



Jacksonville Provider of Sexual Assault Forensic Exams and Trauma Counseling Elects New Board President to Ensure Organization Can Continue Helping Survivors into the Future

As more people seek services in Duval, Baker and Nassau Counties, the Women's Center of Jacksonville, is focusing on ensuring the organization's long-term ability to improve the lives of women and assist survivors of sexual assault

Jacksonville, Fla. – October 3, 2022 – The Women's Center of Jacksonville (WCJ), the only certified rape recovery services provider in Duval, Baker and Nassau Counties, has elected a new board president who will oversee efforts to strengthen the organization to improve the lives of women and help sexual assault survivors for years to come.

The WCJ's new president, Laura Van Zee, took on the role Oct. 1. She is vice president of commercial banking for Truist Bank where she is responsible for managing banking relationships for business clients with between \$5 million and \$75 million in revenues. Van Zee will work with other WCJ board members to expand the organization's donor base, complete the capital campaign that built the J. Wayne and Delores Barr Weaver Sexual Assault Forensic Exam (SAFE) Center and strengthen operations by employing new resources and technology.

"I am honored to work with WCJ leadership as we make plans to secure this life-changing nonprofit's ability to improve the lives of women and help sexual assault survivors into the future," said Van Zee. "Our outgoing president, Kellie Ann Kelleher Smith, laid an excellent foundation we will expand upon during my term."

The WCJ's new executive committee will also consist of:

- Sharòn Simmons, 1st Vice President
- Chandra Manning, 2nd Vice President
- Bob Pinder, Treasurer
- Earlene Schanze, Secretary

One in six women in Florida experiences rape or sexual violence in their lifetime. The WCJ's Rape Recovery Team provides one-to-one client support services, including forensic examinations, and empowers survivors by advocating for their rights, dignity and respect. The WCJ also provides rape prevention education and community education. Their 24-hour rape crisis hotline (904-721-7273) is monitored by victim advocates who provide information, crisis intervention and referrals. The WCJ responds compassionately to survivors of sexual violence whether or not they choose to report the crime to law enforcement.

Van Zee, Simmons, Manning, Pinder and Schanze will all serve two -year terms.