

Coalition Chronicles

A newsletter of the
Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence
Volume 29 Issue 4



Connected Cultures

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From The Director-



"The women of today are the thoughts of their mothers and grandmothers, embodied, and made alive. They are active, capable, determined and bound to win. They have one thousand generations back of them ... Millions of women, dead and gone are speaking through us today."

Matilda Joslyn Gage from National Citizen and Ballot Box- 1889 — a newspaper she founded and edited.

It's hard to believe that this quote from Matilda Joslyn Gage is more than 120 years old as it continues to hold so true to this day. For centuries, women have struggled to be heard, and to be treated with equity and fairness. We could view the fact that women have not fully achieved equity with sadness and despair. But I see Matilda's words as inspirational. She understands that we gain our wisdom and strength from those who have walked before us. The vision, hopes, dreams, challenges and needs of all women are universal even across generations and cultures. And with each new generation, she recognizes that we find and build strength for our journey by looking to those who walked before us.

The domestic violence movement was built on these very principals. Our society embodied and promoted the systematic oppression of women through the use of violence and coercive control. Today, we recognize that we have made great strides in the work to end domestic violence, and that we did so by listening to and speaking through the voices of our mothers and grandmothers, many of them survivors of violence. We also know that we need fresh, new leaders to bring forth strategies not yet thought of or tried.

For the past year, WCADV has embarked on a mission to support the growth and strength a new wave of leaders. Through our Connected Cultures Leadership Institute (CCLI), we engaged in a year-long educational process with survivors of violence and/or women from communities of color. At the recent graduation ceremony for this incredible group of women, we learned that the process of providing 30 women with education and leadership training not only transformed them, it also transformed us. The struggles of their ancestors were channeled through them. And, as Matilda said..."They are active, capable, determined and bound to win." Gratefully, many of the 2010 CCLI graduates contributed to this issue of the WCADV Coalition Chronicles, sharing their wisdom and the wisdom of their mothers and grandmothers with all of us.

Wishing you all a safe and peace-filled 2011

-Patti Seger



CCLI Class of 2010

Introduction to Connected Cultures Leadership and Skill Building Institute (CCLI)

By Valerie Nash

Each month, the women gathered to explore, be challenged in new areas and chart unknown paths of connecting individually to become the power of one.

Over its 30-year history, the Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence (WCADV) has been committed to survivors' leadership in the anti-violence against women movement, and for over 15 years, WCADV has empowered the vital contributions to anti-violence efforts of communities of people of color. Up until 2009, this collaborative work took place through three standing committees: the Battered/Formerly Battered Women's Committee, the Communities of People of Color Committee, and the Wisconsin African American Committee Against Domestic Violence. However during the past year, WCADV reinvented how we integrate the wisdom of survivors and foster the leadership of historically marginalized groups in the movement. In 2010, 30 women participated in the first ever Connected Cultures Leadership and Skill Building Institute (CCLI), culminating with their graduation this past November.

The 2010 CCLI was twelve-month training for survivors and individuals who represent diverse communities. Each month, the women gathered to explore, be challenged in new areas and chart unknown paths of connecting individually to become the power of one. Each brought their measure of wisdom and knowledge and worked toward understanding of themselves and their leadership potential. Individual sessions focused on particular topics and skills that are critical to the difficult and necessary work of strengthening communities and ending oppression. The participants grew their knowledge in many areas, including community organizing, economic empowerment, civic engagement and expressive writing. But even more important than gaining information, the women in CCLI *were the change* we desperately need in the world. By first getting to know each other and then by creating a space imbued with respect and intense connection, the women forged intercultural understanding and openly shared emotion, ideas and truth. They created a community of leaders, which I have no doubt will positively impact Wisconsin and our world and will contribute to preventing and ending domestic violence.

Immediately below is a collective poem from the CCLI graduates entitled *This Journey that is Connected Cultures*. The poem is representative of CCLI as a whole. Out of many different experiences, backgrounds, cultures and even languages we created something greater and more powerful than the sum of its parts.

It was my great honor to walk alongside so many inspiring and gifted women through their year-long journey. I could write volumes about what I and others gained from the experience. I could go on endlessly to try to explain all the profound transformations that took place. However, these women are more than capable of communicating for themselves and the many voices of those they so courageously represent. The pieces that follow (with the exception of the excellent contribution from Sarah Utley-Wells) are from CCLI participants. In them, we explore issues that are both personal and public—personal because our motivation to participate in CCLI is rooted in individual experiences and public because we all strive to go beyond our individual circumstances to lead our communities.

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This Journey that is Connected Cultures

By the 2010 Connected Cultures Leadership Institute Graduates

This journey that is Connected Cultures...

Are like ripples in a pond...growing, expanding, becoming one mind & one heart in each of us.
Has helped me understand other cultures and the needs that every person has to have a place to talk.
I learned to listen, to open more and more my heart to the needs of women.
Has taken me to places that I have never imagined I could be emotionally.
I loved the connection, the interaction, and the opportunity to see how similar we can be if we
Understand each other's needs.

This journey that is Connected Cultures...

Is a relationship of hearts, minds and personalities
Our hearts are open to embracing the joy in everyone....
Our minds are open to learning new ideas
Our personalities are finding one within each other....

This journey that is Connected Cultures...

Connect
Building Relationships
Support
Network
Learning from each other
Understand each other at a deeper level
Comfortable to talk/discuss the issue that matter to us
One voice
Family
Culture Value

This journey that is Connected Cultures...

Building relationships with and learning from women I may have otherwise never known.
Laughing, crying, supporting, motivating, encouraging, loving, and teaching.
Learning things that will help me for a lifetime
As a leader, I will forever be conscious of the language and cultural differences that could potentially be barriers and I
will be able to overcome them because I see it can be done.

This journey that is Connected Cultures...

Provided me, for the first time in my life, with a space of total acceptance and inclusion, which to so many people is a
"given", but to each of us in this room, comes as a result of our own struggle and ability to stand up for ourselves.

This journey that is Connected Cultures...

Has helped push me to break down the walls around me.
Has helped me identify the skills I have so I can take a step forward.
An inspiring journey that makes me feel the impossible is possible.

This journey that is Connected Cultures...

Is a family where we share our culture, pain, laughter, love and care for each other.
Making new friends
Understanding what I survived as a survivor
Understanding what is necessary for primary prevention of Domestic Violence
How to shift the balance of power to make changes to stop domestic violence at its roots.

This journey that is Connected Cultures...

Learning to look past differences in order to see similarities
Has brought me closer to those like me.

Empowering, awesome, enlightening a whole new group of support
Confidence building
Knowledge of other cultures is so enlightening
Knocks down the wall and opens doors.
Clothe us in self-esteem.
Gives us strength to see beyond dreams.
Stand on our own two feet.
Strength to rise.

This journey that is Connected Cultures...

En este viaje he aprendido que tengo muchas hermanas en visión
(In this journey I come to realize that I have many sisters in vision)

Que no necesito ser la fuerte porque todas mis hermanas son Fuertes!!
(That I do not need to be strong because all my sisters are strong!!!)

Aprendido conectarme con varios culturas, tenemos los mismos valor y simepre luchamos por lo que queremos, tener metas para poder lograr todos nuestros objetivos.

(I have learned to connect with various cultures, that we have the same worth and we always fight for what we want and care about, we have goals to be able to achieve all our objectives.

We did it!

Chai Moua, Cheryl O'Neil, Carolina Farvour, Robin Reese, Jeannie Taylor, Tonja Jordan, Sheila Conley, Carmen Vallejo Fairbanks, Teresa Tellez- Giron, Alice Belcher, Alicia Mascarenas, Tammy Hartmann, Rhonda Davis-Kaenan, Monica Adams, Nenglee Vang, Ofilia Astorga, Mao Lee, Violetta Iguchi, Maggie Maxwell, Jolynn Woehrer, Ruth Tucker, Consuelo Morales, Monica Mathison and Stephanie Pamperin.

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Our Shared Experience; Storytelling and Domestic Violence

By Sarah Utley-Wells, Prevention Intern WCADV

“Secrets grow in the dark, and sickness comes from secrets”, Sharon M. expressed to me while sharing about her storytelling and healing experience. A domestic violence, sexual assault and incest survivor, Sharon went on to state, “Telling the truth took the power away from my abusers.”

Survivors of domestic violence experience a multitude of undesired health related side effects of the abuse that they have experienced. Social isolation is a common power and control tactic used by asserters of violence in the control of their victims. And in turn leads to a decrease in social wellness which comes from a deep mutual connection with others. Along with abusers themselves, society as a whole seems to reinforce silence about abuse due to the “uncomfortable and unpopular” nature of the subject. Along with the uncomfortable nature of abuse, there is also the deeper socially constructed silence that is perpetrated on whole groups of people by our society in the form of racist, homophobic, classist, and sexist oppression, among other things.

Storytelling as a tool in breaking the silence is an accessible and valuable outlet for healing that can be used in group settings within programs, as well as in the prevention of domestic violence by getting to the root causes of the violence itself. Storytelling gives a voice to the voiceless, inducing a sense of truth, and can lead to an understanding of the causes of violence within our communities unfolded by those within the communities themselves.

As Sara Slayton, professional storyteller and two time cancer survivor from the La Crosse Wisconsin area, shared with me from her experience in using storytelling for the healing of herself and others, “stories help to erase fear...our shared experience helps us to know that we are not alone, that we are not crazy...The humanity of storytelling is what makes it work.”

There are multiple venues within domestic violence work to implement storytelling. Writing one's story as well as utilizing creative strategies such as poetry and fairytale creation are just some of the diverse ways that storytelling can take place. Intentional inclusion of storytelling within a support group setting can lead to a decrease in social isolation and an increase of social wellness by assisting in a connection with others within the group. As Sharon M. told me, “I couldn't do it alone... I tried.” She went on to say, “Sharing my story has helped me to bond to other people that are similar to me.”

Storytelling can be a powerful tool in getting to the root causes of violence in anti-violence work. Project NIA, out of the Chicago area just recently released their new anti-violence curriculum resource “Giving Name to the Nameless.” This new curriculum resource highlights poetry as “a particularly wonderful way to address sensitive issues with young people (like sexuality, violence, and self-esteem).” This curriculum is part of Project NIA's “Exploring the Roots of Violence” initiative, and includes over 30 poems that address gender-based violence as well as tips and suggestions for individuals who are interested in facilitating poetry circles with girls and young women.¹

As domestic violence advocates and practitioners we have the opportunity to provide outlets for voices of survivors to be heard and a survivor's truth to be validated and respected. Storytelling can serve as a great reminder of the reality that we are the lucky ones; for a survivor to trust us enough and allow us to be present to her story is truly a privilege. Being in the presence of a survivor we are reminded of their courage and strength. As Sharon M. made sure to remind me, “We are not just survivors, we are thrivers!” She went on to share with me a quote that she likes to use that to her encompasses her healing journey from multiple years of incest as a child to sexual assault and domestic violence as an adult: “Out of the ashes grows the rose.”

¹ Project NIA Exploring the Roots of Violence <http://rootsofviolence.wordpress.com/2010/10/29/now-available-giving-name-to-the-nameless/>

Tell It

Woman, Tell your story.

Your stories makes you whole.
Tell your stories.

Sing them. Write them. Yell them.

Only tell them-through poetry, prose and pain.
Tell your story.

By Alice Belcher

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Journey of CCLI

We are not nothing, at the same time we are recognized
I saw the room filled of beautiful color and diversity
Why are we here? Why have angels selected us?
An angel has not given up on us, she has recruited us
That's where we entered our beginning journey of CCLI
We became, grew, after we received each seed from the angels
Each seed has become part of us
We are colored but not selected as a "number"
We have many angel allies to support us
After learning each piece of the seeds
The power of collaboration between colored and ally
Shows that we have potential and with the seeds and the better knowledge we become
We can go back home and start our seeds
We are not letting the un-ally take over and it's our time to step up as a leader
Again, we are not selected as a token, but show our diversity
Diversity is a show of culture and the bonus is our potential leadership skills

By Alicia Mascarenas

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Me, Mine, Myself

Me, My likeness, my being, my essence, who describes
me? Who defines me? Who attempts to erase all that is
me? Who pushes me to the side, who demands of my
time? Me, My, Mine...me by myself, me all alone, me
where I stand, me when i fall, me calling my name & me
answering my cries, me declaring my voice & me singing
my...

By Valerie Nash

Untitled

I need you to hear me... I mean really hear
me...don't stare at me...hear me...don't pacify
me...hear me...don't cry for me... hear me...don't
speak for me...hear me..don't repeat what i
say...hear me...because lending me your ear will
strengthen me, encourage me and give me
hope...hear me... because I want to hear you...

By Valerie Nash

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The Questions Connected Cultures Leadership Institute (CCLI) Helped Me Answer

By Stephanie Pamperin

“Am I a Leader?”

This question was in the forefront of my mind when I first went to CCLI. I was unsure how I would fit. I was unsure if it would be another experience of being seen but not heard. My stomach turned as if I was on a rollercoaster but I walked in the room and sat down anyway.

I sat down in a room with women who understood me; who never asked why I used a walker or doubted my ability.

In this room I was safe. I could take down the walls I built around myself. I could tell the truth about my experience without being ashamed. These women helped me cleanse the wounds and shed the skin of abuse. They helped me peel back the labels given to me by society and began to decide for myself what not to wear. In shedding the skin of abuse and deciding what not to wear I watched my choices increase and my question become “What kind of leader am I?”

Each month that CCLI met they gave me a piece of the puzzle needed to answer that question. The cool part is that as I grow, the answers to that question changes. The answers to “What kind of Leader am I?” have evolved into more questions. As I face the end of my time in the CCLI my focus has shifted to answer the question “How can I use what others view as a disability to lead them to seeing beyond their own limitations to realize their own success?”

I have wrestled with this question for awhile now and I feel that the best way for me to answer it is to become a teacher. I feel that being a teacher of sociology and African-American history will give me the platform to refine and discuss the issues we raised in the CCLI.

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“What does Leadership mean to me?” *By Rhonda Kaenan*

That is a tough question to answer...I can best sum it up in two words...love and belief. I find that (for me) to be an effective leader I have to love and believe in what I am doing. If either of these two things is missing then I cannot effectively lead the “charge”.

Sometimes, we find that leadership is thrust upon us in a way that may not be of our choosing...but those who accept the responsibility (and it is a responsibility) are very often some of the finest leaders throughout history. Look at Moses...he was a great leader. He led God’s Chosen people out of slavery and into the Promised Land. This role was thrust upon him...he did not ask for it but he believed in the One who gave him the task and he loved the One who gave him the task. He loved and believed that this was the right thing to do. So, he did it.

I was led to take part in the 2010 Connected Cultures Leadership Institute for a reason...I am not clear yet what that reason was...but I believe that in time I will be shown the reasons but in the mean time I believe that whatever I am assigned to do, I now have the tools that will enable me to be an effective leader to those who need me.

My favorite part of the Institute has been getting to know and accept people from other cultures, from other walks of life, and learning how to relate to one another in a way that makes sense. We are all leaders in one form or another...if Moses can answer his call...how can I do any less?

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On Leadership in Mujeres Adelante

By Monica Mathison

As women involved in the anti-domestic violence community, dedication, commitment and leadership are important components to facilitating change. With leadership being perhaps the most important part of forming and sustaining a successful movement, it takes more than just sincerity or connections to be an effective leader.

First and foremost, leadership requires thinking in terms of serving others before serving yourself. Also, in order to play a part in the "big picture," it is necessary to engage in continuous training, to become knowledgeable of relevant local and national issues and to expand personal and professional networks through formal and informal means.

Having candor and integrity is also necessary for soundness and wholeness, where honesty in thoughts and actions are guided by principle and personal ethics. Because it places responsibilities on a person, over a group or a body of people, the ability to balance organized efforts over personal agendas determines organizational effectiveness.

Additionally, leadership requires communication and most importantly, feedback. To lead anything, from a small community group to a large political office, it requires the ability to assemble and disassemble information, distribute it and offer acknowledgment of its receipt. Since effective leaders are effective communicators, listening is perhaps the most important component to the communication process. Good leaders are good listeners.

The importance of establishing and maintaining community ties is another issue that cannot be overlooked. In order to be effective in the community, one cannot isolate from it. As an advocate for those suffering under domestic violence, leadership must ensure top-to-bottom outreach programs where doors are always seen as open and empathy is offered from within.

In light of this, Mujeres Adelante, under UNIDOS Against Domestic Violence, is an organization of women who have suffered but are now teaching others to overcome. Rising from victimhood to victory, with help from the agency, these women are being taught not only safety and life management skills, but they are also being trained to influence society for the better.

It takes an aim, a purpose and a method to address the problems of Domestic Violence, and effective leadership requires more than just sincerity and desire. When each is taught to teach, as an individual household improves, the community also improves. As former victims learn to address their physical, safety and esteem needs, the ongoing facilitated process leads to self-actualization where those lifted up can now help to lift others.

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How to Develop and Support Leadership that Contributes to Racial Justice

This article is the introduction from the first report of Leadership for a New Era series and was published in July 2010. Follow the link in the title (or <http://www.capd.org/pubfiles/pub-2010-07-02.pdf>) to see the complete report:

The publication is co-authored by: Terry Keleher, Applied Research Center (ARC); Sally Leiderman, Center for Assessment and Policy Development (CAPD); Deborah Meehan, Leadership Learning Community (LLC); Elissa Perry, Think.Do.Repeat.; Maggie Potapchuk, MP Associates; Professor John A. Powell, Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity; and Hanh Cao Yu, Ph.D., Social Policy Research Associates (SPR).

We live in a multiracial world, in which the nature and consequences of racism are in flux. Many people take pride in, and build on, the strengths of their racial and ethnic identities. Although many of the most egregious and overt examples of racism have been outlawed, it is still true that life chances and opportunities are heavily racialized— that is, determined by one's race or ethnicity. Differences by racial or ethnic identity remain, and in some instances are growing, in areas of well-being that include wealth, income, education, health, and even life expectancy. These differences are the result of historical and current practices that produce and reproduce racialized outcomes in a way that is not well revealed by looking through our old lens of race.

This publication, produced through a partnership of those in the racial justice and leadership development fields, explores the ways in which our current thinking about leadership may contribute to producing and maintaining racialized dynamics, and identifies a set of core competencies associated with racial justice leadership. Recommendations are included for ways to develop and support these competencies. This paper does not seek to address all positive leadership competencies, but rather to highlight some particular capacities and practices that can further racial justice in organizations, communities, and the broader society.

Leadership can play a critical role in either contributing to racial justice or reinforcing prevailing patterns of racial inequality and exclusion. In an ever-changing multicultural society, filled with racial complexities, the role that leadership plays requires continual re-examination and reshaping to contribute in positive ways toward creating a society in which opportunities and benefits are more equally shared.

We need to change our leadership development thinking and approaches in order to become part of the solution to racial inequalities. Failing to pay attention to structural racism in leadership development programs and nonprofit leadership leaves unchallenged several issues that undermine the effectiveness and sustainability of community-based organizations and racial justice work. Patricia St. Onge, et al., in “Embracing Cultural Competency: A Roadmap for Nonprofit Capacity Builders,” outlines some of these issues:

Failing to pay attention to structural racism in leadership development programs and nonprofit leadership leaves unchallenged several issues that undermine the effectiveness and sustainability of community-based organizations and racial justice work.

- A disproportionate percentage of executive directors and board members who do not reflect the general population
- The professionalization of nonprofit management in a way that overlooks the lack of connection between leaders and the communities they serve
- The unchallenged assumption that people of color can improve their leadership only as beneficiaries of highly prescriptive intervention from outside their communities, rather than from resources that support collective work and responsibility for self-determination in their own cultural context

Just as modern-day schools have had to adapt to classrooms with expanding racial, cultural, linguistic, and developmental diversity, situated in neighborhoods and regions with wide variations in resources and opportunities, so must leadership development program staff and funders continually rethink and retool practices in order to appropriately adapt approaches.

According to the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity, “The word ‘racism’ is commonly understood to refer to instances in which one individual intentionally or unintentionally targets others for negative treatment because of their skin color or other group-based physical characteristics. This individualistic conceptualization is too limited. Racialized outcomes do not require racist actors. Structural racism/racialization refers to a system of social structures that produces cumulative, durable, race-based inequalities. It is also a method of analysis that is used to examine how historical legacies, individuals, structures, and institutions work interactively to distribute material and symbolic advantages and disadvantages along racial lines.”

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The Economic Justice Project: Preparing Leaders in the New Era

By Vivian Larkin

The Allstate Foundation understands that money and finances play an important role for many women when considering leaving an abusive partner. The devastation of leaving a home, income, benefits, and economic security behind are struggles that all survivors of domestic violence must overcome, regardless of their education, job skills and personal earning potential. Many survivors of domestic violence have nominal or no access to money or have had their financial security destroyed by their abuser. The Allstate Foundation’s Economics Against Abuse Grant Programs were developed to help survivors build financial independence by addressing their unique economic needs. State coalitions and local programs are uniquely situated to identify and respond to the economic advocacy needs of survivors.

In 2010, the Foundation awarded more than \$650,000 to 9 state domestic violence coalitions through grants ranging from \$50,000 to \$100,000: Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Kansas Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence, Kentucky Domestic Violence Association, Michigan Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, New Mexico Coalition Against Domestic Violence, New York State Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Vermont Network Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence, and Wisconsin State Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

This Economic Empowerment Grant Program provides state coalitions and their local programs the opportunity to partner to develop or enhance projects that address the singular or multitude of economic needs and challenges that survivors face. While there are many types of programming that can build a survivors economic empowerment, The Allstate Foundation and NNEDV focus on financial education through the use of Allstate's Moving Ahead through Financial Management Curriculum, access to Individual Development Accounts, job readiness and job training and microenterprise.

The Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence received \$70,000 through the Allstate Foundation's Economic Empowerment Grants Program for the 2011, and a total of \$220,000 over the last 3 years. Wisconsin Coalition serves as a statewide support organization, and plays a central role in legislative advocacy on domestic violence issues. New funding for this coalition will help bridge the skill gap that many survivors encounter as they begin to enter the workforce. Job readiness, computer training classes and skill assessments courses will be provided to survivors in local programs. Additionally, women will receive access to credit counseling and Individual Development Accounts. A select number of survivors serve as leaders and role models, teaching other survivors to become self-sustaining through economic empowerment.

<http://www.allstatenewsroom.com/channels/News-Releases/releases/domestic-violence-survivors-gather-to-share-experiences-find-empowerment?query>

To see short video clips on some of the women in Wisconsin who have moved bene including Jenisee and others, check out the Allstate Foundation page:

<http://www.allstate.com/foundation/domestic-violence-program.aspx>

For two more great examples of leadership development projects check out:

The Immigrant & Refugee Women's Rights Project, a program of the Family Violence Prevention Fund.

The program educates women about their rights and develops their leadership so that they can become involved in changing policies that affect them. As emerging leaders, they play a critical role in supporting other women, informing institutions on their needs, demanding accessible services and teaching their peers how to address domestic violence and sexual assault.

<http://www.endabuse.org/content/features/detail/804/>

AND

Speak for Success **Women's Leadership Institute**, a year-long training and coaching program for women who have overcome adversity. Its vision is to give women the tools, support, and confidence to:

- Become leaders in corporations and non-profit organizations
- Start their own businesses
- Stand up and speak out as advocates for the prevention of domestic violence and other issues
- Be inspiring role models for their families and women everywhere

<http://speakforsuccesswomenleaders.org/>

AND

http://new.ywcasandiego.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=26:womens-leadership-institute-launches-program-for-domestic-violence-survivors&catid=7:news



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Thank you for your support!



Champion



Leader



Ally

Thanks to our sponsors, table captains, and guests for supporting WCADV's 5th Annual Together We Can End Domestic Violence luncheon. Your support allows WCADV to continue its many programs that support victims of domestic violence throughout Wisconsin.

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www.wcadv.org

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