

The Sojourner Truth

A NEWSLETTER FOR THE FRIENDS OF SOJOURNER

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Sojourner's 2022 Board of Directors

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 Shelley Weier



- Advocates for victim safety;
- Supports the transition from victim to survivor;
- Educates for the prevention and elimination of domestic violence.

Putting the Pieces Back Together: Audrey's Story

With great courage, Audrey made the decision to come to Sojourner Shelter, bringing only her child, the belongings she could carry and hope for change. Audrey arrived overwhelmed and fearful following the control and abuse she had experienced. The father of her child had been physically abusive and when Audrey witnessed him harshly shove her small child, she knew she needed to leave for good this time. Right away, Sojourner advocates began to safety plan, offer emotional support and connect Audrey to the resources she needed to move forward, such as:

- **Basic needs:** food, clothing, personal care items and a car seat
- **Legal advocacy:** advocates prepared and filed an Order for Protection at her request, found a pro bono attorney and accompanied her to court
- **Safe at Home Program:** a way to keep her home address confidential
- **Mental health support:** staff helped Audrey access therapy services
- **Dental care:** advocates helped find her a dentist and provided transportation
- **Economic support:** outstanding bills were causing stress so we helped her apply for a small grant to pay them off
- **Housing:** advocates referred her to a program that provides a temporary rent subsidy while participants pursue full-time employment

Audrey was incredibly motivated and utilized the supports offered to increase her safety and stabilize her life. Before leaving the shelter, Audrey shared:

“It was such a relief knowing that we were protected and that he couldn't get to us. What made a difference is people who care, reminding me I could do it. That has helped me get my confidence back. Everyone went above and beyond. All my problems were like little puzzle pieces and everyone had their role in helping to put all the pieces together. We weren't just provided a room. You provided a home for us while we were here.”



Stories like Audrey's exemplify what is possible here at Sojourner. It is because of the support of our community, the hard work of our advocates and the courage and resilience of survivors that change like this is possible. Thank you for being a part of the journey from fear to hope!

Sojourner Staff and Board

Intervention: An Opportunity for Change

One of Sojourner's most important services is our Intervention program. Started in partnership with the Hopkins Police in 1982, the initial premise of the program was to provide a community response when the police were called to a home because of domestic abuse.

After forty years, nine police departments, including Minnetonka, Wayzata, South Lake Minnetonka, Orono, Minnetrista, Deephaven, Golden Valley, and Eden Prairie, now have formal agreements for their officers to call Sojourner when they respond to the scene of a domestic assault.

Via our crisis line, Sojourner receives information about the victim, the abuser, and the incident from the officer any time, day or night. Then either staff or trained volunteers reach out to the victim right away. This early contact alleviates the stress a victim may be feeling not knowing what options are available to them, not understanding what will happen after their partner or family member is arrested, and often feeling isolated and alone. We not only offer access to our shelter and legal advocacy services, but much needed support and a listening ear about the abuse they have been experiencing. On weekends, volunteers pass on information they obtain from victims to Sojourner advocates



who then continue working with those victims through a criminal court process that can last anywhere from six months to two years. This early intervention is an opportunity to interrupt the abuse that is occurring and make a change, as most victims report a history of abuse prior to the police being called.

After an abuser is arrested, they appear in criminal court. Sojourner advocates give judges information about the victims' needs for safety and often judges issue Domestic Abuse No Contact Orders (DANCOS) to keep the abuser away from the victim's home, workplace, and school, and require the abuser to have no contact with the victim. A DANCO gives the police the ability to arrest an abuser for a new crime if they violate the no contact requirement. Protective orders

can be an effective tool in curbing further abuse that sometimes occurs after a domestic assault arrest. Sojourner's Intervention program has helped thousands of victims, who may never have reached out for help, to seek safety. Over the years, hundreds of volunteers have given their time, expertise and compassion for domestic abuse victims. Their commitment has had a significant impact on the success of this program.

Recognize, Respond, Refer: Preparing Professionals for Action

Domestic violence often isolates survivors from the community, making getting help difficult.

Community partners who know how to identify and respond to domestic violence are essential to our ability to reach potential clients. To meet this need, outreach and education staff offer trainings to a wide range of professionals, including healthcare providers, social service staff and educational personnel.

Trainings usually include:

- **What to look for?** Warning signs domestic violence is present.
 - **How to respond?** Deciding what to say when someone shares their experience of abuse.
 - **How to help?** Knowing what services are available to victims and making "warm" referrals.
- A warm referral is done in partnership with a survivor, like offering to call the crisis line together, as opposed to simply handing someone the phone number. Many professionals we train have long-standing relationships with clients, making their endorsement of Sojourner powerful and impactful.

Whenever possible, trainings are interactive and we are happy to work with highly engaged and curious groups. A favorite activity is often In Her Shoes, an experiential simulation in which participants get to think, act and make choices as a person experiencing an abusive relationship. Trainees build empathy, understand the challenges survivors are navigating and learn how the community can help or hinder the journey to safety.

Do you work in any of the below fields and want to learn more? If so, contact Becca@sojournerproject.org or **952-351-4062** to schedule a free professional training at your work place.

What fields could benefit from domestic violence training?

- | | |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| ✓ Healthcare | ✓ First responders |
| ✓ Dentistry | ✓ Rental property management |
| ✓ Social work/mental health care | ✓ Child/youth services |
| ✓ Veterinary care | ✓ Human resources |
| ✓ Hair styling/cosmetology | ✓ School personnel |

Thank you!

A heartfelt thank you to all our donors, volunteers and supporters. Because of your generosity, Sojourner has helped thousands of survivors as they seek to better their lives. Our community is safer and stronger because of you. **We are grateful!**



◀ Assistance League members putting together welcome bags

Intern Jessica ▶
answering the crisis line



Bingo night at the shelter ▶

Bingo night prizes! ▶

Volunteers gather after
a training with staff ▼



▲ Minneapolis Area Realtors Foundation presenting a check to staff



◀ Staff tabling at
James J. Hill days

▼ Tabling supplies



*Correction: In the previous newsletter, board director Shelley Weier was mistakenly described as an ER physician. Dr. Weier is a Hospitalist and Internist by training. Please also note the spelling correction to her last name.



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952-933-7433
24-Hour Crisis Line: 952-933-7422
www.sojournerproject.org

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Please watch for Sojourner's **Holiday Appeal Letter** in the next few weeks.

Your gift this season will help provide critical services for those victimized by domestic and sexual violence.

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 Outreach and Education Coordinator at 952-351-4062.

Please visit our website at www.sojournerproject.org for a more detailed list and links to our Amazon and Target wishlists.

Gift Ideas		
Women's Gift Ideas:	Children's Gift Ideas:	Teen Gift Ideas:
Fuzzy Socks/Slippers	Infant/Toddler Toys	Stylish Hoodies and Sweatpants
Pajamas	Art/Craft/Science Kits	Pajamas and Slippers
Scarf/Mitten/Hat Sets	Lego Sets	Wallets and Purses
Journals	Toy Household Appliances/Toy Tools	Nail Kits and Body Spray
Lotion/Body Wash Sets	Family Board Games	Full-size Footballs, Soccer balls and Basketball
Fleece Blankets (twin/full)	Small Footballs, Soccer balls and Basketballs	Bluetooth Speakers
Gift Cards (\$25-50) for:	Pajamas, Sweatpants/Hoodies	Fleece Blankets (twin)
- Target	Multicultural Books	Teen Gift Cards
- Cub Foods	Fleece Blankets (twin)	(\$20, Target/fast food)

We are thrilled for the Holiday Boutique to return to it's traditional in-person format, after two years of curbside pick-ups and home drop-offs due to the pandemic. Our boardroom will transform once again into a free shopping experience where parents pick out gifts for their children. Gift cards and self-care items are given to the adults, in recognition of the particularly difficult time the Holiday season can be for our clients. You, our generous community, donate 100% of the boutique gift cards and items. We are always amazed! Below are some suggested gift ideas.

Gifts will be accepted November 28th - December 9th, through appointment only. For questions or appointments, please contact Courtney at 952-351-4066 or Courtney@sojournerproject.org. Thank you!



Holiday Boutique...

Back in Person!