

# OASIS Director Andrea Robinson looks back at her first year at the shelter

- By Renee Beasley Jones Messenger-Inquirer

- Feb 3, 2020 Updated Feb 10, 2020



Andrea Robinson, executive director of OASIS Domestic Violence Shelter, recently completed her first year as the nonprofit's leader. During that time, Robinson has been a catalyst for change. She initiated new programs and expanded existing ones. Robinson stands in the center's new outdoor play area, which was installed last summer.

For Andrea Robinson, the past year has been a whirl of ideas, implementation and deep satisfaction.

She recently completed her first year as executive director of OASIS Domestic Violence Shelter.

Robinson and her team can boast of a long list of accomplishments during that short time.

To start, the shelter recently put the finishing touches on a new space for male survivors of domestic violence and increased the number of beds for women and children.

**Robinson presided over a ribbon cutting Wednesday at a \$10,000 playground that was installed last summer, thanks to an Impact 100 Next Generation grant.**

Last spring, Robinson oversaw a complete IT system overhaul. The \$30,000 project provided new computers, phones, improved security and more. Grants and donations footed the bill.

During the past year, OASIS has positioned itself for youth advocacy and will provide the communities it serves with Dating Matters, an evidence-based program about dating violence prevention. A Henderson County judge called Tuesday and told Robinson she wants Dating Matters taught in that county's schools within the next eight months.

Robinson recently added two employees who are strategic for expanding services — a youth advocacy counselor and a therapist.

On Jan. 1, local law enforcement agencies started using a lethality assessment to measure the extent of risk during domestic violence calls. Since the first of the year, about 15 assessments have triggered OASIS's intervention.

OASIS plans to implement ODARA — the Ontario Domestic Assault Risk Assessment — in March. The program is used as a tool to predict how likely a partner is to commit domestic assault again.

But perhaps Robinson's greatest achievement during her first year has been securing much-needed funding. Under her leadership, federal funding is up \$500,000 this fiscal year. That funding is earmarked for program expansion and can't be used for day-to-day operations, so community donations are still crucial for an organization with an annual operating budget of about \$2.2 million.

"She has blown this place up ... ," said Vickie Glass Hunt, OASIS outreach supervisor who has worked at the nonprofit 15 years. "It is amazing. I feel like I am working in a new agency."

Among employees, Robinson is known as an ideas person, Hunt said. Also, Robinson is the type of leader who gives her staff permission to tackle projects on their own.

"She is always available," Hunt said. "She doesn't care if you call her at midnight. ... She wants to be there for everybody 110%."

The OASIS board of directors searched more than five months to find Robinson. In 2018, the board reviewed 82 applications and interviewed 38 candidates.

Robinson took over as executive director in late January 2019.

Her credentials and passion for survivors of abuse made her a standout, OASIS officials said at the time. She had worked as a dispatcher for the Denver Police Department, crisis counselor with Denver Human Services and pre-trial investigator for the Denver Department of Safety. As a pre-trial investigator, she helped implement a risk-assessment tool that is now used throughout Colorado.

As a working mom, she earned a bachelor's degree in human services and a master's degree in criminology.

When asked about challenges in her first year at OASIS, Robinson said: "I like challenges. They are opportunities."

In the end, she said prioritizing proved to be her hardest task because it is difficult to prioritize when a passion is involved.

Looking ahead, Robinson hopes to remodel the OASIS day care, which hasn't been upgraded for at least a decade.

She will look for additional funding for expanding youth advocacy programs and to help survivors pay rent and deposits so they can move into self-sufficiency.

In coming weeks, Robinson will lobby lawmakers in Frankfort.

OASIS officials oppose Senate Bill 1. The bill basically deputizes nearly all public employees to assist U. S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, commonly called ICE, in detaining and deporting undocumented immigrants.

OASIS would be required to cooperate, which would significantly affect its ability to serve immigrants.

Also, Robinson will lobby for adequate funding for programs, fixing the state's pension woes and more.

"We are proud of the leadership that she has provided to OASIS over the past year," said Suzanne Craig, board chair. "Andrea is an innovative leader. Our board and staff look forward to the future under her leadership."

Robinson agrees. Her first year has been a whirlwind of activity, and that pleases her.

She's proud of OASIS's expanding services, educational programs and community partnerships.

"I'm so grateful to have been welcomed into the community of Owensboro," Robinson said. "The amount of support (OASIS receives) from the community has been outstanding. I'm proud to be part of the community."

Renee Beasley Jones, 270-228-2835, [rbeasleyjones@messenger-inquirer.com](mailto:rbeasleyjones@messenger-inquirer.com)