



voices

A tri-annual publication from Safe Haven Ministries

"A Place of Refuge and Hope" Ps. 46:1



A NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MEET RACHEL VERWYS

The Safe Haven Ministries Board of Directors is pleased to share with you that Rachel VerWys has been hired as the organization's Executive Director, starting on June 7, 2021.

Rachel's arrival at Safe Haven brings her career full circle. As a student at Calvin College, Rachel volunteered for Ramoth House, which later evolved into Safe Haven. Over the past 20 years, Rachel has amassed an impressive array of nonprofit leadership experiences, including founding two of her own organizations. Equally impressive has been the multitude of roles she has played in her career: entrepreneur, coach, strategic planning consultant, social worker, board member and executive director. She most recently served as the Co-founder and Executive Director of Solutions to End Exploitation in Grand Rapids, and chairs the Kent County Area Human Trafficking Coalition. In 2020, Rachel was named one of the Top 50 Influential Women in West Michigan by the Grand Rapids Business Journal, and in May 2021, she received a Diversity Award from Wedgwood Christian Services.

Standing out is Rachel's facilitative, servant leadership—and her ability to collaborate with and empower others. Rachel has a strong history of leading at the intersection of faith and social justice, and we look forward to Rachel partnering with you to elevate the organization's mission, vision and impact in the years to come.

Please join the Board of Directors in welcoming Rachel to Safe Haven. We are thrilled to have Rachel lead the continued growth of Safe Haven.

Sincerely,

Chaz Amidon, Board President

"Safe Haven Ministries' stated focus resonates with me: a Place of Refuge and Hope. I step into this new role recognizing the long courageous commitment to a vision in which brokenness in relationships is transformed into stories of strength. I am honored to join the Safe Haven Ministries' team and together cultivate our mission rooted in faith, serving with excellence to prevent and end relationship abuse, strengthen partnerships, and create equitable systems change."

HELP IS AVAILABLE.
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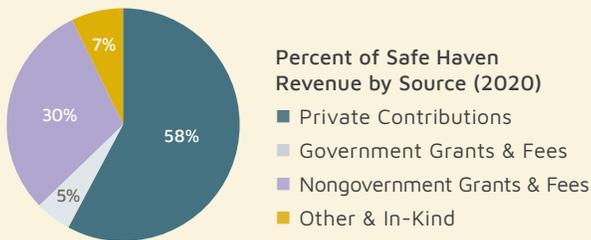
 SHMGR.ORG - WEBCHAT

To meet the need for greater virtual services, Safe Haven now has **24/7 text support** for survivors. Individuals can access crisis support by texting **616.452.6664.**

FUNDRAISING 101

Fundraising. When you say the word, some people get a little uncomfortable. This new column is designed to help dispel the myths around fundraising and open a conversation with you, our supporters.

One of the reasons a nonprofit exists is *to strengthen a community by providing the educational, health, and social services that citizens need and which the government cannot fully provide*. This is especially true for survivors of domestic violence. Emergency safe shelter and comprehensive services are available to domestic violence survivors in Kent County because of individual supporters like you. Intentionally, in Fiscal Year 2020, only 5% of Safe Haven's revenue came through state or federal funding. While we are increasing state and federal funding slightly, we will continue to diversify our revenue so that we do not become overly dependent on any one source.



The role of fundraising (or development) staff is to secure charitable gifts to maintain operations of the nonprofit. The majority of charitable gifts are made to a nonprofit because someone asked them. This makes fundraising an ongoing and continuous effort. At Safe Haven, we rely on a few tried and true fundraising strategies every year. This includes our mailed calendar year end and spring appeals, a fall luncheon event, and a spring Celebration of Hope. In addition, there are opportunities to become a monthly supporter, sponsor an event, and give online or through social media. In addition, our staff are always on the lookout for new and innovative ways to reach our supporters. This is the creative and fun part of our work!

Nonprofit organizations like Safe Haven rely on individual donors to fund their mission and work. The next time you receive a fundraising request, remember that it is because of you (and your fundraising team) that we are able to provide meaningful services to our neighbors. Thank you for being part of this work.

Want to continue this conversation? Let's talk!
Contact Renee at rrivard@shmgr.org or 616.452.6664.



Mary Endlsey, Susan Skillman, and Jessica Payne

VENDOR SPOTLIGHT SURE SHINE CLEANING COMPANY

Sure Shine Cleaning Company has been an integral partner to Safe Haven since 2014. In fact, Safe Haven was Sure Shine's first commercial client when Susan Skillman, Owner and Founder, was in the early stages of building her business.

Susan had been in a corporate role for many years prior to starting Sure Shine. Her sister, Mary, joined the Sure Shine team and now cleans Safe Haven's facility multiple times a week and cleans the client rooms as needed as they transition out of shelter.

Keeping a clean space has always been vital for Safe Haven, and the pandemic only exacerbated that. When supplies were hard to find at the beginning of the pandemic, Mary utilized her relationships to come up with solutions so her clients, including Safe Haven, could be certain they'd have necessary supplies. To date, we have not had a COVID-19 outbreak in our shelter.

"Susan's caring, empathetic and intentional communication style and her incredible attention to detail has made it so much easier for us to keep pace with the cleaning needs of the building during a pandemic," says Jessica Payne, Operations Manager at Safe Haven Ministries.

Sure Shine Cleaning Company is a true partner in our mission, and we cannot thank them enough for their impact on our organization and those we serve. Mary's motto is to, "Help save the world... at least a little bit", and Safe Haven believes she is doing exactly that.

Celebrating 30 years

OF FAITH-BASED PARTNERSHIPS



THE LOCAL CHURCH & SAFE HAVEN MINISTRIES

In 1989, the social justice committee at Shawnee Park CRC began discussing unmet needs in our community. After conversations with other domestic violence experts in the community including the YWCA West Central Michigan, the need for additional safe shelter was identified. Shawnee Park CRC invited five area churches to collaborate and buy a home in Grand Rapids to serve as a shelter for women and children escaping domestic violence. This home was purchased in 1990 and named Ramoth House, after one of the biblical cities of refuge. This was the start of Safe Haven Ministries. Among those founding churches were Calvin CRC, Plymouth Heights CRC, Alger Park CRC, Seymour CRC, and Millbrook CRC. The goal in all of this: provide a community-based solution to the devastating issue of domestic violence.



Safe Haven Ministries, 1990

Hundreds of volunteer hours and immeasurable community support made Safe Haven's first shelter possible. The first shelter had capacity for three individuals, including the victim's children, and employed only one full-time individual, who provided support to the survivors in the shelter. Volunteers accomplished the rest: cleaning, yard work, childcare, and house up-keep and modifications to make it amenable for women fleeing dangerous relationships.



Safe Haven Ministries, 2007

After serving for nine years, the need for more comprehensive services became clear. In 1999, Ramoth House incorporated into the larger nonprofit, Safe Haven Ministries. At this time, nonresidential and prevention and education services were added, while continuing to provide emergency safe shelter through the Ramoth House building. Safe Haven opened a separate administrative office, offering a 24/7 hotline, walk-in appointments for nonresidential clients, and weekly support groups. To address the need to prevent violence before it began, Safe Haven also began a prevention and education program, offering training for high school students, community members, churches, and health and human service providers.

SAFE HAVEN TIMELINE

- **1990** — Ramoth House was purchased
- **1999** — SHM expands to include nonresidential services & prevention education
- **2007** — Ramoth House was sold and a larger home purchased
- **2018** — Safe Haven's current facility constructed
- **Spring 2021** — 75 faith communities completed the Church Certification program to date
- **Fall 2021** — Safe Haven Ministries celebrates 30th anniversary
- **2022** — SHM rebrands church certification program to be more inclusive of various faith communities

FAITH & DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Domestic violence impacts every facet of a survivor's life, from faith to family, finances to mental health. Our expertise at the intersection of faith and domestic violence sets us apart from other domestic violence agencies across the state and nation. As a result of the expertise, Safe Haven developed and implemented the first-of-its-kind comprehensive training program for faith communities in 2018, *Creating a Safe Haven: Church Certification*. This program equips faith communities with the knowledge, skills and tools to effectively recognize, prevent, and respond to domestic and sexual violence in their congregations.

FRUITFUL GROWTH

In 2018, Safe Haven expanded once again. This newly built 24,000-square-foot facility sits on 5.75 acres, and again doubled capacity from 7 rooms --the former capacity at Safe Haven's second shelter--to 14 rooms, serving up to 56 individuals at any given time. This new facility again strengthened the agency's capacity to meet the needs of survivors, while also enhancing security for staff and clients.

In our humble beginnings in 1990, six local churches came together to support Safe Haven through a gift of \$30,000 to purchase Ramoth House and hire its first staff member. These church partners also served through volunteerism, prayer, and pantry offerings. Thirty years later, our financial, in-kind, and volunteer support continues from these founding churches, and 25 additional faith communities. Their giving comprises 6% of our annual operating budget of \$1.5 million.

Throughout our history, one thing remains consistent, we do this work for victims and survivors, so that they too can

Using a two-pronged approach, this program provides in-depth training for a core group within the church, and policy and procedure recommendations that increase capacity and consistency in how the faith community addresses issues of domestic and sexual violence.

To date, Safe Haven has certified over 75 faith communities throughout Michigan and the United States from varying denominations. Trainings are held throughout the year and are open to all.

Above all, Safe Haven strives to support faith communities in their efforts to support victims and survivors and boldly make the commitment to preventing violence before it begins.

live a life free of harm. We do this work every day so that everyone, regardless of their race or ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability status, language or immigration status knows that they are deserving of a healthy and safe relationship. As we continue to strive to be a Safe Haven for All, we know that there is still much work that has to be done, but we know this work can be done because of you.

On behalf of our staff, board, and clients ~ thank you for your generous investment in Safe Haven over the past thirty years. We invite you to walk with us, engaging your faith community in this work. Will you be part of the next 30 years?



Safe Haven Ministries, 2021

In the summer of 2020, Safe Haven sent out a Church Needs Assessment to assess how Safe Haven's services could be modified to meet changing needs of our faith leaders. Surveys were sent to 150 churches in August and September 2020 and resulted in a 25% response rate.

As we continue to facilitate conversations with faith leaders, these responses are being used to inform our work. To engage your faith community, please reach out to Tara Aday, Director of Prevention & Education at taday@shmgr.org.

Important themes that Churches reported include:

- It is hard to recognize signs of abuse and therefore know who needs help.
- COVID-19 created increased isolation in their community and congregation, and churches worried about how COVID-19 would impact individuals that were already experiencing abuse.
- Churches are concerned that the pandemic could lead to even higher rates of domestic violence.
- Housing was one of the greatest needs for victims and the pandemic has intensified this need.
- One church reported that they were in the process of helping an 80-year victim of domestic violence, and then when the pandemic hit, they stopped hearing from her. This further demonstrates how COVID-19 continues to heighten issues around domestic violence.



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SENIOR SEND-OFF

Congratulations to our graduating Young Leaders Against Violence Members. Young Leaders Against Violence is a local youth-led coalition made up of high school students who are focused on dating and sexual abuse awareness and prevention.

Safe Haven is a facilitator and mentor to this group, and by centering the voices of these students we empower them to take charge of the futures they envision.

We are so proud of this year's graduating members, and can't wait to see the change they will create.



EMILY NYQUIST

Served with YLAV for 4 Years

Northview High School: 5th in her class, National Honor Society President, and student body vice-president.

Next Steps: University of Michigan, Major in Economics and Psychology.

Favorite YLAV memory: My favorite memory is honestly any of the educational events we've done. I loved being able to educate the community on such an overlooked but important topic.



MEG VANANTWERP

Served with YLAV for 3 Years

Grand Rapids Christian 21: with Highest Honors

Next Steps: Calvin College to Major in Civil Engineering with minors in economic and international relationships.

Favorite YLAV memory: The educational event for parents YLAV did with the Health Department my first year or my internship this year!



AVA HEINERT

Served with YLAV for 2 Years

Grand Rapids Christian: Honor roll

Next Steps: Pepperdine College as Regent Scholar, to Major in Journalism with a pre-law emphasis

Favorite YLAV memory: This year when we did the problematic pop-culture slideshow presentations, it was so fun!

For more information & to get involved,
visit ylav.org





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— SAVE THE DATE —

Fall



Fundraiser
Creating Safer Communities

OCTOBER 6, 2021

More Details to Follow