



voices

A tri-annual publication from Safe Haven Ministries

SPRING 2026

Dear Friends and Faithful Supporters,

There is a quote attributed to St. Augustine that inspires me: **Hope has two beautiful daughters; their names are Anger and Courage. Anger at the way things are, and Courage to see that they do not remain as they are.**

For 35 years, Safe Haven Ministries has stood at this complex and beautiful intersection of courage and anger as we offer refuge, renewal, and restoration to those impacted by domestic violence and human trafficking.

This past year has been one of much intensity, unknowns, and pain for many of us. In the middle of everything, I intentionally made time for rest. This brought me across the globe to Rwanda on a vision and learning trip. I traveled to a small village in the Boneza region. And everywhere I went, people greeted one another with a profound word, "Komera."

be encouraged
KOMERA

be strong & have courage

This word is deeply rooted in the culture and history of Rwanda, a country that 32 years ago experienced horrific genocide and disruption across every single community and today has healed in remarkable and miraculous ways. "Komera", "hello", means to be strong and have courage.

I stood with women leading a sewing enterprise and running their own vibrant neighborhood businesses, whose personal stories of loss are crushing, and they looked into my eyes and said "Komera." Their children, the generation behind them, shout "Komera" to people passing by along the way. This is the paradox in life — that out of deep pain there arises strength. That courage is not merely resistance but freedom.

As I reflect on this past year, I am filled with deep gratitude for how the women and community in Rwanda reminded me that courage and freedom rises. And I am grateful for you, our generous donors and partners, whose faithful commitment makes the work toward freedom from violence and abuse possible.

Because of you, 2025 was a year of tremendous courage and community transformation.

Behind each data point is a story of "Komera" — a person, a mother and her children sleeping safely for the first time in months, a young person learning to recognize healthy relationships, a survivor rebuilding stability after unimaginable trauma, and new policies that increase resource connections. Your generosity transforms fear into safety, isolation into community, and crisis into hope.

Our impact is possible because it is rooted in strong values that follow Christ's example to love our neighbors and seek justice. We are led by experienced and dedicated leaders who steward our mission with wisdom and integrity. We are a trusted agency within our community. We approach complex challenges with innovation and collaborative solutions. We are supported by a large and diverse community — individuals, churches, foundations, and partners — who believe in survivor-centered programming that meets real community needs.

The future will require courage, innovation, and unwavering commitment. It will also require you. Your continued investment ensures that when someone makes the courageous decision to seek safety, we can say "yes." Yes to shelter. Yes to advocacy. Yes to healing. Yes to prevention. Yes to a future free from violence.

Thank you for standing with us, for believing that abuse should not define anyone's story, and for making it possible for thousands to find refuge and restoration. May we all be reminded every day that, from Boneza to Grand Rapids, being courageous is our calling and standing together is the way forward.

Komera,

Rachel VerWys

CEO, SAFE HAVEN MINISTRIES



Human Trafficking

“... destroyed my life”

Encompassing both sex and labor trafficking, human trafficking affects millions of people around the world. Despite efforts to combat this crime, trafficking remains misunderstood and pervasive in our community and across the United States.

The misuse of power and control over a person for exploitive purposes intersects within the context of our cities, streets, and neighborhoods. It is true, human trafficking can happen to anyone, yet there are often factors that increase someone's vulnerability, including:

- Unstable housing.
- History of domestic violence.
- Runaway youth or youth in foster care.
- Economic instability.
- Migration or immigration.
- Substance abuse.

101 human trafficking victims served through crisis support, advocacy, shelter and/or housing in 2025.

Upcoming Human Trafficking Seminars

Safe Haven regularly hosts a variety of seminars for the public focused on both foundational and current issues in our mission to prevent and end relationship abuse and human trafficking. Over the coming months, Safe Haven will host seminars focused on domestic violence, anti-trafficking, and human trafficking.



“Great presentation! Very informative & engaging speakers/topics. Thank you for the important work you are doing in our community.”



For seminar details and registration, visit safehavenministries.org/praxis-community

Our 2025 Impact Story

Prevention Praxis

Connecting Education with Action to Prevent Violence

401

prevention and outreach activities completed

7,089

community members reached through all prevention and outreach efforts

2,500+

youth reached through violence prevention



Volunteers

Meaningful Impact Through Service

1,890

hours volunteered

\$69,186

volunteer hours equivalent



Safe Transitions & Partnerships

A safe house is essential for survivors' healing journeys. A safe and welcoming home is the further commitment we make to walking with survivors. We partner with our friends at Restored Refuge, who listen to the desires of clients and create an oasis of beauty. The red couch pictured here is an example of dignity being brought into a space with intention and care.



Having the opportunity to be part of the transformations that Restored Refuge Designs has brought to our clients has been an indescribable and glorious joy to witness. Being present from beginning to end and seeing each space renewed has deepened my own faith in powerful ways. This opportunity has been a blessing beyond measure, and I will forever be grateful for this incredible partnership. Our clients consistently express heartfelt and enthusiastic gratitude for the care and beauty they receive."

- Hannah



"Our partnership with Restored Refuge through the Safe Transitions program helps create more than just housing — it creates stability, dignity, and a true fresh start for families. By working together, we are able to ensure survivors not only have a safe place to live, but a space that feels like home."

- Frances

Client Services

Ongoing Support and Advocacy For All

3,192

crisis contacts served

359

individuals who received nonresidential services

69

sessions for adult support groups

51

sessions for children's programming

Shelter & Safe Transitions

Safety and Housing Stability

37

households in Safe Transitions

97

households served in shelter

35,272

total nights of safety

Every donation makes an impact.





2627 Birchcrest Dr. SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49506

NONPROFIT
US Postage Paid
Grand Rapids, MI
Permit #1

YOU'RE INVITED!

Join us for a *Common Table Gathering*

We are joining together to expand hope, conspire for the common good, and build hope for a future free from violence.

Join us for an evening of stories, food, and community networking.



Wednesday, April 22nd
6 p.m.-7:30 p.m.

Kroc Center
2500 Division Ave. S
Grand Rapids, MI 49507

Please RSVP by April 15.

Coffee with Safe Haven

Mark your calendar for coffee, comradery, and meaningful conversation. All are welcome to join us for a tour of our facilities and to hear about the latest endeavors of Safe Haven Ministries.



Wednesday, May 6th
9 a.m.-10:30 a.m.

Safe Haven Ministries
2627 Birchcrest Dr. SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49506

Register for upcoming events!

For more information, contact Debbie Murphy at dmurphy@safehavenministries.org.