

The Sojourner Truth

A NEWSLETTER FOR THE FRIENDS OF SOJOURNER

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Unwavering Commitment *to Clients and Community*

This year has been incredibly challenging. We have all experienced the emotional rollercoaster resulting from COVID. At times, all of us have felt fearful, isolated, and discouraged but laced through our lives are people and stories that open our hearts and minds to possibilities and hopefulness.

Our current environment may feel unstable and not be totally within our control, but HOPE is a powerful stabilizer. At Sojourner we are privileged every day to witness what hope can do to inspire courage and determination. We see it in our clients who work hard and overcome many barriers to achieve safer and more hopeful lives. Their strength is an inspiration to all who work here.

For victims of domestic violence, the impact of this crisis has been uniquely harsh. Seeking safety from an abusive relationship is always difficult, but finding a safe refuge during this time has been harder than ever due to a shortage of shelter beds resulting from social distancing guidelines.

Advocates also have observed a heightened level of challenges for their clients due to financial stressors, higher levels of isolation, reduced court services and community resources which increase complexity of cases and the need for support. Deemed essential workers, Sojourner staff have remained committed to the increased safety of our clients, providing comprehensive services and support, despite all the barriers and COVID chaos. Throughout all, they have been there to support the journey from fear to hope.

Our spirits are lifted everyday as well by our friends and supporters, who encourage our work through their steadfast commitment. They continue to remind us that working together, we can overcome the devastating results of domestic violence and sexual abuse.

Please know how grateful we are for you!
We wish you a safe, healthy and happy Holiday Season.



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

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.

Holiday Gifting in the COVID-19 Era

Despite the many challenges presented by COVID-19, we are still looking forward to our holiday gifting season! The format of this year's Holiday Boutique will be adapted to reflect social distancing requirements but families will still receive gifts. Advocates will talk with clients to determine their needs and then put together gift packages for curbside pickup or delivery. In adapting to this new system, we have simplified our suggested gifts to ease the time and complexity of putting together the many different gift bags. We are also hopeful to provide each family with gift cards to Target and/or Cub, acknowledging the need for food and household items may be higher this year. Learn more about suggested gifts by reading our wish list on the

back of this newsletter or by visiting www.sojournerproject.org.

Donations can be made in person via appointment or mailed to Sojourner via our Amazon and Target registries. Financial donations which help us all year round, can be made by mail, phone or through our website.

Donation appointments will be made November 30th - December 11th and links to the registries can be found on our website. If you have questions or to set up an appointment, please contact **Becca** at **952-351-4067** or becca@sojournerproject.org. Each year, the boutique is a bright light during the winter for the families we serve. Thank you for sharing the joys of the holiday season. We are continually amazed by the generosity of our community!



Yvonne's Place

Yvonne Nimbar was Sojourner's longest working advocate when she retired in October 2017, after 31 years of service to women and children victimized by domestic violence. An excellent legal advocate, she was highly respected for her knowledge and experience. Over time as an advocate, she mentored and trained many women who wanted to work and excel in the field as advocates. She worked mainly with clients in family and civil court; assisting victims in obtaining protective orders and supporting survivors through very difficult custody and divorce cases and child protection proceedings. Yvonne helped thousands find greater safety and increased stability.

For over twenty years, Yvonne also facilitated a weekly support group

for victims and was passionate and deeply committed to helping participants transition from victim to survivor. Yvonne worked tirelessly to create a group environment in which victims felt safe to share their experiences. As survivors, women were able to move beyond the trauma of their abuse to find greater self-confidence and take back control of their lives. She provided her group members with a combination of vital information about domestic violence and the tactics used by an abuser to control and manipulate their victims. Her quiet, gentle manner and respectful approach encouraged trust and healing for too many to count. She continues to be sadly missed.

To honor Yvonne's legacy, Sojourner named our support group room



"Yvonne's Place." We hope that this memorial to Yvonne will inspire survivors and facilitators, as they use this room to transform lives in the years to come. Yvonne will be remembered and appreciated for her many contributions to Sojourner and to combating the destructive effects of domestic abuse on victims in our community.

Combating Isolation via Support Group

When COVID-19 first occurred, Sojourner put its' community support group on hold for the safety of everyone. However, advocates recognized that those who participated in group needed a space to talk, learn, understand the impact of trauma and process their experiences. During the stay at home order, advocates created informational and interactive power points to provide important information about abuse and domestic violence. Participants also had the option to check in with an advocate for support.

After several months, participants were asked for their feedback on the modified, digital version of group. Although participants

appreciated the power points, they felt overwhelmingly isolated and missed meeting in person. A primary objective of support group is to decrease feelings of isolation many survivors experience. Power points were not fulfilling this need.

When the governor's stay at home order was lifted, it was decided that a "hybrid" group would be created. Participants would still receive interactive power points containing information, but they would also be given the option to meet in person with COVID precautions in place. Since group has begun meeting in person again, participants have reported feeling less isolated and feel they have a space to heal.

“I have learned so much and as I move through my recovery journey, the topics have different meanings for me. I really don't know what I would do without this amazing group.”

Meet Jillian



Jillian Chmiel recently joined the Sojourner Project team as a mental health therapist.

Jillian believes the heart of her work is to disrupt cycles of violence within households, families, and communities, and she is delighted to be working with an organization so grounded in this effort. Jillian states; “My approach to therapy is empathetic and collaborative, using many therapeutic techniques to tailor therapy to each person's needs. Working with clients ages 16+, I believe that by fostering a trusting, strengths-based, supportive environment, clients can develop new skills and enhance existing ones, equipping them to heal and grow.” When not engaging in therapy Jillian can be found hiking, snowboarding, or wrapped up in a good book.

Staying Connected: Prevention Education and Awareness Raising

Sojourner has long been aware of the importance of staying connected to the community, our supporters and our partners. However, social distancing has seriously limited our access to the community.

When schools, civic group meeting and faith communities began to shut-down in the spring we knew we had to adjust quickly. As students switched to online learning, we adapted our curriculum so multiple high school classes could virtually receive our SafeU curriculum which focuses on healthy relationships, consent, and personal boundaries. This information is important to the prevention of future victims and abusers. We kicked off the school year by providing “live” synchronous SafeU presentations to local middle school classes and

provided our pre-recorded interactive presentations to other high school and middle school students. After one of our most recent middle school presentations one student wrote; “learning I can say no to things I'm not comfortable with was a relief because I've wasted so much time thinking that I had to do what everyone says in order to be a good person.” Feedback like this is why these connections remain a priority and we look forward to a time where we can connect in person!

We have also worked creatively to adjust all of our outreach activities to stay connected to community groups and volunteers. We have used a variety of methods to engage the community and to raise awareness. We sent out a mailing with service information, displayed posters in

local businesses, connected virtually with our faith communities, provided informational posts via our social media platforms and presented via zoom to local civic groups. We believe the hard work is worth it!

amazon
wishlist

✦ **Sojourner Project**

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



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

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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.

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



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



Women's Gift Ideas

- Fuzzy Socks
- Robes/Pajamas
- Scarves/Mittens/Hat sets
- Journals
- Lotion/Body Wash sets
- Gift cards (\$25-50) for:
 - Target
 - Gas Stations
 - Cub Foods

Children's Gift Ideas

- Infant/Toddler Toys
- Art/Craft/Science Kits
- Lego sets
- Fleece Blankets (twin)
- Family Board Games
- Small Footballs, Soccer balls and Basketballs

Teen Gift Ideas

- Stylish Hoodies
- Wallets and Purses
- Nail Kits and Body Spray
- Full-size Footballs, Soccer balls and Basketballs
- Fleece Blankets (twin/full)
- Gift cards (\$20) for:
 - Target
 - Fast Food

Holiday Wish List

Below are some suggested gift ideas for this year's Holiday Boutique. Please visit our website at www.sojournerproject.org for a more detailed list 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 30th - December 11th, through appointment only. If you have questions about holiday donations please contact **Becca at 952-351-4067** or becca@sojournerproject.org. We are so grateful for your support and compassion.