



Safe Haven

Shelter and Resource Center



VOICES

SPRING 2020

SUPPORTING SURVIVORS IN THE COVID-19 ERA

Our community and funding partners stepped up in a big way over the past few months, and we are so grateful. Thank you all for helping to provide our organization and staff with the resources we need to safely and effectively support survivors of domestic violence amidst the ongoing pandemic. More than ever, survivors need to be seen and heard. With your support, Safe Haven is working to adapt our programming to today's changing needs.

We couldn't do it without you!



SHELTER

Our shelter has remained open and our crisis line staffed 24/7 throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Many survivors continue to access our services, though increased isolation has made it harder for some. We are developing new approaches for supporting these individuals, and have heard we are making a difference. A few of our safety initiatives include:

- Tablets for survivors who are in COVID-19 isolation units to connect with Advocates face-to-face via video conferencing while they recover from the illness
- Investing in detachable webcams/microphones for increased tele-advocacy services
- Providing track phones for survivors without access to their own
- Personal bed pods for increased privacy and social distancing in shelter

RESOURCE CENTER

While drop-in use of our communal kitchen, lounge, and showers have been temporarily suspended, we continue to provide advocacy services at our Resource Center throughout the pandemic. ***We have been told by survivors, at a time when fewer agencies are able to provide service, that walking in off the street and talking with a live person at Safe Haven means so much to them.*** We continue to offer:

- Assistance with restraining orders and navigating the legal system
- Resources for housing, education, employment, and childcare
- Safety planning to escape a dangerous situation
- **New** Online support groups through a secure, confidential platform

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Hello to our friends and supporters-

Recent events have provided countless opportunities for our agency to reinvent itself. At the same time, we've learned that staying strong and advocating for survivors as we've always done is in many ways exactly what is needed. While the rest of the world stopped spinning, Safe Haven's doors remained open to meet the needs of survivors of domestic violence. Many have found themselves in more danger than ever before, isolated with those who've become even more unkind.

Throughout it all, our advocates and staff continue tirelessly answering their calls, greeting them at the door, and welcoming them into our safe space. I have the unique privilege of seeing our work unfold from a broader perspective agency-wide, and I am truly in awe of the kind, gentle care provided by each of our staff; selflessly putting aside their own fears and trepidations to ensure the safety of those who need us most. I am incredibly proud to stand with, and in support of, our amazing community of essential workers here in the Northland. And as always, it is your support that holds us up and makes it possible for us to do this work.

Whatever lies ahead, there is one truth I know: Safe Haven will carry on providing safety and space to heal regardless of what the future may hold.

Stay well and take good care!



Brittany Robb

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Let's stay in touch!

✉ outreach@safehavenshelter.org

📷 @SafeHavenMN

📘 Safe Haven Shelter & Resource Center

VOICES | Spring 2020

IN HER OWN VOICE

Written by K. Kairos

The current health crisis has changed our lives in a way that most have never experienced before. Right now, we can all relate to the shared experiences of needing to stay home. Of needing to distance ourselves from our loved ones, our friends, our neighbors, and our community. We have stopped enjoying the activities that we used to take for granted; like meeting up with a friend at our favorite coffee shop, or going to watch a band playing at the local pub. All of a sudden, our clubs and social engagements have come to a halt. We have felt this isolation take a toll on our minds and bodies. Some of us feel exhausted, some restless, some anxious; sad, lonely, and scared. The struggle to stay connected is real, and we all feel it to some degree.



"In isolation we are separated from truth" by the author K. Kairos

TOOLS OF MANIPULATION

Some of us, however, know the reality of isolation all too well. For many of us who have experienced or are currently experiencing domestic violence, isolation plays a key role in our abusers' power over us. The further they separate us from resources, the harder it is for us to get the help that we so desperately need. Isolation makes it possible for them to get away with their manipulation; their gaslighting, their anger, control, and lies. **In isolation, we are separated from truth.** Our current COVID-19 induced isolation began abruptly, in an effort to keep us and our loved ones safe. In relation to domestic violence, it is often a gradual change, made to systematically distort our reality in a way that blinds us from seeing just how awful our situation has become. By the time we realize that no level of perfection could ever please them, we are in so deep that it feels impossible to escape.

SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE 24/7

A PERSONAL STORY OF ISOLATION

Very early on in my marriage, isolation was a key tactic used by my abuser, presented under the guise of reasonable expectations. At first, I wasn't to go out with my friends, in order to save money. I couldn't go to social gatherings with other women, because "good" moms stayed home with their kids. We moved to a remote setting, and I became isolated by lack of proximity. As the abuse became more intense, my trips to town became less frequent. The odometer on my car was recorded, and every purchase was scrutinized. I was forced to cancel essential appointments for myself, as well as my children. My phone, purse, and car keys were hidden from me. I became completely isolated. I lived in a constant state of anxiety, loneliness, and fear.

I am grateful to say that with the help of Safe Haven and a few close friends, my children and I were able to escape our abuser. Yet, as I walk through this time of social distancing that we are all facing, I am vividly reminded of the life we endured. I have struggled, at times, to fight the intrusive memories of my past. This time has felt lonely for me in a way that feels uncomfortably familiar.

A BEACON OF HOPE

One bright spot over these past few months has been Safe Haven's continued commitment to supporting my family, just as they have throughout our entire journey to break free from domestic violence. Every week, my children eagerly await the large manila envelope that arrives in our mailbox. Every week since the pandemic started, Safe Haven has sent them activities that feed their creativity, as well as their self-care. There is always an art activity, like a simple origami animal, and a mindfulness activity, like a yoga tutorial. They even include something to encourage the mothers. This simple gesture has brought joy to my kids, and connection for me.

It reminds me that even in isolation, I am not alone.

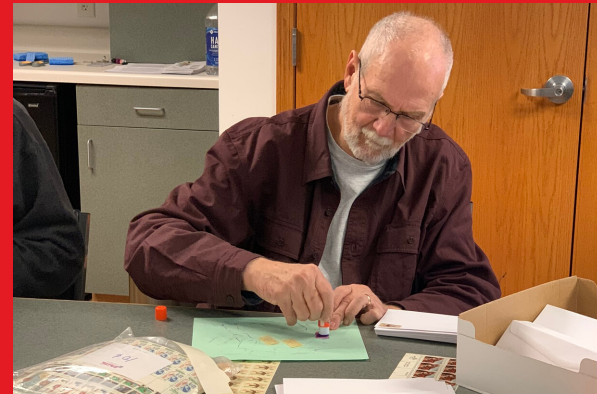
I can't stand to think of what life would be like right now, living with our abuser. My heart aches for those who are currently living in that situation; who fear there is no way out, yet are searching for help. As we all continue to do life, in a world that feels somewhat distant, let's remember the unnumbered people in our community whose isolation runs so much deeper. I am forever grateful for Safe Haven's assistance, from my period of crisis all the way through today. As the rate of domestic violence climbs during these isolating times, we can all lend a helping hand in fostering essential connection, through making Safe Haven's resources available. I am a living testimony of this vital service.



(218) 728-6481

SUPPORTER SPOTLIGHT

Dr. Charles Gessert



If you've ever received a letter from Safe Haven, you may have noticed a plethora of seemingly random and interesting stamps adorning our envelopes. Perhaps a holiday stamp in the middle of June? There is a reason for this, and it all starts with one of Safe Haven's long-time volunteers: Dr. Charles Gessert. "The Stamp Guy" is how he is affectionately known around our office, and it turns out around many other nonprofits in the Duluth area as well. Dr. Gessert has found a unique way to blend his love of stamps and his desire to give back, and he donates hundreds of dollars-worth of old and interesting stamps to Safe Haven and other nonprofits every year. Dr. Gessert discovered he could find old stamps for reduced rates at auctions and estate sales, so he buys them up by the thousands in order to donate them to local nonprofits like ours. It's a creative and fun way to offer volunteer time and resources, and we could not be more grateful for his contribution to our work.

Thank you, Stamp Guy!





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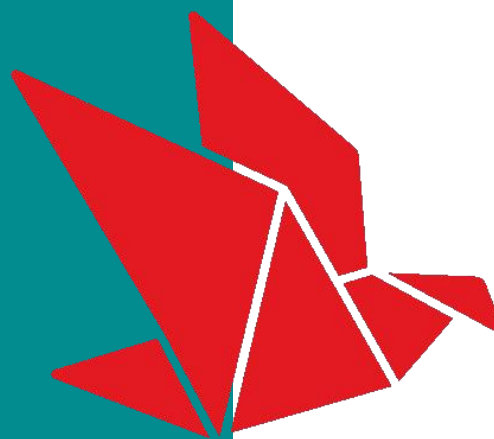
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To remove yourself from our list or to
receive an electronic copy, email us
at outreach@safehavenshelter.org

Support is available 24/7

 (218) 728-6481

HOPE
HEAL
TRANSFORM
THRIVE



SAVE THE DATE

15th Annual *Virtual* Fundraiser

October 5-8, 2020

Stay tuned for various online opportunities to engage with Safe Haven!

Visit our website for updates:

www.safehavenshelter.org/fallevnt