

# together we **THRIVE**

**FY19  
ANNUAL  
REPORT**

## **WE PROUDLY DOUBLED OUR IMPACT IN 2019**

serving 267+ survivors of sexual violence  
and human trafficking across Wisconsin,  
with direct legal services to 101 people

## **129 SURVIVOR- WRITERS**

empowered through LOTUS' Untold  
Stories program since 2011

## **UNTOLD STORIES EXHIBITS REACHED THOUSANDS**

including students and staff at SDS Holy  
Angels High School, National Crime  
Victims' Rights Day at the Wisconsin State  
Capitol, Bay View Gallery Night, and online  
through our digital magazine

## **\$621,405 RAISED TO SUPPORT**

Legal Services, Education, Policy  
Initiatives, and Survivor Empowerment  
(242% growth from 2018)

## **22 COMMUNITY PRESENTATIONS**

by LOTUS Staff and Survivor Advocates  
on issues of sexual assault, internet  
exploitation and vulnerabilities, victims'  
rights and human trafficking

## **2 COMMUNITY AWARDS**

- Association for Women Lawyers  
*Community Involvement Award*
- Milwaukee Bar Association's  
*Pro Bono Organization of 2019*



**LOTUS**  
Legal Clinic

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## MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO

*Things never stay the same. At the close of 2019, LOTUS took incredible strides in growth and stability. We more than doubled our impact. LOTUS attorneys helped clients obtain protected immigration status, clear criminal backgrounds to overcome obstacles to employment, housing and family reunification, protected victims' rights to be safe from harm, informed about their cases, and assured of their privacy. Through the fierce advocacy of Erika J. Petty, our Director of Legal Services, LOTUS also made strides in helping sex trafficking victims get restitution in state court - the first time this has been achieved. LOTUS proudly earned the Milwaukee Bar Association's award for best Pro Bono Organization of 2019.*

*With the help of our new Director of Survivor Empowerment, Austin M. Reece, and local partnerships with Milwaukee Institute of Art and Design, Mount Mary University, and Bloom Integrated Therapies, LOTUS grew its Untold Stories Program to 129 alums. Thousands of community supporters viewed the survivor-writings and response artworks and were informed and inspired. We strive to empower survivors to become change agents in their community. To that end, we travelled the Untold Stories art and writing exhibition to SDS Holy Angels High School to reach 115 students and staff, visited the Capitol for National Crime Victims' Rights Day, and exhibited at Bay View Gallery Night where the work was viewed by hundreds. It is an important part of our mission at LOTUS to stop the re-exploitation of survivors. In that vein, we proudly achieved a first by helping survivors to be paid by the state of Wisconsin at the professional consulting rate for their advocacy work that directly contributes to systemic change.*

*Efforts continue to make the system more just for survivors of sexual violence. We were interviewed frequently by state and national news media and gave our opinion as experts on pending Safe Harbor legislation to end charging juveniles with prostitution.*

*LOTUS continues to be sought after for our presentations and training, and we gave over 22 in 2019; demand far exceeding our ability to provide presentations. 2019 saw strides in the inclusion of paid survivor-advocates in our presentations for awareness on sexual assault, internet exploitation and vulnerabilities, victims' rights and human trafficking. Our team trained attorneys, advocates and other professionals at the US Consulate, the US Department of Justice, the National Crime Victim Law Institute, the Freedom Network, and dozens of local partners. Our training on "Trafficking and Individuals with Disabilities" reached over 100 people from across the Fox Cities region from law enforcement, schools, tribes, healthcare, and advocacy organizations. Training is the first step toward the compassionate and complete response to victims we seek across the board for our justice system.*

*This growth and impact was accomplished not only as a result of amazing staff, board and volunteers, but also our receipt of a significant multi-year state grant for direct victim services. We were able to hire four additional team members (including Catherine Leonard, JD - Staff Attorney and Lizette Olivas - Director of Operations), and forge additional partnerships with Hmong American Friendship Association and HIR Wellness for indigenous survivors. LOTUS's 2019 year could be framed as drinking out of a fire hose. We focused on building strength from our foundations up, from policies on staff wellness and benefits to database design, remote work tools, and financial stability. At the same time, ever in the spirit of bold innovation, I am envisioning what LOTUS 2.0 could be and what our role as a leading victims' law nonprofit means for survivor justice nationwide. We're beyond 'scaling' the model - the new work is about adapting the model. From law school curriculum to building a National Survivor Law Collective, 2020 begins a bold new journey. We are not afraid of change - we embrace it with excitement, confidence, and hope.*



**Rachel Monaco-Wilcox**  
CEO and Founder

**Thank You...** LOTUS blooms through the countless hours of service given by volunteers and in-kind contributors. We are so grateful to each and every person who has devoted their efforts this year. You improved us and the lives of our clients. We are deeply grateful to you.

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## FY19 SUPPORTERS

(Foundation and Organizational gifts, as well as Individual gifts over \$250)

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WisTAF  
Tamra Wittenberg  
Women and Girls Fund of  
Waukesha County

“

**Untold Stories  
taught me how  
to shine a light  
on my scars,  
reigniting my  
passion for  
writing and  
inspiring me to  
return back to  
school.**

**~ Untold Stories alumna &  
2019 Rise and Thrive  
participant**

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## A FORCE FOR GOOD

In 2019, Erika J. Petty, JD (LOTUS Director of Legal Services; pictured left) was awarded a much deserved *Community Involvement Award* from the Association of Women Lawyers. Erika is a tireless champion and we are honored to work alongside her, helping survivors reclaim their voices, their lives, and their futures.





## EXPANDING UNTOLD STORIES

Our Untold Stories program is growing exponentially to include an online literary journal, poetry readings, and traveling art exhibitions. Pictured at left, an alumna from the Untold Stories program reads her poem at the first annual Untold Stories poetry reading at Woodland Pattern Book Center, June 2019.

## RISE AND THRIVE EXHIBIT

Six Untold Stories alumni participated in our 2019 "Rise and Thrive" exhibition, in partnership with local artist Brianna Joy Seipel. Together they collaborated to tell stories of healing and transformation through the outdoor spaces that inspire them. Keep an eye out for these pieces featured in the Milwaukee Independent magazine throughout 2020.



## SPECIAL THANKS TO...



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