



**SOUTH SUBURBAN FAMILY SHELTER, INC.**

*Comprehensive Services to Victims of Domestic Violence*

*Celebrating 40 Years*

**From the Desk of Your Friendly Neighborhood Executive Director**



The last month has been filled with heightened tension as our country awaited the results of election day. I chose to spend this time envisioning the future I'd like to see for myself and my family, as well as how I could help create that reality through our work at South Suburban Family Shelter. I was keenly aware that no matter the outcome of this election,

it would not mean our work was over or that we could take a step back. In fact, the more I considered the future I want to see the more I realized we need to keep the fire burning even brighter. I have been encouraged by the kindness our community has shown SSFS during this difficult time. I have also been encouraged by the energy and new commitment I see in many to fight systemic racism and challenge long held structures of white supremacy.

When the election was called on Saturday – I did take a breath. A change in administration at the federal level could mean several positive things for the clients and communities we serve. However, we must continue to speak loudly about the changes we wish to see and push for them to become a reality. In order to create a world where **compassion prevails, and homes can always be safe spaces** – we must do the work to ensure policies support this vision. We at South Suburban Family Shelter remain committed to holding policy makers accountable to act in ways that create opportunities for all of us to fulfill our potential. We were all born into this world with limitless potential and we all deserve a world that allows us to reach that potential and beyond. When this world is possible we will have achieved greatness.

In Peace,  
Jennifer

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**Interview with Esther Jenkins**

In October, our board president Esther Jenkins' term ended as president. Although she is still involved in our mission and work, we thought it would be great to sit with her and reflect on her time as board president. She remains a committed board member and supporter of South Suburban Family Shelter.



**Kris:** When did you become president of the board?

**Esther:** Three years ago, 2017, a year after Jennifer started as the new executive director. Verlon, the previous president for five years, was leaving. I had been vice president, and it was understood that the vice president was next in line to be president. It was time for me to take that on, so I did.

**Kris:** 2020 has been such a challenging year for everyone at SSFS, our clients, and the thousands of domestic violence victims due to the pandemic. What are you most proud of regarding our agency's ability to provide services?

**Esther:** We seemed to not miss a beat. Seemed is the operative word because I know that people worked really, really, hard to make it like that. The fact that we continued services and didn't layoff anyone is amazing! We pivoted to do different kinds of meaningful work, like What's the Tea?, and I thought the virtual Gala was just fabulous. People were very creative and doing good work, different kinds of work, but work towards the mission of the agency. Clearly a lot of work went into enhancing the programs and coming up with new approaches. It speaks volumes to the staff's ability and skills, and to you, and all those in management. Management's belief in staff and willingness to give them enough rope to go out and create and do all kinds of new things was essential. It also points out the advantages of having a diverse workforce. People coming from various perspectives just bring a lot to the table. The agency seemed to have thrived during this time and I'm not sure many people can say that during the pandemic their organization thrived. Because of the pandemic we will look a little different than we did before the pandemic... In a good way.

**Kris:** As a south suburban resident, why should the community support SSFS?

**Esther:** The obvious answer is that these are services the community needs. On another level, I think it says something positive about a community when it has a domestic violence program. It's like riding through a community that has yard signs that say "science is real", "love is love", "black lives matter" etc.. I feel better about that community and think that I'm in a progressive area. So, to have a community that has a domestic violence program, particularly one that they support, and this community does support us, it says something about where people's heads are and how progressive they are. It says that they believe in the empowerment of women. I think it enhances the image of the

community to have a vibrant domestic violence program. It says that its important enough for us to put some resources towards it.

**Kris:** I love that...It enhances the image of the community!  
Thank you so much Esther!

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### It's Adopt-A-Family Time!



This holiday season we will be helping a total of 35 families, meeting the needs of over 83 individuals/kids and we are happy to announce that all list have been adopted. *However, there is still a way you can help out.* **If you are interested in participating, please email Brittany so that she can let you know our additional needs.**

Adopt-A-Family is designed to help South Suburban Family Shelter's clients who are victims/survivors of domestic violence and their children during the holiday season. **The victims/survivors and their children who participate in Adopt-A-Family are experiencing financial hardship as a result of their family circumstances.** They would likely have nothing for the holidays without the generosity of donors.

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