**Annual Highlights 2017**

**Mission and Vision Statements**

To end violence, inspire hope and provide unwavering support to all people affected by domestic and sexual violence by engaging our community in safety, equality and partnership.

Embrace envisions a courageous social change taking place ending all forms of oppression and violence and creating healthy communities where every person has the support to thrive.

**WE SERVED:**

- 623 men, women, teens and kids with in-person domestic and sexual violence counseling and advocacy services - a 10% increase in in-person services when compared to 2016’s services.
- 22 women, 22 youth, 3 seniors, and 2 adult males with 1,320 nights of safe shelter, counseling and advocacy services.

**2017 Highlights**

- 347 sexual assault survivors served
  - 100 served with in-person advocacy services in Rusk; 143 in Price; 104 in Washburn
- 10 victims received medical advocacy services including 5 sexual assault victims who received forensic nurse exam accompaniment
- 5,640 individual counseling and advocacy contacts made with domestic and sexual violence survivors
- 1,320
- 347 sexual assault survivors served
- 10 victims received medical advocacy services including 5 sexual assault victims who received forensic nurse exam accompaniment
- 5,640 individual counseling and advocacy contacts made with domestic and sexual violence survivors
- 1,320
- 475 Crisis Calls
  - 24 Lethality Assessment Program calls with survivors at high-risk of homicide
- Texting Hotline
  - 600+ crisis text contacts with survivors occurred; used multiple times a day alongside social media to stay in contact with current clients.
- 135 Safe Exchanges completed at the shelter
  - Program restructured to ensure children’s safety and highest quality care
615 adult and youth group counseling contacts made with domestic and sexual violence survivors through shelter groups and county jail site groups - nearly double the number of groups provided in 2016

Program Coordinators certified in PTSD and Trauma Counseling through UW-Milwaukee and trained as facilitators in a variety of evidenced-based curricula and service models

Emergency Legal Advocacy & Criminal Justice Support
337 domestic and sexual violence survivors served - a 10% increase from 2016

Tri-County domestic violence outreach and awareness work at an all-time high; 219 coordinated systems response meetings, 116 community outreach and education presentations, 258 youth outreach and education presentations, 58 public awareness events

Sexual Assault Prevention
553 student and community education presentations offered to all three counties reaching 14,000+ people

740 middle and high school student group contacts made across the tri-county service area on violence prevention and resiliency topics
**State and Federal increased grant awards secured to fund enhanced programming**

- Greater Wisconsin Agency on Aging Resource
- Victims of Crime Act
- Department of Children and Families

Staff wages increased to closely mirror the Wisconsin Fair Minimum levels for State employees

- Night and weekend shelter staff had their job duties revamped and position titles updated to Crisis Advocate. This change promoted and ensured highly trained and experienced crisis response is available 24/7 to all survivors. As a result of the increased training and support, retention outcomes for the Crisis Advocate position significantly improved in 2017.

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**Capacity Building Action Plan**

In fall 2016, the Embrace Board of Directors underwent a planning process that identified areas needing strengthening and established targets for improvement. Activities and a timeline to achieve the desired gains were formulated into the 2017 Action Plan. The Board completed the following Action Plan activities to build the organization’s capacity:

- Researched, wrote and approved an Executive Director Succession Plan.
- The Governance Committee researched and collectively drafted Board Governance Policies following the Carver Policy Governance Model. The outcomes policies, management limitations policies, board processes policies, and board and staff relationships policies making up the Governance Policies were unanimously approved.
- New Board Meeting structure and rotating venue locations adopted to assist in Board recruitment and retention. Enhanced Board Director orientation and training process put in place for 2018.

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"I am so very impressed by [Embrace’s] commitment to trauma-informed care and the best care for [the] agency’s clients."

--Patricia Clason, RCC, Professor at UW-Milwaukee
COLLABORATIVE PROGRAMMING & SYSTEMS ADVOCACY

Schools

The relationships with the local school guidance offices and school administrative staff grew significantly this year. New this year, Embrace and school administration staff from several districts wrote and signed an official inter-agency agreement formalizing Embrace’s involvement in the schools for years to come. The agreement includes onsite counseling, support groups, outreach and prevention presentations, and collaborative response to youth survivors.

Close working partnerships with guidance counselors brought tailored, on-site counseling services to high-risk students in the elementary, middle and high schools in every school district across the three-county service area. Each Program Coordinator spends an average of 8 hours per week in the schools meeting with these students on an individual basis in confidential meeting areas. Student support and prevention education groups were offered often on a twice weekly basis to middle and high school students, and even occasionally to 4th and 5th graders, in nearly every school district in the tri-county area. Embrace’s teams of county-based Program Coordinators maintained a schedule of 256 prevention education and outreach presentations reaching students, parents and school staff.

In summer 2017, Embrace Program Coordinators met consistently to revamp student group curriculum materials, youth counseling tools, and youth prevention presentations. The new materials incorporated staffs’ ever-growing knowledge after they were certified in PTSD and Trauma Counseling from UW-Milwaukee and trained as facilitators in other evidenced-based models such as Darkness to Light, Second Step Child Protection Unit for elementary students, Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE Interface), Trauma-Informed Care, and Coaching Boys into Men. Research on these models indicates a significant increase in attendees’ knowledge about and attitude towards domestic violence and sexual assault and trauma responses, as well as an increase in behaviors that prevent sexual abuse like talking about it with a safe adult or friend.

University of Wisconsin - Eau Claire

In 2017, Embrace signed an affiliation agreement with the University of Wisconsin - Eau Claire. The affiliation between UWEC and Embrace will enhance the internship program at Embrace by providing quality interns from UWEC. The goal of the agreement is to provide opportunities for students to learn about rural Northern Wisconsin and the domestic and sexual violence trends occurring in our communities. The past few years Embrace has worked closely with the UW-Madison nursing program offering opportunities for groups of students to attend our supportive community meetings and have discussions with survivors about the challenges the survivors face regarding the medical systems. Students and faculty advisors have commended Embrace for their work with survivors as well as for hosting meaningful and educational sessions with survivors and students. In recognition of the successful partnership Embrace and UWEC signed a five-year agreement to continue to work together to meet Embrace’s mission and vision.

Youth Services Expansion

Throughout 2017, Embrace has tracked a surge in youth seeking safe shelter services both with and without their parents. Between October 1, 2016 and September 30, 2017, there was a jump to 44% of all shelter residents being under the age of 18. In the past, that number hovered around 25% of all residents.

To best respond to the kids coming into the Shelter, Embrace created a new Youth Development Advocate position in late 2016 and filled the position in 2017. The position is responsible for maintaining direct counseling and advocacy services to youth in Shelter. The position also assists parents in understanding the impact of trauma on their children’s brain development. Strengthening the parental bond with the child and increasing other protective factors will help the child bounce back and prevent future violence. The kid-friendly spaces in the Shelter and Outreach Offices were organized to include more hands on and fun healing activities. The spaces were also redecorated to be gender neutral and colorful! A second living space at the Shelter was overhauled and designated a Kids Room.

In addition to the updated spaces, Embrace began offering the Connected Kids program to both outreach and shelter families. Connected Kids is an evidenced-based curriculum through the American Academy of Pediatrics. The program is designed to address the important issues of violence prevention and resiliency building in children who have experienced trauma. Research has shown developing qualities of resilience through Connected Kids will prevent future violence and accruing Adverse Childhood Experience scores in the child’s life.

Professional Training

This past year, Embrace led and invited trainers to our rural service area to educate community partners on inclusive and culturally-sensitive services. In September, Embrace hosted the statewide LGBTQ committee in Ladysmith for a day-long training on providing inclusive services to LGBTQ survivors. The training was promoted widely and attended by 40+ community partners! The training provided knowledge about LGBTQ victims, intersections of identity, and how intimate partner violence affects these populations. The attendees explored ways to enhance their own agencies’ capacities to serve LGBTQ victims and offer trauma-informed services with a cultural humility.

Also in the fall 2017, Embrace’s Price and Washburn County Program Coordinators invited the Regional Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) Prosecutor to present to criminal justice, medical and social services community partners on strangulation and suffocation crimes within intimate partner violence. The presentations were well attended and provided attendees information on how to support victims in a trauma-informed manner and properly document injuries holding offenders accountable for these felony level crimes.
In addition to the twice weekly support group offerings at the Shelter, Embrace Program Coordinators began offering a weekly Turning Points support group to survivors entering the county jails. The curriculum is based off of the Duluth Model designed to support survivors who have used violence in response to violence. Embrace staff were also trained as facilitators and began offering the White Bison Mending Broken Hearts 3-day supportive retreats in conjunction with the Bannockburn resort property in Exeland. This curriculum has helped Embrace to significantly enhance services to the underserved Native American survivors and promote an understanding of the impact of intergenerational trauma throughout the tri-county communities. All Embrace support groups are activity-based and have a strong educational focus on healthy coping strategies, self-esteem, empowerment, and violence prevention. This year, additional outcome evaluations were created allowing Embrace staff to continually improve the groups.

Flambeau Correctional Center (FCC), located between Price and Rusk Counties, and Embrace continued to expand their collaborative relationship meeting the federal Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) standards. In 2017, response procedures and a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) were created and signed by Embrace and FCC, all of Embrace’s Program Coordinators and FCC staff were trained to respond to PREA advocacy calls and requests for in-person meetings, and additional outreach and notification materials were distributed. The MOU highlights the ongoing collaboration between Embrace and the Flambeau Correctional Center to provide confidential counseling and support services to prison rape survivors. A TV newscast was even completed on this progressive and state-recognized partnership!

"Thanks so much for your support when I needed it the most! I truly hope you are recognized for going above and beyond at your job and line of duty! You are good at what you do and thank you again! You have touched my heart!" - Survivor

The teamwork displayed in the 2017 development of the highly-functioning and project-based Coordinated Community Response teams, Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) and Domestic Abuse Response Team (DART) response and referral protocols and regular systems review meetings, and the Lethality Assessment Program protocol with law enforcement, has gained the trust of community partners. Embrace has built solid relationships and earned the opportunity to work collaboratively with system partners leveraging the community’s collective power to benefit survivors.

Throughout the year, Embrace continued to lead collaborative response meetings (CCRs, DARTs and SARTs) and participate in the county-specific, community coalition group meetings. Maintaining these relationships within the coalition groups encourages inter-agency referrals and brings more awareness and support to Embrace and the survivors we serve. New to the CCR groups this year, agenda-building and meeting facilitation responsibilities are rotated among community partners to encourage participation, fresh perspectives, and buy-in on collaborative projects. A project taken on by CCRs this year was creating and adopting a mission and vision statement for the groups. The Rusk and Washburn County groups also implemented a meeting structure of break-out, project-based committees during the meeting time to ensure meeting efficiency. All three CCRs have prioritized inter-agency cross training and community mapping over the past two years.

In 2017, the three CCR groups agreed to have break out SART and DART meetings that include staff members from Child Protection Services, Public Health, Law Enforcement, District Attorney’s Office, and the Regional VAWA Prosecutor. These teams are led by Embrace Program Coordinators in troubleshooting and collaboratively solving system gaps and barriers survivors face. The teams now meet monthly in Rusk County and semi-monthly in Washburn and Price Counties. The teams prioritized updating the sexual assault victim response protocols and adopted new Sexual Violence Investigation Worksheets following prosecution best-practices as well as trauma-informed care.

Board of Directors
Dave Willingham - President, Kelly Swan - Vice President, Kathy Mai - Treasurer, Susie Daniels - Secretary, Dave Wilson - Personnel Chair, Jeff Wallace, Theresa Gibbs, Kevin Julien, John Kmosena, Annette Barna, Sherrie Wiegand, Mike Toycen, Chris Jarosinski

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40 volunteers and interns donated over 732 hours to the organization.