

# The Sojourner Truth

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A NEWSLETTER FOR THE FRIENDS OF SOJOURNER

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### *Our Mission:*

*To provide safe shelter for women & children, advocacy and education for individuals and communities victimized by domestic violence.*

## From Fear to Hope

### A Success Story

By Kiessa Webster  
Sojourner Board Member, 2002-2008

I'm writing these words after finishing a laughter-filled meal with my family. It is a weekend of activities with friends and relatives, beautiful leaves, sunshine and a bit of gratifying work. Life is full.

If you just met me, you wouldn't know that this month marks nineteen years since my abuser was removed from my home in handcuffs and shackles. Gone. Over half my life ago. You wouldn't know how much life, and I, have changed.

Nearly two decades ago I was consumed and dominated by a bitterly volatile man. How I came to be broken, drained and fearful, a process that occurred unbeknownst to my closest family and friends, left us all feeling rattled and betrayed. The mind-bending, soul-bruising, family-consuming darkness descended.

The loss of my safety and security was immediate. The enduring fear of losing of my mind and heart quickly followed, and lingered. I bumped about, painfully raw, anxious and vulnerable, thinking I would never function normally again. I needed help to right my topsy-turvy world.

Luckily, I received it - from family, friends and professionals. My life became a rigid schedule of therapy and support groups. I was surrounded by people watching over this girl I was never expected to become. Healing is not a quick, linear affair. Rather, it is a messy, minute-by-minute fight to reorient one's self and recreate a life of safety, health and wholeness. Along the way, with hope, healing and support, wounds scab over, scabs become scars, and even those scars fade. What remains is strength and an enthusiastic focus on the future. I owe everything in my life to the support and services I received. Education. Marriage. Parenthood. Career. Volunteerism. Happiness.

In this season of joy and gratitude, I give thanks for Sojourner and its supporters who are helping to change the world, one person and one family at a time. It is a magnificent change indeed.

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**“Domestic violence causes far more pain than the visible marks of bruises and scars. It is devastating to be abused by someone that you love and think loves you in return. It is estimated that approximately 3 million incidents of domestic violence are reported each year in the United States.”**

*Dianne Feinstein, Senator*

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## Volunteer Spotlight

For the last six years, Wendy and Pookha have volunteered with Sojourner Project. Pookha is retiring as a therapy dog and we asked Wendy to share their story with us:

“Pookha joined my family when my daughter was going off to college and she took on the role as a “fill-in child” in a house with two adults who needed her! She is 13 years old and her name means “soft, furry companion” in Russian. She always has been a people lover. We took many obedience classes and tried agility for a while, but socializing with people was what she loved most. I had read about the animal-assisted therapy work and decided that I wanted to do volunteer work with her.

I wanted to take her to an environment that had children and was home-like. A friend of mine was on the board of Sojourner and I asked him if they had made use of animal therapy. We visited once a week, for about an hour in the afternoon when school age students would be back from school. That was six



years ago! Just think how many children and mothers she has met in her close to 300 visits!!

The visits varied as to who was at the shelter each week. Sometimes they would read with her, take her for walks within the shelter, play with her on the playground, snuggle while watching TV or playing video games, throw her a ball, give her treats, brush her, sink their faces in her soft fur and cry for a dog they missed, sit and pet her while chatting, adore her and look forward to seeing her next week! One woman crocheted her a beautiful blue scarf which she wears on her walks in the winter and gets lots of compliments on. A young teenager made her the wallpaper on her cell phone. Many children learned that this dog can be trusted and is not going to harm them.

Pookha has had a wonderful career that has taken me places I never would have gone otherwise. We work with children of all ages who have autism (preschool to high school), with school children who have cognitive and behavioral disabilities, with children who are in special education for reading anxiety, at the Hennepin County library’s program Paws to Read, and at Childrens Hospital with the therapists.

It has been such an honor to have been given the opportunity to share her “specialness” with the employees and visitors at Sojourner. Pookha knew her purpose and did her job well! As we wind down her career as a therapy dog, we will miss the Sojourner family.”

Wendy said that she was thankful to the staff for “letting us walk through the doors and for the education she received working with Sojourner” and we would like to thank Wendy and Pookha for sharing their time with the staff and clients of Sojourner. It was truly a gift and a pleasure.

## Thank You

We’ve begun compiling year end statistics about people served and the people who served and once again, we find ourselves overwhelmed with a spirit of gratitude for the generosity of this community. Looking around at Sojourner, the impact of our volunteer presence is so apparent. Whether it’s through a newly decorated room, designed to provide comfort to residents, a warm meal, a reassuring voice on the crisis and intervention lines, an organized donation space to serve residents effectively or the kind volunteer who gives of their time to let the children at Sojourner know they are cared for and supported, its so clear walking through the building that we couldn’t do what we do without you doing what you do. Thank you for a wonderful 2011, with you by our sides we are confident about great things to come in 2012!

***Volunteers are not paid because they have no value....but because their value is priceless.***

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## Girl's Support Group

Launched in the summer of 2009, the Girl's Support Group was designed to be a safe space where girls can come and talk about the effects of domestic violence on their lives. During meetings they address a wide range of topics including self-esteem, healthy relationships, divorce, feelings, stress and coping strategies. One of them members said that she appreciates how group "keeps everything from bubbling up." Another group member commented how it was "nice to have someone to listen" to her. Facilitators balance out the deeper topics by also featuring fun activities like crafts and games for the participants to enjoy. The mix of education, support, fun and fellowship make it a unique space for young girls where they can talk about sensitive issues in their lives, gain insight from other girls and hopefully come away with some tools that will benefit them in their current situations, stop the cycle of violence and prepare them well for the future.

*1 in 3 teenagers report knowing a friend or peer who has been hit, punched, kicked, slapped, choked or physically hurt by their partner.*  
*Liz Claiborne Research*

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## Sojourner's E-Newsletter

In an effort to be more green and efficient in our communication, Sojourner began an E-Newsletter in July. The E-Newsletter is a monthly email to our volunteers, donors and supporters that is intended to help people be informed about domestic violence issues and the latest news and needs at Sojourner. If you're interested in subscribing, please send an email to [info@sojournerproject.org](mailto:info@sojournerproject.org).



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## Sojourner Featured in Commercial

This fall, Sojourner partnered with KSTP and ICC Wireless for a cell phone collection campaign. It was a great opportunity to raise awareness about Sojourner Project and the way that cell phone donations help promote the safety of domestic violence victims and survivors. If you haven't seen the campaign spot, its available to view on our website at [www.sojournerproject.org](http://www.sojournerproject.org).



Sojourner's Holiday Appeal letter is on the way. Your gift this season will help ensure that we are able to continue to provide critical services to victims of domestic violence and abuse.

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# Holiday Wishlist

The holiday season can be an especially difficult time for the families in our program. Thanks to your generosity and support Sojourner hosts a holiday boutique for our residents and clients. Your gifts help provide joy and reassurance of better days to come and we are thankful for your generosity and support. If you have questions about holiday donations please contact our Program Support Coordinator at 952-351-4062 or [info@sojournerproject.org](mailto:info@sojournerproject.org)

## Women's Gift Ideas

Robes, Nightgowns and Pajamas  
(including large & plus sizes)  
Sweatpants, Sweatshirts  
(incl. large & plus sizes)  
Gloves, Mittens and Scarves  
Bath and Beauty Products  
Disposable Cameras  
Local Salon and Spa gift certificates  
Alarm Clocks  
Fashion Jewelry and Watches  
Purses, pocketbooks and Wallets  
Datebooks and Day Planners  
Small gift cards (\$15-25) for:  
- Target -K-Mart - Gas Stations  
- Cub Foods and other grocery stores

## Baby and Children's

Diapers and Pull Ups (esp. sizes: 3, 4 & 5)  
See & Say Toys  
Push-pull Toys  
Talking Books  
Musical Toys  
Multicultural Dolls  
Art/Craft Sets  
Model, Construction and Science kits  
Educational Toys (Leap Frog, etc)  
Board Games  
Computer Games for Kids (non-violent)  
Children's Non-violent DVD's  
Handheld Electronic Games  
Sports Equipment (including balls)

## Teen Gift Ideas

Teen's Non-violent DVD's  
MP3 Players and CD Players  
Sports Jerseys and Baseball Caps  
Journals  
Teen Apparel  
(all sizes especially large)  
Gym Bags  
Wallets and Purses  
Fashion Jewelry and Watches  
Makeup and Nail Kits  
Bath and Body Kits  
Small gift cards (\$15-25) for:  
-American Eagle -Target  
-Best Buy -Old Navy

## Daily Shelter Needs

Twin Bed Linens, Blankets & Pillows  
Paper Products  
(kleenex, paper towels,  
paper plates & cups.)  
Lip Balm  
Deodorant  
Hand Sanitizer  
Cleaning Supplies  
(Floor cleaners, Clorox wipes,  
multi-purpose cleaning liquids)  
Towels and Wash Cloths  
Women's Socks and Underwear  
(all sizes)  
Slippers  
Bulk Sized Non-Perishable  
Healthy Snacks  
(fruit snacks, granola bars,  
juice boxes, etc)  
Bus/Transit Passes

**"For it is in giving that we receive." - Francis of Assisi**

**If you would like to receive future newsletters and communications by email or if you would like to be removed from our mailing list, please contact the Program Support Coordinator at 952-351-4062.**



RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED  
www.sojournerproject.org  
952-933-7433  
24-Hour Crisis Line: 952-933-7422  
P.O. Box 272, Hopkins, MN 55343



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