

The History Behind Center For A Non Violent Community

A Look Back and Moving Forward

by Founding Sisters:

Darlene Baumgarten, Liz Sewell, Linda DuTemple, and Pat Cervelli

Executive Directors: Heather Carter and Laura Sunday



Renewing Lives...Restoring Futures

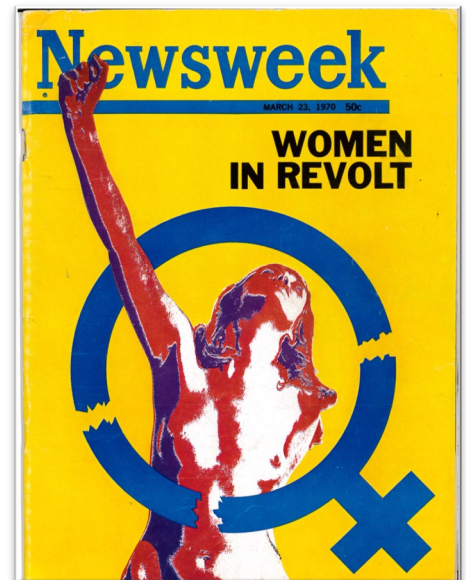
The History Behind CENTER FOR A NON VIOLENT COMMUNITY

The *Center For A Non Violent Community* (CNVC) began life in 1975 as an informal group of women helping women. This was only 8 years after the first Women's Liberation groups began in New York and Chicago (1967), started by women who passionately believed in social change. They were convinced that changing the status of women would change society, just as their predecessors, the 19th century suffragists, believed once women had the vote, they could achieve equality.

The Women's Liberation Movement was based on the discovery by countless women, through consciousness raising groups, that in fact women are *not* inferior to men, *not* less capable or less intelligent, that women are *not* in fact "the weaker sex," and that though different, women are every bit the equal of men and entitled to the same benefits society gives to men. Women began talking to each other about previously forbidden topics, namely, their relationships with boyfriends, partners and spouses, their sexuality, and their response to how they were treated in the world. Words like *patriarchy* were defined; *feminism*, *sexism*, *male supremacy* and *male chauvinism*, *women's oppression*, and *women's liberation* became part of the lexicon. Women responded on a visceral level to the ideal of equality, and to their growing awareness of oppression, subjugation, and being judged on one's looks.

The movement caught on like wildfire nationwide. Soon women all over the U.S. and in other developed nations were discussing equal opportunity for women of all races and classes, equal pay, sexuality, women as "sex objects," reproductive rights, changing women's role in the family to that of equal partner, and the need for public day care. They looked at women's history through the lens of women's historical oppression. They studied the women's rights movement of the 19th century. Class, race and the economic system were important issues in their analysis of the social order. Their ideas were ridiculed and the women were made fun of, but the masses of women persisted on many fronts and succeeded in making huge changes in male-female relationships, not only structurally but in individual awareness and behavior. Fundamental changes were made in hiring practices and how women were treated in society.

However, there is still a long way to go to achieve true equality for all women. The vision of Women's Liberation activists included a world where there would be opportunity for everyone, regardless of gender, race, class or sexual orientation; a world where women and men are equal partners not only in the family, but in the workplace and in political institutions; a world where child rearing is valued; and a world where women have control over their own bodies and their reproduction.



Cover of Newsweek,
March 23, 1970

“Many women who once blamed themselves for being abused found the violence was not their fault.”

Soon women in consciousness-raising groups began sharing their secret stories of being raped or beaten by partners, things they had been too ashamed to tell. Now, with the strength of a movement behind them, they felt safe to divulge. Women came to see that “the personal is political:” what one woman experiences is also experienced by many; that these issues are not just personal but also political since they were embedded in the social system and required a political solution rather than just an individual one.

They understood violence against women as a method of keeping women “in their place.” Many women who once blamed themselves for being abused found the violence was not their fault. This led directly to the formation of rape crisis centers and shelters for battered women in the early 1970s by informal networks of women, often led by women who were themselves survivors of abuse. Eventually, the even deeper secret of being molested as a child began to emerge as a result of the creation of women’s centers where women knew they could find non-judgmental support. A heretofore taboo topic was brought into the sunlight; support groups were formed, therapists were trained in the issue from a feminist perspective, and solutions were developed.

What was soon to be called the *Mother Lode Women’s Crisis Center*, grew out of a Columbia College self-defense class for women taught by Darlene Baumgarten, who had trained in self-defense with the pioneering rape crisis center, *Bay Area Women Against Rape (BAWAR)** in the early 1970s. An alarming number of women in the class shared about having been raped. Others disclosed they were beaten by partners. Darlene Baumgarten found that often more than one in ten class members had been raped. She decided to begin offering the women a supportive listening ear and to those women who needed a safe place to stay, a refuge.

In 1975, Darlene Baumgarten, together with concerned women from the self-defense class, formed a loose-knit organization. She had *BAWAR* staff come to Sonoma to train them in the most effective ways to help rape survivors. The group met with local law enforcement officials to explain their mission. They gave the officers cards with the name and phone number of a volunteer to be given to women they encountered who were raped or beaten by a partner. Law enforcement officers would call the volunteers when they identified a rape survivor or battered woman; the volunteer would meet with the survivor and often offered her a safe stay in the volunteer’s home. This was the beginning of the *Mother Lode Women’s Crisis Center*.



Founding sisters: Liz Sewell, Pat Cervelli, Linda DuTemple, and Darlene Baumgarten, sharing at a CNVC Staff Meeting, 2017.

law enforcement in prosecuting domestic violence and sexual assault cases if the survivor wanted to go through the criminal justice process. These relationships were key to the success of the *Mother Lode Women’s Crisis Center*.

*BAWAR, (Bay Area Women Against Rape) formed in 1971, was the first rape crisis center in the country.

“The CEDAR shelter... was considered a model for rural programs in California.”

For over two years, under the leadership of Darlene Baumgarten, these advocates helped raped and battered women, recruited more members, did educational outreach to community organizations, held public forums with law enforcement, medical and behavioral health professionals, and generally expanded the organization despite a lack of funding. They developed a protocol with Tuolumne General Hospital for the examination of rape survivors as well as an agreement with law enforcement to use the rape kit for the collection of evidence from a rape survivor. Until this time no rape cases had been prosecuted in Tuolumne County. This soon changed.

The members in the group looked to the community for financial support. They enlisted the support of the District Attorney, Tom Marovich, who helped them obtain a \$2,500 grant in 1978. They used the funding to pay for a crisis line via an answering service, to pay for overnight motel stays for women and children escaping from an abusive partner, and to buy stationery. The Office of Juvenile Criminal Justice Planning gave them use of free office space in Sonora. They named their fledgling organization *The Mother Lode Women's Crisis Center* (MLWCC).

The MLWCC continued to develop and that year incorporated with a board of directors, chaired by Liz Sewell. The mission statement of *The Mother Lode Women's Crisis Center* (MLWCC) was:

The MLWCC is a feminist organization dedicated to ending violence against women. It is based upon the premise that women who seek services from MLWCC and women who work for MLWCC participate together in ending this violence. We identify with all women as we work to break down the barriers of discrimination with regard to race, class, sexual orientation, and gender. We believe in the personal strength and power of each individual. We advocate the right of every woman to make the decisions which affect her life. We support the emergence of all women as strong, independent and self-assured people and will tailor our policies and procedures to this end.

They received funding in 1980 from a federal jobs program, CETA, and hired staff with Darlene Baumgarten serving as the first director. A sexual assault support program was one of the first programs set up. By the end of the year they opened a shelter for battered women and their children, named CEDAR (Conscious Effort Directed at Rediscovery). The shelter, directed by Pat Cervelli, was among the first rural shelters in the country, and one of the very few anywhere to implement a children's program. It was considered a model for rural programs in California. CEDAR was staffed around the clock by volunteers and the two staff who ran the shelter.

1982 saw major additions to MLWCC programs. Sexual Assault Program Coordinator Linda DuTemple reached out to Sonora High School and began doing presentations on sexual assault and violence prevention to freshmen Life Skills classes.

“The award-winning CAPE and high school violence prevention curriculum were regarded as statewide models.”

In the fall, convinced it was time to speak out publicly against violence against women, staff organized the first *Take Back the Night** march and rally in Sonora. It became an annual event for the next 14 years.

Besides holding weekly support groups for rape survivors and battered women, the center offered free assistance in filing a temporary restraining order. The center's programs were kept running by a dedicated group of approximately 30 volunteers, all of whom had participated in a 30-hour training designed by board member, Nancy Spence. That training remains the core of today's 60-hour volunteer training. The crisis line was staffed 24 hours a day by volunteers, many of whom regularly stayed overnight at the shelter.

The following year, the *MLWCC* began the school-based Child Abuse Prevention and Education (CAPE) program, focusing on child sexual abuse, for K-3. Under the direction of Linda Maureen, and with state funding, the program was expanded to include all forms of child abuse and was eventually presented in all K-8 classes in county schools. Again, *MLWCC* was a pioneer among women's centers, very few of which were doing school programs at this time. The award-winning CAPE program and the high school violence prevention curricula were regarded as statewide models. Staff were contracted to train staff at other programs in the state in conducting school-based presentations.

In those first years, the main source of funding was the state Office of Criminal Justice Planning. Each spring, the staff agonized over whether the funding would be renewed. When it was cut, the staff shared equally the cuts in hours.

Project Opportunity, a national award-winning substance abuse prevention program, began in 1985. Designed by board member Nancy Spence and funded through the efforts of Chris Bitonti with Tuolumne County Mental Health, Drug and Alcohol prevention funds, it was a 7-month personal growth program for women going through major life transitions such as divorce, loss of employment, death of a loved one, as well as leaving an abusive partner or recovering from a sexual assault. Its goal was to enhance self-awareness, self-acceptance and independence. It focused on positive coping strategies for managing life changing transitions, and helped identify and transform limiting habits and beliefs. This program served hundreds of women over two decades.

In 1986, the City of Sonora showed its support for the work of *MLWCC* by donating a 3-bedroom house (at \$1 annual rent) in Sonora to be used as a shelter. It is still used today. Funding was later obtained for transitional, longer-term housing with six family living units. The Transitional House opened in 2005.

* A candlelight march followed by a rally and with speakers and music on violence against women, particularly sexual violence. Early marches were often deliberately women-only in order to symbolize women's individual walk through darkness and to demonstrate that women united can resist fear and violence.

“Our rural *Women's Center* would not have survived ...[without] the dedicated staff members and hundreds of advocates who volunteered .”

To better describe the agency's expanded programs for women, the word *crisis* was dropped and the name officially changed to the *Mother Lode Women's Center (MLWC)* in 1985. And so it remained until the *MLWC* closed its doors in 1996 due to loss of funding, programs and staff. Within months, early members of the *MLWC* board and staff, Darlene Baumgarten, Liz Sewell, Linda DuTemple, and Pat Cervelli got together and began a new women's center called *Mountain Women's Resource Center (MWRC)*. They formed a board, incorporated, and were able to have the lost funding restored for sexual assault and domestic violence services. *MWRC* opened four months after closure, in early 1997, with a multi-year grant from Soroptimist International of Twain Harte and little disruption in programs for rape survivors and battered women. School-based prevention programs were expanded, and soon support groups for survivors of sexual assault, domestic violence and child sexual abuse were initiated.

Our rural *Women's Center* would not have survived for these past 40 years were it not for the dedicated staff members and hundreds of advocates who volunteered to walk hand in hand with survivors of rape and domestic violence. Women and men in our community have trained to support others through peer counseling. They have helped improve the lives of those who have experienced violence and didn't know where to turn. Without volunteers of all ages stepping up, phone calls from women needing help would not be answered nor would our shelter, assistance in obtaining a TRO or peer-counseling exist. The need for our *Women's Center* has been embraced by Tuolumne County, as women and agencies acknowledge the need to end violence against women.

This history is important to us. It is crucial to recognize our roots in the Women's Liberation Movement, a movement for social change for all women everywhere. We organized, we examined our differences, we unified, we celebrated our commonalities, and we publicly declared: *Women will no longer be abused!*



Timeline:

- 1967:** Women's Liberation groups form in New York City and Chicago; feminism takes the country by storm.
- 1971:** BAWAR forms in Oakland, CA, the first rape crisis center in the country.
- 1973:** Darlene Baumgarten, living in Berkeley, volunteers at BAWAR and is trained in self-defense.
- 1974:** Darlene moves to the foothills and begins teaching self-defense at Columbia College.
- 1975:** Darlene gathers a group of self-defense class students and friends to found the *Mother Lode Women's Crisis Center* which offers a hotline for rape survivors and battered women, as well as refuge in their homes.
- 1978:** *Mother Lode Women's Crisis Center* receives its first funding, \$2,500, from the Regional Criminal Justice Planning Board to serve Tuolumne and Calaveras Counties.
- 1978:** *MLWCC* obtains its first office, free space in the Rose Court Apartments, now the site of the Francisco Building on Yaney Street in Sonora. *MLWCC* incorporates and forms a board of directors.
- 1980:** *MLWCC* qualifies for CETA funding and hires staff.
- 1980:** CEDAR, the shelter for battered women and their children, opens in November.
- 1982:** The first high school program addressing sexual assault and woman battering begins. The first *Take Back the Night* march and rally is held in downtown Sonora.
- 1983:** CAPE launches.
- 1985:** *MLWCC* launches *Project Opportunity*, an award-winning substance abuse prevention program for women.
- 1986:** The City of Sonora leases *MLWCC* a 3-bedroom house to use as a shelter for \$1 per year.
- 1986:** *MLWCC* changes its name to *Mother Lode Women's Center* to reflect the breadth of its prevention programs.
- 1996:** Mother Lode Women's Center closes its doors in November.
- 1997:** In March, *Mountain Women's Resource Center* is incorporated as a new non-profit to replace *Mother Lode Women's Center* with state funding and a 3-year grant from Soroptimist International of Twain Harte .
- 2005:** Transitional shelter is opened with six separate units where a battered woman and her family can live for up to two years.
- 2009:** Name changed to *Center For A Non Violent Community*.
- 2009:** Estate Sale Business established.
- 2009:** Training for *CNVC* staff in *Nonviolent Communication* resulting in a shared leadership model and the reinforcement of feminism, as well as reflecting the core values of *CNVC*. Staff also trained in *Strength-Based Leadership*, which allowed staff to recognize their individual key assets as well as the teams' they work with and within.
- 2012:** Shared Leadership Model implemented: Heather Carter, Direct Services Director & Laura Sunday, Community Services Director.
- 2014:** Partnered with Mathiesen Memorial Health Clinic to provide domestic violence and sexual assault counseling services on-site in Jamestown.
- 2017:** Emergency Shelter renamed "The Guardian House" & Transitional Housing renamed "The Sunshine Houses."
- 2019:** *CNVC* main office relocated to 542 W. Stockton Street, Sonora, in April 2019.
- 2020:** Purchase of The Guardian House made possible by Liz Sewell.

A Little More About Us Today

Mission Statement

CNVC actively supports the right of all people to live their lives free from interpersonal violence. We foster healthy relationships with self, partners, family, and peers. We value the feminist principles of self-empowerment over self-desertion and of shared decision-making over dominance. We are ardently dedicated to building community which is interdependent, collaborative, respectful of diversity, and supportive of peaceful solutions to conflict.

Purpose

- ◇ To foster a healthy and violence-free community
- ◇ To change social norms which contribute to the acceptance of violence and discrimination.
- ◇ To partner within the community to create safety and healing for those surviving violence,
- ◇ To impact policies that enhance equal rights, community health, and the prevention of personal and interpersonal violence
- ◇ To promote programs which build personal empowerment and self-worth, and contribute to political and social equality while respecting diversity.

Values

CNVC seeks to create a structure that encourages nonviolent communication, creative and flexible decision-making, collaborative power structures, skill building, resource sharing, and a continuing personal and organizational learning process that contributes to individual and community empowerment. We believe that all people deserve respect, dignity, and acceptance; and this organization endeavors to embody this belief. Therefore, the traditional Board of Directors of this organization will function as a Guardian of processes encouraging equal participation, collaborative decision-making, and power equity while upholding the legal responsibilities of this organization.

CNVC core values are:

Compassion ~ Empowerment ~ Teamwork ~ Courage ~ Integrity ~ Creativity

Strategies for achieving these core values will include behaving respectfully, utilizing effective communication skills, and practicing empathy.



Center For A Non Violent Community

(209) 588-9305

(209) 533-3401 24-hour crisis line

542 W. Stockton Street, Sonora, 95370

www.nonviolentcommunity.org

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