



# QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

GEORGIA COALITION AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Welcome to our newsletter dedicated to shedding light on pressing social issues that impact our communities. In this edition, GCADV looks at the intersection between Domestic Violence, Affordable Housing, and the LGBTQIA+ community. Domestic violence affects millions of individuals worldwide regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation. With open hearts and unwavering support, we invite you to read articles written by staff and explore invaluable perspectives and resources that honor the diverse experiences and unique challenges faced by our LGBTQIA+ neighbors in search for safe and affordable housing.

**Jan Christiansen, Executive Director**  
Georgia Coalition Against Domestic Violence

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## A Focus On Affordable Housing and LGBTQIA+ Discrimination

**By: Leo Williams - Director of Culturally Specific Outreach**

LGBTQIA+ people face an array of stigma and discrimination that undermines their ability to have stable, safe, and affordable housing, and still federal, state, and local laws provide only a patchwork of protections against anti-LGBTQIA+ discrimination in housing, lending, and social services. During the time of the COVID-19 pandemic, we saw people living in poverty along with the loss of work lead to major housing instability and homelessness. Atlanta's lack of affordable housing and booming gentrification are serious problems for all low-income people in our city – but some communities are hit harder than others.

**LGBTQIA+ people are disproportionately living in poverty, and therefore are more likely to need affordable housing and are less likely to have family safety nets to turn to in times of need.**

Countless times, our clients have told us that they turn to family members when they lose their housing. Sometimes this looks like moving into a brother's guest bedroom or sleeping on a mother's couch. Sometimes it looks like emergency loans from cousins or grandmothers. In the absence of an effective governmental or charitable safety net, family often fills in the gaps.

[This link will show you the fair housing Act for Georgia.](#)

**Georgia Law states under what is Prohibited “Discrimination in housing includes activities such as refusing to rent or sell to someone, charging different rates, or offering different terms based on these characteristics. It could also include making discriminatory statements or disseminating discriminatory advertising. It also prohibits making false statements about the availability of housing to members of a protected class”.**

[This link is to Georgia Community Affairs.](#)

While this is written very well, we know that this happens, however, it is not easy to prove. I can remember, a time ago when me and my partner went to look at a one-bedroom apartment, and the

landlord asked us if we were sisters and we said no, then he said to us you do know that this is a one-bedroom apartment so where will the other person sleep. Needless to say, he did not rent the apartment to us, and although we couldn't prove that this was blatant discrimination, we knew it was.

**Housing affordability:** LGBTQIA+ people are 15% more likely to be poor than cisgender straight adults after controlling for age, race, urbanicity, employment status, language, education, disability, and other factors that affect risk of poverty. Among LGBTQIA+ people, poverty is especially prevalent among racial minorities, bisexuals, women, transgender people, and younger people

(e.g., *Badgett, 2018; Badgett et al., 2019; Carpenter et al., 2020; Meyer et al., 2019*).

**Homeownership:** according to representative data from 35 states, nearly half (49.8%) of LGBTQIA+ adults own their homes, compared to 70.1% of non-LGBT adults. Homeownership is even lower among LGBTQIA+ racial minorities and transgender people. Homeownership is higher among married couples than unmarried couples, but married same-sex couples significantly are less likely to own their homes than married different-sex couples 72% and 79.4%, respectively.

(*Conron et al., 2018; Meyer et al., 2019*).

**Discrimination:** LGBTQIA+ people face widespread harassment and discrimination by housing providers, who, for example, studies have shown are less likely to respond to rental inquiries from same-sex couples (Friedman et al., 2013) and are more likely to quote male same-sex couples higher rents (Levy et al., 2017) than comparable different-sex couples. Discrimination against LGBTQIA+ people in employment and other settings is widespread and can destabilize housing and make it more unaffordable.

#### What can we do:

- Adoption and enforcement of comprehensive federal and state protections against sexual orientation and gender identity discrimination in housing, lending, and government-funded programs and activities, among other settings.
- Evaluation of the extent to which LGBTQIA+ people face barriers to accessing programs and services aimed at increasing housing affordability and reducing housing instability—such as Section 8 and home buying programs of the Federal Housing Administration—and execution of corrective actions as necessary.
- Allocation of governmental and private funding to develop and implement evidence-based programs to reduce stigma and discrimination faced by LGBTQIA+ youth and adults, including within LGBTQIA+ people's families-of-origin.
- Expansion of housing and shelter options for LGBTQIA+ youth and adults so that they are sheltered safely and appropriately.
- Mandated training for all staff at agencies providing housing, child welfare, homelessness, and other relevant services to the LGBTQIA+ population, in order to ensure that staff become and remain equipped to serve LGBTQIA+ people in an affirming manner.
- Enhanced data collection and research on housing issues faced by the LGBTQIA+ population and subpopulations to improve our knowledge base and help design interventions.

To read the full article, [click here](#).

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## Affordable Housing, Emergency Shelter, and LGBTQIA+ Survivors of Domestic Violence

By: Alexis Champion - Director of Training and Capacity Building

According to Georgia's Criminal Justice Coordinating Council, there was a twenty-percent increase in the number of hotline calls to Georgia's certified domestic violence programs from 2020 to 2021. At the same time, we are experiencing an extreme shortage of affordable housing in Georgia and across the country. Lack of access to safe and affordable housing is a significant barrier to survivors leaving an abusive relationship. For survivors who identify as LGBTQ+, these barriers are compounded by the stigma, discrimination, and stereotypes that they often encounter when seeking help or resources. GCADV's training team strives to address and alleviate these barriers by providing training, technical assistance, and support to Georgia's domestic violence programs on best practices in serving LGBTQ+ survivors. There are many essential services that advocates can provide to LGBTQ+ survivors, especially when safe and affordable housing is not an immediate option:

**Safety Planning:** This is a core service provided to all survivors before, during, and after leaving an abusive situation. For LGBTQ+ survivors, there are approaches to safety planning that take into consideration the unique barriers and tactics of abuse that they often experience. The training team has added a section to our quarterly Frontline training for new advocates that covers these dynamics and guidance for advocates on how to best work with LGBTQ+ survivors.

**Emergency Shelter:** While safe housing is the ultimate goal for most survivors, emergency shelter provides a safe and confidential space for survivors to escape an abusive partner and take important steps toward longer term goals. To adequately serve LGBTQ+ in shelter, there are important steps programs must take to ensure a welcoming and safe shelter environment. In November of 2022, GCADV hosted a two-part training series facilitated by the Network/La Red, a

survivor-led, social justice organization that works to end partner abuse in lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer communities. The sessions provided an overview of the LGBTQ+ communities, LGBTQ+ partner abuse, and strategies for creating welcoming services to LGBTQ+ survivors.

**Community-based Advocacy:** navigating criminal justice and social service systems can be overwhelming for any survivor. For LGBTQ+-identified survivors, these systems can also be re-traumatizing and harmful. Advocates can provide strong allyship and support to LGBTQ+ survivors by advocating on their behalf with community partners, identifying and sharing LGBTQ+-friendly resources, and standing with survivors against bias and discrimination.

GCADV believes that ALL survivors, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, deserve to be safe from domestic violence. While we are celebrating and uplifting Pride Month this June, the training team is available throughout the year to provide training, consultation, and technical assistance to Georgia's domestic violence programs. To learn more about the various topics we cover and request a training or consultation, check out the training tab on our website [HERE](#).

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## LGBTQIA+ Rights & Housing Accessibility

**By: Karimah Dillard- Director of Policy**

A May 2023 press release submitted by Human Rights Campaign cites a record number of anti LGBTQI+ bills that have been sweeping across the country this year. Of the more than 500 bills introduced, at least 70 have been passed into law. These numbers seem to be misaligned with findings from the 2021 American Values Atlas which showed support of LGBTQ+ rights on the rise across the country with 79% of respondents from GA supporting laws that protect members of the LGBTQI+ community. As one of more than a dozen states enacting anti- LGBTQI+ legislation, GA has passed legislation over the last two years restricting access to gender affirming care and high school sports to youth whose gender identities do not match the gender they were assigned at birth. This is not by coincidence, but rather the result of a concerted effort from groups that have launched a national parents' rights campaign to "protect children" by targeting primarily school policies on gender identity and how race is taught in schools.

These groups provide model legislation and legal support to defend any challenges to these measures becoming law. It is no secret that historically, queer and trans folks have been disparately impacted by laws which exist to further marginalize, stigmatize and even cause harm to members of the LGBTQI+ community. It has been estimated that roughly 40% of homeless youth identify as LGBTQ+ and gender-based violence continues to be the main driver of homelessness amongst women and children. When high rates of poverty are coupled with housing insecurity and discrimination, survivors are forced to make the impossible decision to either return to an abusive situation or live on the street. According to a 2023 report published by NRCDV, the multiple, often intersecting forms of oppression experienced by members of the LGBTQ+ community including anti-LGBTQI+ bias by service providers- create barriers that limit LGBTQ+ survivors' access to housing resources and options.

### **Know Your Rights**

There are now laws that are designed to protect people in the LGBTQI+ community from housing discrimination-including temporary shelter. In 2021, Following an executive order from the Biden Administration, the US Dept of Housing and Urban Development added sexual orientation and gender identity as protected classes under the Fair Housing Act. This means that if a person believes they were discriminated against by a landlord while attempting to access housing (including fair market and government subsidized housing) they have a right of action (meaning they can sue) based on the conditions of the Fair Housing Act. Under VAWA, a person attempting to access shelter should not be asked to "prove" their gender by medical or legal documents, nor should they be asked about their body parts. They have the right to ask for an individual accommodation to provide greater privacy or safety, but a program cannot isolate nor separate a person based on identifying as transgender.

### **Impact**

The impact that anti- LGBTQI+ bills and debates have on LGBTQI+ youth cannot be overstated. A 2022 survey by the Trevor Project found that two-thirds of LGBTQ+ youths reported that debates about anti-trans legislation have had negative impacts on their mental health. While 42% of the nearly 35,000 LGBTQ+ youths surveyed and over half of trans and nonbinary youths- seriously considered suicide within the prior year. Not only do queer and trans folks experience higher rates of violence from family members, but the combination of family violence and housing insecurity results in LGBTQI+ youth in particular relying heavily on unhealthy/violent relationships for survival.

It is important to note that the systemic barriers to accessing safe and affordable housing in GA go beyond just historically resilient and marginalized communities, but according to the National Low Income Housing Coalition, across the state of GA there is a severe shortage of affordable and available housing for extremely low income renters, 77% of whom are extremely cost-burdened, spending more than half of their income on housing. As it stands, GA is one of 25 states that do not allow rent control. Meanwhile, rent prices have spiked since before COVID with GA seeing the 6th largest increase in fair market rent in the country.

## Solutions

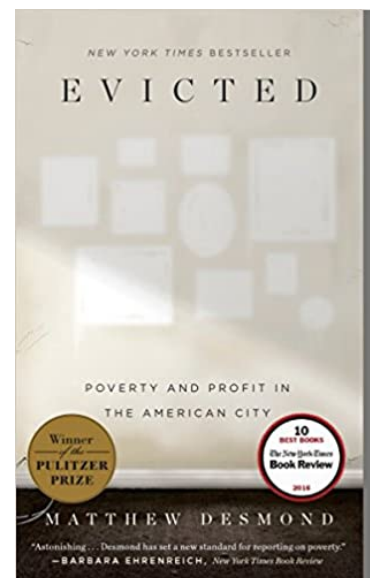
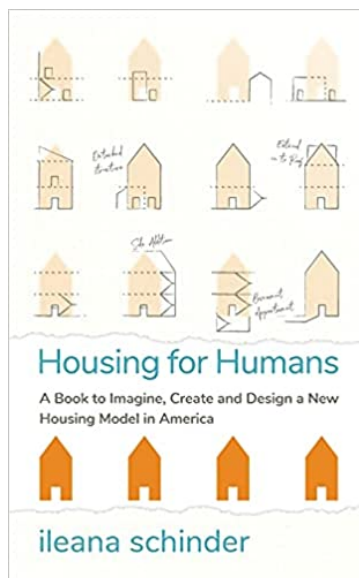
In the most recent report published by NRCDDV, they posit several solutions to improving access to safe housing including, but not limited to: federal non-defense, discretionary resources to be used flexibly in communities; wide dissemination of research findings on best practice housing models that have been proven to improve survivor access to housing; increase funding supports for culturally specific programs; broadening the definition of eligible family members to increase the likelihood of survivors remaining housed within family networks that extend beyond biological family.

The National Low-Income Housing Coalition suggests expanding the amount of affordable housing resources in the federal budget, reform the low income housing tax credit to support the people with the greatest need, create a permanent, emergency rental assistance fund to prevent evictions and homelessness, and strengthen rental protections.

To read the full article, [click here](#).

## Want to learn more about Affordable Housing?

Check out these books:



### Take Action:

Find your legislators and let them know why you and all Georgians deserve affordable housing.

## SUPREME COURT UPDATE

In 303 Creative v. Elenis, SCOTUS ruled that businesses involving customized expressive messages can turn away same-sex couples or other customers. The case addressed whether a website designer in Colorado could refuse to design wedding websites for same-sex couples.

LGBTQ+ individuals are a protected class and yet face enshrined discrimination and relentless social and legal attacks, as well as violence. Homophobic discrimination impacts victims of domestic violence by making it harder for LGBTQ+ people to reach out for help in an increasingly hostile environment. Though the decision today is limited in its scope, it is another dehumanizing attack on the LGBTQ+ community. NNEDV is committed to creating a world that rejects homophobia and discrimination.

[Read More from NNEDV](#)

## Q2 Program Updates

COMMUNITY  
RISE

JUSTICE FOR  
INCARCERATED SURVIVORS



Our first Community Conversation on Trans Health & Wellness and its intersection with domestic violence was held on April 4th, with several executive directors from our member programs. This conversation was followed up with a statewide training on April 6th, there were over 50 advocates from across the state that attended the training.

The first draft on “How to Start a Non-Profit” Guidebook is completed. This guidebook will assist the CBOs in our CR program with basic information on “what is needed to start a 501c3”. Some of the topics are developing mission and vision statement, strategic planning, and board development.

For any questions or inquiries, please email Leona Williams, Director of Culturally Specific Outreach: [Lwilliams@gcadv.org](mailto:Lwilliams@gcadv.org).

We are so thrilled to announce the hiring of our second ever fully dedicated staff member to the JFISProject, Ellie Williams, the newDirector of the JFIS project!

Very excitedly, we are also able to announce that one of our program participants was released from prison! We have been working to continue providing her with support and resources to help her get started on her new journey and to navigate the challenges that many women experience post-release.

In addition, we have also begun to develop a new partnership withLadies of Hope Ministries (LOHM).who provide support, programming, and services to women who are reentering society after being incarcerated.

For any information on the JFIS project contact:  
Selena Faith: [sfaith@gcadv.org](mailto:sfaith@gcadv.org)  
Ellie Williams: [ewilliams@gcadv.org](mailto:ewilliams@gcadv.org)  
Karimah Dillard: [kdillard@gcadv.org](mailto:kdillard@gcadv.org)

## Membership

### Membership

**Membership Applications:** The Membership survey has been released. If you have not yet done so, please complete the survey as soon as possible. Dues are not required to complete the survey – if you have questions or concerns about paying dues, please reach out to Trish Hardy at [thardy@gcadv.org](mailto:thardy@gcadv.org).

### Membership Meetings:

The next Membership Meeting is Thursday, August 3rd, 11am – 3:00pm in person, location TBD.

### 2023 Membership Meeting Dates:

August 3rd – 11:00am – 3:00pm – In person, location TBD  
November 2nd – 11:00am – 1:00pm – virtual

### Communications

2022 Annual Report now available in print and in an interactive [Webpage](#).



## BRIDGES DEAF ADVOCACY PROGRAM



BRIDGES has been serving two repeat survivors and referring at least 25 hearing survivors for the last three months due to them receiving information from the National Domestic Violence hotline.

GCADV has hired a new BRIDGES Program Director, MeLisa Dennis who started in June. DeAnna is DeAnna is now working for Activating Change as a Senior Program Associate and will stay on as a

## Q1 Training Updates

### Frontline Training:

GCADV will alternate 2 in-person and 2 virtual Frontline sessions per year. Making the shift to virtual training throughout the pandemic has taught us that there are many benefits to virtual training – accessibility, less time away from work due to travel, flexible scheduling, and the ability to record sessions. However, many people find learning to be easier attending training in-person and struggle with online learning platforms. A good balance of both in-person and virtual training, including Frontline, will allow us to meet the needs of all advocates in Georgia.

Our next Frontline session will be in-person in August of 2023.

### Advanced Advocacy Training:

Alexis Champion will be holding a virtual training series on advanced advocacy topics including goal setting with survivors, outward-facing advocacy vs. survivor emotional support, addressing substance abuse and addiction, supporting survivors as parents, navigating mental health, and time limits, terminations, and evictions. Each session will include a 1.5 hour presentation, and an additional 30 minutes for activities and practice. The sessions are held every 3rd Thursday of the month through September 2023.

### Confidentiality Applied: Federal Requirements, Survivor Privacy, and Testifying in Court:

GCADV was thrilled to host this full day in person training on May 11th in Atlanta, with national trainer and TA provider Alicia Aiken, J.D., Principal, Danu Center for Strategic Advocacy and Director of the Confidentiality Institute. Topics covered in the training included:

- Overview of the basics of confidentiality requirements
- Privacy and confidentiality – programs' use of technology
- Best practices in testifying on behalf of survivors in court.
- Expert witness testimony
- Applied concepts – scenarios and group discussion.

### Upcoming Training:

#### Frontline Training

August 15-17, 2023 - In Person, Atlanta  
December 4-11, 2023 - Virtual

#### Advanced Advocacy Training

July 20: Navigating mental health  
August 17: Time limits, terminations, and evictions  
September 21: Mandated reporting  
10:00am – 11:30am via Zoom

For any questions or inquiries, email Alexis Champion, Director of Training and Capacity Building, [achampion@gcadv.org](mailto:achampion@gcadv.org)

Training Opportunities:  
to register please visit <https://training.gcadv.org>

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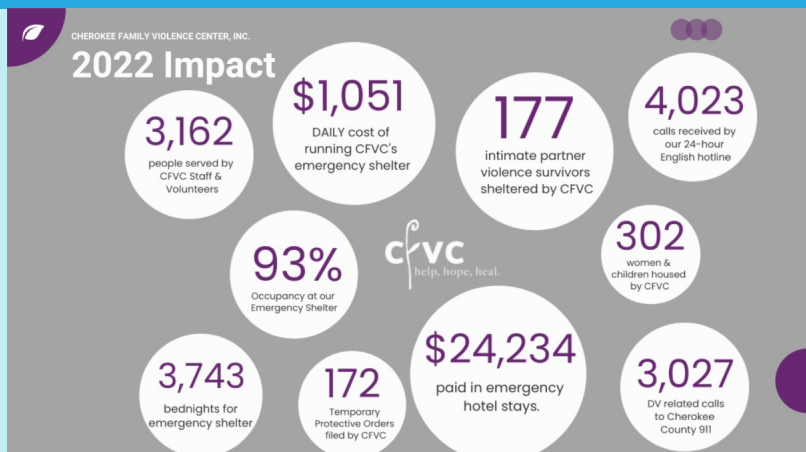
## 2023 Q2 Events



# RACE & RALLY FOR EMPOWERMENT

We want to thank everyone who helped make the Rally For Empowerment the absolute wonderful experience that it was! View more pictures [here](#).

## Member Highlight



Cherokee Family Violence Center is a longtime member of the Georgia Coalition Against Domestic Violence and their Multicultural Program Director, Norma Mendoza, serves on GCADV's Board of Directors. We are the Cherokee Family Violence Center (CFVC). Located in Cherokee County, Georgia, we provide safety, support, and shelter for victims of domestic violence and their children. What began as a concerned group of Canton First United Methodist Church members almost 35 years ago is now one of the most comprehensive domestic violence support organizations in Georgia. CFVC continues to expand the services that we offer to victims of domestic violence in Cherokee County and in Georgia. CFVC now provides on-site support services to both English and Spanish speaking clients living in our Supportive Transitional Housing Program. In addition, they provide referrals for Legal Assistance to victims who need help with divorce, child custody and other civil legal issues.



#### Advocate Highlight from CFVC

Kenia Chinchilla has been working at CFVC for 4 years advocating for immigrant victims of domestic violence in Cherokee county and advocating for the survivors who call the Statewide DV Hotline in Spanish language. She is bicultural and bilingual and has been providing trauma informed holistic legal, housing, and immigration advocacy services to the immigrant survivors. She also provides support groups, IPV and Financial Empowerment classes in Spanish language. She continuously participates in outreach activities, collaborative meetings and events, including different counties DV Task Forces meetings. Kenia enhances safety, and empower the immigrant survivors, with empathy, passion and commitment, working above and beyond.

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SAVE THE DATE



GEORGIA COALITION AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

TOGETHER WE RISE

thursday

28

september

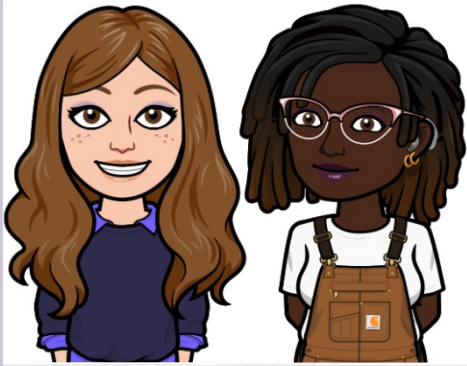


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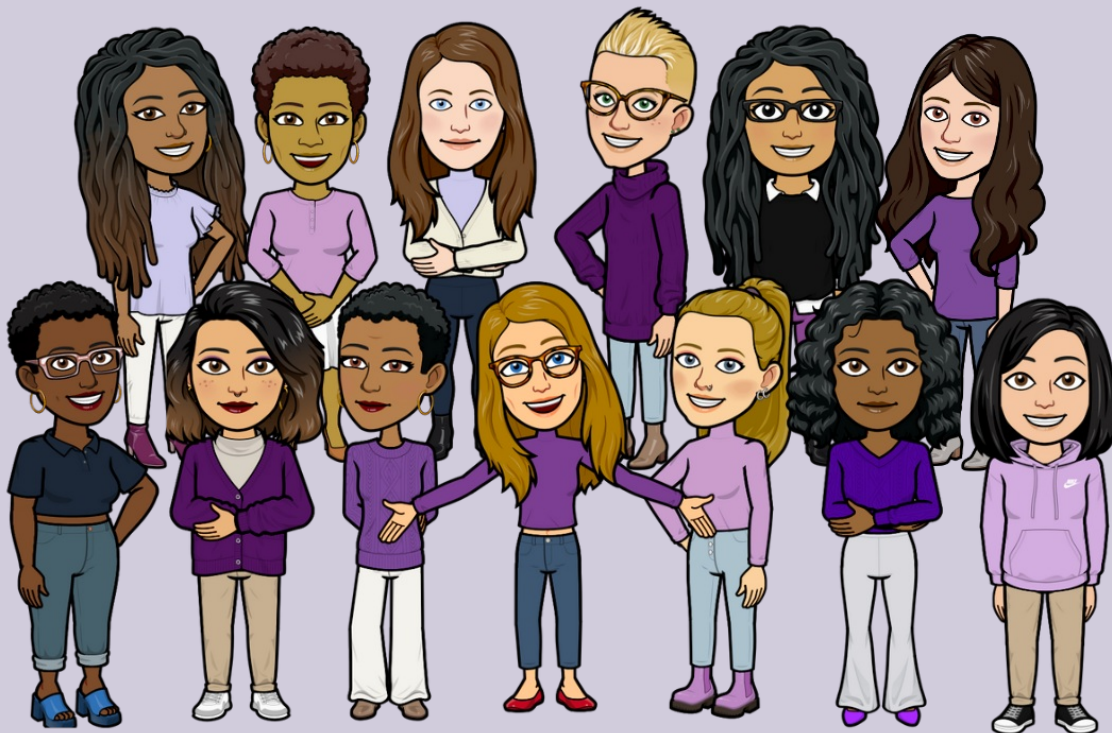
ANNUAL FALL FUNDRAISER

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(Left to Right)  
Ellie Williams - JFIS Director  
MeLisa Dennis - BRIDGES Program Director



### **A Letter from DeAnna, former BRIDGES Program Director**

Hello everyone!

It is with mixed emotions that I announce that I will be leaving my position as a domestic violence program director here at BRIDGES. It has been an honor to work with such a dedicated and passionate team over the past 4 years. I am grateful for the opportunity to have contributed to the important work of ending domestic violence and supporting survivors.

As I move on to new endeavors, I am excited to see the organization continue to thrive and make a difference in the lives of those affected by domestic violence. I am confident that the team will continue to provide exceptional support and advocacy to survivors.

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce you to MeLisa Dennis, who will be taking over my role as domestic violence advocate. MeLisa brings a rich experience from domestic violence, counseling, and vocational rehabilitation skills to the team and I am confident that she will continue to provide the same level of dedication and support to survivors as I have.

It has been an absolute honor to work alongside survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking, and to have seen firsthand the resilience and strength that they possess. Together, we have worked to create a program that serves to empower survivors and provide them with the resources and support they need to rebuild their lives.

I also want to extend my sincerest thanks to our community partners since the past 10 years. Your

support and collaboration have been instrumental in the success of the BRIDGES program. Your dedication to serving survivors has been truly inspiring, and I am grateful for the opportunity to have worked with each and every one of you.

Finally, I want to express my appreciation for the members of the BRIDGES Advisory Committee. Your guidance and expertise have been invaluable in shaping the direction of the program, and I am grateful for the time and energy that you have dedicated to this important work.

Thank you all for the support and camaraderie that I have experienced during my time here. It has been a privilege to work alongside each and every one of you. BRIDGES is in a good hands of my good friend MeLisa and thank you for carrying the torch.

Sincerely,  
DeAnna Swope

**Thank you for reading our newsletter.  
We are so excited for what's to come!**

*Envisioning a Georgia Free of Domestic Violence*

Visit our website



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