



Happy Holidays

from RSAC Staff



Dispelling the Darkness

*More info
on pages
3 & 4!*



Raising Hope with RSAC



*Meet our new staff!
Pages 6 & 7!*



RockfordSexualAssaultCounseling.org

December 2021 V6

Erica Engler, Executive Director

Grateful

This has been quite a year for Rockford Sexual Assault Counseling! While there have been challenges, I want to share the wonderful that's been happening with you all!

To begin with, as the year has gone on, RSAC services have continued to return to a more normal, pre-pandemic place. While we still offer telehealth and phone counseling as ways to provide options for clients who do not feel safe coming in-person, we are seeing an increase in people coming in-person and a huge increase in the amount of Prevention programming in the schools this year. I cannot stress enough how important it is to have our Preventionists in the schools doing the Erin's Law presentations (an Illinois state mandate that teaches about sexual assault/abuse and consent in age appropriate ways for our pre-K-12th grade students). What we know is when Preventionists are doing in-person presentations, they often receive disclosures from kids who have been sexually abused/assaulted. Once that disclosure happens, those kids can get the help, support and protections they deserve!



We've also been fortunate that we are fully staffed and have added four new, wonderful people this year! This includes two Preventionists, a Volunteer Coordinator, and a Therapist. As I look around RSAC and the people who work here, I always feel very fortunate. We have a wonderful, caring, hard-working team here at RSAC, and I'm very proud of that!

I also want to give a huge shout out to our volunteers! These dedicated individuals give their time, talent and efforts to RSAC, and the survivors we serve. At a time when the world is so different, we appreciate that they still serve as volunteers in many different capacities as medical advocates, board members, office assistance, public awareness, fundraising, and more. We cannot do what we do without them, and they are an integral part of our RSAC team!

RSAC has also held two fundraisers this fall/winter (pg 4 & 5) and the support we received from businesses and community members was so heart-warming and appreciated!

As we go into the holidays and new year, RSAC has so much to be grateful for and you are a part of our gratitude! Take care and happy holidays to you all!

Erica Engler, LCPC

RSAC Executive Director



Moving On...

RSAC is so excited to announce the main office in Rockford will be moving locations in April 2022! We have been in our current location for almost 22 years and have outgrown the space. We have signed a lease for a property that gives us 2,000 more square feet to accommodate our growth! While moving is a big task, RSAC staff is so excited about the move as it lets our Winnebago County staff be under one roof a bit more comfortably and allows space for extras! Please look for future emails about our wish list for the new office and check our Facebook page for announcements too!

Quick Links

[For Survivors](#)

[For Significant others](#)

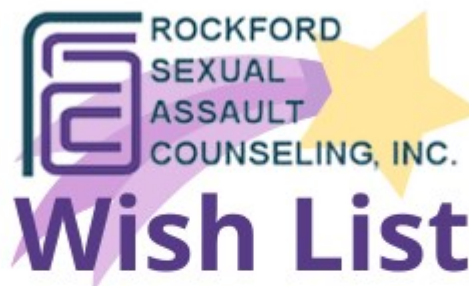
[Resources List](#)

[Coping Skills List](#)

[Donate to RSAC](#)

[Contact RSAC](#)

Click [HERE](#) for RSAC's wish list for counseling services and office essentials. You may also click the "Donate to RSAC" link above to make a monetary donation!





Dispelling the Darkness

Thank you to those who donated and participated in our annual Dispelling the Darkness fundraiser. This year, we welcomed Honorary Retired Judge Collins and Representative Maurice West to speak. We also were honored to hear a survivor story and advocate for victim rights. She also explained survivors are not alone in their feelings and to reach out. We are so grateful for the support in our communities. We look forward to next years' vigil!

Thank you to our donors/sponsors...

Maureen Mostacci	S.B.R.
Nadia Johnson	Jan Benedict
Cameron Davis	Changes Counseling
Julia Gordon	would like to donate
Rosecrance	in recognition of all
Northwest Bank	of the survivors we
Sue Theden & Sandy	have had the honor
Falconer	to work with over the
Freedom River	past 11years.
Defense LLC	Lisa Ditzler
Paula & Terry	Anthony and
Hancock	Barbara D'Sousa
Erica	Lynn Kearney
& Jeramy Engler	Karen Polkowski-
Andrell Bragg-Shaw	Armstrong
Royal & Bonnie	Tina Pumilia
Taylor	Sasha
David Klepitsch	Laurie Sievert
Quo-Shayla Brewer	Marjorie Glaser
Mary Buzzell	Anonymous Donors



[Thank You Video](#)

[Watch](#)
[the Vigil](#)
[here!](#)



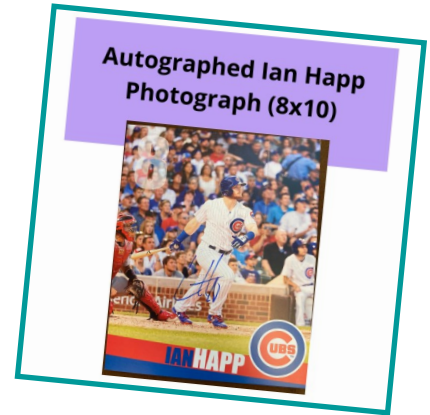
Raising Hope with RSAC



Raising Hope with RSAC was so fortunate this year to have local businesses donate! Click the link below to visit the fundraising Facebook group!
We welcome you as a new member!

Thank you to our donors/sponsors...

- Chicago Cubs
- Oriental Trading Company
- Field Museum
- Chicago Zoological Society
- Sam's Club
- Lowe's
- Beef-a-roo
- Lino's
- Buffalo Wild Wings
- Baker Street Burgers
- Lavelle's Wood Burning
- Noodles & Company
- Metro Center
- Jason's Deli
- Target
- Starbucks
- Home Depot
- Applebee's
- Culver's
- Macianos
- Lake Geneva Boat Tours



Join Raising Hope with RSAC [HERE!](#)

Introduction: Katie Cacchinelli

Preventionist



I am so thrilled to be part of this amazing team at RSAC. I grew up in Stillman Valley, before moving to DeKalb for college. I graduated from Northern Illinois University. My husband Matt and I have moved multiple times over the last 12 years, but we have been back in the Rockford area for just over 4 years. We have two daughters, Genevieve is 7 and Illa is 4, and they are our whole world.

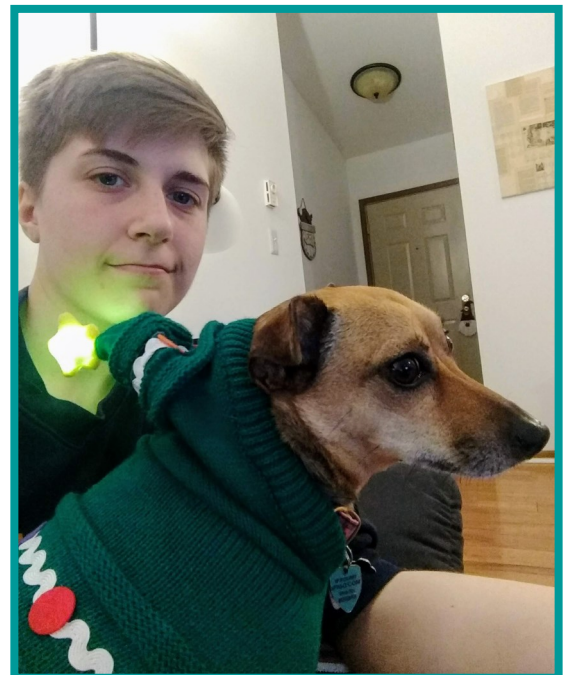
I only work two days a week, but I find so much joy in teaching prevention. If I have the ability to make a difference in even one child's life, then I have done my job. Knowing that I can help give a child a voice to be heard is what makes me excited to come to work.

To schedule a presentation at your business or school, please contact our Prevention Coordinator, Jimmie Getter [HERE!](#)

Introduction: Morgan Carlson

Preventionist

Hello everyone! My name is Morgan Carlson. I use they/them pronouns, and I am the new full-time preventionist. I just moved to the Rockford area a few months ago. I'm sure driving out to all of these schools will get me familiar with the area very quickly! I previously did prevention education for the University of Illinois Urbana- Champaign while I was a student there. I graduated with a degree in psychology. After school I stopped doing prevention, but I still had a passion for it. When looking for a new job in Rockford I saw an opening at RSAC and it was fate. I'm so excited to be working with all of you!



Introduction: Samantha Thomas

Therapist

Even though I'm new to being a therapist, I have actually been at RSAC for over 6 years! I started my journey at RSAC as a volunteer which was a transformative experience. It made me realize that this is what I wanted to do and when the part time position of Volunteer Coordinator opened up, I was excited for the opportunity. After a few months, a part time Preventionist position opened up and I happily began working full-time at RSAC in these two very different roles. After some time, I transitioned to full time Prevention work which was also influential in helping me find my way. During this time, I realized I wanted to go back to school and pursue my Master's in Social Work to become a therapist. I knew I wanted to continue my work at RSAC and expand my capacity to serve this community. I stepped into the role of child and adolescent outreach therapist through the Winnebago County Community Mental Health grant RSAC was awarded. My expertise in the prevention field will lend to my experiences as an outreach therapist and likewise my experience as a therapist will bring great value to the community through prevention. I believe that the core of both prevention education and therapy is a healthy relationship that is essential to healing both the individual and the community. I am greatly looking forward to the impact I can have on children in our community by providing therapy and in my continued role as a Preventionist.



Introduction: Jackie Zakarija

Therapist

I am a recent graduate from Judson University with a Masters Degree in Clinical Mental Health Counseling. I interned at Clarity Counseling in Rockford and while there, obtained my EMDR training certificate. During graduate school I volunteered for Unity Hospice and Rockford Sexual Assault Counseling. I am excited to be a part of this agency, which is amazing asset to our community. I join as the new adolescent outreach therapist through the Winnebago County Community Health Grant. I am excited to empower, encourage and walk along side of the brave survivors that utilize RSAC services. My therapeutic approach is person center and I feel privileged to not only be part of this team but to have the opportunity to support our community through healing and hope.



Volunteer Advocate Spotlight

Blake Heinzeroth

Hello! My name is Blake Heinzeroth and I'm a male advocate/volunteer here at Rockford Sexual Assault Counseling. I went through my advocate training in July of 2017, so I'm going on my fifth year with the organization. I first decided to become involved with RSAC because of all the disclosures of abuse and assault that my friends had shared with me over the years. I have always been struck by the pervasiveness of this issue and as I listened to story after story, there emerged some very common themes: self-blame, anxiety, struggles with self-esteem, and just general unresolved trauma to one degree or another. I've always endeavored to give my friends a safe space to talk about these issues, but I was excited to find an organization like RSAC that could offer a more formal, therapeutic approach and provide healing in a way that I was unable.



If I'm completely honest, I had some trepidation about joining at first. The sexual assault advocacy space can be notoriously female-centric, and I knew there were only two other male advocates in the organization when I signed up. But, I am a firm believer that men play a significant role in the reduction of sexual assault, and their voices are an important part of the discussion. I was relieved to find that I was immediately welcomed with open arms and have had nothing but positive experiences with everyone in the organization. These are all people who genuinely care about what they do, and one of the personal benefits I appreciate is being surrounded by people who feel as passionately about this topic as I do.

There are many pre-determined ways for male advocates to support RSAC's mission including signing up to staff the RSAC booth at various events like the Boone County Fair (again, I feel like having a public male presence sends the message that men are in a unique position and have a distinct responsibility to address sexual assault), volunteering for the annual candlelight vigil ceremony, or participating in the quarterly advocate meetings. I've also enjoyed the challenge of generating new ways to support the organization, whether that be via reimagined methods of fundraising, creating ways for survivors to safely interact with RSAC (our QR code project which allows survivors to carry hotline contact information on encoded cards without alerting an abuser is one example), or writing articles like this for the newsletter.

No matter who you are, if you are passionate about helping survivors of sexual assault and reducing its occurrence in the first place, we would love to hear from you!



Rockford Sexual Assault Counseling, Inc. recruits volunteers to provide advocacy for victims of sexual assault or abuse and their families. Volunteers play an important role in helping victims feel they are not alone and not to blame for the assault or abuse.

Our agency provides a 40-hour training session for all volunteers. The topics discussed will include, but are not limited to: basic advocacy techniques, the Illinois Criminal Sexual Assault Law, medical care of the victim, crisis intervention, child sexual abuse, and community resources. Volunteers providing advocacy play a crucial role in providing crisis intervention services to victims of assault or abuse.

Requirements for becoming an RSAC volunteer:

- At least 18 years old
- Background check
- Available for on call two weekday evenings a month or one weekend day a month
 - Have reliable transportation with insurance
 - Have a phone

Fee for training class is \$40 to cover materials.

Scholarships are available.



**Contact me,
Courtney White,
our Volunteer
Coordinator, to
learn more!
cwhite@rsacil.com
OR
[Click Here!](#)**

Contact Us!

Winnebago, Boone & Ogle Counties

Winnebago County

4990 E. State Street

Rockford, IL 61108

24 Hours: 815-636-9811

815-636-9811- 24 Hour Crisis Hotline

Boone County

860 Biester Drive, Suite 205

Belvidere, IL 61008

815-544-6821

Ogle County

412 W. Washington

Oregon, IL 61061

815-732-0000

Mission Statement

Rockford Sexual Assault Counseling, Inc. (RSAC) responds to the needs of victims of sexual assault/abuse and their families/significant others through emergency services, emotional support, counseling, referral, advocacy, and education, and promotes awareness and understanding of sexual assault. The focus of RSAC is to provide services to survivors of sexual assault/abuse and to educate the community to reduce the risk of sexual violence.



RockfordSexualAssaultCounseling.org

Follow us on
Social Media!

