

# The Sojourner Truth

A NEWSLETTER FOR THE FRIENDS OF SOJOURNER

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## Sojourner's 2021 Board of Directors

Mary Carter  
 Helen Chargo  
 Rita Dornbusch  
 Andy Gardner  
 Linda Gardner  
 Jo Hoo  
 Vicki McGinty  
 Mike Murphy  
 George Singer  
 Jeff Smith  
 Joan Trowbridge



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

## Thank you Helen

### Helen's Legacy

Sojourner and the community it serves have been blessed for the past two decades to have a leader who has dedicated her life to helping others. Today, we announce the retirement of our Executive Director, Helen Chargo. Helen will be missed beyond measure, but she has left behind a tremendous legacy. That legacy includes not only the leadership and vision that has provided a solid foundation for the future, but also a capable staff of individuals that she has mentored who are all committed to the mission of the organization. Helen has provided aid to many individuals and families who have struggled in life and departs Sojourner with the appreciation of the community she served. She has made the world a better place. We are privileged to have served with Helen and to be able to call her a friend. To that end, she is committed to providing assistance that ensures the smooth transition of leadership for Sojourner. We wish her all the best in the next chapter of her life.

*With gratitude,  
 the Board of Directors*

### Helen's Farewell

#### **To the Board, Staff, Friends, and Supporters of Sojourner:**

It has been my pleasure to serve as Executive Director of Sojourner. What a great journey it has been! I have met and worked with so many wonderful people. For over 19 years, I have witnessed first-hand the generosity of Sojourner's supporters, the dedication of our board and staff, and the courage and determination of those we serve. I am honored to have been a part of the important work of this organization and its mission. I leave with my heart filled with gratitude for all this experience has brought to my life, and I wish you every success in the future.

*Helen*



## Holiday Appeal

**Please watch for Sojourner's Holiday Appeal Letter in the next week!**

Your generous gift this season will help provide critical support to those victimized by domestic violence and sexual assault.

## A Surprising Benefit of COVID: Court via Zoom

About a year ago, court hearings that Sojourner advocates regularly attend in Hennepin County began occurring by Zoom to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Initially, it was a challenge to communicate with prosecutors and judges and the opportunity to connect with victims was reduced. Thankfully court staff improved the process for advocates to give input on behalf of victims. They set up break out rooms with prosecutors, and judges became accustomed to asking for advocate input. Advocates also felt more comfortable speaking up when necessary.

In the early days of attending hearings for Protective Orders over Zoom, numerous glitches added stress for victims. Long wait times, incorrect information and requirements such as providing abusers with private witness

information, created greater anxiety and fear. Advocates found that it was challenging to support and assist victims from separate locations. It also appeared that judges' ability to assess a victim's experience and credibility was compromised by not seeing and hearing them in person. In order to better assist victims, advocates took steps to either have clients come to our office for the hearing, or if the client could not come to our office, the advocate would go to the client's home. Advocates also spent more time preparing clients and considered additional witnesses and evidence to increase the likelihood that the Protective Order would be granted.

Despite the negative aspects of virtual hearings, there are some unexpected benefits. Victims can attend criminal court hearings anonymously without

the abuser's knowledge and they can give victim impact statements without having to face the abuser. Less money spent for parking and less work time missed are also positive aspects of virtual hearings. Protective Order hearings are spread out and victims do not have to wait long to appear before a judge. Zoom hearings have allowed advocates greater flexibility to attend hearings in different locations; giving advocates more time to spend with survivors; and increasing opportunities for advocates to provide safety information quickly. Overall, Zoom hearings have had more advantages than disadvantages for victims of domestic violence. Hopefully the Court will continue to use Zoom hearings in some capacity after the pandemic is over.

## Shelter Refresh

We value keeping our shelter spaces and rooms updated and organized in order to create an environment that feels safe and welcoming. See what we did this past year at the shelter.



Freshly painted children's room, with new wall décor and interactive toys



All shelter bedrooms were professionally painted in peaceful and warm colors



New and relaxing couches in the women's room



New, comfy furniture where families can relax, play and watch T.V.

## Shelter Life during the Pandemic

**Sojourner chose to keep operating the shelter during the pandemic but, at a reduced capacity.** The shelter team acted quickly to put safety measures in place to prevent the spread of disease. Extra cleaning procedures were implemented and staff monitored themselves daily for fever and other symptoms. Residents were screened for COVID-19 before entering the shelter and those who were positive for COVID-19 or had symptoms were placed in isolation spaces in a hotel reserved for this purpose. The hotel space was staffed with victim and shelter advocates who worked in conjunction with hotel advocates to serve families.

Our living areas were closed except for the dining room and residents staggered the times they took their meals in the dining room. During some of the worst times, residents were served meals in their bedrooms. Needing

to limit the number of people entering the shelter building, we have temporarily suspended group programming and shelter volunteers. Concerned that these changes increased isolation and feelings of loneliness for women and families, advocates met with residents over the phone, outdoors or in large living areas where social distancing could be maintained.

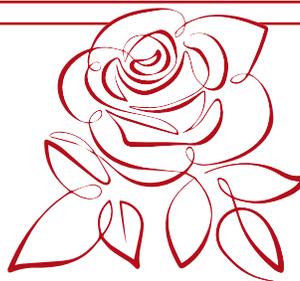
Advocates worked diligently to determine what services were available during the pandemic and how to access them. Some services were only available remotely and advocates assisted women in accessing these services. Stimulus money and other assistance dollars were instrumental in helping some women stabilize financially and secure safe permanent housing. Many women and families are still waiting for affordable housing options to become available.

When fleeing a domestic violence situation important papers can be left behind but are needed to qualify for some housing programs. With government offices closed at the beginning of the pandemic, clients had to wait longer for replacement documents to arrive in the mail, which resulted in losing their place in line for housing assistance. This among other challenges mean women have been staying in the shelter longer. During these extended shelter stays, some women have worked on such things as getting their driver's license, continuing their education, saving to buy a car and stabilizing their health conditions. We have witnessed the resiliency and determination of survivors during these difficult and sometimes chaotic times. Advocates and survivors eagerly look forward to having group programming and volunteering resume as soon as safely possible.

### IN MEMORY

#### Barbara Rogers

We at Sojourner, mourn the loss of Barbara Rogers, a valued co-worker, friend, and advocate. Barbara worked at Sojourner for almost 10 years, bringing hope to hundreds and hundreds of women residing in our shelter. They felt her support and benefited from her wisdom long after they left shelter. She was a treasure trove of knowledge and experience, and those of us who worked with her, felt enriched everyday by her presence.



amazon  
wishlist

Visit our Amazon registry by going to **SojournerProject.org** and scroll down to be directed to the wishlist.



Visit our Target registry by going to Registry and choose "Search for an organization". Find us by Sojourner/Minnesota.



Follow Sojourner on Facebook.  
Type in the link below to go directly to our page. **Facebook.com/sojournerproject1**



Follow us on Instagram (**sojournermn**) and 're-share' how victims can access free and confidential services with your networks.



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

Return Service Requested

Nonprofit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Permit # 719  
Hopkins, MN 55343



**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.**

- Children/Teens Gift Ideas**
- Infant/Toddler Toys
  - Fleece Blankets (twin and full)
  - Pajamas (all sizes)
  - Hoodies (all sizes)
  - Scarf/Mitten/Hat sets
  - Teen Gift cards (\$20) for:
    - Target
    - Fast Food
- Women's Gift Ideas**
- Fuzzy Socks
  - Pajamas
  - Scarf/Mitten/Hat sets
  - Journals
  - Lotion/Body Wash Sets
  - Gift cards (\$25-50) for:
    - Target
    - Gas Stations
    - Cub Foods

**If you would also like to donate a gift,** here are some suggestions for this year's Holiday Boutique. Please visit our website at [www.sojournerproject.org](http://www.sojournerproject.org) for more information and links to our Amazon and Target registries. Thank you for helping make the winter season special for our clients.

**Gifts will be accepted November 29–December 10,** through appointment only. If you have questions about holiday donations please contact **Becca at 952-351-4067** or [becca@sojournerproject.org](mailto:becca@sojournerproject.org).

While Sojourner's focus remains on safe shelter, advocacy and personal safety education, we recognize that tangible resources also have an impact on the safety and well-being of our clients. Whether or not a survivor has access to the resources they need can contribute to their ability to safely and sustainably leave an abusive relationship. With the continued challenges of the last year and the rising cost of rent, gas, food and supplies, we are primarily asking for gift cards, which clients can use for their most pressing needs. **We are specifically requesting Target, Cub and Gas cards** in \$25 increments (of course, any amount is appreciated!).

**The Holiday Season is quickly approaching!** After much consideration, we have decided to host our Holiday Boutique in the same fashion as last year. Advocates will interview each family over the phone to determine their needs and put together gifts for curbside pickup or delivery. We look forward to when we can have our families back in person again but are proud to find creative ways to provide support during the Holiday season in the meantime.

We are so grateful for your support and compassion.

