



Office of the Texas Governor Sexual Assault Survivors' Task Force

Greetings all and welcome to the June edition of the Governor's Sexual Assault Survivors' Task Force (SASTF) newsletter! It is hard to believe we are already halfway through 2022 – and well into our **third** year together as a Task Force!

In addition to our usual information on SASTF activities, upcoming trainings, presentations, and events related to sexual assault, we are pleased to highlight other exciting news and updates this quarter, including our new Associate Administrator, Shannon Lowry, and an update on the Tex-TRAC project from Dr. Stacey Mitchell of Texas A&M University. In this issue, we also spotlight *current* SASTF member, survivor advocate and leader Lavinia Masters, and *new* SASTF member, Dr. Suzanna Gratia Hupp.

As we enter the summer months, we hope each of you is taking time for vacation and self-care – which, as you know, is a core SASTF value. We must each take time to restore so that we can continue this critical work with, and on behalf of, all survivors in Texas.

We look forward to continuing our collaborative efforts and working together to improve Texas' response to sexual violence!

Nicole Martinez – SASTF Administrator

SASTF Staff Updates

Welcome Shannon Lowry, the new SASTF Associate Administrator!

We are happy to announce that Shannon Lowry has joined the Public Safety Office team as the new Associate Administrator for the Governor's Sexual Assault Survivors' Task Force (SASTF). Shannon's first day was April 1, 2022.

Before coming to the SASTF, Shannon worked for the Texas Municipal Police Association's (TMPA) grant programs as a Victim Services Specialist. She developed materials, coordinated training, and presented the SAFVIC Systems Trauma-Informed Training to multidisciplinary team members across Texas. Prior to her work at TMPA, Shannon worked as an advocate at a community-based dual center, where she provided medical accompaniment to survivors of sexual assault.

Shannon holds a master's degree in Victim Services Management, and a bachelor's degree in Psychology, both from Sam Houston State University (SHSU). In addition to her professional experience, Shannon is a survivor and brings her lived expertise to the SASTF. She has also taught at SHSU as a member of the lecture pool for the Department of Victim Studies and previously served on the Texas Association Against Sexual Assault (TAASA) Board of Directors.

We are excited for Shannon to be joining our team!

Thank you LaDonna McCray!

As many of you know, the SASTF's Administrative Assistant, LaDonna McCray, had an opportunity to join the Public Safety Office's Victim Programs grants team. While we will miss LaDonna on our team, we are delighted that she remains in the Public Safety Office and that she continues to serve survivors, and our great state, in her new role. We do want to take a moment to **acknowledge and thank** LaDonna for all that she has contributed to the SASTF! We'll list just a few of LaDonna's many accomplishments here: first, she acted in a lead role in our initial work with OOG's Information Services team to plan and develop an online information/resources database for survivors. The resource database will launch this year and will positively impact our ability to connect Texas' survivors with necessary resources. In addition, LaDonna collaborated closely with Justin Wood of CACTX to plan and implement the SASTF's *Prosecutor Working Group* – a critical and essential group that is working to improve sexual assault prosecutions in Texas. Finally, LaDonna played a central role in working with the Health and Human Services Commission to implement the SASTF's recommendations to the *Information Sheets for Sexual Assault Survivors*, which contain essential information survivors need to know about what happens after a sexual assault and how they can obtain help. Beyond these signature accomplishments,



LaDonna contributed to our team, and our office daily with her seemingly boundless positive, enthusiastic, and morale-boosting energy, her artfully designed snack trays and candy bowls, and her thoughtful gestures of support towards her colleagues. Please join us in wishing LaDonna well!

Join our Team!

The Office of the Governor (OOG) is seeking to fill the SASTF Administrative Assistant position. The SASTF Administrative Assistant will report to the SASTF Administrator and be responsible for performing highly complex (senior-level) administrative support and coordination for the Task Force. This position will assist in coordinating SASTF meetings, disseminating information to various stakeholders, as well as perform other internal administrative support work.

Job Posting

Task Force Member Spotlight: Lavinia Masters



Victim Advocate Lavinia B. Masters, a native of Waco, Texas, is a loving wife, mother, grandmother, author, life coach, mentor, moderator, inspirational public speaker, and entrepreneur.

Lavinia B. Masters struggled for many years emotionally, mentally, and psychologically after childhood sexual abuse and a brutal rape at the age of 13, before discovering and implementing seven steps to true empowerment after sexual trauma; through prayer and supplications. No matter the audience or venue, her public voice as a survivor of rape always acknowledges her faith, i.e., the trust she has in God, who transformed her from a girl of misery into a woman of ministry. This transformation rescued her from debilitating emotional, mental, and behavioral issues that defined her existence for decades following the childhood sexual abuse and rape.

With the gift of transforming an audience, and a desire to encourage others to embrace purposeful living after trauma for over 20 years, Lavinia has worked tirelessly to raise awareness about sexual assault, and promote and

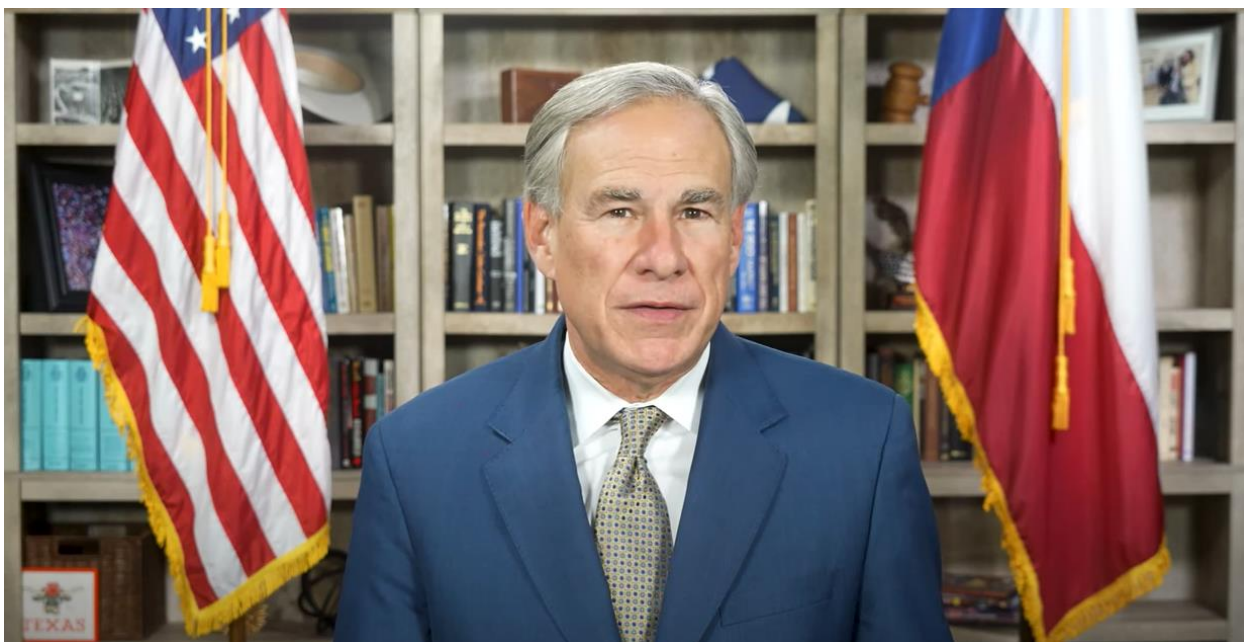
empower victims. She has also advocated for justice by encouraging the implementation and enforcement of laws that protect victims of sexual assault.

However, Lavinia's greatest and most fulfilling battle has been the war to end the nationwide accumulation of backlogged rape kits sitting on shelves, untested, just as hers did for over 20 years.

In 2019, the Texas Legislature passed House Bill 8, also known as The Lavinia Masters Act. HB 8 established several new timelines for the collection, preservation, and submission of forensic evidence for analysis, as well as mandating the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) to conduct an audit of law enforcement agencies statewide to determine the number of unsubmitted sexual assault evidence kits in their possession. It was then that Lavinia experienced the beginning of a major transformation, in her great state of Texas, and in her role as a powerful advocate and speaker. She continues to move audiences to take action and inspires other survivors to raise their voices.

Governor Greg Abbott's Recognition of SASTF Members

During the April SASTF Quarterly Meeting, Task Force members received recognition from Governor Greg Abbott for their involvement with the SASTF and commitment to improving services and support for all survivors of sexual assault. Each Task Force member received an official letter of recognition signed by Governor Abbott. Governor Abbott also shared this message of appreciation for their leadership and tireless efforts to transform Texas' response to sexual violence:



Click on image to play video message.

Task Force Members in the Field

Texas Chief of Police Association Conference:

Hillary England (Office of the Governor), Liz Boyce (TAASA, SASTF Steering Committee), Rebecca Fears (President of Texas IAFN, SASTF Member) and Kim Farbo (TAASA) co-presented a well-received overview of *The State of Sexual Assault Response Teams (SARTs) in Texas* at the 2022 Annual Texas Police Chiefs Association Conference in Galveston this April.



(left to right: Liz Boyce, Hillary England, Rebecca Fears, Kim Farbo))

End Violence Against Women International (EVAWI) Conference:

Hillary England (Office of the Governor) and Rose Luna (TAASA, SASTF Steering Committee) co-presented *The Sexual Assault Survivors' Task Force: Transforming Texas' Response to Sexual Violence* at the End Violence Against Women International (EVAWI) Conference in San Francisco, California this April. Several TAASA staff attended this session to support the dynamic duo.



SASTF and TAASA Staff

(left to right: Hillary England, Kristen Lenau, Shelli Collins, Rose Luna, Rick Gipprich, Jr. Haleh Cochran, Liz Boyce, and Virginia Rueda)

Conference on Crimes Against Women's 2022 Ignite Award Recipient Tracy Matheson

In May 2022, SASTF Member Tracy Matheson was recognized with the prestigious IGNITE Award at the Conference on Crimes Against Women. As stated in the announcement of the award, "Tracy embodies the IGNITE Award, created to recognize individuals who have worked tirelessly to bring injustice out of the darkness and light the fire of change in their community. We are thrilled to honor her contributions to the field of sexual assault advocacy." Congratulations Tracy – we are so honored and grateful to have you as part of our team!

National Crime Victims' Service Special Courage Award Recipient Lavinia Masters

SASTF Member, Lavinia Masters, was awarded the National Crime Victims' Service Special Courage Award for her work as a victim advocate and a survivor who inspires hope wherever she goes through HOPE S.A.V.E.S. Ministries. In April of 2022, she was

presented with the award during the National Crime Victims' Rights Week (NCVRW) events in Washington, D.C.. Congratulations Lavinia – your advocacy on behalf of sexual assault survivors continually inspires the SASTF's work and energizes our mission!

New TAASA Survivor Advocate: Tonia Cunningham

We are excited to introduce Tonia Cunningham, the new Survivor Advocate from the Texas Association Against Sexual Assault (TAASA), assigned to the Governor's Sexual Assault Survivors' Task Force. In her role working with the Task Force, Tonia will provide peer support and advocacy for those impacted by sexual violence.

Tonia has dedicated her life to working with survivors. She recently retired from the Frisco Police Department in March 2022, where she served as the Victim Assistance and Grants Administrator for the past 20 years. Prior to her work at the Frisco Police Department, Tonia served as a Community Supervision Officer in Tarrant County and a Parole Officer in Denton County. She also previously served as an Adjunct Professor at Collin College in Sociology and Criminal Justice.



Tonia has experience in trauma-informed program development and cultivating strategic community partners. Tonia received her B.S. and M.A. in Sociology from Texas Woman's University. She also serves as a consultant for the International Chiefs of Police (IACP) Law Enforcement Victim Assistance Program, providing training & technical assistance.

Tonia is an active community member and previously served on the SMU Center for Family Counseling Advisory Board, Collin County Council on Family Violence Membership Chair and Advisory Committee, Children's Hospital Beyond ABCs Advisory Board, THR Plano Presbyterian Hospital Community Health Council, and North Central Texas Council of Governments Criminal Justice Policy Planning and Development Committee.

Texas Teleforensic Remote Assistance Center (Tex-TRAC)

The Texas Teleforensic Remote Assistance Center (Tex-TRAC), housed in Texas A&M's Center of Excellence in Forensic Nursing, was established with federal grant funding from the Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) and state funding from the Texas Office of Attorney General (OAG). Tex-TRAC's mission is to plan, develop and use a statewide sexual

assault nurse examiner (SANE) telehealth program to serve rural and underserved communities in Texas.

Tex-TRAC uses a trauma-informed model focusing on survivors to promote future health and well-being for all persons who experience sexual assault. Tex-TRAC utilizes a telehealth platform to provide continuous availability of high-quality medical forensic exams regardless of geographic location or community resources.

Tex-TRAC's objectives are to:

- Increase access to high-quality, evidence-based, trauma-informed care following sexual assault.
- Prevent issues that can occur when patients seeking care are transferred from one facility to another, including:
 - Increased trauma;
 - Loss of time-sensitive evidence;
 - Delay of time-sensitive treatment;
 - Increased burden on law enforcement;
 - Increased healthcare costs; and
 - Lack of coordinated community response.

How it's done:

Expert forensic nurses provide 24-hour TeleSANE guidance to providers in rural and underserved areas of Texas and include patient-centered, trauma-informed medical forensic exams using telehealth technology.

Tex-TRAC Hotline – 1-833-839-8722):

The 24-hour Tex-TRAC hotline is available for SANEs, law enforcement, clinicians, first responders, and advocates to call at any time to speak to the forensic nurse on call. The forensic nurse on call can answer questions about sexual assault kits, sexual assault forensic exams, where the nearest SAFE-Ready hospital is, where a Tex-TRAC telehealth cart and program is available, or where the nearest SANE is to do an exam.

Active Tex-TRAC Sites:

- Uvalde Memorial Hospital – Uvalde, TX
- DHR Health – Edinburg, TX
- Liberty Dayton Regional Medical Center – Liberty, TX
- Sabine County Hospital – Hemphill, TX

- Kimble Hospital – Junction, TX

Future Tex-TRAC Sites:

- Cogdell Memorial Hospital – Snyder, TX
- Culberson Hospital – Van Horn, TX
- Muleshoe Area Hospital – Muleshoe, TX
- Parmer Medical Center – Friona, TX
- Shamrock General Hospital – Shamrock, TX
- Collingsworth General Hospital – Wellington, TX
- Eldorado Hospital – Eldorado, TX
- Coleman County Medical Center – Coleman, TX

For more information about Tex-TRAC, contact:

Kim Zemanek, PhD, MEd

Associate Program Director - Center of Excellence in Forensic Nursing
Texas-Teleforensic Remote Assistance Program (Tex-TRAC)
979-436-0186
kzemanek@tamu.edu

Kayce Ward, MSN, RN, CA/CP SANE, SANE-A

Forensic Nurse Manager - Center of Excellence in Forensic Nursing
Texas-Teleforensic Remote Assistance Program (Tex-TRAC)
210-912-2501
kward@tamu.edu

[Tex-TRAC Website](#)

Task Force Member Updates



New Task Force Member: Dr. Suzanna Hupp

Dr. Suzanna Gratia Hupp was raised in Friendswood, Texas, with her two siblings. She attended the University of Texas at El Paso and El Paso Community College, eventually entering Texas Chiropractic College and graduating with a Doctor of Chiropractic degree in 1985. Dr. Hupp moved to central Texas in 1987, where, for thirteen years, she owned and operated the Cove Physical Rehab clinic before selling it in 2000.

Dr. Hupp is recognized worldwide as one of the leading advocates for an individual's right to carry a concealed weapon. In 1991, after leaving her gun in her car in order to comply with the current law, Suzanna watched helplessly as both her parents, along with 21 others, were gunned down in a mass shooting at a local restaurant. As a survivor of this tragedy, she has testified numerous times across the country on Second Amendment issues, including the concealed carry law in Texas.

Dr. Hupp was elected to the Texas House of Representatives in 1996. In 2003, Speaker Tom Craddick appointed Representative Hupp Chair of the House Select Committee on Child Welfare and Foster Care. Speaker Craddick later appointed Representative Hupp as Chair of Human Services for the 79th Legislature. Representative Hupp was the proud sponsor of Senate Bill 6, the Child Protective Services and Adult Protective Services reform package that serves as a blueprint for other states. She also served on the Law Enforcement Committee for four consecutive sessions.

Her legislative achievements have been recognized by the American Family Association, Free Market Foundation, Texas Association of Business and Chambers of Commerce, and many others. Suzanna retired from the Texas Legislature in January 2007, after twelve years of service.

She is currently serving as Special Executive Advisor to the Texas Attorney General, Ken Paxton.

Congratulations on your retirement, Kaye Woodard-Hotz!

SASTF Member Kaye Woodard-Hotz recently retired from the Office of the Attorney General after 27 years of service. Kaye was the Manager of the Sexual Assault Prevention & Crisis Service (SAPCS) Program/Crime Victim Services Policy & Planning in the Crime Victims Services Division and exhibited a true commitment to improving services for crime victims through various programs and policy initiatives. Her insight, historical perspective, and critical thinking will be greatly missed at all SASTF-related meetings.

Thank you for your contributions to the SASTF, and we wish you all the best for your retirement!

Men's Resource Network



MEN'S RESOURCE NETWORK

SURVIVORS HELPING SURVIVORS

WHO WE ARE

Brad Watson and Bryan Pope met through a shared acquaintance, and soon after discovered that they had both experienced childhood trauma. Although their stories are a little different...they are also the same. Brad and Bryan became quick friends and almost immediately began discussing the limited resources available to male survivors. It has since become a shared mission to help other men on their healing journeys. As successful husbands, fathers, and businessmen who are also survivors of childhood sexual abuse, they are passionate about helping other men suffer less.

WHAT WE DO

As a nonprofit organization, WE HELP GUYS! We strive to help men find the resources they need, when they need them. HERE'S HOW WE HELP:

- Public outreach, education, awareness campaigns, and other events centered around male survivors and men's mental health issues
- Find, organize, and promote existing mental health resources for male survivors and link them on our website
- Create and support male survivor support groups where needed - online and in-person

- Provide scholarships for men to attend healing and self-care conferences and other events when there is a financial need
- Collaborate with other organizations to help provide the most comprehensive list of resources available for male survivors

www.mensourcenetwork.org

Training Opportunities

34th Annual Crimes Against Children's Conference

Sheraton Hotel in Downtown Dallas - Dallas, Texas

August 8 – 11, 2022

[Crimes Against Children's Conference](#)

2022 International Conference on Forensic Nursing Science and Practice

Sheraton Hotel in Downtown Dallas - Dallas, Texas

September 28 - October 1, 2022

[IAFN Conference](#)

Free Webinar Training for SARTs in Texas

Hosted by the Texas A&M Health Center of Excellence in Forensic Nursing in partnership with End Violence Against Women International (EVAWI)

[EVAWI SART](#)

Resources

The Texas Association Against Sexual Assault (TAASA) has released an updated Sexual Assault Service Directory, and it can be found [here](#).