Womankind's Coalition of Will Raises $450,000 at 2020 Virtual Gala

Womankind's first-ever virtual gala program began with a reflection of the organization's work throughout this pandemic, voiced by honorary board member and past gala honoree Connie Chung: “Together we change the world, but this year the world changed before our eyes. So we changed. We did not shut down because violence does not shut down. Nothing stopped us from rising above the violence. Not a pandemic, not social injustice, not politics. We communicate, we collaborate, we survive, we recover.”

This event marked Yasmeen Hamza's first gala as CEO, having attended for many years as the Director of Community Programs. In her interview with Board Chair Karen Elizaga, Yasmeen spoke on what drew her to Womankind: “Growing up I saw the impact that gender-based violence, and gender and inequity had on my community, and recognized that change needed to come from within. I knew a long time ago that I wanted to be part of a movement—not one that just provided support to individuals who have experienced sexual violence, but also understood the impact that culture has and works alongside the community to really bring about the change that we want to see. To me Womankind was the epitome of all that.”

Chantal La-Fon, a survivor and entrepreneur, described the impact that Womankind and her close relationship with her advocate Sheng Lin have had on her life. “Womankind helped me invest back into loving myself and getting my act together. I had an opportunity to educate myself and to still be a mother. I could be a productive person, once again a part of society. Womankind has changed my life— as a woman, as a minority woman, as a woman of trauma, as a woman hurt. Womankind has brought me back full force.”

We were incredibly proud to present the Rising Phoenix Award to Eva Noblezada, star of Yellow Rose and a two-time Tony-nominee for Miss Saigon and Hadestown. Danielle Ayers, CEO of me.too International, accepted the Phoenix Award on behalf of Survivors’ Agenda, who was honored for their incredible work with survivors of sexual violence.

The nearly $450,000 raised during the evening sustain a multitude of programs for the thousands of survivors that come to us for help annually. Given how challenging 2020 was, every contribution is especially meaningful and helped make it successful. We give special thanks to Board Chair Karen Elizaga and Gala Co-Chairs Mae Hsieh and Susanna Hong for planning our biggest event during a pandemic, and to creative visionaries Merv Garretson and Janet A. Masamitsu for adding their magic touch to the gala, year after year.

Legal Program Launches Pilot Program for Orders of Protection

At Womankind, many survivors of gender-based violence seeking an order of protection often face a language barrier when doing so, which greatly adds to the stress and trauma of trying to escape an abusive relationship. They need an attorney that speaks their native language and can advocate for them, as well as help them understand the process. With our in-house linguistics capacity, we are able to provide just that.

Womankind is excited to announce a new pilot program focused on orders of protection. Launched recently on November 1st, this program expands our family law practice, which includes representation in uncontested divorce cases and consultations on a broad range of other family law issues. The program complements our immigration legal services.

All Womankind legal services are provided by our dedicated team of 3 full-time staff attorneys, led by Legal Manager, Alisha Mohammed. Language capabilities include Mandarin, Japanese, and Cantonese. Advocates may internally refer their clients to the legal team for legal assistance. Like all of our services, our legal assistance is free though the petitioner may be responsible for some filing fees.
Message from CEO Yasmeen Hamza

Dear Friends of Womankind,

As 2020 comes to a close, we continue to witness the devastating impact that the pandemic has had on survivors of gender-based violence. Through the pandemic, Womankind’s staff continues to work tirelessly, with the support of our friends and allies, to address the growing financial, employment, housing and basic needs of our survivors. As many of our staff continue to work remotely, we have found creative methods to ensure service delivery, while remaining committed to our mission of walking alongside survivors of gender-based on their path to healing.

Though this year has brought about hardship, we also witnessed the power of collective action. We watched and joined as our community came together to continue the fight to dismantle oppressive systems. We celebrated as community members rallied to help one another locally, while others shattered glass ceilings, giving us hope that change is on the horizon.

As we move into a new year, now more than ever, we hope that you will join us in the collective fight to bring about more change as we work to combat the rise of domestic violence, anti-Asian discrimination, and the flawed systems that continue to marginalize our communities. Support us as we continue to tackle the challenges and embrace the opportunities that 2021 will bring.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed this year, including those who helped make Giving Tuesday a success. If you have not yet given, but are inspired, there is still time to make a difference this year. Your gift, no matter the size, will support survivors of gender-based violence and their children as they embark on their path to healing. Every gift matters and can bring about collective change.

Finally, I reflect with gratitude on the dedication of the Womankind staff as they worked on the frontlines of a global pandemic to support the thousands of survivors that we serve. “We never know how our small activities will affect others through the invisible fabric of our connectedness. In this exquisitely connected world, it’s never a question of ‘critical mass.’ It’s always about critical connections.” -Grace Lee Boggs

Happy holidays to you and your family, and best wishes for the new year!

In solidarity,

Yasmeen Hamza
CEO, Womankind
Hear Our Voices: A Domestic Violence Awareness Month Art Project

Too many of our stories get lost, whether in our own pain or flattened by systems that refuse to acknowledge the nuances of our lives. Womankind created Hear Our Voices, a virtual art exhibit, as a reminder that we are listening, we hear you, and we stand with you. We offer this gesture with gratitude for the resilience and courage of survivors of gender-based violence. We hope that by sharing our art, the community can find confidence as they continue their healing journeys.

Womankind spent Domestic Violence Awareness Month in October gathering stories from staff and survivors to bear witness to one another's truths and to connect meaningfully despite figurative and literal distances. The stories are told through a multitude of forms and range in tone and theme. But they are all expressions; proclamations as unique as our survivors are.

We invite you to see us for who we are, and our hope is that you feel a little less alone along your own journey. View the exhibit at www.hearourvoices-womankind.squarespace.com.

To all those who graciously contributed, Womankind is grateful. If you are a survivor and feel inspired to share your story, we also welcome your submission. Please leave a message on the exhibit website or email Reema Sharma, Manager of Community Education and Outreach at rsharma@iamwk.org for information on submission guidelines.

Life In The Time of COVID-19 at Rose House and Peace House

This past spring, when COVID quickly changed the organization’s way of operating, it was business as usual for Womankind’s Residential Programs. While most advocates and administrative staff were able to transition to working from home to stay safe and help flatten the curve, the nearly two dozen residential team members continued showing up to work at Peace House and Rose House, Womankind’s two confidential emergency housing for survivors of domestic violence.

At the start of the pandemic, there were a lot of challenges we faced as a program, trying to both keep our staff and residents safe, while still providing a supportive environment that is attentive to their needs. An immediate challenge was managing the 40 families’ access to staff. "Usually at both Houses, residents know they can approach us at any time in the offices in order to get support and assistance," says Taykina Chowdhury, a Residential Programs Manager. "We had to rethink this approach in order to create as much social distancing as possible. We asked residents to call the office number first to see if they can come by. This screening allowed certain requests to be handled over the phone. For those that could not, residents took turns coming to the office to limit the number of residents approaching the office area at the same time." Having this strict system in place has allowed Womankind to successfully keep everyone safe during this entire pandemic.

In anticipation of the financial needs that survivors would have, Womankind quickly launched the COVID-19 emergency fund and received generous contributions. Many residents were able to benefit from these funds to assist with rent, utilities, and purchasing PPE, food and clothing for their children. And who could forget the fear for personal safety and the anxiety of not being able to secure masks and groceries at the start of this pandemic. Womankind’s Residential Programs worked hard to alleviate these concerns, especially in the spring when not much was known about the virus and people were panic buying and certain items became scarce. The team worked together to find grocers that would deliver food and basic supplies, as well as purchase bulk PPE for both facilities. But thankfully, we did not have to do this work alone. Womankind would like to thank the many friends who supported residents and staff with delicious meals and PPE, including Shop Sandra Smith, Jeff Bauml/Not 4Gotten NY, Honeybrains, Deepthi Sharma/FoodtoEat, Sage Kitchen, and Sticky’s Finger Joint!

As the virus continues to spread uncontrollably across the country, we expect these needs and challenges to be ongoing. But, thanks to the commitment of Residential Programs staff, strong community support, and unwavering resilience from residents, we have witnessed that working together has helped an unbearable year be more bearable. We enter 2021 more prepared and stronger.
The election is over and Americans have voted. But one fact remains constant. The world we live in is unacceptable. Covid-19 has raged on—and is worsening. Domestic violence is on the rise. Asians are experiencing hate crimes. There is little to no economic relief in sight. The women and families Womankind serves are resiliently struggling to survive. Caregivers with children are struggling. Our staff are struggling. We have no doubt that you are, too. We are all trying to survive in our own individual ways.

Some of us have more privilege than others. We have a source of income. We are safe in our own homes. We are able to put dinner on the table every day. But most of the survivors we serve do not.

As 2020 comes to an end, let’s join forces to give the women, children, and families that Womankind serves what they need. Your year-end donation will help us provide crucial services like counseling and helpline access and basic necessities for survival: groceries, assistance with rent and utilities, Metrocards, diapers, and so much more. Things that were hard for survivors to pay for during “normal” times have been nearly impossible during this pandemic.

Every gift, no matter how large or small, will go towards fulfilling this goal.

You can donate online at www.iamwomankind.org/donate or mail a check (made payable to Womankind) to the address above.

Womankind is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization and received Guidestar’s Platinum Seal of Transparency in 2020. Your donation is tax-deductible within the guidelines of U.S. law. Our tax ID is 13-3286250. Thank you, always, for your support!
THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

JANUARY-SEPTEMBER 2020 NON-GALA CONTRIBUTIONS OF $100+

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