2019 Woman of Faith weaves a healing network to empower survivors of sexual trauma

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There is no question that Rachel Monaco-Wilcox is driven with the spirit and passion to help survivors of domestic violence, rape and trafficking.” Those powerful words open Ann Angel’s nomination of Rachel for our 2019 Woman of Faith Award.

Ann is an English professor at Milwaukee’s Mount Mary University who collaborated with Rachel to launch the Untold Stories Program in 2014. The two-day writing workshop helps survivors find strength and healing through personal testimony. It has also helped change cultural attitudes and strengthen laws to protect — rather than punish — survivors. But Ann says Rachel believed she could still do more.

Rachel’s “more” was founding LOTUS Legal Clinic, where she serves as chief executive officer, and law profession colleagues provide trauma-informed legal services to victims of human trafficking and gender-based violence.

Austin Reece joined the LOTUS staff in 2018 and now directs Untold Stories. Together, he and Rachel have facilitated writing workshops, organized art shows and poetry readings, edited Untold Stories Magazine, and accompanied survivors to the National Crime Victim’s Rights Ceremony at the state capitol in Madison, Wis.

“My passion to help survivors comes from being an honest witness to myself as a survivor, and accepting the power of my own voice instead of fearing it.”
– Rachel Monaco-Wilcox

That lasting connection is now the art therapy component to Untold Stories.

“Art therapy helps to further witness survivors’ stories and build empathy,” says Emily, now an assistant professor at Mount Mary. She says Rachel’s mission is growing with plans to offer Untold Stories workshops nationally in the coming year.

“Rachel and I have a collaborative working relationship that supports Untold Stories, Mount Mary’s graduate art therapy program, and survivors of sex trafficking and sexual abuse.” Rachel has even helped advocate for state licensure of art therapists to qualify for insurance reimbursement.

Carrie says, “Rachel possesses high-level awareness of the support survivors need,” and shares her acuity with mental health providers and legal advocates to help them apply research-based principles of trauma-informed care to their work. She also encourages collaboration among legal and counseling professionals to improve client outcomes.

Carrie’s letter of support for Rachel’s nomination closes with this tribute:

These snapshots of what Rachel has done and what is in her heart have inspired me to give more of myself to the greater good. She has opened my eyes to new ways to care for those who experience shame, fear and insecurity. If ever there was a Woman of Faith whom I can identify with and look up to, it is Rachel.

Please join us to honor Rachel Monaco-Wilcox
CEO & Founder of LOTUS Legal Clinic

Thursday, September 26, 2019 • 7:00 p.m.
SDS Community House • 4311 N. 100th Street, Milwaukee
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