

FOODSERVICE EAST PRESENTS

SECRETS OF **SUCCESS**

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An ongoing series of interviews with chefs, restaurateurs and foodservice operators, Secrets of Success looks at the paths taken to professional recognition and acclaim.



Stacy Malone

**Executive Director of Boston's Victim Rights Law Center
By Foodservice East**

Stacy Malone, executive director of Boston's Victim Rights Law Center, graduated with a B.A from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst with a Graduate Certificate in Women in Politics and Public Policy Program and received a J.D. from Boston University School of Law.

She joined Victim Rights Law Center in 2004 and became executive director in 2010. FSE: FSE In 2011, she was honored to receive Massachusetts Lawyers Weekly's "Top Women of Law 2011" Award and in 2013 inducted into Massachusetts Lawyer's Weekly's Circle of Excellence.

While FSE's Secrets of Success normally focuses on foodservice professionals, we stretched the boundaries this time to look at the leader of an organization that is increasingly acclaimed for its work with victims of sexual assault here.

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FSE: How did you decide to go into law?

MALONE: I grew up in public housing very aware that my community did not have a voice. A lawyer, to me, represented the ability to have a powerful, respected voice that could effectuate change. As a lawyer, I knew I could make a difference in the lives of people who needed my skills and my voice- low-income women and children, those discriminated against, and victims of violence.

FSE: What are the origins of Victim Rights Law Center and how did you become involved in it?

MALONE: The founder of the Victim Rights Law Center was volunteering answering calls for a rape crisis center hotline. Rape victims were calling with questions about the expected questions about law enforcement and therapy, but they also were looking for lawyers to help them break their lease so they wouldn't have to live in the apartment where they were raped, change their class schedule so they wouldn't have to sit in class next to the person who assaulted them, among many other critical legal issues. But there were no lawyers!

In 2003, the first nonprofit law center in the country was founded- the Victim Rights Law Center. At that time, I was working with pregnant teenage girls and I knew some were pregnant because they were raped. I signed up for one of the first VRLC volunteer attorney trainings. It was there I found my passion- helping survivors of sexual violence.

FSE: Tell us about its goals and the work it does and how long it's been operating.

MALONE: The VRLC is in its 13th year. We are small, but fierce. Locally, VRLC provides free legal services for sexual assault survivors throughout Massachusetts and in Oregon in the areas of privacy, safety, education, immigration, employment, housing and financial stability. Nationally, our attorneys train advocates, lawyers, and other professionals on how to improve the response to sexual violence. We are proud to be the nation's leading experts on the legal needs of sexual assault survivors.

FSE: What is the hardest part of what you do?

MALONE: It is heartbreaking when people don't believe rape victims. They think if the victim behaved differently (didn't wear a short skirt, didn't go for a run at night, didn't drink alcohol) that they could have prevented being raped. Sexual violence is

a crime committed by serial perpetrators. Instead of blaming rape victims we need to hold the perpetrators accountable.

FSE: What do you see as the 'secret' of your success?

MALONE: Passion, perseverance and generosity. I believe if I have passion for what I do then I will commit myself so whole heartedly that the only result can be success. Also, my mother raised a fighter. I never give up. I am also aware that I can have passion and unwavering tenacity, but without the generosity of others, and those who have mentored and encouraged me, my life would be very different.

FSE: What do you like most about your work?

MALONE: I LOVE my team, our volunteers, and the survivors we serve. It helps on the hardest days to know I'm not in this work alone, but FSE: am surrounded by compassionate and brilliant lawyers! I also love that the law is powerful and that I can be used to address the concerns of survivors creatively to help them stabilize and rebuild their lives following sexual violence.

FSE: How does VRLC find and help those who've been sexually abused?

MALONE: We are fortunate to work with many dedicated community partners who refer sexual assault survivors to the VRLC for legal assistance. Rape crisis center advocates, therapists, English as a Second Language tutors, guidance counselors, staff in cultural centers, child advocacy centers, teen drop in center staff, medical professionals, campus advocates, law enforcement- victims of sexual violence disclose their experience to those they trust that's why it's so important our community knows about the VRLC so they can connect survivors to our free, compassionate attorneys.

FSE: What would you say has been the group's biggest success?

MALONE: Our work on campus sexual assault. In 2010, the VRLC submitted a white paper to Vice President Joe Biden's staff at the White House about our campus sexual assault cases. For years we were seeing that primarily young women were being raped on college campuses and dropping out of school while the perpetrators went on to literally work on Wall Street and become Rhodes Scholars.

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We were invited to Washington, D.C. to discuss the magnitude of the problem and solutions. In April 2011, we were honored to meet the Vice President and sit one row away as he said “rape is rape” and used our client stories in his speech on national television. The VRLC is and has always been on the forefront of bringing sexual violence to the forefront of the nation’s consciousness.

FSE: What pursuits do you enjoy when you’re not busy working?

MALONE: Walking my very silly rescue dog and traveling with my super fun husband. But most people know that when I’m not working I’m still thinking about work! Hey, I love it!

FSE: What do you see yourself doing 10 years from now?

MALONE: In 10 years, I see myself volunteering (again) for the Victim Rights Law Center and spending time in Vermont and Hawaii. Aloha.