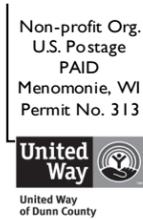




The Bridge to Hope
P.O. Box 700
Menomonie, WI 54751



Advocacy services for victims and survivors of domestic and sexual abuse and human trafficking

Return Service Requested

Providing a bridge to hope that creates a safer, more just and compassionate society

What if 2020 isn't cancelled?

What if 2020 is the year we've been waiting for?

A year so uncomfortable, so painful, so scary, so raw- that it finally FORCES us to grow.

A year that screams so loud, finally awakening us from our ignorant slumber.

A year we finally accept the need for change.

Declare change. Work for change. Become the change.

A year we finally band together, instead of pushing each other further apart.

2020 isn't cancelled, but rather, the most important year of them all.

~Leslie Wight

August 2020 Newsletter

Editor: Brittany Olson

"There is no road...we make the road as we go."

Mexican proverb

Each day of this pandemic we find ourselves putting one foot in front of the other, not sure of our path, but moving forward nonetheless. Some days I feel hopeful, and some days I am overcome with despair. Like many of you, I worry about what the future holds for our children and grandchildren, our community, and our world.

As an agency providing critical services to abuse victims for almost 40 years, we have always been aware of the fact that those who seek our services reflect the disparities of our society. While abuse crosses all lines, those we serve are overwhelmingly poor, have little education, and are disproportionately black, indigenous, or people of color. There's a reason for this:

- * **The median net worth of white households is almost 10 times that of black households.**
- * **The unemployment rate for black adults is twice that of white adults.**
- * **The poverty rate for black adults is almost 21% compared to 8% for non-Hispanic white adults.**

This raging pandemic demonstrates another disparity: the higher death rates for Black, Indigenous and Hispanic folks compared to whites. The heart-breaking killing of George Floyd that haunts so many of us was yet one more example of the inequities and injustices that people of color suffer in our country. We are surrounded by the reality of injustice and racism.

End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin, and the Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Abuse, (of which we are members), issued the following statement, *"The coronavirus pandemic, unchecked police violence, political and economic upheaval have produced a "perfect storm." We have a choice to make: run from the storm, or into it. We choose to run into it and through it. We choose to come out the other side better, whole, loving, just, and more human."*

The Bridge to Hope stands with victims and survivors of all colors, but know all too well that trauma and violence impact people of color most heavily. We join our hearts and our hands with our neighbors to work for racial justice, equity, and a world where abuse and violence of any kind is not tolerated. And when our hope for transformative change is floundering, may we remember the words of a very great and courageous man, Congressman John Lewis, ***"You are a light. You are the light. Never let anyone - any person or any force - dampen, dim or diminish your light."*** May we all walk forward into a future of peace and justice for all.

Naomi Cummings,
Executive Director

Volunteer Spotlight: Rochelle Kroening

Rochelle has been a Bridge to Hope volunteer for almost two years, compassionately serving victims of sexual assault. She is part of our 24/7 on-call SANE team who goes to the hospital to be with victims and provide advocacy during forensic exams. That means she sometimes gets called at 2:00 a.m. She grabs her SANE backpack and heads off into the night within minutes of getting the call. Angie, our Sexual Assault Victims Services Director said, "I am so thankful to have Rochelle on my SANE team. She has picked up countless shifts and is always eager to continue learning. She has been an amazing support for victim/survivors and truly shows her compassion and empathy in everything that she does."

Rochelle says, "I am a proud member of the 24/7 SANE team. I live in Menomonie with my incredibly supportive husband, Jon, and our five children. Prior to becoming a homeschooling mother, I was a public-school teacher. Jon serves on many boards for fabulous community organizations and we are active in the foster care community. As a SANE advocate, I feel fortunate to be called upon to provide victims of sexual assault with support, knowledge, and empowerment. I fully believe in the mission of The Bridge and knew that I wanted to have a role in all that they do to serve our community."

Thank you Rochelle for your calm and compassionate presence during what may often be one of the most difficult days in a victim's life.

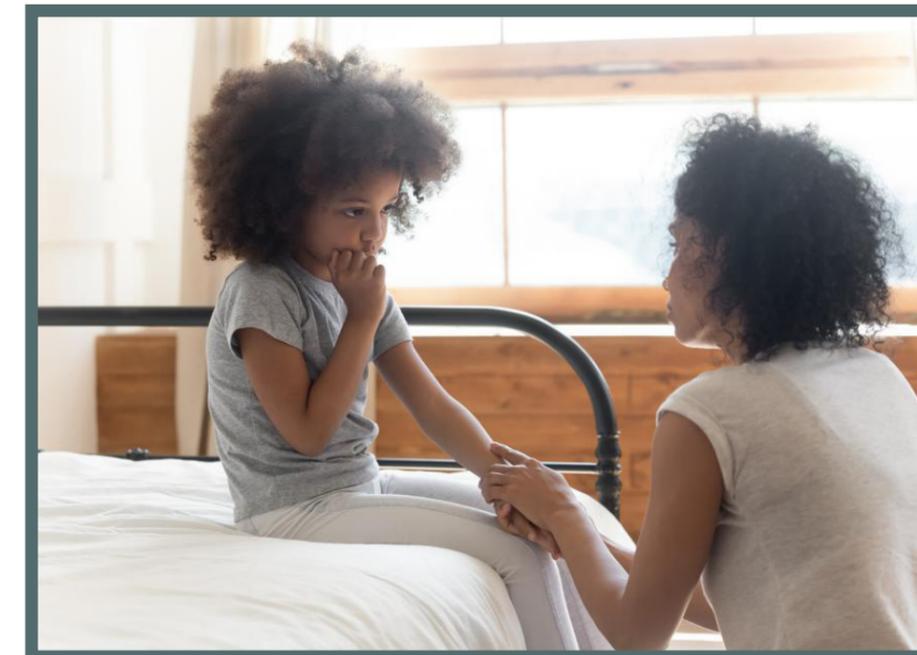
Continuing Our Mission in the Midst of a Pandemic

2020 has been a challenging year across the globe. We at The Bridge to Hope have been working towards maintaining a trauma informed environment while dealing with triggering restrictions. When the Safe at Home order came down from our governor, we had to reevaluate our services for we knew that home is not a safe space for everyone. To think that mandates put into place to keep us safe would truly be a more dangerous situation for some was truly heartbreaking. We quickly realized that we were going to be dealing with a double pandemic as domestic violence rates started to surge across the world and in our county.

We have always viewed our emergency shelter as a place where people could find peace and comfort, somewhere that they could be free without judgement and able to make their own choices without the weight of power and control threatening their safety. We, as an agency, attempted to put policies into place that would protect our clients

and staff members health but also protecting the emotional well being of the people that we served. For me, this has been the greatest challenge during this pandemic. Having to ask someone to "stay home" when they just escaped a prison like environment did not feel trauma informed. Sitting six feet apart from someone crying in our conference room did not feel trauma informed. Asking someone to sanitize their hands before entering our building while in crisis did not feel trauma informed. We had to take a step back and shift our perspective.

After the Safer at Home order was lifted we have seen a large influx of calls, police reports, and drop ins. We continue to see this trend. We are working with survivors to get restraining orders, housing, jobs, and most importantly keeping them safe and healthy during this trying time. Our shelter has been full since the end of the order and continues to see a high call volume. We



have seen a large number of individuals calling for restraining orders or help with divorce paperwork, as well as asking about what the court system is allowing. Our pantry shelves are starting to empty with the high volume of food we are giving out to our clients as well as emergency assistance requests from clients that have lost their jobs. The Bridge to Hope continues to stand strong and offer these services to our community. We are here to provide support and healing to all victims of abuse, as always.

Ashlee Kendall
Director of Domestic Violence Services

We are looking for dedicated female volunteers, age 18 or older, to be a part of the Sexual Assault Response Team (SANE Team) for Dunn and Pepin Counties. Team members provide emotional support through the exam process and distribute legal and other useful resources to victims of sexual assault and their families. A commitment of one weekend per every 4 weeks is requested. Compensation is \$75.00 for the weekend on call and \$25.00 for a week. If interested and/or have any questions, please contact Angie at The Bridge to Hope 715-235-9074 or angiem@thebridgetohope.org

Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women

Imagine the pain of reporting your 19-year-old daughter as missing, and having it dismissed by law enforcement with, "Oh, she's probably just out partying." For many Native American families, this has been their reality. In 2017, 5,646 Native women were reported missing in the United States. The U.S. Department of Justice stated that Native women face murder rates that are ten times the national average. 56% of Native women experience sexual violence.

In December I had the opportunity to attend a conference in Boise, Idaho that featured Native women speaking about their missing sisters and daughters. It was heart-wrenching. Indigenous women are all too often targets of violence and hatred. Poverty and homelessness contribute to their victimization as well as the historical trauma and racism they have suffered as a people. Contributing to this problem are federal laws regarding violent crimes on native land; many tribes are unable to prosecute non-natives for crimes committed on their own lands.

You may have heard about the Red Dress Campaign. The red dresses symbolize missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. In July, Wisconsin Attorney General Josh Kaul announced the launch of a Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women Task Force to help fight the abduction, homicide, violence and trafficking of Indigenous women in Wisconsin. The Bridge to Hope stands in solidarity with Indigenous women and their fight to bring justice to their people.

Naomi Cummings
Executive Director



Design by Brodie Sanchez

The Bridge to Hope Board of Directors

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Our Wish List

- Comforter Sets (Twin/Full)
- Fitted sheets (Twin/Full)
- Pillows
- Bath Towels
- Laundry soap
- Toilet paper
- Paper towels
- Dish washer soap
- Printer paper
- Gas Cards/ Gift Cards
- Full sized hygiene products
- Socks/underwear (new)
- Nail clippers/files
- Razors



Currently we are not taking donations of used items. If you wish to donate please consider a monetary donation or shipping the listed items above from amazon or another site. Thank you!