



Women's Shelter
AND SUPPORT CENTER

2023

ANNUAL REPORT

*Saving Lives.
Restoring Hope.
Changing Futures.*

**Women's Shelter and Support Center
PO Box 457, Rochester, MN 55903**

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MESSAGE



Dear Supporters and Friends,

As I reflect on the past year, I am filled with immense gratitude. Together, we have journeyed through challenges and celebrated victories, all in the pursuit of providing safety, advocacy, and transformation for survivors of domestic violence.

Since our inception in 1976, the Women's Shelter and Support Center (WSSC) has been dedicated to providing a lifeline for those in need, and I am proud to have been part of this journey for almost five years now. 2023 marked a significant chapter in our story of impact and growth. Our collective efforts came to fruition when we received grants to enhance our capacity and expand services. Additional staff advocates have been added to our children's program, community outreach services, and court advocacy programs, ensuring that our services reach those who need them most.

While celebrating our victories, we've faced funding challenges with state and federal support stagnating or declining. It's disheartening to witness our peer programs closing due to financial strains, leaving vulnerable individuals without vital assistance. Despite setbacks, your unwavering support and commitment fuels this vital cause where survivors are not only safe but empowered to reclaim their lives.

Looking ahead, our vision is clear: We are committed to becoming a next-level organization to meet the evolving needs of our community, and your continued involvement is paramount to our success. Together, we are shaping a future where every individual can live free from the shadow of domestic violence.

As we express our gratitude to our donors and supporters, we also extend our heartfelt appreciation to our staff, volunteers, and board of directors. Their dedication and compassion are the driving force behind every life we touch and every milestone we achieve. Together, let us continue to build a world where love is safe, and every voice is heard.

Respectfully,

Artyce Thomas

Executive Director

Women's Shelter and Support Center

FOCUS AND LEADERSHIP

FOCUS

Our focus is to provide temporary shelter and services to people impacted by domestic violence, while transforming our communities through education and leadership for social change. Our goal is for all people to live safely with freedom and dignity in our communities.

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION STATEMENT

The Women's Shelter and Support Center is built on a foundation of equity, diversity, inclusion, and safety. We strive to provide this through the people who we serve, the staff we employ, and the culture we promote. The Women's Shelter and Support Center is committed to serving all victims of domestic violence through services and supportive housing options that meet the needs of the community. We endeavor to do this by incorporating the input of clients, volunteers, staff, and board members into these values and the future of the organization. We respect the unique experience of diverse clients and staff, and we are committed to the preservation of our values.



WSSC LEADERSHIP STAFF

Artyce Thomas

Executive Director

Kara Hoel-Kleese

Director of Housing

Barb Schramm

Director of Development

Jodi Skurdahl

Director of Shelter Services

Jeannie Thompson

Director of Youth Programming
and Community Outreach

2023 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President:

Cathy Stroebel, January - August 2023

Vickie Ernste, September to present

Vice President

Vickie Ernste, January - August 2023

Bobbie Gostout, September to present

Treasurer:

Sue Palen

Secretary:

Gail Sauter

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Judy Braatz

Jane Drennan

Jennifer Horn

Deb Lafferty

Amanda Lindberg

Bill Oertli

Rachel Trewhella

Sejal Waghay

Gerald Weinrich

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

The Women's Shelter and Support Center empowers survivors on their journey of healing. Our emergency shelter in Rochester serves the 10-county region of SE Minnesota. Additionally, we have community advocacy programs in Dodge, Fillmore, and Olmsted Counties, along with transitional and permanent housing units located in Rochester.

Crisis Intervention & Advocacy

WSSC's emergency and ongoing advocacy services address immediate safety concerns and assist in the recovery from physical and emotional trauma, serving as a vital lifeline for individuals navigating through the aftermath of abuse.

1,811 Individuals received immediate and ongoing **advocacy services** for safety planning, civil/criminal court, restraining orders, and help with **emergency needs** (food, clothing, and personal items), housing, childcare, transportation, and other needs.

1,084 Individuals received **community referrals** for childcare assistance, legal services, housing assistance, financial resources, and other crucial supportive resources.

2,200 Callers to our **24-hour crisis line** received information, assistance, and support for themselves or others.

"The abuse was so bad, I had to leave! If you [WSSC] weren't here, I would be living in my car with my pets." - Client

WSSC recognizes that pets are often abused or killed if left behind, therefore pets can accompany survivors staying at the shelter.

Shelter & Housing

The WSSC emergency shelter offers safety, while our transitional housing program provides extended support, helping survivors overcome barriers to stability.

208 (134 adults and 74 children) stayed at the **emergency shelter** and received advocacy.

7,155 Shelter nights were provided, offering individuals affected by domestic violence a safe haven, free from harm or intimidation.

34 Days is the **average length of stay** per resident in our shelter.

9 Permanent **housing units** for WSSC were maintained.

22 Households (28 adults and 43 children) utilized our **long-term supportive housing** programs from which 8 households moved on to **self-identified safe housing**.

29 Households were **assisted financially** to obtain or maintain their own stable housing.

108 individuals received additional **relocation assistance** from our agency.

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Children and Youth

WSSC's children and youth programs promote resilience in young survivors, offering a safe space for children to express their feelings, process trauma, and learn healthy coping mechanisms.

331 Children participated in **122 interactive activities** throughout the year, such as field trips, holiday parties, and on-site activities (i.e. craft projects, story time, music, etc.).

259 Youth received **educational and supportive programming** through support groups, learning about topics such as self-esteem, anger, and communication skills.

She was in extreme danger and was so scared. She had been strangled and was in great distress, but once I assured her that she was safe here, helped her with immediate needs, and got her settled in her room, she finally relaxed, and kept saying, "Thank you!" over and over!

- Advocate

Community Outreach & Volunteering

Our Community Outreach program raises awareness and increases understanding of the complexities of domestic violence and promotes early intervention and prevention.

WSSC's Volunteer Program helps fulfill the diverse needs of the organization, providing valuable services in a variety of roles.

1,588 Individuals attended **54 educational sessions**, including the interactive "*Why they Stay*" presentations. Attendees included system professionals, college and high school students, community groups, organization teams, and other interested community members. WSSC also hosted **information booths** at numerous community health fairs and events.

414 adults received support and education at **65** virtual and in-person **support groups**, learning about self-esteem, power and control, anger management, healthy relationships and related topics. Additionally, **259** children took part in complementary **support activities** alongside the adult sessions.

1,560 Individuals watched WSSC's **awareness videos** learning about domestic violence topics and services available.

25 Volunteers provided **1,648** hours of service, helping with support groups, data entry, graphic design, presentations, community booths, foster grandparent program, childcare, organizing material donations, maintenance, gardening, and other needs.

2,220 People follow WSSC's **Facebook page** with a reach of **3,700**.

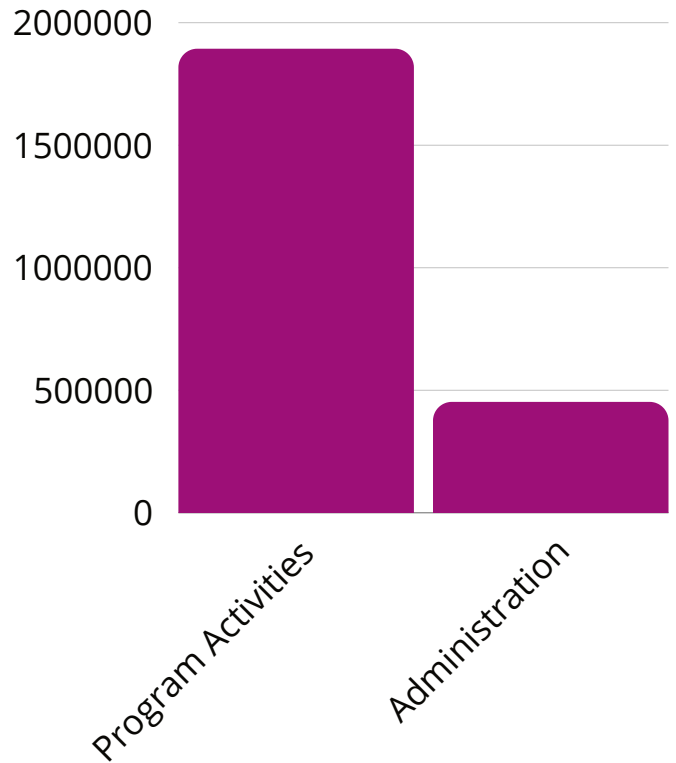
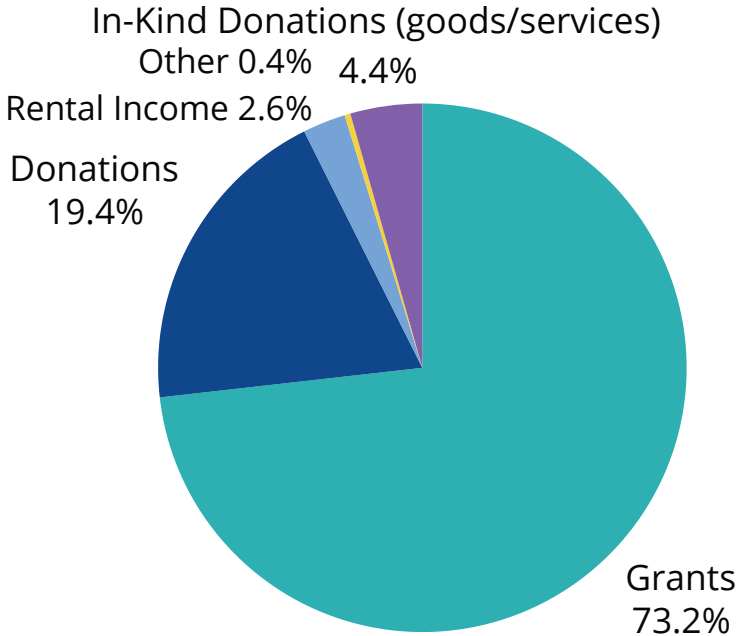
198 people attended the annual **Transforming Lives** fundraising luncheon to support and empower survivors on their path to safety.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Data reflects 2022 Audit

Revenue \$2,448,763

Expenses: \$2,346,378



TRANSFORMING LIVES 2023 LEAD SPONSORS

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BANK

MAYO
CLINIC



CONTRIBUTOR RECOGNITION

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all who generously support our life-saving programs. Your commitment is instrumental in building futures filled with safety, healing, and dignity.

DONATIONS

Multi-Year Giving Society (Pledges)

Acknowledging the commitment and generosity of those who have pledged their support over multiple years, ensuring sustained impact and continuity in our mission.

Shelter Stewards (Monthly Giving)

Recognizing the invaluable contribution of our monthly donors whose consistent support provides stability and resources for our ongoing operations.

Legacy Society (Planned Giving)

Honoring the foresight and generosity of individuals who have included our organization in their estate plans, ensuring a lasting legacy of compassion and support for our cause.

Empowerment Partners (Donations)

Expressing gratitude to all those who contribute directly to fuel our programs and initiatives, driving positive change in the lives of those we serve.

In-Kind Donors (Goods and Services)

Extending appreciation to our in-kind donors, whose contributions of goods and services play a vital role in enhancing our capacity to meet the diverse needs of the individuals and families receiving services.

Volunteers (Time, Energy, Skills)

Celebrating the selflessness and dedication of our volunteers, whose gift of time, energy, and skills enriches the fabric of our organization and empowers us to achieve our mission.

TRIBUTES (≥ \$500)

In Memory:

Betty Bowman
Madelline Kingsbury
Dr. Darlene Gai Kelly
Charles and Linda Sheffield

In Honor:

Maddie Olson

COMMUNITY FOUNDATIONS / GROUPS (≥\$5k)

Otto Bremer Trust
Gloria Dei Lutheran Church
Luxury Bath Remodeling & customers
Mayo Clinic
Mayo HS GOFA (Give One For All) Student Govt
Minnwest Bank
United Way of Olmsted County
United Way of Dodge County
Rochester Area Foundation
Carl & Verna Schmidt Foundation
Think Bank

STATE and FEDERAL GRANTORS

Minnesota Department of Human Services
Minnesota Department of Public Safety
Office of Violence Against Women
US Department of Justice/Office of Justice Programs
US Department of Housing and Urban Development

HOW YOU CAN HELP

BECOME INVOLVED

Speak out about injustices, and visit www.womens-shelter.org to learn about ways you can help, such as volunteering and supporting services.

DONATIONS

Online: www.womens-shelter.org/waystogive

Mail: WSSC, PO Box 457, Rochester, MN 55903

Phone: 507-292-6743





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