



voices

A tri-annual publication from Safe Haven Ministries

OCTOBER 2025

Annual Fall Luncheon

Our annual Fall Luncheon brought together hundreds of supporters to mark 35 years of hope, healing, and empowerment for survivors. As I looked out at the room, I was brought to tears by the stunning visual of a room full of hope and the power of our community to unleash the common good. Safe Haven's work remains rooted in conviction, compassion, collaboration, and courage which continue to guide us on our path of supporting survivors and preventing violence.

As we gather, we hold tension in our world of tears and healing. Our mission is long and enduring, with a long-lasting commitment to ending abuse, marked by stubborn faithfulness. In a time of epidemic levels of violence in our community, we cultivate a way forward together.

In Greater Grand Rapids alone, the impact is significant. About 35% of women and more than 11% of men in Kent County report experiencing domestic or intimate partner violence at some point in their lives. For human trafficking, Grand Rapids is consistently identified as a hotspot in Michigan, especially for sex trafficking and labor exploitation.

To learn more, offer support, or explore resources for your employees, please visit shmgr.org.

Rachel VerWys

CEO, SAFE HAVEN MINISTRIES



**Every donation
makes an impact.**



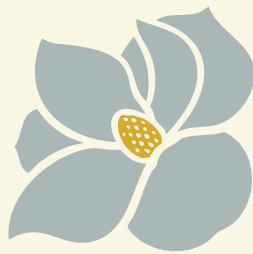
The 35th luncheon empowered survivors to speak out and continue to lead with boldness, as reflected by one attendee:

“ Have you ever been seated in the front of the room, full of people, and felt so deeply, personally moved that the tears just started to flow? That was me at Safe Haven Ministries' Fall Luncheon. It took everything in me not to go into a full-on 'ugly cry!' (My pictures are awful because I was a hot mess afterwards).

As we look around our communities, it's important to remember that we never truly know the internal weight someone may be carrying. Colleagues and staff may show up despite navigating emotional, physical, financial, or mental challenges outside of work. How we treat others, from all walks of life, greatly impacts our society.

I want to sincerely thank Jennifer Pascua for inviting me to the luncheon, for her courage, poise, excellence, and steadfast commitment to elevating the mission, advocacy, support to survivors, and prevention of abuse. Words fall short of expressing how impactful Safe Haven Ministries is in our community, changing and saving lives, strengthening our communities, and giving people a chance to live freely and holistically.

Abuse does not discriminate. It impacts people of every background, career level, education, and lived experience.



SAFE | HAVEN

PREVENTION PRAXIS

Connecting education with action to prevent violence

Safe Haven Prevention Praxis: Our work to place an umbrella over the vast variety of training and education prevention resources.

Praxis: Education connecting with action to prevent violence.



Praxis | Youth

Equips children and youth with age-appropriate violence prevention curriculum and community-level interventions to make measurable impact toward safer schools and communities. Joining caregivers to promote healthy relationships.

Praxis | Community

Connects education and action through our public seminars and talks as well as customized training for healthcare, human services, criminal justice, and workplace communities.

Praxis | Faith

Brings faith-based communities together to create cultures of safety and shalom through training, action, and response plan development.

Praxis | Fellows

Putting theory into practice. It's the bridge between what we know and what we do. Praxis Fellows is an application-based, year-long cohort that will partner with Safe Haven mentors, connecting the theory of violence prevention to community solutions.



Learn More About Prevention Praxis

Scan the QR code

Introducing The Domestic Violence High Risk Team

In 2021, Safe Haven engaged in a strategic plan that resulted in a commitment to 5 Bold Steps by 2025. These commitments are rooted in our mission to serve victims/survivors of domestic violence and human trafficking, while also working to prevent violence before it begins.

These 5 Bold Steps include:

1. Launching Safe Transitions: Comprehensive housing resources
2. Engaging in Systems Change: Addressing root causes of violence
3. Centering Survivors: A renewed commitment to listen and learn with survivors
4. Developing Asset Maps: Understanding community needs, gaps, and strengths
5. Launching Safe Haven Prevention Praxis

We are excited to share one of many exciting updates to our 5 Bold Steps. This month, Grand Rapids' first **Domestic Violence High Risk Team (DVHRT)** will launch with the Grand Rapids Police Department (GRPD) in partnership with Safe Haven Ministries and the YWCA of West Central Michigan. The DVHRT has four critical components: 1) early identification of the most lethal cases of domestic violence; 2) quick access to a domestic violence agency for victims scoring as high risk; 3) increased offender monitoring and accountability and; 4) a coordinated community response to high-risk cases through a multidisciplinary team.

In October, advocates across our community, including all Safe Haven advocates, will be trained and certified to administer the Danger Assessment with victims and survivors. The Danger Assessment was developed by Dr. Jacquelyn Campbell and has been used as an evidenced-based assessment tool which assesses the likelihood of a homicide or near fatal homicide occurring in a domestic violence relationship. Safe Haven staff will also co-facilitate the training of all GRPD officers on how to use trauma-informed approaches when administering the Danger Assessment for Law Enforcement (DA-LE), a tool for law enforcement to quickly identify those at greatest risk of lethality when responding to domestic violence calls.

Safe Haven will be taking the lead as the primary victim service agency responding to victims when law enforcement has identified someone scoring as high risk. Additionally, as a result of this partnership, Safe Haven was able to hire a High Risk Team Coordinator who will oversee the functions of the multidisciplinary response, and provide intensive case management to victims and survivors who are identified as high risk.

This new initiative reflects our ability to uncover high priority needs in our community and work across systems to create changes to systems.

Safe Haven Ministries' most recent annual impact include:

- 3,195 crisis contacts (providing 24/7 crisis support)
- 49,283 nights of safety
- 539 ongoing advocacy services
- 7,024 community connections

Beyond these numbers, Safe Haven provides programs to support survivors and prevent violence, including Prevention Praxis for Youth, Community, Fellows, and Faith.



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**It's almost that time
of year!**



Home for the
Holidays



SAFE HAVEN
MINISTRIES **35** Years



For many of our clients, Safe Haven will be their Home for the Holidays. Donate today and help survivors with household items & the joy of our free Christmas store.

Check out our Wish List

