harbor house

Domestic & Sexual Violence Programs

2024

ANNUAL REPORT

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A LETTER TO OUR COMMUNITY

Dear Friends,

As we reflect on 2024, we do so with deep gratitude for this community—our partners, supporters, volunteers, and advocates—who stand with us in our mission to end domestic and sexual violence. This year has been one of transformation, growth, and renewed commitment to how we serve and support survivors.

One of the most visible changes has been our new brand—a reflection of who we are today and how we want to show up in the community. Our updated identity is more than just a new look; it is a reaffirmation of our values, our mission, and our promise to survivors. We are here to provide safety, healing, and empowerment, and we want every person who turns to us for support to feel seen, heard, and believed.

This past year, we also celebrated a milestone—40 years of Harbor House. Since our founding, we have remained steadfast in our vision of a future free from violence. In October, we gathered for our Rise Together: 40 Years of Building Hope, an event to honor our past, celebrate our progress, and look ahead to the work that remains. This was not just a celebration—it was a call to action. Together, we will continue to rise, to support survivors, and to create lasting change in our community.

Thank you for standing with us. Your belief in our mission fuels our work and strengthens our ability to provide life-saving services. We look forward to another year of resilience, hope, and collective impact.

With gratitude,

Tracy Plamann
CEO, Harbor House Domestic & Sexual Violence Programs

OUR LEADERSHIP

BOARD MEMBERS

Nikki Voelzke, Board President
A2Z The Agency

Jean Coopman-Jansen, Vice President
Primary Care Associates

Jennifer Peotter, Secretary
ThedaCare

Kellan Popp, Treasurer
Bank of Kaukauna

Mike Frisch
Appleton Police Department (Retired)

Brynn Olearnick
Faith Technologoies, Inc.

Cory Brumlic
ThedaCare

Ashley Hargrave
Miller Electric

Melodie Briggs
US Energy (US Venture)

HARBOR HOUSE LEADERSHIP

Tracy Plamann
CEO

Gabby Croley
Culture, Diversity, & Engagement Manager/Human Resources

Lara Reddin
Volunteer Manager

Melissa Rettler
Office Manager & Accountant

Beck Fritsche
Development Manager

Michelle Ruhl
Director of Program Services

Lindsey Ross
Sr. Manager of Shelter, Crisis, & Outreach

Lori Stiebs
Manager of Intervention Program

Alia Swingle
Manager of Domestic Violence & Sexual Violence Services

STATE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE TODAY

"Wisconsin is among the worst states in the country for victims of domestic violence. We're seeing a public health crisis, with 1 in every 6 domestic violence homicides occurring in our state. Recent studies have shown that Black women in the U.S. are disproportionately murdered compared with white women, with the highest inequity in Wisconsin. The answer has been and remains simple, year after violent year. Wisconsin is failing domestic violence victims. Show care for survivors by sufficiently resourcing those supporting their needs, or lives will continue to be lost to predictable, preventable violence year after year after year."

-Monique Minkens, End Abuse Executive Director

A few key points from the 2023 End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin Report:

- 85 people in Wisconsin lost their lives to domestic violence last year in 2023
- While it's a drop from the 2022 report, where there were 96 deaths, it's still the second highest total of deaths since the organization began releasing reports in 2000
- Many domestic violence programs are facing cuts as federal funding decreases (including Harbor House)
- Domestic violence deaths took place in 22 of 72 counties in the state in 2023

At Harbor House, our focus is and remains to best serve our clients and community with dignity and respect. Our team is dedicated to developing best practices and looking into ways to increase trauma informed care for our clients.

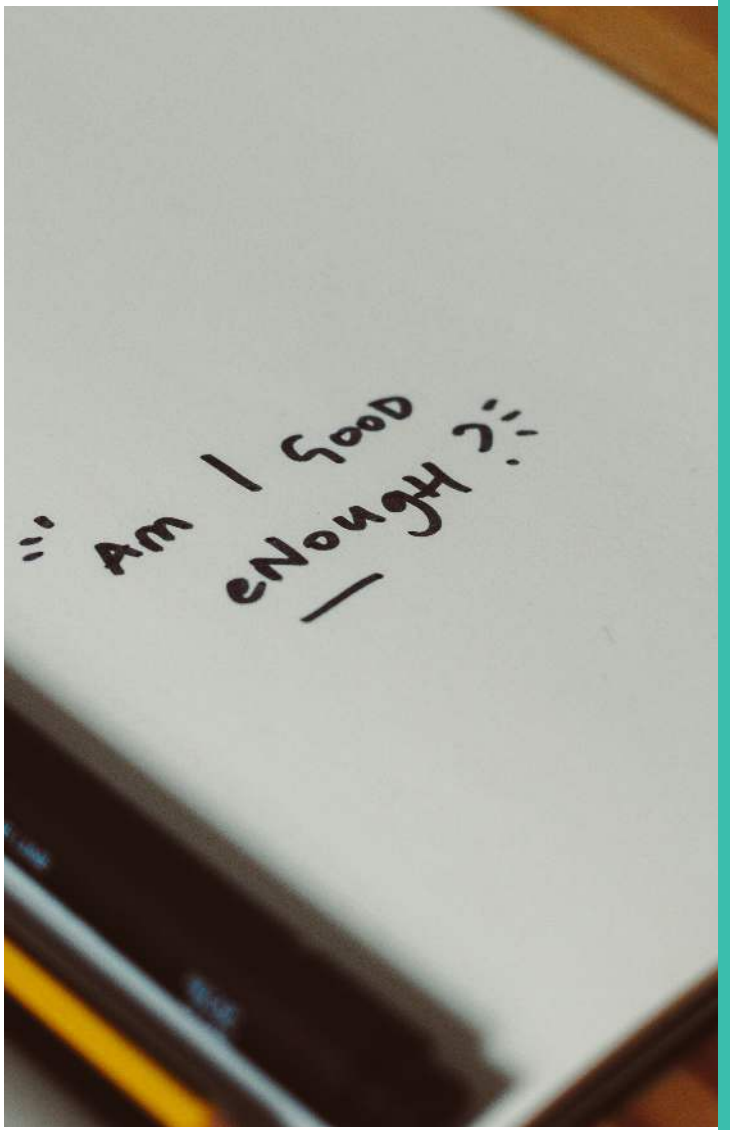
SEXUAL VIOLENCE PROGRAMMING

Harbor House offers crisis response for the immediate physical, psychological and emotional needs of a victim-survivor. Our advocates are here to help individuals find emotional support and a sense of safety and empowerment in their lives.

Harbor House sends Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) advocates to all reported SANE exams in Appleton and Oshkosh. During SANE exams, our role is to provide emotional support and be there with the victim during a traumatizing crisis.

87

SANE exams were attended in 2024



Taydem and her Mom, Sarah were supported by one of our SANE advocates in 2024. Harbor House was called for a SANE exam in Oshkosh. When our advocate arrived they were met by the nurse and Sarah to be briefed on what had happened to Taydem. Sarah brought in Taydem after she was complaining about pain in her vagina and found redness and blood. Sarah cried as she told us the story.

After getting Sarah's permission to be in the room with her and Taydem during the exam, our advocate entered the room. Our advocate met Taydem and was able to talk to Taydem while she was having the exam and provide Sarah reassurance and validation while the nurse asked her questions. After a while of talking, Taydem began to open up and become more comfortable. She eventually shared what happened to her with an older boy at school who sexually assaulted her.

Our advocate took Sarah in the hallway and walked her through taking a few deep breaths to help her with the emotions she was experiencing, so she could go back into the room to be there for Taydem.

When the exam was over, our advocate played board games with Taydem while mom was talking to law enforcement and a nurse, then Taydem was able to talk about what happened to the police officer.

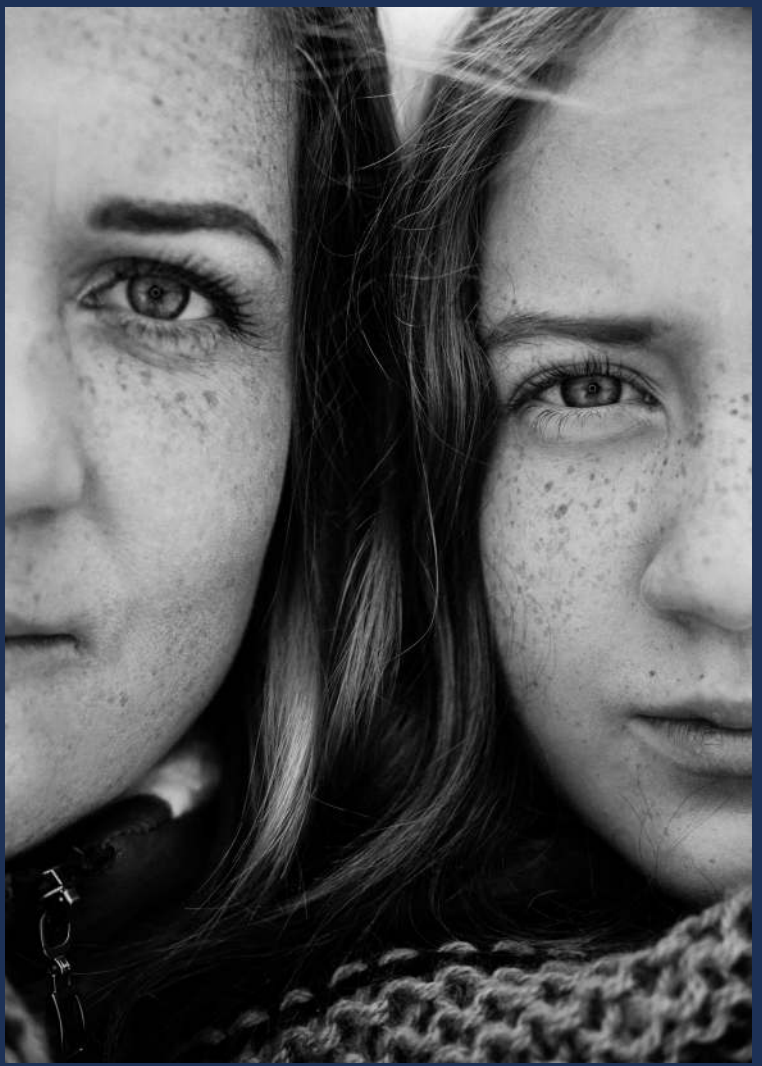
"Once the report was filed, we were saying our goodbyes when Taydem came back and gave me a big hug and thanked me for being there for her. I was crying in my car for like an hour after that."

-Gabriela, Harbor House's Sexual Violence Advocate

After several months of working COTS (an adult only transitional homeless program), Hope learned from her oldest daughter that their father was sexually abusing her. Once Hope became aware of the abuse, she took action and made contact with Harbor House, desperately seeking shelter for her and her daughter, so that she could get her to safety.

Hope and her daughter came in to shelter at Harbor House feeling very overwhelmed and not feeling sure of their next steps. She recently hit a 6-month sobriety milestone and was often reaching out to her sponsor for support. Hope was able to return to COTS to continue their programming, but her main concern was finding safe and stable placement for her daughter. Hope was still actively participating in her required programming through Drug Court and working part time. During her time in shelter, she met with her assigned advocate regularly, participated in support groups, and connected with outside resources such as the Community Clothes Closet, the Boys and Girls Club, and the YMCA. Hope began therapy and started addressing her significant mental health concerns and trauma.

Hope's schedule was very restrictive, but she continued to reach out to family support to see who could help her with placement. Once Hope found placement for her daughter with a family member, Hope was able to return to COTS to complete programming. Hope was able to get her move in fees covered by her drug court program. Hope thanked Harbor House for our kindness and dedication to serving our clients.



CRISIS AND SHELTER SERVICES

Harbor House knows that immediate support is critical, which is why our shelter program has responded to growing demands, providing safe shelter for all who seek it – regardless of capacity.

To provide the best care and support for our clients, our advocates serve a client from day one (when they walk through the door needing shelter) to years in their journey when they do a monthly check up with their advovate.

"Crisis and shelter services are crucial for domestic abuse and sexual abuse survivors because they provide immediate safety and services during a very vulnerable time. We offer a safe and confidential environment that provides emotional support for survivors to regain control of their lives and make informed decisions."

-Michelle Ruhl, Director of Programs

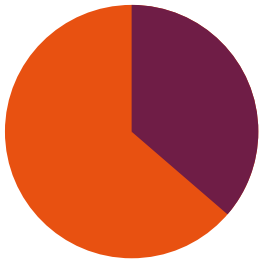
CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Our Children and Youth Program helps children and teens heal the emotional wounds that come from witnessing or experiencing domestic and sexual violence. Youth programming focuses on restoring the relationship between children and their protective parents. Young people are supported through counseling, educational and legal advocacy, support groups, and other fun activities.

At Harbor House, we believe that domestic and sexual violence does not define who you and your children are. For Devin, our advocates were able to help him discover and be proud of the person he is.

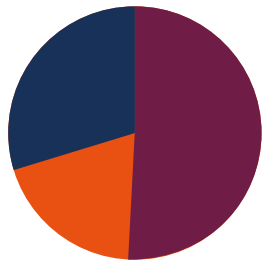
417
total clients ages (>17 y.o)

3503
total services



Residential Clients: 251
Non-Residential Clients: 166

Age Ranges:



0-6: 215
7-12: 122
13-17: 80

3,555
total hours spent serving youth

Devin and his older sister and mother stayed in our safe shelter for six months in 2024. Devin had a history of struggling with school attendance in their hometown. He would cry each morning when he had to go to school, beg his mom to stay home, and would struggle when his mom had to leave him at school. This directly affected his school attendance and his overall education. As such a shy boy fleeing an abusive situation with his mom and sister, he needed help and support to develop his social-emotional skills. Even his older sister took on a parental role, which is common for older siblings in families that are or have experienced domestic violence. Devin had become very attached to his sister, making his shyness and social anxiety even more evident.

Since arriving at Harbor House in the summer, our Children & Youth Advocates were able to garner a relationship with Devin to bring him out of his shell. Through the Children & Youth Summer program, our advocates were able to build relationships with Devin. They helped him have conversations, understand how to treat others fairly, and the importance of healthy relationships with safe adults. Devin had a great transition into school when September came around!

Now, Devin loves learning in school, is so excited to walk with his family each morning and has been talking more easily with others. As time went on, he flourished with his confidence in himself and a stronger personality. This also allowed his sister to be more of a child herself, rather than always having to take care of him. Both children are now attending school regularly and succeeding.

As a part of our Intervention Program, participants are asked to write about how you think your use of power and control and abuse have affected your partner and/or children. Here are a few examples of how individuals answered:

"The decisions I have made and the stress I put on my family because it was never and will never be right. What I have learned over these past four months of classes is that there is bad in the world and in ourselves - we can accept it and grow from it or blame everyone else and stay stuck in a rut. I believe ***this is what this class is for, to give good people a chance to grow."***

"I'm writing to you about how my actions may have affected you and want to sincerely apologize for the way I treated you. I didn't mean for things to end the way that they did and I'm sure I caused you to feel scared, lonely, afraid, anxious and angry many times with my harsh words and minimizing how I treated you. I've learned a lot from this class on how I should have handled things and walked away whenever I felt like I was getting upset. ***I should have communicated better, shared more responsibilities, been more accountable, not minimizing or blaming you for my behavior, and been more respectful and understanding of boundaries.*** *I wish I would have supported you more on all your dreams and ambitions. I wish I had been more willing to lay down my pride and been more willing to compromise. I'm only able to control how I treat other people and respond. I know you are also hurt by everything that happened towards the end between us and you are still on a path of healing. I wish you the best with whatever life brings your way."*

"My behavior has affected my ex in many ways. She is fearful of me now and doesn't trust me and my actions. ***I have learned that because of my actions and behavior, she may be negatively affected in her future relationships and how she looks at men in general.*** *The children have been affected by me also, they may think in the future that my behavior was alright and grow up doing the same. It isn't fair for them to witness arguing and poor behavior. They may never forget the behavior and it may affect them their entire lives. The children's artwork hit home hard with me and choked me up. I took it to heart and will do everything I can to protect and never expose them to it again."*

INTERVENTION PROGRAM

Harbor House's Intervention Program acknowledges a generational cycle of violence by providing transformative community services to those using abusive behaviors and their families. Our goal is to ensure the safety of victims and families through partner engagement. We work to hold those responsible for the abuse accountable, providing a space where people using abusive behaviors and their families/friends can receive trauma-sensitive services.

The Intervention Program is certified through the Wisconsin Batterer Treatment Providers Association. We provide domestic violence assessments to individuals in Outagamie, Calumet and surrounding counties. Our Intervention Program receives referrals from a variety of sources including probation, court, child protection, family court, mental health professionals, self-referrals, advocates, family members, etc.

255

domestic violence intervention program assessments were given

88%

of individuals that attended Impact Panel learned new information on the effects of violence on children

PREVENTION AND EDUCATION PROGRAMMING

In an effort to build our community's capacity to respond to domestic and sexual violence, Harbor House has developed two key initiatives – our Community Outreach Initiative and our Prevention Education Initiative. By educating community members about domestic and sexual abuse and its repercussions, as well as how to help someone in an abusive relationship, we're building a compassionate community of domestic and sexual abuse advocates. The more advocates we add to that community, the faster it grows, and the closer we get to ending domestic abuse in Northeast Wisconsin.

Prevention Education

Prevention Education is integral to leading children and teens into healthy relationships, aiding them in recognizing violent behaviors, and most importantly, showing them how and when to get help for themselves and others.

Two examples of high school students that approached our advocates after hearing a presentation from our advocates:

- A high school student wanted to learn more about how she could set boundaries with her boyfriend. Our advocates were able to equip her with the power and control wheel to use as a tool to explain to her boyfriend how some of his actions make her feel. She thanked our advocates for giving her a better understanding of consent.
- After a presentation, a student approached an advocate because she felt a friend of hers had started dating a friend that has some abusive characteristics according to the power and control wheel. Our advocate was able to walk her through what she can do as a friend to support both her girlfriend and the guy friend that had been showing abusive behaviors.

Community Outreach

Community Outreach is focused on strengthening our community's awareness of and response to domestic and sexual violence. This lets community members experiencing domestic or sexual violence know they are not alone while preparing friends and family members to more effectively support their loved ones and neighbors.

This past year, Harbor House presented to Fox Valley Technical College's Starting Point program, a free program designed to help young adult women with life skills, empowerment, and career planning that will lead to successful pathways of further education and/or self-sustaining careers.

During the presentation, a student got emotional and visibly upset. When the presentation was complete, and other students began to exit, our Community Education Coordinator asked the student if there was anything they wanted to talk about. The Community Education Coordinator was able to give her a business card and take her information to provide to one of our advocates to reach out.

The student was very happy we had taken the time to speak with them after class and connect them with an advocate. They had even attended a group meeting and raved about the interactions during the group and the group facilitator. Their needs were met, they felt heard, and cared about!

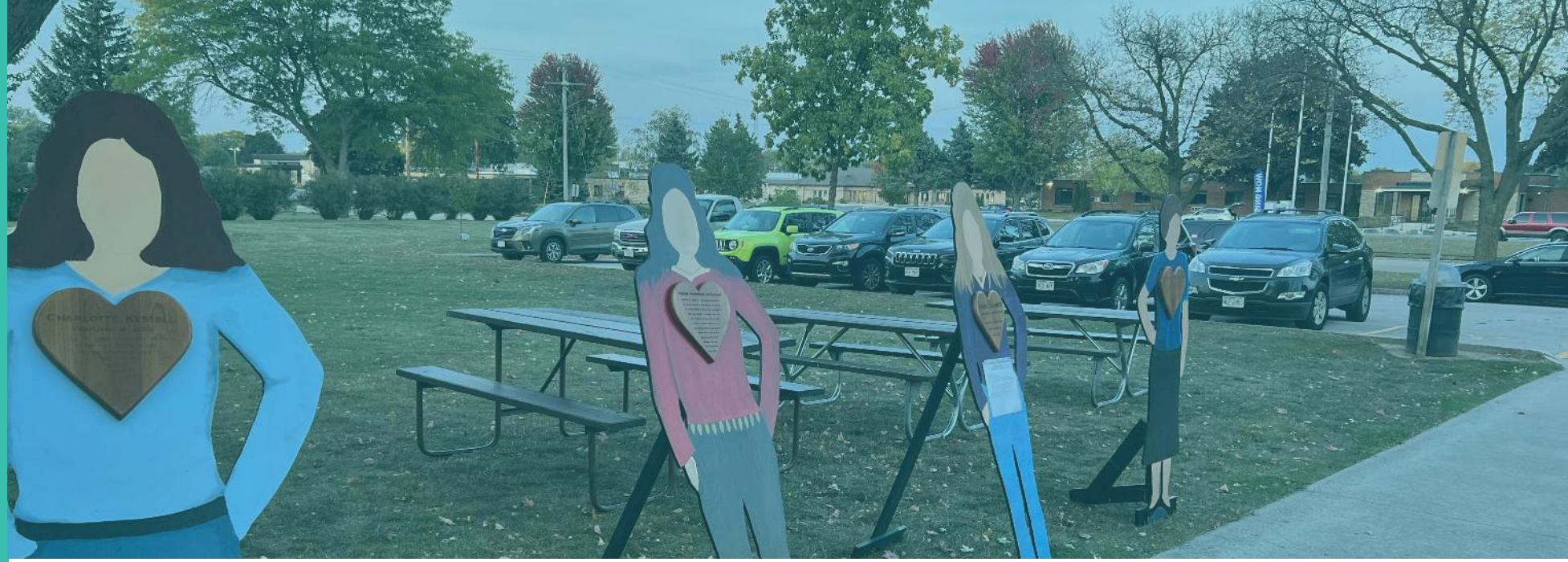
Safety is always a top priority as we help individuals navigate the challenges of abuse. For Kate and her child, who had experienced significant abuse from her partner and the child's father for seven-years, she finally reported the abuse and needed support.

The Calumet County District Attorney recommended Kate reach out to Harbor House. Our Calumet County Outreach Coordinator supported her through the criminal process, helped her obtain a restraining order, and from there, helped her navigate the legal system to work on custody, placement, and child support. Even though he had legal counsel, the arguments she presented were strong enough to secure sole custody of her child, with him receiving weekend placement.

The Calumet County Coordinator also advocated for the right programming and intervention classes for the father, ensuring that Kate felt comfortable allowing increased visitation over time. The case has now concluded, and all parties are satisfied with the outcome.

Additionally, this past holiday season, Kate was able to participate in our Christmas program and received gas cards for support. Kate shared the following about her experience:

"I know I wouldn't have been able to face these two years of struggles without Harbor House. I depended on my advocate to keep me focused on my main goal—safety. Her experience, relationships with community organizations, and system knowledge helped me stay on track."



RURAL OUTREACH: CALUMET COUNTY OUTREACH PROGRAM

Located in Chilton, our Calumet County Outreach Office provides programming similar to what's offered at our main location in Appleton. Special attention is given to the unique circumstances faced by individual experiencing domestic and sexual violence living in rural communities.

NEW DEDICATED SPACES

In 2024, we continued to expand and develop our safe shelter to best serve our clients and community in the ways they need us. This included the development of two new spaces, both of which were designed to commemorate two women who both have been integral to Harbor House's ability to serve our community today.

Wendy Gehl Children's Calming Corner

Wendy was Harbor House's first Children's Advocate, this space honors all her years of service to victims, children, Harbor House, and our community. Through her many roles at Harbor House, to our eventual Program Director, keeping children at the forefront of our minds when making new policies and decisions was always a priority for Wendy. This space is all about supporting children with high anxiety and sensory issues by offering a dedicated area for to support their needs.

Beth Schnorr Community Resource Room

As a longtime Executive Director of Harbor House, we wanted to recognize Beth for her years of service, dedication, and leadership to victims of domestic violence. Beth has inspired our staff to go above and beyond when working with the community. Bringing partners into Harbor House to provide resources was always one of her priorities. The Beth Schnorr Community Resource Room is a dedicated space for our community partners to meet with and serve individuals right at Harbor House.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Reach Counseling

We partner with Reach on SANE (sexual assault nurse examiner) response to ThedaCare Appleton and Oshkosh Aurora hospitals. Advocates and volunteers from each organization fill an on-call calendar each month to cover SANE exams at both hospitals. Reach also partners with us on Sexual Assault Awareness Month (April) programming and various needs throughout the year.

Apricity's Casa Clare

Apricity's Casa Clare is a AODA and mental health shelter in the Fox Cities. Our adovcates visit two times a month to run support groups and offer walk-in domestic and sexual violence services.

Compass Health Fox Cities

Carri Ciske at Compass Health runs a weekly support group at Harbor House and offers one-on-one counseling appointments for our clients every Friday focusing on trauma, DV, SA, substance use, chronic pain/illness and LGBTQ+ issues.

HeadsUp Fox Cities

HeadsUp Fox Cities bring young adult clients, ages 17-24, to us for shelter and outreach services. They also offer our staff training and education on their services and supporting individuals in this age group.

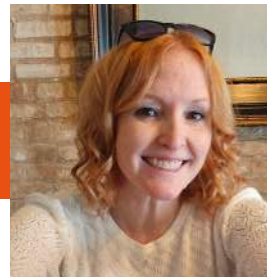
BY THE NUMBERS

325
volunteers donated their time and talents

6,004
hour of volunteer support

58
families were served by our Holiday Gift program

VOLUNTEER HIGHLIGHT



Volunteer of the Year:
BETH WEILER

What do you wish other people knew about Harbor House?

I wish everyone could see the dedication of the entire staff and volunteers. Walking in the doors the first time and every time since I feel the energy behind the common goal of breaking the cycle for domestic and sexual abuse survivors. Harbor House offers many avenues of support for those in need, a passion clearly shared between everyone involved in the organization.

What activities energize and excite you at Harbor House?

I love being able to share my talents with such an amazing group. With a background in project management and event planning I've been thrilled to use my personal and professional life experiences to make a difference at Harbor House. The collaborative spirit on every committee I've had the fortune to be a part of inspires me to this day to continue to be the best person I can be for those around me.

Any other thoughts or comments that you have about your volunteer role at Harbor House?

Feeling like I've found a home full of peers all working together on a common goal to be the spark that ignites brighter futures for so many struggling in our community has truly been an honor. I'm so thankful for and continue to be inspired by every single person I've met and had the pleasure to work alongside at Harbor House. I look forward to meeting and growing with those I'll volunteer with in the future.

Teen Volunteer of the Year:
BRYNN MILLHOUSE

How did you first get involved at Harbor House?
I first got involved at Harbor House because I was looking for a meaningful way to fill my free time after school. I started looking for volunteer opportunities in the area and Harbor House stood out to me. My brothers and I had a rough child hood, so I understand the impact abuse can have on a child, and I felt empowered to support children in similar situations to my own. I love working with children, so when I came across Harbor House, I knew it was the perfect opportunity for me!

What would you tell someone who is thinking about volunteering at Harbor House?
Do it. There's nothing more rewarding than knowing you've had a positive impact on your community. It's so simple and it doesn't have to be a full time commitment, sometimes I volunteer two times a week and sometimes when I'm busy I come in once or twice a month. Any time you can give is greatly appreciated. It isn't so scary, and you will be welcomed with open arms!

Any other thoughts or comments that you have about your volunteer role at Harbor House?
I have learned so much and I truly appreciate the experience I have gained at Harbor House. I have been able to apply what I've learned outside of Harbor House, advocating for domestic violence victims and teen dating violence in my school through ideas like purple out day! It truly is an amazing connection.

"There is so many resources available to you. Whether you're seeking shelter or just assistance, Harbor House can help, from housing to support groups to legal advocacy. There is so much more they offer and it truly is a positive and supportive environment."

-Brynn
Youth Volunteer of the Year

2024 EVENTS OVERVIEW

Amazing Race 2024

Based on the TV show “Amazing Race”, Harbor House’s Amazing Race fundraising event send teams out to “race” around Outagamie and Calumet counties.

In April of 2024, we hosted our fourth annual Harbor House Amazing Race. Harbor House’s Amazing Race event is not only about raising funds, but creating awareness about domestic and sexual violence in our area. In 2024, the top team raised $2,583 and top individual raised $1,177 all to help us raise $41,000 to support our programming.

Calumet County Candlelight Vigil

Our “Light the Way” Candlelight Vigil in Calumet County is a candlelight walk that covers a short distancet from Klinkner Park to our Rural Outreach Office in Chilton, WI, where we held a reception with refreshments for attendees.

The goal of the vigil is to send a powerful message of solidarity and hope. We know that by coming together, we raise awareness, support survivors, honor the victims and survivors, and shine a light on an issue that often remains hidden in the shadows.

Rising Together: 40 Years of Building Hope

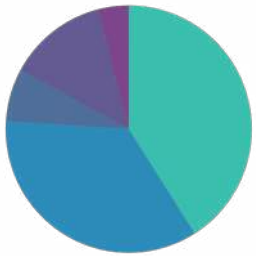
On October 24, we celebrated our Rise Together: 40 Years of Building Hope event at The Hillside at Plamann Park friends and supporters from Harbor House's past, present and future gathered to celebrate the journey that has lead us to today and to look ahead at what the next forty years will bring as we work together to end domestic and sexual violence in our community.

From all of us at Harbor House, thank you. Thank you for your unwavering support, kindness, and love, it means the world to our staff, volunteers, board members, and most importantly each and every individual that has utilized our services over the past 40 years. Thank you.

Purple Porch Project

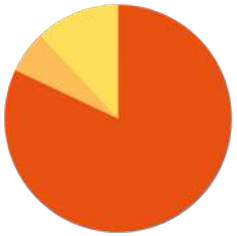
Purple Porch Project is an annual awareness campaign during October (Domestic Violence Awareness Month) in which we make a simple ask to the community to switch out their porch light(s) with purple bulbs and/or add purple outdoor lights (floodlights, string lights, etc.) to their homes.

2024 IMPACT REPORT



INCOME

- Government Grants: 41%
- Individual & Corporation Contributions: 35%
- Non-Government Grants: 7%
- United Way: 13%
- Fundraisers: 4%



EXPENSES

- Shelter & Programs: 82%
- Fundraising: 6%
- Administrative: 12%

**financial numbers are pending a final audit*

1,625
total clients served in 2024

1,356
of total clients identified as female

934
total number of walk-ins

SHELTER & CRISIS ADVOCACY

496
individuals stayed in our shelter

18,051
days total shelter days

5,550
calls were received on our 24/7 helpline

30
nights - average night stay for a shelter client

OUTREACH & ADVOCACY

1,334
hours of legal advocacy were provided to clients

601
individuals received legal support

417
clients under 17 years old, with **3,555** hours of services

PREVENTION, EDUCATION, & INTERVENTION

8,404
K-12 students received our healthy relationship message

42
community presentations and trainings reached 1,548 people

255
assessments given to people using abusive behaviors

387
prevention education presentations provided to K-12 students in schools

88%
of participants that attended Victim Impact Panels in 2024 reported learning new information about the effects of violence on children

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2025

In 2024, thousands of community champions chose to support our mission. Businesses, foundations, individuals, schools, faith communities, etc. have all allowed us to build hope in the lives of individuals experiencing the impact of violence.

Once again, we say thank you. We look to continue to shine our light even brighter for survivors in our community and beyond!

HOW YOU CAN BE INVOLVED

CORPORATE SUPPORT

At Harbor House, we believe in the power of collaboration to drive meaningful change. By aligning with our mission, your company can help us serve all people impacted by domestic and sexual violence, while also enhancing your corporate social responsibility (CSR) profile, engaging employees, and making a tangible impact in the community.

- Corporate Giving
- Matching Gifts
- Sponsorship
- Board Member/Committee Engagement

For more information, please **contact Beck, Development Manager at grants_fundraising@harborhousewi.org** or 920-832-1667.

HOST A DONATION DRIVE

Check out our current needs list and host a donation drive with your group or organization.
harborhousewi.org/current-needs-list

FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA

facebook.com/harborhouseDAP
instagram.com/harborhouse_appleton

VOLUNTEER

See all the ways your time can have an impact at Harbor House. Check out our volunteer listings at
harborhousewi.org/volunteer

ATTEND AN EVENT

- Harbor House's Amazing Race ~ May 3, 2025
- Calumet County Candlelight Vigil ~ October 1, 2025
- Purple Porch Project ~ October 2025
- Comedy for a Cause ~ October 30, 2025

See our complete line up of events at **harborhousewi.org/events**

MAKE A DONATION

Provide crucial support for victims of abuse, offering safety, empowerment, and a path to healing.
harborhousewi.org/individual-giving

harbor house

harborhousewi.org