



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



Return service requested

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

### Caring + Community = Hope



While 2020 has been one of the most challenging years that The Bridge to Hope has ever faced, we have never closed our doors to victims or survivors. Folks like you have repeatedly stepped up to support us so that we can help those who have suffered so much. You have given so many children, women, and men much-needed hope and the tools to overcome trauma and pain. One of the survivors that we provided services to wrote:

*"The Bridge will set you free and have you believing in yourself. When I first got here I was very angry and scared. But I have accomplished so much in my three months here. I now have self-respect, and that is a priceless gift."*

Thank you for your caring, your support, and your gifts. Your love shines through.

Naomi Cummings  
Executive Director



## December 2020 Newsletter

Editor: Brittany Olson

### Housing Victims in Hotels

Since April, we have provided hotel stays for 12 adults, 9 children and 1 dog. These folks either needed to quarantine because they were fleeing from "hot zones," or because our shelter was at capacity. Of these family units or individuals, 6 came into shelter after a 2-week quarantine period. The others moved on to other housing or only needed a couple days of a safe space. Even during a 2-week quarantine period, one of our advocates would go to the hotel at least 4 times per week and meet with the client to assess their needs, bring them food or supplies, and provide advocacy. We have been extremely grateful for the emergency hotel funding that we received due to Covid-19, but it is dwindling fast!

### We have given safe shelter to..

9

Cats



5

Dogs



2

Rats



**72 lives lost**  
in Wisconsin in 2019 due to  
domestic violence.

this past year...and their  
humans!!!

# A day in the life of Our Advocates...

The first time I walked into a classroom to do a presentation my heart was beating out of my chest as a roomful of students stared at me. All of them had masks on. I was just hoping that they were smiling at me below their masks. Right away we found out we would have to yell because the spacing of the kids and wearing a mask made it hard to hear. We asked if anyone knew about The Bridge to Hope and I was surprised that not many of them knew about our services. Those that did know just thought that we were a shelter.

I told them that we were going to present on *Healthy Relationships*. We went through the presentation with your normal amount of technical difficulties, with the students yelling "click the volume button". I thought I was more techn-savvy than that, but apparently not. When we started asking questions the class came alive once they realized we tossed candy to students that answered questions. Some just rose their hand and said they agreed with what another student had said so they could get candy. Throwing candy is a lot harder when students are at the back of the class and I am definitely not an athlete. When we were done we had the students fill out a survey. I did 15 class presentations all together in October. Some of those were with our Sexual Assault Victim Advocate, Kat. Those were after the class had read the book, "Speak." I always tell the students about our 24/7 textline so they know that were a safe place and can answer their questions any time, day or night.



Alyssa  
Family and Youth Advocate

When asked what a typical day at my job is like, it's difficult to provide an answer. No two days ever look the same. Many of the people who have questions about my work seem to have a sensationalized idea of what trauma is and how it presents itself. There's often a dark and dramatic image of what a victim looks like, but this stereotypical concept of victimhood tends to put survivors into boxes. I have spoken with countless survivors who are unsure whether what they've experienced is truly sexual assault for a number of reasons. Perhaps the perpetrator did not seem to have malicious intent, or the survivor has not experienced overt emotional responses they've see portrayed in media. Untangling these misconceptions about sexual assault and consent is a major component of my job. The reality is trauma and healing will look different for each individual.

My greatest responsibility when working with survivors is to listen to what they are willing to share with me. Allowing survivors to have a safe space to speak openly and be heard is, in my experience, the first step toward healing. It is only after this occurs that we can truly begin exploring their feelings, wants, and needs. I'll offer a number of options based on each individual situation, allowing the survivor to choose what is best for them. I can offer to accompany them to the courthouse for a hearing, to a medical forensic exam, to make a report to the police or the Title IX coordinator at their school, but ultimately it is up to the survivor to decide how to move forward. It is not my job to tell survivors what they should do or not do; it is my job to support survivors no matter what path they take. While the tragic image of a damaged and inconsolable victim persists, I like to show survivors and inquiring minds another side of the story. When people seek advocacy, they are taking steps to empower themselves. They are putting in effort to heal and grow, to persist despite the circumstances. Even when a survivor does not disclose their story, there is enormous strength in working through that trauma. In her 2019 memoir, **Know My Name**, Chanel Miller wrote, "How many of us have been made to feel humiliated, melodramatic, instead of brilliant, brave. One man could have kept me from awakening millions. Question who your realities are being written by." In healing, there is power. There is so much more to surviving than most can imagine.



Kat,  
Sexual Assault/ Campus Advocate

## Thank you Tom!

One of our outstanding board members, Tom Harris, retired from our Board of Directors after serving for four hard-working years. Tom first attended one of our Server Nights at Barrel Room in 2016. He was intrigued with our agency, and applied for board membership. We were especially fortunate because at that time, we were pursuing the purchase of a new facility. Tom, who was the plant manager at 3M had invaluable experience and expertise. On June 26, 2017 we obtained a mortgage at Westconsin Credit Union for our new facility, and he was one of the signers. Tom's experience and association with Market and Johnson and other businesses were invaluable as remodeling plans were developed. He worked closely with those firms to create a safe and comfortable building that truly met our needs. He also opened the door for us to receive grant funding from 3M which helped make the purchase of this building possible.



Both Tom and his wife Jody donated many hours getting our building ready to move into, as well as cleaning-up and emptying our former facility on South Broadway. It was with great sadness and appreciation that we sent Tom off with a bouquet of bottled beverages in September. He will always be remembered with gratitude for all he did to make our dream a reality.

## Our Wish List

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

## The Bridge to Hope Board of Directors

Mary Osteraas: **Chair**  
Janice Neitzel: **Vice Chair**  
Stacie Breitung: **Treasurer**  
Julie Furst-Bowe: **Secretary**  
Lisa Montgomery  
Debbie Stanislawski  
Sarah Shonts  
Mickey Boyle  
Sara Olinger  
Corita Forster  
David Natzke

## A Grateful Client

Words cannot describe how grateful I am for finding The Bridge to Hope. I was in a very dangerous position. I was in a very dark place before I found this place. I had been hiding from my abuser for months in hotels; I wish I would have known about these kinds of places a long time ago. My abuser found me before while I was hiding, by hacking into my bank account. I was hiding in my jeep when he took a crow bar to my driver's window, shattering the glass cutting me everywhere, and then grabbing my purse and cell phone and taking off on a high-speed chase with law enforcement but got away. After getting my phone, he then hacked into my bank account and sent almost all of my money to himself to his bank account.

I never thought I would feel safe again. The advocates at The Bridge helped me find this program called Safe at Home, which is a program that helps keep my address and location confidential. This is one of the many services they have helped me with. They also helped me find housing, not only giving me a safe roof over my head in their shelter for 3 months, but also helped me feel safe enough to find my own place. I haven't ever rented on my own before until now and they helped me fill out all of my applications, helped me keep organized, they even helped with housing application fees. They helped me fill out essential paperwork for Crime

Victim Compensation. I am so grateful to have found The Bridge to hope, they saved my life!



~ A client

## Gifts Recieved Since Our Last Newsletter

*including up through December 8th*

Mary Kay Allison

*In honor of Lisa Brogan*

Anonymous

Carol Bakke

Kathryn Baumgardner

*In memory of My Mother*

Christopher & Julie Bendel

Jean Bengston

Jean Biggs

Mary Ann Bilse

Patricia Bilse

Fred & Margaret Breisch

Stacie Breitung

Ellen Carlson

*In honor of The Bridge to Hope Staff*

Dennis & Roxanne Close

Dave Cook

*In honor of Anne Frantz-Cook*

Holly Dardine

Tim Deatley

*In memory of Judy Muller*

William & Bonnie Dehoff

*In honor of Patricia & Dr. Frank Keeler*

*In honor of Judy Faust and her efforts to keep students safe*

James & Janice Erdman

Julianne & William Fisher

Nita & Tim Fitzgerald

Susan Foxwell

*In memory of John Williams*

Cynthia Gilberts

*In memory of Norman & Norma Gilberts*

Tracy Glenz

Joe & Patricia Gravelle

*In memory of Judy Mueller*

Kenneth or Carla Greiber

Gareth Hadyk-DeLodder

Barbara Hauck

*from quilt sale*

Mary & Dennis Hayden

John & Martha Hove

Brent & Sharon Husby

*In memory of Sharron R. Buss*

Rosemary Jacobson

Ron & Jan Jordan

John & Judy Jax

Joyce Kendall

*In memory of Jerry Kendall who passed away a year ago*

Amber Kraft

Neil & Marie Koch

Thomas Krieg

Stacy LaPointe

Georgianna & Eugene Larson

Harlyn or Jeanne Larson

*For victims of human trafficking*

Howard & Charlotte Lee

Barb Lindberg

*In memory of Steve Terry*

Sandra Lindow

Sandra Long

*In memory of Richard Long*

Trevor Ludwig

Roger and Mary Marin

Dudley & Kathy Markham

Peggy & Michael McAloon

Jeff & Mary Merritt

John & Muriel Mikkelson

Elizabeth Mindrup

*In honor of work of Naomi Cummings*

David & Nila Natzke

Mike & Lucy Nicolai

Allen & Paula Noll

*In memory of Judy Muller*

Linda Neuville

Fred & Ellen Ochs

Kyle Olson

Ron & Luanne Prochnow

Richard or Cindy Purves

*In memory of Judy Muller*

Mary Riordan

Mary Riordan

*In memory of Peg Diser*

*In honor of David Maves*

Elizabeth Robinson

Rich & Jeanne Rothaupt

Ron & Joan Sandfort

Jeanette Scheuermann

Lois Schultz

Paul & Lynn Schwartz

Jill & Lee Schwebs

Joseph & Mary Sekelsky

Dan Sessions

Lynda Stewart

Shawna & Colin Streif

*In honor of Andrea Hayden*

Annette & John Taylor

Peggy Terry

Mark & Joan Thomas

## Gifts Recieved Continued

Bill & Kris Tice

*In memory of Jim Rottinger*

Rita Ulesich

Catherine Usborne

Otto & Marilyn Waldbuesser

Gladys Waller

Kathryn Zimmerman & Steve Richter

*In memory of Karen Zimmerman*

## Gifts from Organizations

Achterberg Welch Law Office LLC

AFL-CIO DBA Greater West Central Area Labor

Andersen Corporation

Cedarbrook Church

City of Menomonie

Clarence Talen Charitable Trust

ConAgra

ConAgra Staff Raffle

Eau Claire Automotive Group (Jean's Day)

Eau Claire Leader Telegram (Jean's Day)

Festival Foods

First Congressional Church

KMTSJ, Inc. (Jean's Day)

La Dee Dah and Dennis Ciesielski

Leissa's Hair Studio & Day Spa

Lifestyle Nutrition (DV Donation Jar)

Mainstream Boutique

*In memory of Dale Johnson Sr.*

Menomonie Food Co-Op (in honor of Employee of the Month, Brooke)

Mills Fleet Farm (Jean's Day)

National Mutual Benefit Branch #927

Otto Bremer Trust

Our Savior's Lutheran Church

Rock Elm United Methodist Women

Waznik Moseler Group, LLC (Women's Golf Outing)

Zeal Wellness (DV Donation Jar)



**Thank You to  
WESTconsin Credit Union  
for donating mittens to us  
from their mitten tree!**

## A Big Gift from Otto Bremer Trust!

We were so pleased to receive notification from the Otto Bremer Trust that they approved our grant request for \$60,000. This funding is an unrestricted grant for services to victims of domestic abuse, sexual assault, and human trafficking. Otto Bremer Trust, which is based in St. Paul, has funded our services for many years. We are so fortunate that they have chosen to invest in our community in such a meaningful way.



# Perceptions of Domestic Violence by College Students

As a student at the University of Wisconsin River Falls I had the opportunity to conduct student research on domestic violence, resulting in the academic article, "Perceptions of Domestic Violence by College Students." I found that there is plenty of research on sexual assault among college students but little to none on domestic violence. This revelation was startling because, as young adults, this is the age that they start to enter serious, long-term relationships and begin to identify what healthy relationships truly look like.

Another area of concern I identified was how normalized many acts of violence are around campus, such as hitting each other on the shoulder, roughhousing, spanking each other's butts, verbal abuse, and so much more. After looking into other research, I decided I wanted to understand how college students view certain acts of violence, how aware of domestic abuse they are, and how that influences what they think should be done about domestic abuse. I also wanted to examine how student's ability to identify domestic violence changed when it was physical compared to emotional or verbal.

After going through the required steps, I sent out my survey to 1,000 students. The results revealed a lot about student's views of domestic violence. They were generally able to identify acts of physical violence but struggled with identifying emotional abuse and mental abuse. This may be because physical violence is more tangible and other acts of domestic violence are harder to understand if someone has never been in an abusive relationship. There were no significant differences in the way different age groups responded. (Had I been studying 20 to 50-year-old's I would expect age to be a more significant factor due to life experience.)

One of the most telling results of my research was that across the board women were much more accurate in identifying domestic violence than men. This could be because women are more often victimized than men, and they are more able to identify with the women they see being abused whether in the news or their sister, daughter, mother, aunt, or cousin.

Both men and women in the survey believed in the myth that people want to be abused and that people deserve to be abused. These myths are very damaging and set a tone of acceptance amid students to abuse partners or be abused themselves. Students also showed they wanted more education on domestic violence and for more to be done to combat domestic violence. Another study done showed that educating students greatly diminished beliefs in myths as well as improving their general understanding of domestic violence. These findings show that we should be educating college students on domestic violence like we do with sexual assault especially because this is the last chance for mass education.

Doing this research wasn't always easy. I had to stop many times and take a step back from the heavy facts and the implications of those facts. A lot of the research made me think of the abused line of women I come from and how our definitions of domestic abuse have changed over time. For some people, the financial abuse my mother suffered could be looked at as being a minor issue. The emotional abuse my grandmother suffered was normalized as just an acceptable aspect of being married to a determined man. The physical abuse my great-grandmother endured was a just the sad reality of being married to an alcoholic.

It is all of our responsibility to become more attuned to what constitutes as abuse. It is our duty to educate others about what abuse looks like so that we can stand up for one another, be there to support survivors, and end abuse happening in our community. Knowing what domestic violence is and what it looks like in its many forms sets me apart from the tenacious women who raised me; it allows me to protect myself from those looking to take advantage and allows me to walk away from toxic relationships before I have no way out. For me this research was not just a class project or a great opportunity, it was a way for me to acknowledge the trauma my family has endured and hopefully give others the opportunity to understand that "normal" isn't always okay.

Coltra  
Legal Advocate



# Designer Purse Bingo

Our first Purse Bingo fundraiser was a great success, in spite of all the challenges presented by Covid-19. After having to cancel our April event, we hoped to re-schedule it to September. But as September approached, it was evident that we still couldn't hold a live event. At that point we swiveled to a Facebook live-stream event, in a much different format. We are so grateful to Brittany Olson for chairing this event, to Mary Osteraas for allowing us to stage it in her store, to Justine Johnson for being the tech-savvy person who filmed it live, and to Caitlin Canon for being the Mistress of Ceremonies. In spite of it all, it was a very successful event, and we plan to do another one sometime in 2021. Hopefully....live!

## Thank you to our Designer Purse Bingo Sponsors, with out your support our event wouldn't have been possible!

- WESTconsin Credit Union
- Dana Brunstrom CPA LLC
- Carter Anderson
- Keyes Chevrolet, INC
- Peoples State Bank
- Century Fence Company
- Tom Harris
- Xcel Energy
- Marshfield Clinic
- C.R. Bryan and Son's Excavating
- Complete Investigative Services, LLC.
- Eau Claire Victim Witness Ladies
- Hulbert Heating & Plumbing, INC.
- Royal Credit Union

## Thank you to our Silent Auction Sponsors!

- Lifestyle Nutrition Club
- 3M
- Vet's Plus
- Eau Galle Cheese Factory
- Collective Soul
- Markquart Motors
- Menomonie Food Co-Op
- Jen Gibson
- Green Bay Packers
- Century Fence Company
- Samantha Luer
- Ali Hill-Zurbuchen
- MJ and Company Hair Parlor
- Micon Cinemas
- Taylors Falls Scenic Boat Tour
- Simply Sports
- Mall of America
- Catalytic Combustion



Some of our purse winners!