



ANNUAL REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OCTOBER 2009

VISION

To reduce suffering within our community by helping those in need to address their emotional, physical and mental issues more effectively.

MISSION

CONTACT is dedicated to meeting the needs of the community by providing quality 24/7 crisis helpline support and information & referral services that are sensitive to the changing needs of the community. We support, refer, assist in prevention, intervention, postvention and provide educational services to individuals seeking help for their own or their family's emotional, physical and mental well being. CONTACT provides prompt, non-judgmental and comprehensive response to all those in need.

As we celebrate our 37th year of uninterrupted 24-hour telephone support service, it is my great pleasure to present to the membership of CONTACT of Burlington County my Annual Executive Director Report.

And what a year it has been! With our 24/7 Crisis Phoneroom on one side of the building and our 2-1-1 South Regional Call Center on the other, we marked our first anniversary as a dual call center agency. In 2008, with the restructuring of New Jersey's 2-1-1 system, our 2-1-1 regional call center came into being with paid staff and a Monday-Friday operation providing referrals for ten counties in the southern part of our state. Our volunteer staffed crisis phoneroom continued its history of 24/7 availability to the people in need in Burlington County in the areas of crisis, mental health, emotional support with response for shelter and sexual assault services among our other services.

Our full range of CONTACT programs remains intact. We continue to serve our community and fulfill our mission in eight program areas that provide a continuum of care for the residents of Burlington County: **1-Crisis Intervention Helplines; 2-Information and Referral Services; 3-KidsLine Helpline; 4-TeenLine Helpline; 5-Rape Care/Sexual Assault Services; 6-Reassurance for the Homebound; 7-PetFriends for Grieving Pet Owners and 8-Outreach and Education.**

In September, we supported our crisis intervention mission further by becoming part of the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline network, receiving calls from Burlington County through 1-800-273-TALK and 1-800-SUICIDE. We now join our sister CONTACT centers in Union and Mercer Counties as the three crisis centers in New Jersey providing this valuable service.

Our service is free, non-judgmental and unique in that it is available 24/7, 365 days a year. Our service is available to all in need, regardless of age or income. We offer emotional support and a bridge to all services available in Burlington County and statewide. We continue to see basic needs and mental health issues as our top two areas of assistance. The state of the economy impacts not only the financial needs of our callers, but their emotional well being also. We continue to hear stories of turmoil from callers in emotional crisis along with financial concerns. CONTACT has continued its 24/7 record of service this year, but it has been one of our most difficult staffing years.

CONTACT serves its community through participation in the social service delivery system in Burlington County. We are accredited by CONTACT USA (CUSA) and will soon be undergoing our annual five year site visit and evaluation. We continue our international affiliation with LIFELINE in Australia, the parent organization of CONTACT. We are a United Way of Burlington County (UWBC) partner agency. We are members in good standing of the National Association of Crisis Center Directors (NASCOD), CONTACT USA (CUSA), the New Jersey Coalition Against Sexual Assault (NJCASA), the American Association of Suicidology (AAS) and Directors of Volunteers in Agencies (DOVIA).

In my capacity as Executive Director, I chair the county Comprehensive Emergency Assistance System Committee (CEAS) and serve on the Burlington County Human Service Advisory Council (HSAC). We are involved with the New Jersey Coalition Against Sexual Assault (NJCASA), the Children's Inter-Agency Coordinating Committee (CIACC), the Long Term Care Committee (LTC) that addresses the needs of the

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elderly, Community Organizations Active in Disaster (COAD) and the Code Blue Initiative for emergency weather response. We work closely with Department of Human Services, the United Way and the Health Department. Lori Newkirk, our I&R Director, has been busy with meetings for H1N1 preparations as the county gears up to meet this new challenge. Through these partnerships, we work in collaboration to identify needs and to work together for better service delivery for our county.

STATISTICS

In 2008, CONTACT answered over 30,000 calls on our Helplines. At the end of this report are graphs detailing our call categories and types. Basic Needs tops the list, followed closely by Mental Health Issues. In July of this year, *with five months yet to go*, we surpassed that 2008 number due to the expansion of our 2-1-1 Call Center to ten counties and an increase in calls in our 24/7 Crisis Phoneroom.

In our Application for Accreditation, we noted in 2008 a total of 175 volunteers who serve as Board Members, on our Helplines, in our Reassurance program, as Rape Care Advocates, on our TeenLine and in other areas. We trained 47 new volunteers in 2008. These dedicated volunteers, along with paid staff, work together to meet the needs of the people of Burlington County. It is obvious we could not provide the service we do without the commitment and the thousands of hours contributed by volunteers to our agency and its programs.

CONTACT USA

On their 2008 roster, CONTACT USA lists 46 certified centers and four centers pending. Of the 46 listed, 34 are CONTACT centers and the remaining 12 non-CONTACT crisis centers. The accreditation of non-CONTACT centers has helped to gain additional exposure for our parent organization and stabilize their operations. Mary Drexler continues as their part-time Executive Director. Mary has management experience in both 2-1-1 and crisis center environments and has been a trainer for many years. She also served as the Crisis Centers Chair for the American Association of Suicidology. She has been working on grants to support technology in the centers—sorely needed by all of us.

Next year, CONTACT USA may join with NASCOD (National Association of Crisis Center Directors) to host a joint conference that would benefit both volunteers and administrators. I will keep you posted on this as attending conference is an unbelievable experience. The conference should be reasonably priced and the opportunity to meet with and learn from crisis volunteers and staff from many different call centers across the United States is one you will long remember. We maintain our long-standing membership with CONTACT USA and other national partnerships to stay informed and strong.

DELVAL CONTACT DIRECTORS

The Delaware Valley CONTACT Directors is a regional group that meets four times a year. Our goal is to collectively address the issues we share and create some common solutions. Unfortunately, the advertising campaign I noted last year that was being developed by Public Relations Majors at Temple University Seniors, did not produce the results we had hoped. However, DelVal has proved its worth to me over and over again in shared experience, support, protocols and ideas. We all struggle in the same areas of volunteer recruitment and fundraising, but we continue to seek opportunities that would benefit us all.

CENTER

As stated previously we are now a dual call center. We maintain 24/7 coverage in our Crisis Phoneroom with full staffing by trained volunteers. We maintain Monday-Friday (8 AM – 6 PM) coverage in our 2-1-1 Call Center with paid staff. It has been interesting to view these two very different operations basically side-by-side.

Our 24/7 volunteer coverage in our phoneroom (the heart of our mission) would not be possible without our schedulers, **Dori Audette** and **Karen Naese**. Their gargantuan efforts to keep our crisis lines covered are to be applauded. To be a scheduler of a 24/7 operation is a stressful (and many times thankless) position, but they do it with caring and competency. I am indebted to them both.

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Staffing our 2-1-1 Call Center is not as stressful, but working closely in a high-volume call center in a small space certainly is. I am pleased to have CONTACT trained employees serving as supervisors in the 2-1-1 operation. They maintain our mission “to reduce suffering” and ensure caring, efficient service. **Lisa Harkins** serves as our full-time 2-1-1 Call Center Supervisor with part-time supervisory assistance provided by **Anna Horn-Tumas, Joan Willett, Pam DeMarco** and our new sub, **Ruth Cohen**. The OfficeTeam temps staffing the 2-1-1 helplines are caring and capable information and referral call specialists.

We must keep the Crisis Helplines staffed 24-hours a day and it would be our best interests to continue to do so onsite with our own dedicated volunteers. Our uniqueness is our 24/7 helpline service staffed by volunteers—a great deal of our funding is predicated on that. I know we have labored this year to keep the phones covered. I know the impact of a small turn-out for helpline training or no turn-out at all. However, this coming year I look forward to an increase in our marketing and recruitment of volunteers. We have a new board member who heads her own advertising agency. I believe the 11 volunteers we now have in the training process are partially a result of her donated marketing efforts. The Board, recognizing where we are and the need we have, has committed dollars specifically to market CONTACT. In addition, we are looking at our “brand” and considering if there are ways to strengthen our CONTACT name and have it more descriptive of the service we provide.

Our revised training program with the new Core Competencies instituted by CONTACT USA has worked well as has our initiation of trainees matriculating in the phonerom earlier in the process. Our training presentations are now being done in PowerPoint and that has helped to standardize the process while still retaining the passion of the work. Almost all the volunteers who come to us now have computer experience. But, what unites all our volunteers is the commonality that *service to others* should be a part of our lives.

Last year I noted that while a high number of our volunteers fulfilled their in-service education requirement, we needed better participation. Continuing education is critical to the work we do and our accreditation requires that every volunteer receives in-service education. **Dori Audette**, our Office Manager, made this her personal mission and took on the task of tracking down those of you who...well, you know...and she was successful in “helping” you all to reach our requirement. To provide the highest quality of service, skills and protocols need to be refreshed and updated. Please—remember your responsibility for ongoing education.

STAFF

Our **Volunteers** serve on the Helplines, make Reassurance calls, provide support to sexual assault victims, listen to teens in trouble, serve on the board, staff publicity tables, provide peer supervision/support, raise money and are involved in many areas of our organization. What they get in return is a sense of satisfaction and a thank-you for their time. We recognize our wonderful volunteers at our Annual Volunteer Recognition in October. Milestone certificates are presented along with awards of special significance to honor particular contributions. These contributions are considerable and deserve to be acknowledged. We appreciate the opportunity to honor our volunteers. In fact, it is our privilege to do so.

Senior Workers are our 24/7 phonerom supervisors. Senior Worker supervisors are where volunteers turn when assistance is needed in an emergency situation or when a life-saving intervention is required. Senior Workers serve two to three 12-hour on-call shifts each month in addition to their helpline shifts. CONTACT's Senior Workers ensure our volunteers are never alone in the phonerom. The Senior Workers are chaired by **Karen Naese** and **Karen Cohen** who hold on-going meetings where concerns are shared and procedural improvements are discussed.

CONTACT's **Trainers** have devoted many, many hours to staffing our helplines with qualified volunteers. **Lila Graziano** has chaired this group for many years. **Lisa Harkins** and **Susan Kaczinski** round out our enthusiastic and able training staff and are assisted by **Ruth Cohen, Sue Golding, Jenny Matthews** and **Karen Naese**. These people give much of their time to ensure highly-trained volunteers answer our crisis helplines. I am grateful to them for their caring and their willingness to share their skills. Thank you all!

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Our **Board of Directors** also serve as volunteers. They are responsible for the business of CONTACT. The Board develops and implements policy, seeks revenue to keep us viable and creates a strategic vision for our future security. Our Board President, David Herron, has led us with his foresight and work ethic. He has restructured the Board, brought in new members from varying backgrounds and strengthened board committees. He was and continues to be the driving force behind our online presence. The Board, with the efforts of the Strategic Planning Committee, just completed a Strategic Plan of which they can be proud. It is inclusive of CONTACT's past and speaks to CONTACT's future. It is the most comprehensive Strategic Plan in CONTACT's history. I thank everyone involved for their input. In addition, the board has been focusing on fundraising, marketing and networking. A complete list of our Board of Directors is noted in our Volunteer Recognition program. Please thank these generous volunteers for their leadership.

CONTACT'S **Office Staff** and **Program Directors** sustain all our volunteers in all service areas. They perform well beyond their job descriptions. In addition, they are working members on over 25 human and social service committees striving to collaboratively improve the quality of life for the residents of Burlington County. We meet regularly at group staff meetings and at one-on-one program director meetings to further their goals for their programs and improve our services. I believe they know I respect and value them for the work they do, the passion they bring to it and their day-to-day support of me and one another.

These people, volunteers and staff alike, are what CONTACT is all about. They serve our mission and are dedicated *"to meeting the needs of the community."* They account for our credibility and our service delivery.

BUDGET

Our budget for the year 2009/2010 is \$684,679, a large part of that is our 2-1-1 Call Center operation. United Way of Burlington County funds approximately 21% of our budget and about 44% is received from government grants—federal, state and local. We hope to raise 6% through grant writing efforts. The remaining 29% is raised from various sources such as contributions, special events, fundraisers, after-hour services, training fees, investment interest, organizations and in-kind facilities. All of our services are confidential and continue to be offered to the public free of charge. We soon will undergo our financial audit for our Fiscal Year End June 30, 2009. Our last audit was completed with no concerns (i.e. an unqualified opinion—which is a good thing).

We continue to seek new revenue sources, among them Lifeline and a possible new special event. We, like so many other others this year, have seen decreases in giving and funding but we are holding our own. There are still area corporations donating where their employees or their spouses work. Many businesses have programs that provide matching funds or actually "pay" for the hours an employee volunteers (e.g. Exxon Mobil, Merck, Wachovia and Verizon). This is "found" money, but the request must be initiated by the employee/volunteer. We once again request our volunteers to inquire if this type of giving is available at their workplaces. These programs provide monetary support for hours that are already so generously donated.

Our 2-1-1 South Center is a revenue stream that is helping to support us. Agreements and budgets with the NJ-211-Partnership are being finalized for the 09/10 fiscal year. We have budgeted the 2-1-1 operation at \$266,000 but that is an estimated figure at this point. The bulk of these dollars go to staffing—as it is a requirement of the 2-1-1 contract that call specialists are paid staff.

Our **Fourteenth Annual Golf Classic** was held on September 15th at Ramblewood Country Club in Mt. Laurel. The outing, under the direction of board member co-chairs, **Doug Jones** and **Sandy Parker**, was a success and what an absolutely gorgeous day it was. To date we have raised \$16,000+ to support the work of our center! We are grateful to those of you who volunteered at the Golf Classic or financially support it. We are especially thankful to our major sponsors who underwrite this event and provide dollars and exposure for CONTACT. The Golf Classic is our major fundraiser and crucial to our financial health.

We appreciate the support we receive from our membership on all our fundraising efforts. Like any entity, CONTACT needs dollars to survive and underwrite its free services to the community.

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ACHIEVEMENTS

Our board, staff and volunteers are responsible for these landmarks and are to be congratulated for them.

- Maintained uninterrupted 100% 24/7 Helpline coverage staffed by volunteers
- 24% Increase in call response volume (2008 vs. 2007)
- 41% Increase in Reassurance care-calls (2008 vs. 2007)
- Celebrated 37th year anniversary of continuous 24/7 Crisis Helpline service
- Celebrated 1st year anniversary of 2-1-1 South Regional Call Center
- 2-1-1 South Center expanded from eight to ten counties of southern New Jersey
- Initiated National Suicide Prevention Lifeline service (1-800-TALK 1-800-SUICIDE)
- Developed and Implemented new CONTACT website (www.contactburlco.org)
- 84 cents of every dollar spent allocated to program services in Burlington County
- New comprehensive Strategic Plan approved by Board of Directors
- 100% Participation of Volunteers in Continuing Education
- Recipient 2009 Lifetime Achievement Award from Businesses Committed to Burlington County (BC2)
- Participation at more than 32 outreach events throughout the county
- Continued partnership with Code Blue to shelter all homeless in extreme winter weather

PLANNING

The new Strategic Plan is underway. Our board will present a slate of new officers at the Annual Meeting and will undergo the board reorganization soon after. The Board will continue to review our needs and work to secure new board members with the skills to meet those identified needs. Marketing for recruitment and agency awareness is a high priority. The CONTACT name may transition with a better tag line to identify our services. And, as we are bursting at the seams, a committee starts to consider if a move is in our future.

In addition, we are researching new software for the crisis phonerom to replace the problematic IRis we all grapple with on a daily basis. As with the elimination of the pagers from the phonerom, I would venture to guess not many tears will be shed over the removal of IRis. In its place we look to something with a totally different look and capabilities: iCarol, software created for crisis lines by crisis line call specialists.

CONTACT's Board and Executive Director work in tandem to serve CONTACT by honoring the past and protecting the future. The Strategic Plan is our map and sets our course with clearly defined goals and the necessary action steps to achieve them.

CLOSING NOTE

This past year we witnessed the loss of one our center's founding members. The Rev. Canon Bruce A. Weatherly died at his home in Charlottesville, VA in July. He truly was a friend to CONTACT. Bruce was one of the people responsible for our center's existence. I last saw Bruce when he attended our center's 35th Anniversary Celebration in 2007. He spoke of CONTACT past and present—his words reminded me of why I first volunteered at CONTACT and why I am here today.

This CONTACT year has had its difficulties and its shining moments. The economic situation in our country has been felt around the world and on our helplines. You all have felt it. It has established a new norm—a sense of uncertainty that clings to our lives. We - the helpers - many times this year have felt helpless. CONTACT is needed...now, more than ever. You all are needed...now, more than ever. Please accept my appreciation for your precious time, your generous dollars and your loyal support of our mission. Take care and thank you, thank you so very much.

Respectfully submitted,

*Theresa M. Tobey
Executive Director
September 30, 2009*

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2008 Calls By Category and Type

