

# January Newsletter

2023



*Network staff organizing rescue bags donated by the FBI Minneapolis Citizens Academy Alumni Association for human trafficking survivors.*

## Happy New Year from The Network

We want to wish you all a Happy New Year! The Network is blessed by your continuing support and the services you and your organizations provide to victims and survivors of violence each day. We hope your upcoming year is filled with many successes in serving South Dakota victims and survivors. With your support, collaboration, and partnership, we will continue to help victims and their families. We are committed to victim support, offender accountability, and access to inclusive and safe services for everyone in South Dakota. We are always striving to do better and be better!

-Krista Heeren-Graber, *Executive Director*



**Together, we are  
The Network.**

South Dakota Network Against Family Violence and Sexual Assault

## Newsletter Highlights

Introduction of New  
Staff Members

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New Project  
Updates

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Continuous Project  
Updates

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Legislative Session  
Updates

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Upcoming Events &  
Trainings

# New Staff Members

## Annie McMillan



Annie formally joined The Network in August 2022 after six months as an intern. She recently graduated from Boise State University with a master's degree in Social Work. Her BSW was completed at the University of South Dakota in 2016, followed by six years as a Kinship Home Study Specialist at Lutheran Social Services. Annie also assisted with the Foster Care program at LSS on occasion. As a Grant Project Specialist, Annie will be coordinating The Network's recently awarded ICJR (Improving Criminal Justice Response) grant as well as the Legal Assistance for Victims grant. Favorite pastimes for Annie include writing, reading, listening to music, and tending to her collection of houseplants. She and her husband stay busy with their three children- Oliver, Lola, and Jonah.

## Mattie Jones

Mattie is a recent graduate from the University of South Dakota, graduating in December 2022 with both a Bachelor of Arts in Criminal Justice and in Psychology. She is originally from Hayes, South Dakota and attended high school in Pierre. During college, Mattie worked as an undergraduate researcher on the Sexual Assault Kit Initiative grant as well as other various research projects under the Chiesman Center for Democracy. She has worked in a variety of internships, including positions with the Division of Criminal Investigation and a victim support service in Dublin, Ireland. Mattie enjoys traveling, cooking, and listening to podcasts. She is excited to join The Network and will be working on the Rural and Justice grants.



## Melody Koch



Melody grew up in Aberdeen, SD and graduated high school in Brookings. After high school, she attended SDSU, obtaining a B.S. in Political Science and a B.S. in Interdisciplinary Studies. Prior to joining The Network, she spent the last 10+ years gaining valuable skills in customer service, legal operations, and accounting. In her free time, Melody enjoys spending time with her 5 nieces and nephews, taking in the local music scene with her fiancé, Edward, and playing board games with friends.



# New Staff Members

JANUARY NEWSLETTER 2023

## Brandi Storgaard



Brandi is a native of Northern Idaho, moving to SD in 1989. Brandi resides in Parker, SD with her husband, Peter, (step)daughter Madalyn (16), and their four fur children; Rosie (Domesticated Indoor Cat) is 8, Jinks (German Wirehaired Pointer) is 4, Sturgill (Morkie) is 1 and June (Labrador Retriever) is 7 months. Brandi has two other children; Chase (24) and Cayden (20) who also keep her busy. Brandi earned her degree in Criminal Justice with a concentration in Human Services from Colorado Technical Institute in 2011. Following graduation, Brandi spent nine years with the SD Department of Social Services, Child Protection Services(CPS) as a Case Manager, and was promoted to an Initial Family Assessment Investigator. In 2016 Brandi was awarded the Child Protection Worker of the year award. After nine years, Brandi took on a new position at Sanford Children's Child's Voice in a dual role as a Family Advocate and Human Trafficking Liaison in a partnership with Call to Freedom, focusing on prevention education and child sexual exploitation. She was also the Human Trafficking Expert contact for the Sanford Enterprise taking calls from other medical professionals and staff within Sanford to answer questions about trafficking or potential trafficking situations and took requests for trainings. When Brandi is not working, she enjoys spending time with her family and close friends, hunting with her husband, photographing her animals, traveling, and baking.

## Lara Roetzel



Lara comes to The Network after completing an appointment as the Interim State's Attorney for the Pennington County State's Attorney's Office. She is a graduate of the University of Nebraska – Lincoln, and Creighton University School of Law. From 2000-2003 she was in private practice, specializing in family law. Since 2003, Roetzel has been a felony prosecutor, specializing in sexual assault and homicide cases. Roetzel served as Pennington County's Chief Criminal Deputy from 2006-2022. Lara's cases have been featured on television in episodes of "Snapped" and "See No Evil." She has served as a member of the West River Human Trafficking Task Force and as a statewide trainer for The Network. Roetzel was named the "Victim's Champion" by the Pennington County Victim's Advocacy Program, and her team recognized by WAVI with their Spirit of Peace Award. In 2017, Lara was named the SD Prosecutor of the Year by the State's Attorney Association. Above all else, she is a wife and mother of five. Lara will be working on the new ICJR Grant as attorney consultant and advisor.



# New Staff Members

## Mike McCormick



Mike grew up in Sioux Falls, SD and still thinks of it as home. Mike now lives in Rapid City with his wife, Chris, and have been married for 35 years. They have two sons- Rheider and Connor. Both boys live in North Dakota. Rheider is a practicing attorney and Connor is currently attending UND Law School. Mike likes to listen to music, hunt and fish, go to concerts, ride motorcycles- and most of all -ride the bike to concerts. He and his wife get together with their sons as often as they can and try to go to at least one concert a year with them. Mike has been a drummer most of his life and still works hard to improve on that craft. He moved around a lot while his wife was in the military, so they are both happy to be back in South Dakota. Mike loves South Dakota, both East and West River. He worked in the field of disabilities for around 20 years, coached football, basketball, and baseball, and worked for the Pennington County States Attorney's Office for the last 10 years. Mike is honored and very excited about the new position with The Network.

## Madison Eggen

Madison is a Social Work intern at The Network this spring. She is currently attending the University of South Dakota, where she will be completing her undergraduate degree in Social Work in May. Eventually, Madison would like to get a master's degree and continue to develop in this field. Madison is from Yankton, and has one younger brother, two sisters, and a dog, Bella. She's excited for what's to come, and for the opportunities to learn at The Network!



## Continued Staff Members

**Executive Director:** Krista Heeren-Graber

**Assistant Director:** Kathy Rutten

**Financial Director:** Bonnie Tschetter

**Grants Compliance Supervisor:** Eric Lingen

**Financial Assistant:** Lora Ronning

**Office Manager:** Vien Hall

**Director of Program Development and Evaluation:** Christy VanDeWetering

**SAKI:** Raina Boyum

**Grants Project Coordinator:** Olivia Boese

**Project Specialist:** Sara Kindvall

**FAST Coordinator:** Tanya Grassel-Krietlow



# Project Updates

## New ICJR Grant Opportunity

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The Network was recently awarded a new grant opportunity to continue the Improving Criminal Justice Response grant through the Office on Violence Against Women. This project will allow The Network to aid in efforts to strengthen legal advocacy service programs for victims and survivors of violence in our state. Additionally, this grant award will aim to improve victim services by increasing access to justice and will ensure survivor-centered, culturally-relevant minimum standards for victim service providers, including those in tribal jurisdictions.

The Network has employed attorney Lara Roetzel to assist survivors and advocates with navigating the criminal justice system, thus reducing the barriers that often exist when seeking safety and protection. Lara will also provide TA and training for SANEs and SAFEs across the state so they are familiar with the criminal justice system and are comfortable testifying in court as needed.

Partners in this grant include the SD Department of Public Safety Victim Services, SD Survivor Task Force, White Buffalo Calf Women's Society, and a sexual assault nurse examiner consultant. The Improving Criminal Justice Response (ICJR) grant is a statewide project.

## Current ICJR Project Update

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The 2019 ICJR grant will end June 30, 2023, and a new application will be written in the spring of 2023. The grant continues to fund detectives who specialize in domestic violence in Sioux Falls, Minnehaha County, and Lincoln County, in addition to a victim advocate based out of Sioux Falls. The grant provides training for law enforcement and has offered technical assistance from resource prosecutors statewide. The sexual assault taskforce is funded through this grant and hosted a statewide sexual assault meeting in September 2022.



# Project Updates

## Justice and Disability Grants

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We are excited to announce that The Network was awarded continuation grants for the OVW FY2022 Disability and Justice for Families grant programs. The Disability grant will continue expanding on previous goals to address the intersection of violence and disability by providing training to providers, individuals who are deaf/have disabilities, support systems, etc., assisting with technical assistance requests, and supporting victims/survivors & providers through liaison services.

We are excited that South Dakota Urban Indian Health has joined the collaboration as a new grant partner and to continue partnerships with Communication Service for the Deaf, Disability Rights of South Dakota, and The Compass Center. This grant will focus on the Sioux Falls community but will maintain support & assistance with statewide needs as requested. The Justice for Families grant will continue moving forward comprehensively, assisting families navigating the justice system and engaging with various service systems. The grant works with families in situations of violence through the provision of supervised visitation/safe exchange services, lethality assessments to determine risk & treatment recommendations for domestic violence offenders, and civil legal assistance with protection orders for victims/survivors. We are excited about the continued partnership with the SD 2nd Judicial Circuit, Lutheran Social Services, and Safe Place of Eastern South Dakota.

## SAKI – Sexual Assault Kit Initiative

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After completing a statewide inventory to assess if sexual assault kits were being tested and stored according to state laws, we began the process of looking for older kits that had not been tested for DNA and could potentially be retested with current technology. This process has currently identified 84 kits. Additionally, the SAKI project is gathering information on electronic tracking systems for sexual assault kits that would track the kit throughout the case and allow victims to check on the status of their kit. The University of South Dakota is in the initial stages of a research project that will follow sexual assault cases in ten counties of the state to gather data and determine barriers to successful prosecutions.

# Project Updates

## Legal Grant

This Fall, The Network was awarded a new Legal Assistance for Victims Grant through the Office on Violence Against Women. The Legal Grant will provide civil legal assistance to victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking and human trafficking across the state of South Dakota. Kari Nordstrom, based out of Working Against Violence, Inc. in Rapid City, will cover the western part of the state and Edward Hruska, with Bachand and Hruska Law Firm, will cover the central part of the state. As of this writing, The Network is still working on coverage for the eastern part of the state. South Dakota Voices of Peace will provide legal assistance regarding immigration matters as it relates to domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking and human trafficking. More information will be coming soon on how agencies can access the assistance for the victims they are working with.

## Rural Grant

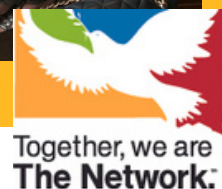
The Network is thrilled that the extension of the 2019 Rural grant was approved until March 31, 2023. In addition, the 2022 Rural Grant, a 3-year project, was awarded and will continue to support all the rural advocacy work in South Dakota. The 2022 Rural Grant will start April 1, 2023, and its primary focus will be on sexual assault advocacy, services, and outreach.

## Rape Prevention Education

We are currently working on the next five-year South Dakota Rape Prevention Education State Action Plan. We are excited about the new prevention efforts within this new five-year plan to include new curriculums, resources, state assessment needs survey, guided support for furthering prevention education, and support for tribal prevention efforts in South Dakota. We are currently working with Universities in South Dakota to implement prevention curriculum, prevention campaign work, and the continuation of relationship building.

## Tribal Advisory

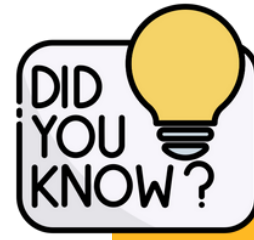
The tribal advisory group (pictured on the right) led by Norma Rendon with assistance from Tanya Grassel-Krietlow will bring together individuals from tribal areas to discuss prevention, trends, wants & needs, and how The Network can support the efforts. This photo was taken in Sioux Falls in September 2022.





# Legislative Session Update

Legislative session is in full swing in South Dakota. Throughout the 2023 session, The Network will send out weekly updates on any bills related to sexual assault, domestic violence, human trafficking, and more. You can sign up now to be a member of The Network as an individual or agency and receive the weekly updates via email. Information on how to sign up can be found on The Network website under Member Services.



If you are a student or survivor, your Network membership is FREE.

## Upcoming Membership Meeting

Please join The Network in Pierre on February 8th and 9th, 2023 for the Quarterly Membership Meeting and Legislative Networking Reception. The Quarterly Membership Meeting will be held at the AmericInn on February 8th from 1pm to 4:30pm CST.

A block of rooms has been reserved for the nights of February 8th and 9th at the AmericInn in Ft. Pierre. Please call 605-223-2358 and ask for the "SD Network" block. The block closes January 25, 2023.

The meeting will then be followed by a Legislative Networking Reception also at the AmericInn from 5-8pm CST. On February 9th, there will be time at the Capitol to visit with legislators and observe committee hearings.

*The Network will reimburse mileage for one vehicle and per diem and hotel rooms for two people per agency member.*

Register by February 3rd



## Spring Sexual Violence Institute

The Network will be hosting a Sexual Violence Institute in Spearfish on April 12th and 13th. More information will be coming soon!

## Fall Domestic Violence Institute

The Network will be hosting its Annual Membership Meeting and the Domestic Violence Institute in Sioux Falls on September 6th and 7th. More information will be coming soon!

