



voices

A tri-annual publication from Safe Haven Ministries

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

A NOTE FROM RACHEL



This summer I had the opportunity to join our Young Leaders Against Violence students in a local park for what was their first in-person meeting and last meeting of the school year. This peer-led leadership program equips students as change agents in their own schools and community. On the lawn that day students from multiple high

schools shared stories of both personal growth and their contribution to the work our community needs to make abuse intolerable and healthy relationships thrive. Safe Haven Ministries' invitation to students to join this leadership group creates a phenomenal ripple effect that strengthens our pursuit of collective well-being.

We at Safe Haven Ministries are catalyzing the invitation each and every day to depart from a world that swims in violence. The casualties violence inflicts both in individuals' lives and across our greater community is ours to upend and prevent. Our collective story does not have to be abuse. Through 30 years of faithful and courageous work—beginning as a seemingly small step of faith in which a church committee dreamed of a response against domestic violence—we have walked with thousands of people. An act from one congregation extending an invitation to five more,

and now a whole networked multi-sector community disrupts injustice, actively prevents abuse, and maintains a space of hospitality and healing.

We renew this invitation daily to prevent and end relationship abuse. Our story is woven together across people and places from one generation to the next. Everyday life is teeming with the possibility to join God's movement through time and place to catalyze transformation and walk with hope in our lives, our neighborhoods, and our world. Our invitation acknowledges brokenness—abuse and violence are real. Safe Haven Ministries meets people in their pain, believing their story and offering the invitation to walk with them in the process of change. Our invitation acknowledges historical inequity which shapes outcomes of violence, and we offer an invitation to leaders to assess policy and change practices to create belonging and well-being.

We intentionally foster a connectedness that builds each of our capacity to be resilient and to contribute to a thriving community. I heard our young leaders' commitment to be the change we hope for. I'm inspired. I extend an open invitation for you to be a part of creating the next 30 years of inclusive excellent service, intentional partnership, and holistic advocacy to prevent and end relationship abuse.

Sincerely,

Rachel Verwys, Executive Director

HELP IS AVAILABLE.
**FREE, CONFIDENTIAL,
24/7 HOTLINE & CHAT.**

 616.452.6664 – TEXT OR CALL
 SHMGR.ORG – WEBCHAT

PREVENTING VIOLENCE THROUGH RESTORATIVE AND TRANSFORMATIVE JUSTICE

-Scott Troyer, Youth Violence Prevention Coordinator

When someone in our community experiences harm, our response matters a great deal. As a society, we often rely on punitive responses that focus on broken rules and punishments rather than the needs of victims or the broader community. So, what other options are there?

Restorative Justice (RJ) and Transformative Justice (TJ) are two related responses to harm that address these needs. Both originated in and are used by BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) communities. RJ responds to the needs of victims, requires that people who commit harmful acts take responsibility for repairing the harm, and engages the entire community in the response. TJ seeks to respond to violence as a community without creating more violence; it asks what harm was done, what conditions enabled that harm, and what can be done to change those conditions.

Both responses are valuable tools for violence prevention and can be integrated into our daily interactions. One day while I was facilitating an after-school program, one teen physically threatened another member of the group. The first teen thought that everyone knew they were “just joking”, but the targeted teen felt unsafe. I responded by immediately pausing our planned activities and forming a talking circle with the entire group so that everyone was able to share how they were affected by the incident. At the end of the process, the offender was able to better understand the impact their actions had not only on the target of their aggression, but on the entire group, and agreed not to threaten people in the future, even “as a joke.” **When these restorative methods are used consistently in school, students learn to consider the ways their actions impact others and begin to seek out support in dealing with conflicts that might otherwise result in a fight.**



RESTORATIVE & TRANSFORMATIVE JUSTICE

Safe Haven is committed to supporting the community and preventing violence before it happens; working with partners to promote restorative and transformative processes are an important part of that work.

Connect with us for:

CLASSROOM EDUCATION	STAFF SUPPORT & TRAINING	PARENT/COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Violence Prevention Classroom Lessons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional Development • Policy Support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent Engagement • Community Education

To learn more about Restorative & Transformative Justice or to request a speaker or training, visit shmgr.org/prevention/request-a-speaker-or-training or contact us at 616.452.6664.

Scott Troyer is Safe Haven’s new Youth Violence Prevention Coordinator. He holds a B.A. in Music Education from Bluffton University and has experience practicing restorative justice in a variety of settings, including high school and college classrooms, after school programs, and churches.

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FALL GIVING

We invite you to use the enclosed envelope to make a one-time or monthly gift.

If you did not have a chance to attend our Fall Luncheon, there is still time to give!

Our fall fundraiser is an essential part of our annual fundraising strategy, and considering a monthly financial gift allows Safe Haven to plan for consistency in our budgeting. Just like you may do at home, our organization runs on a set monthly budget, and this is monitored closely to make adjustments when needed. Each and every month, we have a team who reviews our monthly financials to ensure good stewardship of your gifts.

"I was first introduced to Safe Haven when I volunteered at the domestic violence shelter in college. I was able to see firsthand the positive impact Safe Haven's programs had in the West Michigan community. While my husband and I have supported Safe Haven throughout the years, we have moved to monthly support due to the predictability and sustainability it offers Safe Haven as they continue to expand and maintain needed care and prevention services in our community, especially in light of the disruption and increased demand due to the pandemic."

- Jenna Wierenga,
Sustainer of Hope

HOUSING RESOURCES FOR SURVIVORS

Lack of affordable housing in West Michigan continues to be top of mind for social service agencies in our community. To address this need, Safe Haven formed a partnership with Community Rebuilders in a project dedicated to serving victims of domestic violence who lack resources to maintain housing when fleeing abuse.

The systems that domestic violence victims often navigate to seek support and safety can be complicated, often creating barriers to living a life with safety. Due to these barriers, many survivors experience homelessness or exit a shelter back into unsafe relationships because they don't have another housing option. Domestic violence is also a complicated issue, rooted in power and control. Survivors of domestic violence, who have extensive trauma histories, may struggle with gaining and maintaining education or employment due to the control that existed in their relationships. Their credit may be ruined after having an assailant control their finances, or limit their ability to work. This is where the intersection of housing and domestic violence services becomes so critical.

Over the course of the past year, Safe Haven has worked closely with local landlords, while also providing case management, childcare resources, education, transportation, and financial assistance. Through this partnership, 21 households have been placed in transitional or rapid rehousing since November 2020.



This program was created out of a need to provide direct rental assistance as participants are reclaiming their life. Safe Haven provides a direct insight as an expert in the field. The staff are equipped with resources, knowledge and skills to best support the clients we serve. Safe Haven is an active supporter in the community, educating and advocating for survivors of domestic violence.

- Jameela Maun, Portfolio Manager, Community Rebuilders



As we complete our first year of this project, we are grateful to Community Rebuilders and the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for the funding to provide this essential service. Strong partnerships allow us to create a community that is safe for everyone, a Safe Haven for all.



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DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS MONTH COMMUNITY EVENTS



MONDAY
OCTOBER 11
7:00 PM

CANDLELIGHT VIGIL, Blue Bridge (GVSU Side)
Join us for a candlelight vigil honoring those that lost their life to domestic violence in 2021.

OCTOBER 11-15
OCTOBER 18-22

MEMORIAL ART INSTALLATION, Blue Bridge
An art installation will pay tribute to Michiganders that have lost their lives to domestic violence in the last year.

TUESDAY
OCTOBER 26
9:00 AM - NOON

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SEMINAR, Safe Haven Ministries
Register at shmgr.org/prevention/seminars/

THURSDAY
OCTOBER 28
9:00 - 10:00 AM

TOUR SAFE HAVEN'S FACILITY
See how our space helps to prevent and end relationship abuse.
Register at shmgr.org/events