

LaPorta Is Retiring, But She Will Never Quit

Children's Advocacy Center Seeks New Executive Director



Scranton, Sep 18, 2020 (Issuewire.com) - When it comes to caring for the children in our community, we are surrounded by many unsung heroes...women and men who literally do not sleep at night working tirelessly to make the world of a child the safest it can be. Mary Ann LaPorta is one such woman.

For over two decades Mrs. LaPorta has been leading the charge as Executive Director of Children's Advocacy Center of Northeastern Pennsylvania. Responsible for the energy brought to the fledgling organization from its earliest years, she has helped grow the acclaimed Scranton-based child abuse crisis intervention center from three tiny rent-free rooms in the former CMC School of Nursing to a three home mini-campus in Scranton, Pennsylvania's Historic Hill Section.

This exponential expansion could not have occurred without the passion, drive and collaborative leadership skills that Mrs. LaPorta brought to the table. With one out of every four girls, and one out of every six boys sexually abused before they reach age 18, our kids were in crisis. "A fiercely tender

advocate, she brought the hidden horrors of our most vulnerable citizens out into the light,” states CAC Board of Directors Chair, Judge Michael J. Barrasse. “Fueled with facts and the prospect of collaborative solutions, she advocated for support to a very serious community need...one that no one wanted to touch,” he continued.

From foundations, funders and families to anyone who was willing to listen, Mary Ann LaPorta has developed collaborative partnerships which have served our community well.

The original Mulberry Street flagship location continues to serve children from infancy to 12 years of age. The Teen Advocacy Center, which is the first of its kind in the United States, serves victims from 13 to 18 years old. Finally, home to a highly advanced trauma therapy program is the Mulberry Center, the Children’s Advocacy Center’s latest acquisition in 2016.

And so the story goes, one person making a difference in the lives of many... one person moving an immature and undeveloped entity from “just forming” to “formidable force” status, earning the non-profit organization National Children’s Alliance Accreditation year after year.

Driven by a multidisciplinary team of forensic medical experts, forensic interviewers, child and family advocates, development and fiscal managers, the executive director ensures that these vital services remain available and accessible 24 hours a day.

Unfortunately, the need for Children’s Advocacy Center Services in our region remains great and growing, with 90% of sexual abuse happening at the hands of someone the child knows.

In 2019, 1,807 child abuse intervention services were provided to 731 children and adolescents. Of those served, 64% were victims of sexual abuse, 26% were victims of physical abuse, and 10% were victims of a combination of physical and/or sexual abuse, neglect, and/or

witnesses to violence. 62% were female and 38% male; 31% were ages 0-6; 35% were ages 7-12; 34% were ages 13-18. Victims ethnicities included: 72% Caucasian, 12% Hispanic, 9% African American, and 7% other.

Fully aware that COVID-19 was likely to stimulate violence in families where it did not exist before and worsen situations in homes where mistreatment and violence have been a problem, Mary Ann LaPorta delayed her well-deserved retirement for almost one year. She knew that the support systems that many at-risk parents needed could no longer be relied upon— including extended family, childcare, schools, religious groups and other community organizations. She understood that child protection agency resources and home visits would be strained during the lockdown. She anticipated the uncertainty that teachers and school counselors were bound to face while providing virtual classrooms, including difficulty bearing witness to signs of suspected abuse and the ability to report to authorities.

“Mary Ann was the right person, at the right time,” states Susan Cognetti, Board Member and Chair of the Executive Director Search Committee. “Thousands of abused children have a fighting chance because of her work. I am confident that our next Executive Director will build on the platform she has so firmly established.”

When asked to reflect on her years of service, Mrs. LaPorta quickly gives credit to all who serve. “Our children are safer and our community is stronger because of the unparalleled commitment of the CAC Team, the ongoing support of a dedicated Board of Directors, and our communities willingness to embrace the education and prevention programs offered by the Children’s Advocacy Center.”

Thank you Mary Ann LaPorta for a job well done.

Interested applicants for the position of Executive Director are encouraged to submit a resume and cover letter to CAC@onesourcestaffing.com.

Mary Ann LaPorta

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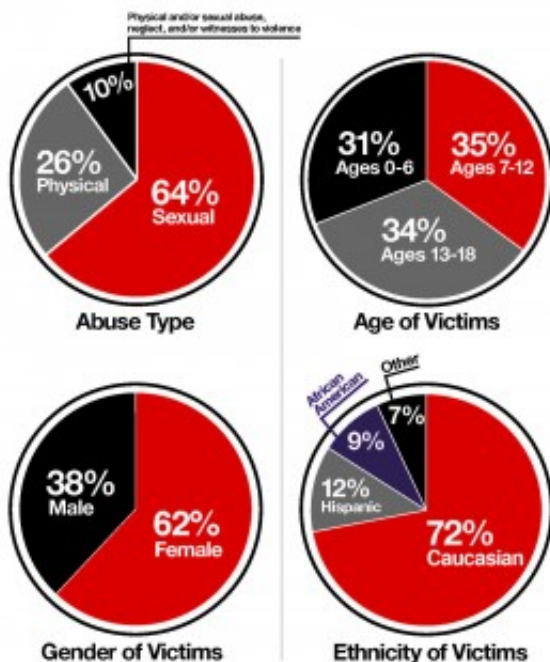
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Source: Children's Advocacy Center of Northeastern Pennsylvania, 2020.

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