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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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40 YEARS SERVING THE COMMUNITY

CORA has been providing safety, support and healing to those experiencing intimate partner abuse in San Mateo County for four decades.

SAN MATEO, CA – In 1976, at an activist meeting in San Francisco, a woman stood up and offered to give her home to the group to establish California’s first what was then called “battered women’s shelter.” After founding and stabilizing Casa de las Madres in San Francisco, these passionate individuals turned their attention toward the Peninsula and, in the Fall of 1978, started a shelter and support group for those fleeing domestic violence. This organization grew into CORA, the only organization in San Mateo County solely focused on helping those escaping intimate partner abuse.

Since that day, CORA has been there for hundreds of thousands of individuals seeking help with domestic violence.

“It’s amazing to see what a few caring individuals can do”, said Executive Director, Melissa Lukin. “The domestic violence movement has its roots in the women’s movement. But even back then, a woman was more likely to hide in her car than a shelter and there were no laws, no trained advocates. It was a ‘private matter.’ Now, four decades later, look how far we’ve come. An array of services from shelter to free legal representation has supported thousands upon thousands of women—and men—to create hopeful futures for themselves and their children.”

CORA offers a wide array of free services to those experiencing abuse. Beyond the original “shelter” and support groups, the organization now offers a 24-hour hotline, long-term housing support, mental therapy, programs specifically tailored to children and much more.

“It isn’t easy, but it’s rewarding work,” according to Lynn Engel, Development and Communications director. She notes that we’d all like to think that domestic violence isn’t happening in our community, but that’s simply not the case. “It’s something we don’t about. When the stats tell us 1 in 4 women and 1 in 7 men experience abuse, then it’s obviously around us. But, we’d rather keep it in the dark and pretend it isn’t there. Talking and admitting domestic violence exists is the first step to ending it.”

Even from the beginning, it wasn’t easy sailing. There were hurdles. Constance Castaneda, one of the founders, says she remembers being asked, when the nonprofit was brand new, why there needed to be an organization like CORA in the community when “that doesn’t happen around here.”

“We’re still addressing that falsehood today,” says Lukin, noting that CORA serves clients from all communities in San Mateo County. “We’re always trying to raise awareness. Public dialogue about this issue is more common than it used to be, certainly, but we still have a very long way to go.”

Of course, a lot has also changed over 40 years. Since those humble beginnings CORA has grown into a vital community resource, integrated with city police forces and the County Sheriff’s Department, and working closely with the District Attorney’s Office. The organization remains committed to being on the edge of domestic violence

assistance and treatment methods. (The recently partnered with Google to research how better to keep survivors remain safe online.)

Director of Programs, Cori Manthorne, understands the need for innovation while holding to the core of the movement. “In this work there is a fine balance between holding on to the values and learnings that began the movement and having enough flexibility to change with the times,” she says. “This shows up in how we understand intimate relationship violence and the approaches we use, all the way to understanding the community that supports and funds us. An organization like ours does not survive for 40 years and thrive the way we have been without finding that balance.” Cori says she’s excited about the new research and the direction the organization is headed. “We are always striving toward innovation. We stretch ourselves to think differently.”

Melissa Lukin (Executive Director), Lynn Engel (Director of Development and Communications), and Cori Manthorne (Director of Programs) are available for interviews. Please contact us if you’d like to arrange one.

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About CORA

CORA (Community Overcoming Relationship Abuse) provides safety, support and healing for individuals who experience abuse in an intimate relationship, and educates the community to break the cycle of domestic violence. The only agency in San Mateo County with the sole purpose of serving victims and survivors of domestic abuse, CORA provides confidential emergency, intervention and prevention services, including the County’s only emergency shelters, as well as a 24-hour hotline, an emergency response program, therapeutic counseling, legal services, children’s specific programming and supportive housing for survivors. Services are free of charge and are open to anyone needing help. Services are available in English and Spanish, as well as many other languages. To learn more, visit www.corasupport.org. You can also see the latest information by following CORA on twitter ([@ENDtoDV](https://twitter.com/ENDtoDV)) and Facebook ([@facebook.com/corasupport](https://facebook.com/corasupport)).