Advocates, has recently completed a needs assessment in the Barre and Burlington communities. Strategic planning has begun with the intention of making systems’ changes to increase the capacity of Network Programs and disability organizations to meet the needs of people with disabilities/Deaf people who experience abuse.

Vermont’s Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program
When someone in Vermont is sexually assaulted and seeks medical assistance, one of the most important people they will encounter is a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner. These advanced practice nurses not only gather forensic evidence for a crime investigation, but also ensure that survivors get appropriate medical care and access to advocates in a supportive, compassionate setting. The Vermont Network was pleased to have been asked to serve as the coordinating body for the Vermont SANE Program. We welcomed Vickie Poulin, RN and Jennifer Foster, MS, to our SANE Coordinating Team, and they join a family of hospitals, nurses, law enforcement officers, prosecutors and state administrators whose goals are to ensure that survivors of sexual assault are treated with dignity and respect, and perpetrators are held accountable.

2008 Vermont Network Highlights
The Vermont Network is a coalition of 15 local Programs located throughout the state, and a statewide Network Office located in Montpelier.

The Board has been diligently working toward the completion of the Policy Governance Ends Statements and has made great strides toward this goal.

These are trying but promising times at the Network. While we know much ahead of us, we are confident, that, together with our allies and with victims and survivors, the social change that is needed in our state will come – an environment in Vermont that is healthy, safe and supportive for all its citizens.


Vermont Network 2008 Financial Statement* (in thousands)

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<th>INCOME</th>
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*Note: This financial statement is not yet audited.