



Women's
Advocates

ANNUAL REPORT

2022-2023

Message from the Executive Director

Dear Friends and Relatives,

As we reflect on the past fiscal year, I am filled with gratitude for the milestones and progress we achieved together. The period spanning July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023 marked another significant chapter in the journey of Women's Advocates, one underscored by resilience and unwavering commitment to our mission to walk with victim-survivors and our community to break the cycle of domestic violence.

One of the notable highlights of this year was the beginning of our Foster Pet Program, a need recognized by our Survivor Advisory Council. This program resonated deeply with our mission of providing holistic support to victim-survivors and their entire family. Recognizing the invaluable role that pets play in the lives of many victim-survivors, we embarked on this initiative to ensure that those seeking refuge in our shelter can find peace knowing their beloved furry family member is also safe from their abuser. This program not only brought comfort to those in need but also exemplified our dedication to innovative solutions in addressing the diverse needs of our community.

Our commitment to community engagement and empowerment manifested through a series of impactful events and initiatives. We were honored to host a Juneteenth cookout, celebrating the resilience, liberation, and heritage of our Black/African American relatives while fostering solidarity and inclusivity. This event served as a testament to our ongoing efforts to create spaces where all voices are heard, valued, and celebrated. Our Break the Cycle bike ride and community festival garnered widespread support and fun, bringing together individuals and families from the Twin Cities to advocate for a shared cause: breaking the cycle of domestic violence. Through collective action and raising awareness, we reaffirmed our unwavering commitment to creating a safer community for all.

I extend my heartfelt appreciation to each and every one of you for your ongoing support, dedication, and generosity. Your contributions have enabled us to uplift and empower countless individuals and families, making a tangible difference in their lives.

As we look ahead to the future, I am filled with optimism and determination. Together, we will continue to advocate for a world free from violence, where every individual can thrive and live with dignity and respect.

Respectfully and Zhawenim (unconditional love),



Holly Henning, Executive Director

*Photo Credit: Greene
Photography LLC*



Our Mission

Women's Advocates walks with victim-survivors and our community to break the cycle of domestic violence.



Women's Advocates shelter 1974

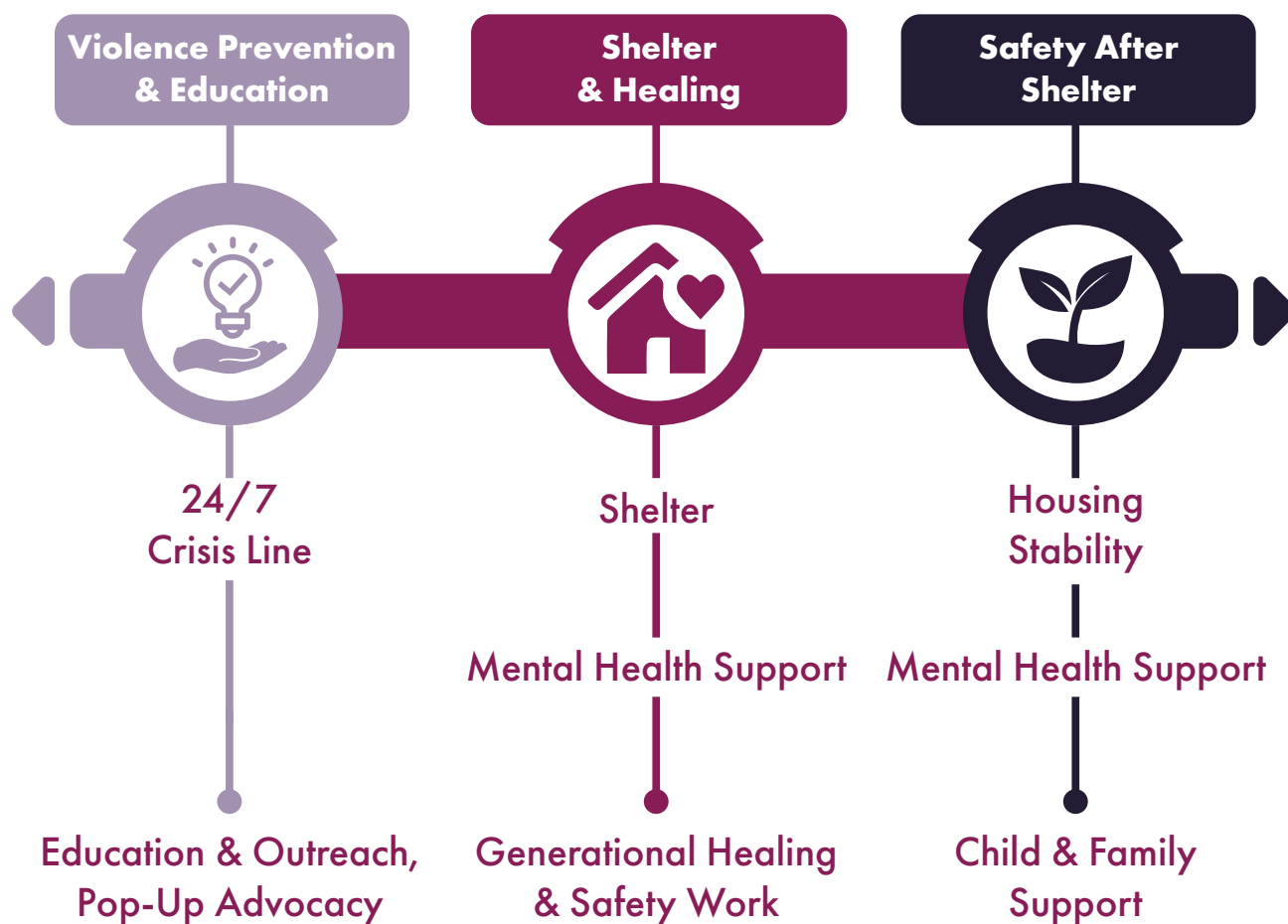
Land Acknowledgment

Women's Advocates is located on Dakota land, bordered on the west by bdoṭe (the sacred confluence) and on the east by Wakán Tipi (Dwelling Place of the Sacred). This land that holds Women's Advocates, and the community we serve, was stolen from the Dakota by the American government through centuries of wars, broken treaties, and acts of cultural genocide. Through incredible perseverance and resistance, the Dakota (and other Indigenous people of the Seven Council Fires) remain here today, caring for the land and the life it sustains.

As an organization dedicated to breaking the cycle of domestic violence, we know that Native women and girls face the highest risk of domestic violence, sexual assault, and intimate partner homicide. This, too, is a legacy of white settler colonization. We grieve and honor the missing and murdered. At the same time, we express our gratitude for those who are still among us, those Indigenous-led organizations who are fighting every day for a world without domestic and sexual violence.

While this acknowledgment cannot eliminate the sins of the past, we commit ourselves to sustaining meaningful partnerships with our Dakota and Anishinaabe neighbors now and in the future. We commit ourselves to supporting tribal sovereignty with the same fervor that we support the self-sovereignty of victim-survivors.

Continuum of Safety from Abuse



Women's Advocates is proud of our legacy of leadership and innovation—our emergency shelter was the first in the nation dedicated to protecting victim-survivors of domestic violence, and our opening inspired the creation of domestic violence shelters across the country. We also know that emergency shelter alone will not end the epidemic of domestic violence in our communities. Breaking the cycle of abuse in the lives of individual victim-survivors requires a strong network of services to wrap victim-survivors in the emotional, legal, and financial supports they need to heal before, during, and after their stay in our emergency shelter. At Women's Advocates, we call this network the Continuum of Safety.

The continuum begins with prevention—stopping violence before it starts. Our Education and Outreach team offers in-depth webinars to engage the Twin Cities community in conversations about supporting victim-survivors. This work empowers individuals to claim their role in ending domestic violence in our community. Our shelter is a welcoming, secure environment where victim-survivors and their children stabilize after crisis and begin to process their experiences. Finally, families are supported in the transition from shelter to community through our Housing Stability program, which offers financial assistance, mental health therapy, and advocacy to ensure that victim-survivors can maintain their freedom from abuse without compromising their family's stability. These wraparound programs and services reduce the likelihood that victim-survivors will return to an abusive relationship out of financial necessity, truly breaking the cycle of domestic violence.

24/7 Crisis Line

Women's Advocates operates a 24/7 crisis hotline and online chat service to support victim-survivors taking their first steps away from abusive relationships. Our team of Crisis Resource Advocates provide shelter referrals, safety planning, and emotional support to crisis line callers from all walks of life.

Our crisis hotline attracts both callers who are actively seeking space at a domestic violence shelter, and those who are looking for non-shelter resources. As Women's Advocates' programmatic offerings have expanded, our hotline screening questions have changed. When we launched our Pet Foster program in early 2023, we began to ask callers whether they had pets they were afraid to leave behind with an abuser. Those who answered yes were connected to our Pet Foster Program for further support. Women's Advocates' screening questions continue to adapt to connect victim-survivors with the programs that will best meet their needs.



**In the 2022-2023 Fiscal Year
(Between July 1, 2022,
and June 30, 2023):**

**531 people accessed our 24/7
crisis resource services via
phone or live chat.**

Education & Outreach

**In the 2022-2023 Fiscal Year
(Between July 1, 2022, and June 30, 2023):**



108 domestic violence and related trainings were hosted by Women's Advocates' Education & Outreach team.



2,963 professionals and community members attended domestic violence and related trainings.

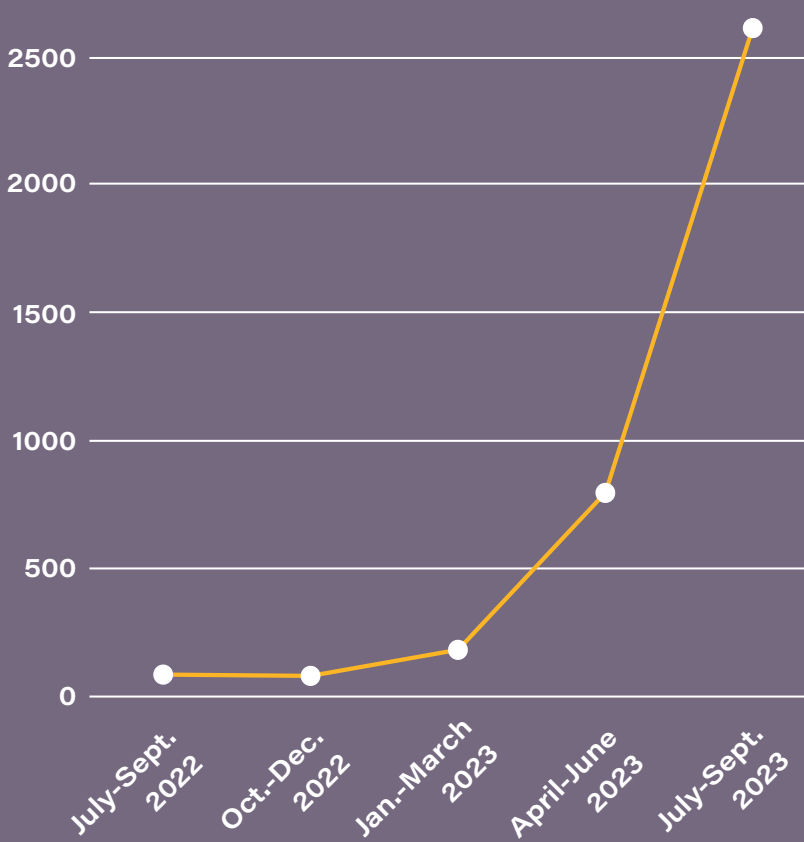


Outreach expenses for the 2022-2023 Fiscal Year were \$160,153, comprising 5% of organizational expenses.

Women's Advocates is dedicated to preventing domestic violence in our communities through both virtual and in-person Education & Outreach programming, which aims to strengthen our community's ability to recognize warning signs of domestic violence, understand the dynamics of abuse, and support and affirm victim-survivors. Our curriculum includes the following topics:

- **Domestic Violence 101 and 201**
- **How Domestic Violence and Homelessness Impact Survivors' Mental Health**
- **Supporting Children Through Abuse-Related Trauma**
- **All About Safety Planning**
- **Healthy Relationship Building Blocks**

In addition to this, the Outreach team continues to offer weekly "office hours" through Pop-Up Advocacy at the Rondo Community Outreach Library and other trusted community sites. In April 2023, we began offering Pop-Up Advocacy at the Saint Paul Opportunity Center, Catholic Charities' day center in downtown Saint Paul. This partnership provides domestic violence education and advocacy services to members of the Twin Cities' homeless community, who experience high rates of abuse and interpersonal violence but lack access to most domestic violence services.



Number of People at Pop-Up Advocacy

The Pop-Up Advocacy initiative at Rondo Community Library and Saint Paul Opportunity Center has significantly expanding our outreach within this vulnerable community, allowing us to provide resources and services to over **3,700** people from July 2022 to September 2023.



Online Survivor Support Group

Women's Advocates' Education & Outreach team has hosted an online support group for victim-survivors of domestic and sexual violence since 2021. Online Survivor Support Group is a 10-week program designed to support victim-survivors in processing their experiences of abuse, navigating their newfound freedom, rebuilding trust in themselves and others, and creating an empowering personal narrative. Participants receive a complimentary workbook to guide their 10-week journey. In 2023, Women's Advocates hosted four 10-week sessions of Online Survivor Support Group.



Shelter, Food, & Radical Hospitality

For nearly 50 years, Women's Advocates' shelter has been a warm, welcoming, safe environment for victim-survivors and their children. Year after year, residents tell us that Women's Advocates is the cleanest, most home-like shelter they've encountered. This would not be possible without the tireless work of our dedicated Food and Facilities staff, who promote radical hospitality in all they do. Our shelter space offers comfort and security, comprising 15 bedrooms, 7 resident bathrooms, and a commercial kitchen where daily meals are prepared. To further support our residents, we provide access to laundry facilities, a living room, a dining room, a secure children's playground, and computer resources during their time in our shelter. A 24/7 team of Crisis Resource Advocates and shelter managers ensure the round-the-clock safety and wellbeing of all residents and staff.

Our shelter environment was temporarily altered by the isolation and distancing measures we implemented at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. These measures kept our residents and staff safe, with remarkably low rates of COVID infection, but isolation and distancing created less of a community feel in shelter, with fewer activities available and no group spaces for residents to share stories and encouragement. We're happy to report that this year, we returned to our normal community events and activities. Our shelter team has put together exciting, community-building activities for victim-survivors and their families to engage in fun and fellowship. With the return of weekly events like Children's Music Night and Women's Wind-Down Art Group, joy and laughter are once again echoing through Women's Advocates' communal spaces.



Juneteenth Community Event 2023

**In the 2022-2023 Fiscal Year:
(Between July 1, 2022, and June
30, 2023)**

81 victim-survivors and **87** children, **168** people total, received emergency shelter through Women's Advocates.

97 days was the average length of stay for residents.

Residents received **13,891** nights of shelter.

Facility expenses for the 2022-2023 Fiscal Year were \$485,705, comprising **14%** of organizational expenses.

Food expenses for the 2022-2023 Fiscal Year were \$251,730, comprising **8%** of organizational expenses.

Nearly half of victim-survivors of domestic violence stay in abusive situations rather than leave their pets behind.

Women's Advocates' Pet Foster Program, initiated in the spring of 2023, addresses a crucial but often overlooked aspect of domestic violence situations. Shockingly, 71% of women in domestic violence shelters report their abuser threatened, injured, or killed a pet. Women's Advocates' Survivor Advisory Council, comprised of current and former program participants, pushed Women's Advocates to take action to meet this urgent need. Collaborating with local animal rescue organizations, we provide a lifeline for survivors seeking refuge in our emergency shelter by offering temporary foster care for their furry companions for up to 90 days.

Furthermore, all pets being fostered through this program have access to preventative and emergency vet care through our partners at The Bond Between.

Source: National Coalition Against Domestic Violence



Capital Campaign

2024-2027

Help us **double** our shelter space for victim-survivors, youth, and their pets!

Thanks to a generous \$8.7 million grant from the Minnesota Office of Economic Opportunity and over \$400,000 in private donations, we've acquired two new buildings in Saint Paul, doubling our shelter space! With 19 units totaling 58 beds, these ADA-compliant buildings will allow pets to live with their owners 24/7 and welcome victim-survivors of all genders, sexualities, and abilities. We've met 60% of our goal, but still need your help to raise \$14.25 million in funds for planning, design, renovation, and 5 years of programming costs.



Learn more or give!



Shelter-Based Advocacy Services

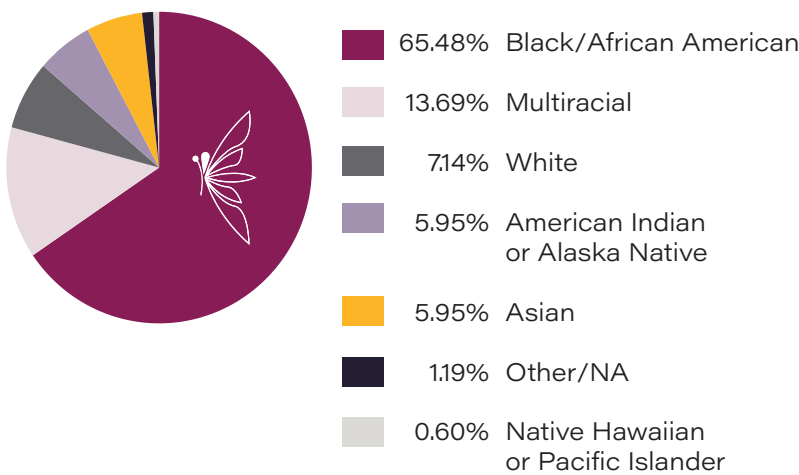
At Women’s Advocates, we create a supportive environment for victim-survivors that fosters healing, safety, and justice. Our in-shelter Mental Health & Wellness Counselor supports residents with self-care and mindfulness as they embark on their healing journey. Residents have access to regular support groups on a variety of topics, where they can share information, resources, and experiences to cultivate community and resilience.

Our Family & Legal Advocates work closely with victim-survivors in our shelter, providing personalized goal planning and guidance as they navigate complex legal, healthcare, and financial systems. As advocates work individually with shelter residents, they also take on special roles with outside partners to create a coordinated community response to domestic violence.

One of our advocates participates in the Family Violence Coordinating Council, and another works weekly at Bridges to Safety, helping Ramsey County residents apply for Orders for Protection and Harassment Restraining Orders. This collaborative approach enhances our ability to provide comprehensive and effective legal support to victim-survivors, most of whom lack the financial resources to obtain legal representation when seeking safety from their abusers.



Racial demographics of residents in our 24/7 emergency shelter:



Over 90% of our residents identify as Black, Indigenous and People of Color. In addition to this, 7.74% of our residents identify their ethnicity as Hispanic/Latinx.

In the 2022-2023 Fiscal Year:
(Between July 1, 2022, and June 30, 2023)

249 crisis interventions took place for victim-survivors staying at our shelter.

Family advocates dedicated **1,114** hours of support to residents.

Mental health, wellness, & legal advocacy expenses for the 2022-2023 Fiscal Year were \$1,169,128, comprising **35%** of organizational expenses.

Housing Stability Program

Financial and housing instability are two of the most common reasons that victim-survivors remain with or return to an abusive partner. To truly break the cycle of domestic violence, victim-survivors need stable housing and financial resources to keep them living independently. Women's Advocates' Housing Stability program plays a pivotal role in breaking the cycle by helping survivors find, obtain, and maintain stable housing for themselves and their families through advocacy, eviction prevention, and flexible financial assistance. As the recipient of grant funds from the MN Office of Economic Opportunity, the federal Office on Violence against Women, the Minnesota Housing and Finance Agency, and the Pohlad Family Foundation, our program wraps victim-survivors in one year of support for rent and emergency needs. Beyond financial support, participants have access to Women's Advocates housing advocacy, domestic violence advocacy, children's advocacy and parenting support, and mental health therapy for up to two years.

**In the 2022-2023 Fiscal Year:
(Between July 1, 2022, and June
30, 2023)**

82 victim-survivors and **108** children, **190** people total, participated in the Housing Stability Program.

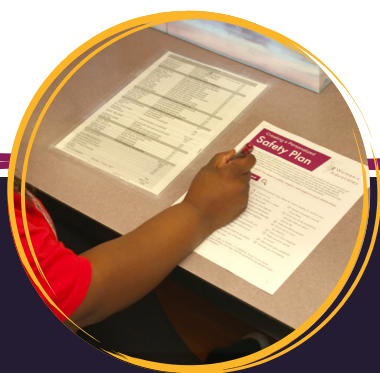
84% participating households maintained stable housing for 12 or more months.

Housing Stability Program expenses for the 2022-2023 Fiscal Year were \$370,306, comprising **11%** of organizational expenses.

Addressing *Mental Health*

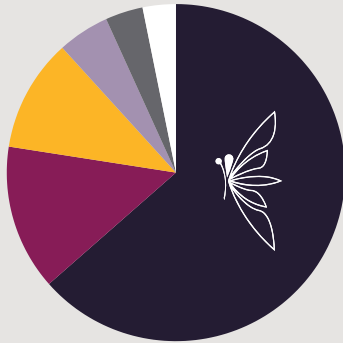
Victim-survivors transitioning from shelter to independence often face ongoing mental health challenges that are difficult to address with limited income, time, and resources. The confluence of high need, the large percentage of BIPOC residents we serve, and the lack of mental health care options for communities of color makes our Mental Health program an essential health equity strategy.

In April 2023, Women's Advocates hired a licensed Mental Health and Wellness Therapist to work specifically with victim-survivors in our Housing Stability program. Therapy sessions are strengths-based and focus on the victim-survivor's goals- whether that means processing recent trauma, learning to handle stress, or delving into childhood experiences that may be affecting their adult life.



Over 80% of our housing stability program participants identify as Black, Indigenous, and People of Color.

Racial demographics of residents in our Housing Stability Program:



- 63.51% Black, African American, African
- 13.96% Multiracial
- 10.81% White
- 4.95% American Indian/Indigenous/Alaska Native
- 3.60% Asian
- 3.17% Other/NA

In addition to this, 7.21% of our residents identify their ethnicity as Hispanic/Latinx.



On May 6th, 2023, Women's Advocates proudly hosted our first Break the Cycle event, a community bike ride and festival. We were overwhelmed by the turnout, reaffirming our gratitude for the unwavering support in our mission to break the cycle of domestic violence. We extend heartfelt thanks to our vendors and community partners for their invaluable contributions in making the festival such a fun day.



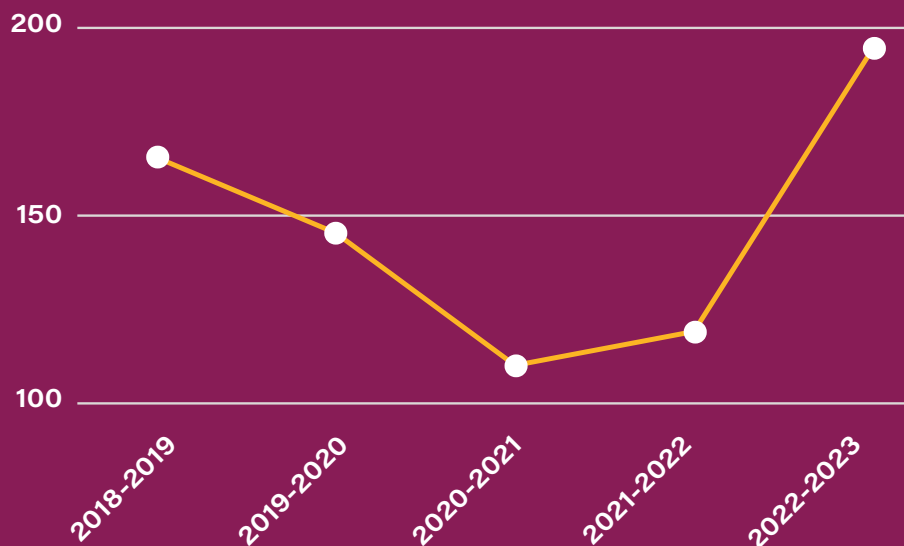
Sheila Wellstone Children's Program

The Child & Family Advocates who operate Women's Advocates' Sheila Wellstone Children's Program are compassionate and dedicated to supporting our youngest victim-survivors, whether in our shelter or our Housing Stability program. In shelter, our advocates provide drop-in childcare, tutoring support, special activities, and support to victim-survivors struggling with parenting after an experience of abuse. Families enrolled in Housing Stability programming also have access to support from the Children's Program in the form of home visits, school-based advocacy, connections to community resources, and emotional support for children during the transition from shelter to permanent housing. Through our Lean on Me campaign, we are working to expand these services and have been raising funds to enhance our support for children and youth in need.



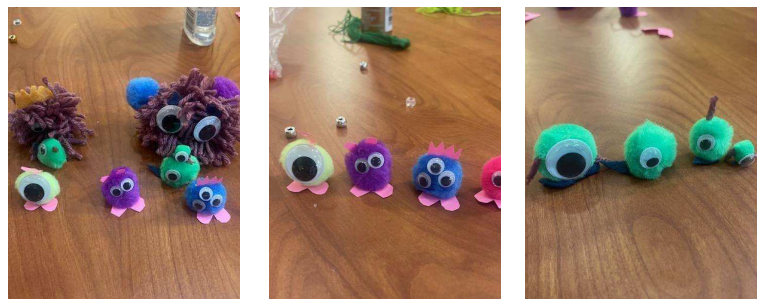
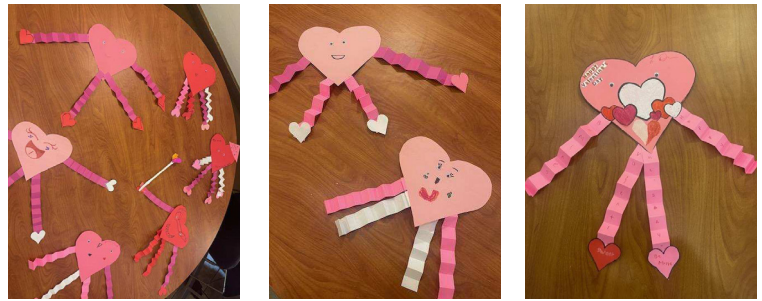
Number of Children Served

During the early years of the pandemic, spanning from 2019 to 2021, we observed a decrease in the number of children accessing our programs. This decline was attributed to the isolating nature of the pandemic, which made it increasingly challenging for victim-survivors to seek out resources and safety while confined at home with their abusers. However, as we progress through the pandemic, we are witnessing a notable increase in both children and youth seeking our services. The demand for youth-oriented support is now more critical than ever before.



Creating Moments of *Joy & Connection*

Advocates in our shelter have made a commitment to fostering moments of joy and connection for the victim-survivors and children who seek safety at our shelter. Advocates host a kid's activity in shelter every Tuesday evening. From vibrant art projects to singing and experimenting with instruments, children are invited to explore, create, and express themselves in a safe and supportive environment. What truly warms our hearts is when these evenings turn into interactions between a parent and their children. These precious moments not only enrich their bond but also help make their shelter experience a positive and comfortable one. Check out some of the children's artwork below:



**In the 2022-2023 Fiscal Year:
(Between July 1, 2022, and June 30, 2023)**

87 children ages 0 to 17 stayed at Women's Advocates' emergency shelter.

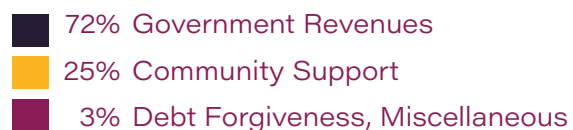
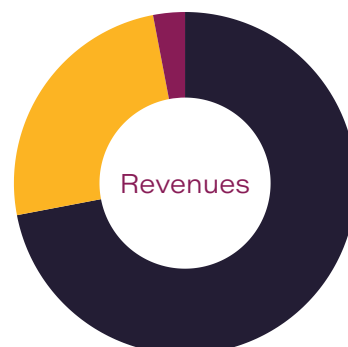
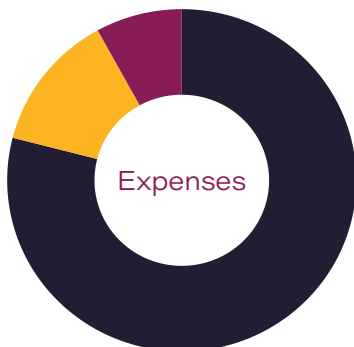
108 children enrolled in Women's Advocates Housing Stability program, marking the second year child-specific advocacy was available to children after they leave shelter.

Children's Program expenses for the 2022-2023 Fiscal Year were \$149,357, comprising 4% of organizational expenses.

Financial Report

2022-2023

Audited Financial Statements		2022-2023	2021-2022
Assets	Total Current Assets	\$2,651,720	\$2,796,119
	Net Property & Equipment	\$885,107	\$894,805
	Total Assets	\$3,536,827	\$3,690,924
Liabilities	Total Current Liabilities	\$264,701	\$201,187
	Long Term Debt	\$0	\$24,757
Net Assets	Net Assets: Undesignated	\$655,182	\$1,023,303
	Net Assets: Designated	\$2,356,184	\$2,356,184
	Net Assets: Temporarily Restricted	\$260,760	\$85,493
	Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$3,536,827	\$3,690,924
Revenue	Program Service Revenue	\$3,130,298	\$1,943,767
	Contributions	\$1,084,793	\$846,900
	Debt Forgiveness	\$25,584	\$25,584
	Interest & Miscellaneous	\$124,095	(\$106,245)
	Total Support & Revenue	\$4,364,770	\$2,710,006
Expenses	Programs & Services	\$3,589,305	\$2,541,492
	Management & General	\$602,248	\$462,149
	Fundraising	\$366,071	\$329,695
	Total Expenses	\$4,557,624	\$3,333,336
Change in Net Assets		(\$192,854)	(\$623,330)
Net Assets - Beginning of Year		\$3,464,980	\$4,088,310
Net Assets - End of Year		\$3,272,126	\$3,464,980

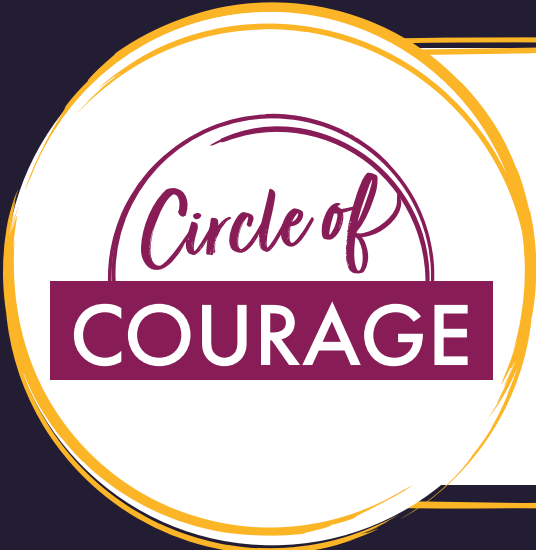


Thank you, 2022-2023 contributors!

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			Julie Anderson	Sandra K Fenton	Sandra K Fenton
			Katherine Anderson	Deborah Fineman and Richard Soule	Deborah Fineman and Richard Soule
				Debra Fisher	Debra Fisher
				Nick Fisher	Nick Fisher
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				Tony Flint	Tony Flint
				Appleblossom Flowers	Appleblossom Flowers
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				Sarah Foster	Sarah Foster
				Barry Foy and May Wu	Barry Foy and May Wu

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Thank you to members of the Circle of Courage!

Donors who give more than \$1000 each year make an unbelievable impact on our ability to break the cycle of domestic violence. You inspire us.

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Key staff members are on Women's Advocates' Support Team. Members in the 2022-2023 Fiscal Year:

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- Joan Countryman, Director of Shelter Advocacy Services
- Nikki Beasley, Director of Housing Stability
- Alison Canty, Director of Food and Facilities
- Roxy Walker, Manager of Shelter Advocacy
- Jake De Vera, Director of Development & Communications
- Stephanie Plaster, Director of Housing Stability

Our History



1971

A small group of women set out to meet the needs of women in crisis with a divorce rights booklet and a legal assistance line.



1972

Women's Advocates is incorporated as a nonprofit.



1973

Volunteers began sheltering women and children in their own homes.



1987

National Domestic Violence Awareness Month is observed for the first time.



1991

The third property is purchased. The three adjoining homes now shelter up to 50 victim-survivors and children.



1994

Congress passes the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) in response to increasing domestic violence.



2009

Women's Advocates initiates housing assistance for families leaving the shelter through the Rapid Re-Housing national effort.



2016

Women's Advocates expands its children's programming to support therapeutic interventions and safety planning.



2020

Women's Advocates stays strong through COVID-19 pandemic by temporarily moving shelter services into a hotel setting.



1974

On October 11, 1974, Women's Advocates opens as the first shelter in the nation for victim-survivors of domestic abuse.



1975

The neighboring property is purchased and Women's Advocates helps form the Consortium for Battered Women.



1978

Minnesota passed first-of-its-kind legislation that gave state funds to battered women's shelters.



1997

A group of Minnesota women launch the Silent Witness Initiative in memory of individuals who died as a result of domestic violence.



2003

The Junior League of Saint Paul introduces a model for volunteerism. By 2004, a record 472 volunteers helped at the shelter.



2007

The R.O.S.E. Aftercare Program was launched, and began advocacy services for families once they leave the shelter.



2021

Pop-Up Advocacy begins in the Saint Paul community.



2023

Our Pet Foster program begins to provide safety for victim-survivors and their dogs and cats.





www.wadvocates.org