Fall 2025

The Sojourner Truth

A NEWSLETTER FOR THE FRIENDS OF SOJOURNER

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Sojourner
SUPPORTING THE JOURNEY FROM FEAR TO HOPE

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

Finding Stability After Fear: Two Journeys of Resilience

For many survivors of domestic violence, the greatest barrier to safety is not just escaping abuse—it's finding stable housing. While most people stay in Sojourner's shelter for 30–60 days, some survivors need several months to bridge the gap between crisis and stability.



Two recent residents illustrate just how complex and courageous that journey can be.

A young woman in her 20s came to Sojourner after her temporary housing situation collapsed and her former partner continued to harass her. She had been staying in a youth transitional program, but when the situation there became unsafe, she suddenly had no place to turn. With little family support and limited resources, she arrived at Sojourner unsure of what her next steps could be.

Her stay stretched over several months as a housing plan that had been set up fell through. But with help from her advocate, she eventually secured her own apartment through a supportive housing program. During her time at Sojourner, she also found steadier employment, set clearer boundaries with family members, and began building the foundation for a safe and independent life.

Another young woman in her 20s came to Sojourner with her toddler after a dangerous encounter with a former partner left them both unsafe. With guidance from her advocate, she took brave steps to protect her family, filing for an Order for Protection and enrolling in Minnesota's Safe at Home confidentiality program to safeguard their privacy.

Finding stable housing was not easy, applications fell through, and waiting lists were long, but with persistence and support, she kept at it. She ultimately secured transitional housing where she can stay up to two years as she regains her footing. While at Sojourner, she celebrated her daughter's second birthday.

Both women showed extraordinary determination to create safer, stronger lives. Their stories remind us that young women often face unique challenges in finding stability. Without the community's support, many would be left without safe options when they age out of young adult shelters or when housing applications collapse at the last minute.

Because of you, Sojourner can provide more than shelter. We walk beside survivors for as long as it takes—supporting them as they secure housing, strengthen their families, and take courageous steps from fear to hope.

Community Champions: Businesses Making a Difference

It takes a whole community to create safety and hope for survivors of domestic violence. That's why we are so grateful for the many ways businesses, large and small, step up to support our mission. From hosting fundraising events to rolling up their sleeves as volunteers, corporate partners play a vital role in ensuring survivors and their children have safe shelter, compassionate services, and the resources they need to heal. This year, we're especially excited to share two inspiring examples of partnership.

Lowe's Hometowns: Building a Safer Future

Sojourner is honored to be selected as one of only 100 **Lowe's Hometowns projects** nationwide, receiving a grant for $195,000. Through this incredible program, Lowe's is investing in large-scale renovations that strengthen the "heartbeats" of communities across the country. Thanks to this generous grant, essential updates to our shelter are well underway. So far, we've replaced both roofs, installed new gutters and downspouts, and repaired damaged cement. Diseased trees have been removed, gardens opened up, and new landscaping completed. We're excited to start a major laundry room upgrade soon. These improvements are more than bricks and mortar. They ensure survivors have a safe, dignified, and welcoming space where healing can begin.





The Bernard Group: Golfing for Good

On July 31, **The Bernard Group** and **Smartpress** hosted their seventh annual charity golf tournament, raising funds for three local nonprofits, including Sojourner. The day brought together employees, clients, and community members for a spirited round of golf, followed by a dinner program highlighting the impact of their generosity. For Sojourner, the event meant more than just financial support; it was a powerful reminder of how local businesses can rally their networks to create lasting change. "When a business like The Bernard Group invests in nonprofits, the ripple effect is powerful," said Development Director Becca Welna. "Their leadership shows what's possible when businesses use their influence to lift up others."



Many Ways to Partner

Beyond these large-scale efforts, countless businesses find creative ways to support Sojourner. Some, like **U.S. Bank** and **Winnebago**, volunteer as groups. Others host donation drives, sponsor events, or dedicate a day of sales to Sojourner—just as **LTD Brewing** did through their Give Back Monday. Local partners like **Driskill's Downtown Market** and **Boba Tonka** have also raised funds through "round-up" programs at checkout. Event sponsorships provide another meaningful way for companies to underwrite the costs of our fundraisers while amplifying our reach. Every effort, big or small, helps sustain Sojourner's work. Together, these partnerships create a lasting impact: safer families, stronger communities, and a brighter future.



Get Involved

Wondering how your workplace can join in? Here are a few ideas:

- Nominate Sojourner for your company's giving or volunteer program
- Invite colleagues to one of our fundraising events
- Share our impact stories on LinkedIn
- Ask if your employer matches donations or volunteer hours

With your partnership, we can continue building a community where survivors are valued, supported, and never alone.

Interested in getting involved? Reach out to us at **info@sojournerproject.org** to learn how you can make a difference.

Honoring the Legacy of Helen & Shelley at Sojourner

We are deeply saddened by the passing of Helen Chargo, Sojourner's former Executive Director, and Dr. Shelley Weier, former Board Chair. We pause to remember these extraordinary women, whose dedication, kindness, and courage left a lasting mark on our mission and all who knew them.

Remembering Helen



Helen's leadership transformed Sojourner. She was driven to ensure victims of domestic violence in the western suburbs had a strong, supportive organization to turn to. Her vision and dedication shaped the foundation we build on today.

"Her leadership and devoted advocacy transformed lives and significantly strengthened our mission. I am especially grateful for her dedication to establishing financial security, which has ensured the organization's long-term sustainability and impact."

-Laura, Sojourner Executive Director

Remembering Shelley



Shelley brought energy, heart, and generosity to every role she held. She connected deeply with people, guided the Board with wisdom and grace, and championed survivors with unwavering determination.

"I saw her show up to every board meeting right up until the end with the same vitality and passion as the day I met her. Her strength in the face of adversity was truly inspiring- much like the clientele Sojourner serves."

– Sarah, Sojourner Board Member

Helen and Shelley's legacies live on in the work we do every day. Their strength and vision continue to guide Sojourner as we create safety, hope, and support for survivors. Read more reflections from their colleagues on our blog www.sojournerproject.org/post/honoring-the-legacy-of-helen-and-shelley

Media Framing Matters

Toraya Reid, 28, was remembered by her family as protective and loving. On September 6, she was killed by her partner in an act of domestic violence.

Much of the news coverage focused on her connection to her brother, MN Timberwolves player Naz Reid, reducing her to "the sister of" instead of honoring her as a woman whose life, dreams, and relationships mattered. Too often, stories highlight sensational details like how many shots were fired or who the victim was related to, while leaving out the real issue: domestic violence.

How media frames these tragedies shapes how we understand them. Without naming domestic violence, readers may walk away thinking these deaths are random, instead of what they are, preventable outcomes of abuse rooted in power and control.

Reporting that names the abuse, respects the survivor, and offers help can do more than inform; it can become a tool for change and safety.

At Sojourner, we believe every story deserves this context. Toraya's life mattered. By insisting on accurate, survivor-centered coverage, we honor her memory and help create a future where fewer families experience this kind of loss.

5 Questions to Ask About Domestic Violence Coverage

1. **Does the story name domestic violence?**
   – Or does it describe the incident as an isolated "shooting" or "crime of passion"?
2. **Is it victim centered?**
   – Is his/her name used? Is s/he described as her own person, or only in relation to others (e.g. "somebody's sister or brother")?
3. **Does the coverage avoid sensationalism?**
   – Are details like number of gunshots emphasized more than the systemic issue of abuse?
4. **Are resources included?**
   – Does the article provide crisis line numbers, shelters, or other ways for survivors to seek help?
5. **Does the story connect to the bigger picture?**
   – Is this framed as part of the broader issue of domestic violence that affects families and communities everywhere?

Your voice can shift the narrative. By asking questions and sharing resources, your help ensures victims are seen, supported, and protected. Together, we can change the way these stories are told and save lives.

Sojourner
SUPPORTING THE JOURNEY FROM FEAR TO HOPE

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

Return Service Requested

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U.S. Postage
PAID
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Hopkins, MN 55343

Charities Review Council MEETS STANDARDS smartgivers.org

Stay Connected

Follow us on **Instagram** (@sojournermn), **Facebook** (@sojournerproject1), and **LinkedIn** (@sojourner) for regular updates. Help is available 24/7 via our **Crisis Line** at 952-933-7422.

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 Manager at 952-351-4062.

Holiday Boutique
Spread the Cheer!

The holidays can be especially hard for families in crisis, but together we can make the season brighter. Each year, your generosity brings joy and hope through Sojourner's Holiday Boutique, easing burdens so families can heal while still experiencing the magic of the season.

This year, you can share that same light—reminding children they're not alone, giving caregivers comfort, and creating memories that last. Below are this year's most-needed gifts and ways to give. Whether you donate items, gift cards, or financial support, your kindness helps families celebrate the season and carry hope into the year ahead.

How you can get involved:

- **Shop directly from our Amazon or Target wish lists** to make giving simple and direct.
- **Make it a family tradition** in choosing gifts, involving your kids or grandkids.
- **Organize a collection drive** with your workplace, faith community, or neighborhood group to collect gifts, gift cards, or financial contributions.
- **Volunteer as a small group** to help with Holiday Boutique setup and operations.

Visit our website at www.sojournerproject.org for a more detailed list and links to our registries.

Gifts will be accepted December 1-12, by appointment only.
Please contact **Abigail@ sojournerproject.org** or call **952-351-4066**.

Thank you for helping create joyful memories and hope for the year ahead!

Women's Gift Ideas

Fuzzy Socks/Slippers
Pajamas
Journals
Lotion/Body Wash Sets
Fleece Blankets (Twin/Full)
Gift Cards for: Target, Gas Stations, Grocery Stores

Children's Gift Ideas

Infant/Toddler Toys
Art/Craft/Science Kits
Lego Sets
Family Board Games
Pajamas, Sweatpants, Hoodies
Multicultural Books
Fleece Blankets

Teen Gift Ideas

Stylish Hoodies and Sweatpants
Slide on Sandals/Crocs
Bluetooth Speakers and Wireless Headphones
Gaming Electronics
Pajamas and Slippers
Nail Kits/Face Masks/Hair Clips
Cozy Blankets
Teen Gift Cards (Fast Food/Target)