

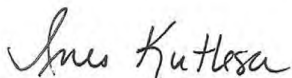
OUR MISSION IS TO PROVIDE DIVERSE SERVICES THAT INSPIRE PEOPLE TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF THEIR LIVES IN THEIR GREATEST TIME OF NEED.

FROM THE DESK OF THE CEO:

Dear Friends,

It is my pleasure to share Guardian Angel's 2025 Newsletter, as we reflect on a wonderful year of service and celebration. Our phenomenal staff reached 161,195 people, 16,498 through direct services, across six programs, and 144,697 through trainings and presentations. Our essential services were implemented 24-hours daily, seven days a week. We provided 11,078 nights of emergency shelter and 33,234 meals to adults and children fleeing the horrors of domestic violence. Additionally, 9,137 emergency hotline calls were fielded out of our 24-hour emergency shelter. We advanced our mission to provide diverse services that inspire people to improve the quality of their lives in their greatest time of need. This was an extra special year for me, personally, as I celebrated my 25 Year Anniversary with Guardian Angel Community Services, a tremendous honor, indeed! We also hosted the Council on Accreditation, following a year and a half of intensive preparations, for a multi-tiered site visit that ended in high praise and reaccreditation. We celebrated our mission at our 16th Annual Angelica: Dancing With Our Local Stars Gala with 550 guests and raised crucial funds for the agency. Additionally, memorable awareness activities were hosted throughout April and October for Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Awareness Month. We hope you enjoy reading about the exciting achievements of the last year. On behalf of our Board of Directors, staff, volunteers, and everyone at Guardian Angel Community Services, thank you for your support.

Sincerely,



Ines Kutlesa, MA. LCPC. LPHA. CCTP
Chief Executive Officer



Exchange Club Center for the Prevention of Child Abuse & Neglect, Honoring AnnMarie Scheiper



AnnMarie Scheiper accepting her award for 2025
Outstanding Field Instructor of the Year

We are thrilled to announce that our very own, AnnMarie Scheiper, Program Manager of Foster Care and the Exchange Club Center for the Prevention of Abuse and Neglect, was recognized by the College of Health and Human Services at Governor State University as the MSW program's 2025 Outstanding Field Instructor of the Year! This is a wonderful achievement and we are so proud of AnnMarie's expertise in supervising and mentoring our student interns in order to help them prepare for their future. In addition, AnnMarie served as President for the Exchange Club of Joliet for two years and has been heavily involved in the club's annual Spaghetti Lunch/Dinner Fundraiser. GACS is also incredibly grateful to James Ruzon, dedicated GACS Board Director and Exchange Club member, who has been instrumental to the success of the annual Spaghetti Lunch/Dinner over the years. Thank you AnnMarie, James, and all of the Exchange Club Center of Joliet for all you do for those in need!

17th Annual Angelica: Dancing With Our Local Stars Gala

GACS' celebrated the 17th annual Angelica: Dancing With Our Local Stars Gala & Fundraiser on April 5, 2025 at Bobak's Signature Events (Woodridge) welcoming more than 500 guests in attendance. "Angelica" is the annual event and fundraiser benefitting all of Guardian Angel's programs.

The event is highlighted by a dance competition for which local "stars" prepare a dance routine with a professional to perform. We were thrilled to have returning event emcee Pete Colarelli (Western Alliance Bank) lead us through a night of excitement and raising awareness of our mission to provide diverse services that inspire people to improve the quality of their lives in their greatest time of need. Guest speaker, Norma Peterson, founder of "Document The Abuse" shared her tragic story of losing her sister-in-law, Stacy Peterson, to domestic violence and shared her work on *The Evidentiary Abuse Affidavit* that empowers victims to securely document their experiences.



2025 Local Star Dancers and Dance Professionals strike a pose before the competition begins

Our local star dancers rose above and beyond the challenge and delivered unforgettable performances. Captivating the night were: Jeff Carey (Joliet Fire Department), Karen Cunningham (Silver Cross Medical Group), Brad Ehrich (Kurtz Memorial Chapel), Robert Miranda (Wintrust Community Bank), Sarah Palya-Rees (Joliet Chamber of Commerce and Industry), Melissa Rankine (Katherine Maloney & Associates), and Julie Troutman (Oswego School District). Concluding each dance routine, a panel of local star judges provided their "expert" commentary. 2025 judges included Angelica 2024 second place winner, Angie Aegerter (Fit Foundation) and Angelica 2022 local star dancer, Marc Senffner (Kurtz Memorial Chapel). Julie Troutman of Oswego School District took home the mirror ball trophy along with her partner, James Dutton, owner of Arthur Murray Dance (Naperville/Oakbrook Terrace).



GACS Staff gather for a group shot at the end of a successful evening of fundraising

We honored top donors and supporters, 2025 Award Recipients included: Old Plank Trail Bank, A Wintrust Bank – Corporate Donor of the Year; The Donald McNeeley Foundation – Private Donor of the Year; Robyn Bates – Volunteer of the Year and Ines Kutlesa, Guardian Angel's Chief Executive Officer – Guardian Angel of the Year, in celebration of her 25th Anniversary with the agency. Angelica 2025 was certainly a year to remember, and we are forever grateful to the many supporters and donors who make this event more and more memorable and fantastic, year after year.

Holiday Giving: Angels on Assignment

The 2024 holiday season was filled with so much joy this year, thanks to the generosity of so many! Throughout the month of December we received in-kind donations of wish list items, presents, and gift cards from more than 75 community groups, organizations and individuals! We were overwhelmed by the incredible spirit of giving. Pictured here are just a few examples of the many donations received during the holiday season. We are grateful to all of our donors for taking the time to shop and deliver the wonderful gifts and supplies. We are also thankful to our dedicated volunteers, Michele Vana & April Veerman, who helped sort and organize gifts for distribution, making it so joyful for our clients and their families.



Chief Development Officer, Jane Ukleja and Senior Development Specialist, Val Muersch accepting donations in December 2024



Groundwork Domestic Violence Program & Suzy's Caring Place celebrate Domestic Violence Awareness Month (DVAM)



GACS staff volunteering as the "Gatekeepers" at Witches Night Out 2024

Every year during October: Domestic Violence Awareness Month (DVAM), GACS participates in many awareness events and activities. October 2024 was another memorable year for our Groundwork Domestic Violence Program and Suzy's Caring Place - Transitional Living Program. We had a successful awareness month, hosting and participating in a variety of events!

This past fall, we kicked off the month of October with the 14th Annual Angels Against Abuse 5K Walk & Run held on October 5, 2024. The annual 5K was held at a new location, Lewis University, long-time partner and supporter of Guardian Angel. A keynote speech and survival story was shared by Illinois State Senator, Rachel Ventura. Employees of long-time agency supporters, Chicago Tube and Iron attended the event in large numbers including Chairman and CEO Dr. Donald McNeeley and his family. Additional funds were raised through raffle baskets, ticket sales, and generous donations from our community supporters.

Witches Night Out is a costume fundraiser for women who want to make a difference in another woman's life. Proceeds go to Will County Agencies serving women and children. The agencies selected provide services and support that help women secure their independence, regain their dignity, and become self-sufficient (www.witchesnightout.com). The event is held annually at the Jacob Henry Mansion (Joliet) and has continued to grow in popularity, year after year, with tickets selling out in record time. Additionally, Guardian Angel staff serve on the committee and volunteer every year as the "gatekeepers" and scan thousands of tickets for attendees, as they arrive. GACS was so thankful to, again, have been selected as a recipient of proceeds from the event.

Grundy County Take Back the Night (TBTN) was hosted on October 23, 2024 in Morris, Illinois where the agency operates a satellite office. Grundy TBTN is a free event, organized by our Groundwork Program and held annually at the Grundy County Court House. This year's event included a keynote survivor speaker in association with the Morris Women's Club. The event concluded with a "March for Awareness" walk to the Grundy County Historical Museum where it concluded. Grundy TBTN would not be possible without assistance provided by the Morris Women's Club throughout the years.

The 25th annual Will County Take Back the Night (TBTN) event took place October 24, 2024 at Crossroads Church in Joliet. The event was free to the public and included resource tables, a vigil honoring lives lost to domestic violence in Will county, and a march in the surrounding area. Annually, TBTN brings survivors, supporters, activists and community leaders together in a call to end violence. The 2024 event featured speaker Mary Jo Claffy, who shared the story of her son, Mitch, who lost his life in an abusive, same-sex relationship in April of 2022 at the age of 31. For more information on the annual Will County Take Back the Night event, visit www.willtbtn.com

GACS is eternally grateful to all of those who show their support to the agency, especially by attending or otherwise supporting our awareness events. For more information on the programs benefiting from DVAM event proceeds, visit our webpage: www.gacsprograms.org



GACS Staff including Groundwork Domestic Violence Program and Suzy's Caring Place Program gather for a group photo at the conclusion of the Angels Against Abuse 5K

Foster Care Celebrates National Foster Care Month



The winning apparel design submitted anonymously by a child in Foster Care

Our Foster Care Program celebrated the month of May: National Foster Care Month. In preparation, the foster care program held a contest where foster care youth were invited to submit a design to be used on apparel in order to promote and spread awareness. Once all applications were submitted, the Foster Care program staff voted on a winning design to be used on apparel that was sold in preparation for May 2025. The contest, and subsequent apparel fundraiser held through Custom Ink, helped the program raise more than \$1,000. In addition, the program participated in outreach events including social media where they shared success stories, encouraged followers to get the word out in order to reach their goal of 5 new foster home applications in the month of May, and put a spotlight on Foster Parents at Guardian Angel Community Services: Foster Parents Jasmine and Chris, who have been with Guardian Angel since 2023, have welcomed 24 children into their home, assisted with 6 Long-Term placements, and have taken in 18 children who were in need of emergency placement. Jasmine and Chris continually answer the call to provide a safe and loving home to Youth in Care- whether it be for one night, one week, one month, or one year. The Foster Care Program is so grateful for the countless individuals and families who supported their efforts during the awareness month of May, and of course for all of those who champion their cause, year-round.

Recap of April: Sexual Assault Awareness Month



Saul Good Trio performs at "Songs for Survivors"

April, recognized nationally as Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM), was highlighted by many exciting awareness events and activities hosted by our Sexual Assault Service Center (SASC). 2025 was a year to remember! A music-themed event, "Songs for Survivors" was held on April 25, 2025 at Pelican Harry's Bar & Grill in Homer Glen. The event featured music by the talented Full Circle Acoustic duo, comprised of former SASC staff member Janice Masokas and husband, Mike. The second half of the evening featured Saul Good Trio, who generously donated their time to perform at the event. Funds were raised through a split the pot and raffle benefitting survivors of sexual assault. The annual "Walk a Mile" awareness event was held at the Joliet Public Library, downtown location, on April 30, 2025. The event featured a rally, an educational presentation given by staff, including a survivor story that was shared anonymously, raffles and awareness activities followed by attendees participating in a mile-long march to bring attention to sexual assault & gender-based violence. The program was grateful for Harrah's Casino Joliet volunteers who assisted with this event, as they have for many years! This month, Denim Day was celebrated in conjunction with Walk a Mile-on April 30, 2025. For the past 25 years, Peace Over Violence has run its Denim Day campaign on a Wednesday in April in honor of Sexual Violence Awareness Month. The campaign was originally triggered by a ruling by the Italian Supreme Court where a rape conviction was overturned because the justices felt that since the victim was wearing tight jeans she must have helped her perpetrator remove them, thereby implying consent (peaceoverviolence.org). On this day, allies of the cause are encouraged to wear denim to show their support. More information on the annual awareness events and Sexual Assault Awareness Month can be found at gacsprograms.org/saam.



Full Circle Acoustic performing at Songs for Survivors



Walk a Mile attendees gather for a group photo before beginning the mile-long march in Downtown Joliet

Partner Abuse Intervention Program (PAIP) at GACS

This past year has been one of many successes and milestones for our Partner Abuse Intervention Program (PAIP). The PAIP program, established in 2010, provides perpetrators of domestic violence with appropriate and effective services



PAIP Facilitator/Coordinator T'cia Chatman & Bilingual Intake Specialist Guadalupe Anguiano at the Will County Courthouse - Criminal Felony and Misdemeanor Domestic Violence Call Space

so they will recognize and accept accountability for their actions, while maintaining a focus on victim safety. Education is provided to individuals who cause harm in order to reduce and prevent domestic violence. In very exciting news, as of March 2025, our PAIP personnel now have a space in the Criminal Felony and Misdemeanor Domestic Violence Call space at the Will County Courthouse. The PAIP Program has also shared the following success stories:

Family Reunification: Both fathers and mothers participating in the program have made substantial progress, with some regaining custody of their children through the DCFS court system. Their dedication to change has had a direct and positive impact on their families.

Employment Milestones: Two program participants recently secured union jobs, enhancing their ability to support themselves and their families with stability and long-term opportunities.

From Homelessness to Stability: One gentleman entered the program while living in a shelter and unemployed. Through consistent effort and engagement with PAIP, he successfully graduated, having secured both permanent housing and gainful employment.

These stories are a testament to the transformative power of intervention, accountability, and support. We celebrate the resilience and progress of our participants as they work toward building safer, healthier futures.

Save the Date

THE ANNUAL GALA BENEFITTING GUARDIAN ANGEL'S PROGRAMS

ANGELICA

dancing with our local stars

SATURDAY APRIL 11, 2026

BOBAK'S SIGNATURE EVENTS | WOODRIDGE, IL



WWW.GACSPROGRAMS.ORG/ANGELICA

BOARD OF DIRECTORS RECOGNITION

Beth Delrose's "Share the Love" Donation Drive



Annually, for the past several years, our wonderful Board Vice Chairperson, Beth Delrose, has organized a "Share the Love" donation drive for Valentine's Day. Beth collects donations of items from our Wish List from the community and from her real estate clients with Keller Williams Infinity in the months leading up to February and then drops off her collection to us so that we can distribute the much needed items to our clients. We are so grateful for the effort that Beth puts into this project, year after year, and all that she does for us year-round!

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ADAM UNDERHILL

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GACS' CORE PROGRAMS:



EXCHANGE CLUB CENTER

Parenting classes for the prevention of child abuse & neglect

FOSTER CARE

Nurturing and safe homes for children, foster home licensing & support services



GROUNDWORK DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROGRAM

Comprehensive services for individuals & families impacted by domestic violence

PARTNER ABUSE INTERVENTION PROGRAM

Support & education for the development of healthy relationships



SEXUAL ASSAULT SERVICE CENTER

Comprehensive services for individuals & families impacted by sexual assault

SUZY'S CARING PLACE

Transitional housing & support services for survivors of domestic violence



MAIN OFFICE:
168 N. OTTAWA ST.
JOLIET, IL 60432

PHONE:
815-729-0930

FAX:
815-744-6087

**GRUNDY COUNTY
SATELLITE OFFICE:**
GROUNDWORK
815-941-2261

*Domestic violence and sexual assault services available at Crete, Planfield, and Morris Satellite Offices.
Please call 815-729-0930.*

CONNECT:



www.gacsprograms.org



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24-Hr. HOTLINES:
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
815-729-1228

SEXUAL ASSAULT
815-730-8984