

ENROLLED ORIGINAL

A CEREMONIAL RESOLUTION

24-174

IN THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

April 5, 2022

To recognize June 1, 2022 as the 50th anniversary of the D.C. Rape Crisis Center, a nonprofit organization dedicated to creating a world free from sexual violence.

WHEREAS, the D.C. Rape Crisis Center, opened in 1972, is the oldest rape crisis center in the country and the only rape crisis center in the District;

WHEREAS, Liz O’Sullivan and Karen Kollias, spurred by the surge in feminist consciousness around sexual assault in the early 70s, envisioned a full-service rape crisis center and held meetings around the District to attract women to the project;

WHEREAS, following a meeting at American University in the spring of 1972, O’Sullivan and Kollias opened the D.C. Rape Crisis Center on June 1, 1972, operating from a rental house on Wisconsin Avenue, NW in which Kollias lived;

WHEREAS, in 1972, O’Sullivan wrote the groundbreaking manual *How to Start a Rape Crisis Center*, and thousands of copies were distributed around the world, which resulted in the D.C. Rape Crisis Center consulting with organizations in the United States, Europe, and Africa to address sexual violence against women;

WHEREAS, the following year, the D.C. Rape Crisis Center was relocated to a townhouse on Q Street, NW, where 6 women supporting the work of the D.C. Rape Crisis Center lived, and where many more volunteers came for meetings and phone monitoring;

WHEREAS, 2 years later, the D.C. Rape Crisis Center moved to a church basement, and by that time many of the original members had left the organization;

WHEREAS, the D.C. Rape Crisis Center initially had no outside funding, but through its advocacy to the D.C. Council, in 1975, it was awarded a small contract with the District’s Department of Human Resources to provide rape prevention education, though the organization’s hotline and victim services programs continued to be run by volunteers;

WHEREAS, the early organizers of the D.C. Rape Crisis Center, who were white, felt that the D.C. Rape Crisis Center’s leadership and paid positions should be roles occupied by Black women, given the District’s large Black population, and so, to better reflect the demographics of

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the District’s population, Michelle Hudson, Nkenge Touré, and Loretta Ross served as the organization’s first 3 executive directors;

WHEREAS, throughout its history, the D.C. Rape Crisis Center was led and supported by other dedicated women, including Jackie MacMillan, Nancy Pfaff, Marialis Zmuda, Deb Friedman, Deirdre Wright, Trish Nemore, and Marty Langelan;

WHEREAS, the D.C. Rape Crisis Center’s overarching goal was to stop rape and, to that end, the organization focused on peer support, confidence and skills development, and opposing ideologies that maintain men’s power over women;

WHEREAS, the D.C. Rape Crisis Center organized the 1978 March to Stop Violence Against Women – the District’s first “Take Back the Night” march – in partnership with several other women’s groups;

WHEREAS, the D.C. Rape Crisis Center has organized Anti-Rape Week, an annual, week-long event where participants organize and participate in educational workshops, and which has become one of the D.C. Rape Crisis Center’s most well-recognized events and brought many women of color into the D.C. Rape Crisis Center’s anti-rape work;

WHEREAS, the D.C. Rape Crisis Center also formed a relationship with the D.C. Self Defense Karate Association, a martial arts school run by Carol Middleton, which provided self-defense workshops year-round and throughout Sexual Assault Awareness Month;

WHEREAS, Denise Snyder, the D.C. Rape Crisis Center’s executive director from 1988 to 2013, was instrumental in getting funding needed to continue operating;

WHEREAS, Snyder was succeeded by Sherelle Hessell Gordon, and then Indira Henard, who has served as Executive Director of the organization since 2016;

WHEREAS, the D.C. Rape Crisis Center educates children and adults to equip them with the skills needed to form and cultivate healthy relationships;

WHEREAS, in 2016, the D.C. Rape Crisis Center went to Lagos, Nigeria to help open the first rape crisis center in that country, and the organization worked with international non-governmental organizations to create the first mobile application for refugee aid workers;

WHEREAS, in 2018, the D.C. Rape Crisis Center led a team to Capitol Hill to support Dr. Christine Blasey Ford and other survivors of sexual assault during the U.S. Senate’s confirmation hearings on Brett Kavanaugh’s nomination to the U.S. Supreme Court;

WHEREAS, the D.C. Rape Crisis Center won a 2019 and 2020 “Best Places to Work” award from the *Washington Business Journal*;

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WHEREAS, in 2019, the D.C. Rape Crisis Center helped reposition the sexual assault coalition in the District into a separate entity;

WHEREAS, the D.C. Rape Crisis Center played an instrumental role in the passage of the Sexual Assault Victims' Rights Amendment Acts, and the organization provides advocacy services established through that legislation;

WHEREAS, the D.C. Rape Crisis Center was awarded "Agency of the Year" in 2019 by the National Association of Social Workers;

WHEREAS, the Washington Award Program awarded D.C. Rape Crisis Center the 2020, 2021, and 2022 "Best of Washington" awards in the category of Community & Social Services and inducted the D.C. Rape Crisis Center into the Business Hall of Fame 3 years in a row;

WHEREAS, the D.C. Rape Crisis Center provided specialized crisis support to Members of Congress and congressional staff who were impacted by the insurrection on Capitol Hill, and leadership spoke at the National Press Club on the importance of ushering in a survivor-centered process;

WHEREAS, since its inception, the D.C. Rape Crisis Center has provided free counseling services, 24/7 crisis intervention hotline services, 24/7 hospital- and community-based advocacy services, and legal services to sexual assault survivors in the District; and

WHEREAS, the D.C. Rape Crisis Center is celebrating its 50th Anniversary in the month of June 2022.

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, That this resolution may be cited as the "D.C. Rape Crisis Center 50th Anniversary Recognition Resolution of 2022".

Sec. 2. The Council of the District of Columbia recognizes June 1, 2022 as the 50th anniversary of the D.C. Rape Crisis Center, a nonprofit organization dedicated to creating a world free from sexual violence.

Sec. 3. This resolution shall take effect immediately.