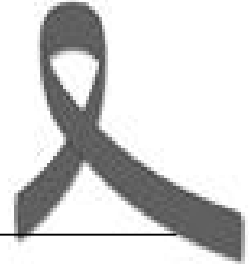


PASSAGES



*April is Sexual Violence Awareness
Month
Remember to wear your Teal Lapel Pin!*



Take Back The Night a March Against Sexual Assault

Kirtland Community College and River House, Inc. will be hosting Take Back the Night, a March Against Sexual Assault, on April 14th, at 11 a.m. This march will begin and end at the campus's student center.



Any community member is welcomed and encouraged to join in this effort to raise awareness about sexual assault, and all participants are invited to bring their personal picket signs, advocating against sexual assault.

Take Back the Night is an international initiative against sexual violence and was first mentioned at the International Tribunal on Crimes against Women, demanding "the right to move freely in communities at day and night without harassment and sexual assault." The Tribunal took place in 1976 in Brussels, and, since 1976, women and men from New York to India are letting their voices shatter the silence that veils sexual assault. Yet, there is still much to be accomplished in the fight to end sexual violence.

Crimes of this nature continue to appear in epidemic proportions. Our movies, music, and daily news describe another killing, shooting, more violence, abuse and rape.

As the history of Take Back the Night continues to be written, its mission to end sexual violence for all remains a beacon of hope for the millions affected by crimes of violence.

We have made great strides, but our march is far from over. Join the efforts now by participating in Sexual Assault Awareness Month.

Other events and projects during Sexual Assault Awareness month that River House, Inc., and Kirtland Community College are partnering up to host include the Clothesline Project and other "guerrilla" tactics displaying facts and stories about sexual assault around the campus. The Clothesline will be on display at the Kirtland campus throughout the month of April.

KCC will be hosting a disc golf tournament on Thursday, April 22nd. The fee to enter is \$5, and the tournament will take place all day with lunch included in the participation fee. All proceeds will go to River House, Inc. Also, during April's "Earth Week," KCC is hosting a "Tending to Your Garden" project to cultivate a community garden on campus as a means of sexual assault awareness.

For more information about any of these events, please contact Monica Martinez at:

martinem@kirtland.edu

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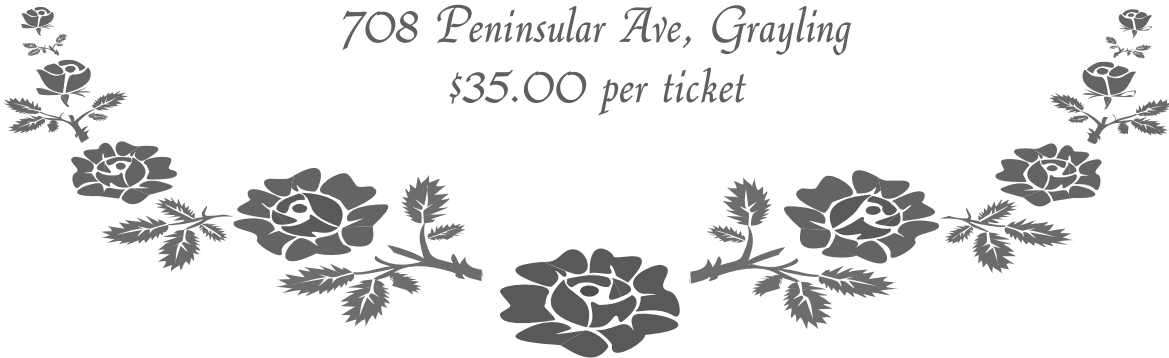


*River House, Inc.
High Tea
and Silent Auction*



*Thursday, May 6, 2010
4:30 pm — 7:30pm
St Mary's Catholic Church
708 Peninsular Ave, Grayling
\$35.00 per ticket*

For reservation information.
Please contact
River House, Inc.
989-348-3169
office@riverhouseinc.org



**River House to Host
Volunteer Appreciation
Event**



River House will be hosting their annual Volunteer Appreciation Dinner on April 16th. National Volunteer Week is April 19th - April 25th. St Mary's of Grayling has donated their facility. Volunteers will be honored for their dedication to the survivors of domestic violence, sexual violence and homelessness in Crawford, Oscoda, Ogemaw and Roscommon Counties.

Volunteering is an important component in the operation of the shelter and its services.

Volunteers help in several capacities, they lend an ear, help with transportation, sort donations, help with shelter maintenance, give spiritual guidance and assist with fund raisers. There is a place for everyone to volunteer.

Anyone interested in volunteering at River House may inquire at 989-348-3169 or www.riverhouseinc.org

Special thanks to the following for helping us to provide quality services to our community through grants and donations.

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(Providing for our rural outreach programs)
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Special thanks to all of our private donors !

Free Fun For Fantastic Families!

Oscoda Co. Family Fun Fair

Date: April 17th, 2010

Location: Mio High School

Time: 11am-1:30pm





Volunteer Spotlight

*Sally Teed has been a
River House
volunteer for 3 years.*

A few years ago when I was in school working on my Bachelor of Social Work degree I looked at River House, met with the director and that was the beginning. For the better part of the next year I spent Tuesday afternoon, Thursday and Friday nights learning at River House.

I was assigned to Marey and Liz. I felt somewhat sorry for them as it is always hard to have to teach and be around someone new when you have your normal duties to perform. But, they put up with me and gave me direction all the while doing their regular routines. I like to think of myself as a quick learner and soon I realized that I didn't depend on them as much as I had. I was becoming comfortable in this environment. Even the women and children in the shelter were getting used to me being there. I knew their names and some of their stories and they all knew who I was and what I was there for.

It was a routine. I would come in and find I had assigned duties. Soon I was taking care of the pantry with Marey. This is a job in itself. Having to maintain food for a varying number all the time can be challenging. Sometimes the women coming in had no kitchen skills. With these women I would help in the kitchen cooking meals. With the children I would make Jell-O with fruit. They thought it was great to cook. I call River House a home because the advocates there try to make it so. The women and children who come here are in crisis. They need comfort and stability. They need to feel they are wanted and accepted. It is frustrating to see women so beat down emotionally and know that there is nothing you can do to help them. Listening is the biggest part of the advocate's job. I answered a lot of questions about being in my 40s and returning to school. Many women had questions about whether or not they could. I tried to be a cheerleader for homework and the school issue. Some women were taking their GED classes so that they could go to college and some were just thinking about it. This is a very fragile population. Women who are capable but not believing they can do much. It is hard to convince a woman she is able to be more when she is so beaten down mentally and emotionally.

While at River House I felt I became more than an intern. I felt needed and wanted. I think that is the key of success for a woman to move on. I saw women come in with no hope and start to believe that there is a possible rainbow. I saw women who didn't want to hear what the advocate had to say and would leave a safe place to go back home where she was wanted. I saw children just accepting this is where we live right now. Some were embarrassed to be living in a shelter. Some were afraid or angry. Some wanted to go home. It is sad to see children in this light.

Watch your boundaries I was told in the beginning. It is hard to keep your heart at a distance at times. Emotionally you can self destruct if you aren't careful. You can't change people. You can offer change but you can't force it on someone. Patience is a requirement for advocates and I DID learn patience.

There is not always the public or legislative support for domestic and sexual violence shelters. There is a lack of understanding and funding for this much needed service. Money is not readily available. Grants, donations, fundraisers, are the main financial sources for River House. Advocates who work there are not there for the pay. It can be a thankless job. It is an overlooked job. It is a job you do only if you have the heart to do it. I look at the women (and Larry) who work there as heroes. They are there because they care. I value their services to our communities.

When Carrie asked me to write about how I feel being a volunteer I felt honored. I am an on call volunteer for the hospital calls and transports or just shelter coverage. I try to help out when they call me for a special need. I try to help out with the pantry and grocery lists. I wish I had more time to give to River House. What I do know is that being involved has made me a better person. I would like to think that my being involved with River House has helped make someone a better person also.

I think the greatest source of satisfaction came to me one day when I saw a woman who had been in the shelter. She came up to me and said hello. She then asked me if I remembered making split pea soup for her when she was sick? She told me that she felt good being taken care of like when I was a kid. She told me I had made a difference for her and then showed me school pictures of her kids. She was doing fine and just wanted me to know. That is what I believe this job is all about--making a difference.

One Woman's Story

The following story was written and submitted by a River House client. The name has been withheld for confidentiality purposes.



Somewhere up in the Mid Northern part of Michigan, there's a busy little community nestled in a small township called Grayling. Through the work of your local government, small businesses, volunteers, employees, and numerous other agencies and affiliates, this community manages to maintain and upkeep a home for the homeless, victims of domestic and sexual violence, and their children. A place called "River House." For those of you who've only acknowledged or experienced this seemingly state of abeyance entity by word of mouth, hearsay, topics of the local fund drive, water cooler, or even over dinner. It's a 24 hour a day, 7 days a week, all year round, non-stop non-profit organization.

Passing through these doors are humble people, those that have been carrying on them a burden bigger than they are able to carry alone, guilty of nothing other than victims of circumstances beyond their control. They are not all addicts, nor are they all from broken down or dysfunctional worlds. Many just like you and or me or the person next door. Beat by some means or another, not always physically. Beaten in ways that are evident, and with out doubt the cause of their last grasp at hope or what brings them to these doors. Feeling overwhelmingly defeated by life's hardships and even less of their selves, most would agree that when you reach this point in your life you are feeling if not near stripped of all pride, all dignity, any attempts of finding it seems a grim or futile challenge. With nowhere else to turn, you're only thoughts at this point are to make it to the next day or how?

Life doesn't quite prepare anyone for the enormous amount of guilt, burden, and mental anguish that any human being would feel upon these circumstances. If only for a moment we, both men and women, would place or imagine ourselves in just one person's shoes, not only would we find it easier to understand the profound importance of these programs and organizations, but of our nature to be nurturing and helping out the less fortunate.

None of this would even be possible were it not for the few chosen to make these changes happen. Were it not for these few dedicated, respectable and powerful individuals that represent a small fraction of the contributors to the sources that make all the difference between time spent and time spent productively. This and more is what the staff and members of River House Inc. are on a daily basis arriving and committing to, gathering information and sharing it, team efforts, training and joining forces with liaison throughout the community to make it happen. These few individuals choose to come to work each day and make the differences. Their unbiased, compassionate, devotion, selfless acts reach out to all those that come to those residents River House.


Myself as a survivor of domestic abuse and homelessness took me on a journey through these huge hearted women and through them transposed a new belief in my soul, I woke up one day and felt their love, their sincere embrace, and desire to give to me what it was that I needed to not feel hurt, or the burden, or that immensely lostness that one is shadowed with at these times of our lives. They took me and brought me sun, guided, empowered and I felt purposeful, yet did not enable me. They smiled and laughed and counseled me, yet they spoke with me, they brought me information, education, and resources. These women are the power of this establishment with more than just an immeasurable aura, they fuel the mind-set, and manifested will, strength beyond imaginable in me and others. They mended and healed, shared and gave, we are the protégé and they the mentors, moms, grandmas, sisters, friend, and counsel women. They mediated, they refereed, they sang and danced with and around you. They taught many a new way of approaching what could have been walked away from, they taught poise, protocol, and communications of all manner. And just when you think the list would come to an end, they became chefs at Thanksgiving, Elves around Christmas, and Santa for all little boys and girls at the shelter. There was no end to these women's special powers. Showing us what we needed to get beyond that one unique obstacle that kept our sights obscured from our vision.

For all that you have given to me and the countless others that have come and gone through those doors, your acts of unconditional, unselfishness, and profound tenderness have not gone unappreciated or forgotten. They will always stay clear in my mind, remain forever in my heart!

Were it up to me, they (all the staff at River House Inc.) would be nominated the "Unsung Hero" award and if you are able to cast a vote please do so! These women have just began. Their job never ends, and any contribution of humanity, monies, or gift is always needed and welcomed.

Thank you from the deepest part of my heart for helping me find that hope that I needed to break away from the confines of my sadness. To finding my true self, a new me!

Believe
(as written by a child survivor)
You think you are bad,
well your not
Just think and say what happened
I can tell you something
You are not bad
You are brave, good and awesome
I send this message to any brokin hartid person



One Staff's Perspective

Melanie McClain, River House Advocate



My first real lesson in humility was taught to me by a client at River House. I have been interested in the helping professions in one facet or another for as long as I can remember. Until a little over a year ago, when I was hired as a Casual House Advocate, my experiences consisted mainly of working with the elderly and people with disabilities. When I began at River House, I was excited and full of naïve ideas about how I was going to change the world. Much to my amazement, there were no quick fixes for our clients, and there wasn't always a clear path from a person's goal to reality. Even more astonishing was the fact that I didn't always have the answers, and I certainly didn't know what the best solution was for every client's problem.

In a conversation with a particular client, I made the mistake of saying "let's get you back on your feet." She smiled at my inexperience, patted my hand and proceeded to tell me her story. An hour later she looked at me, and again with a smile, explained how there was no "getting back on her feet." And the fact was she was absolutely right. She was an expert on her life, and I didn't have anything new to offer that she hadn't already tried or lived. That is not to say that I was of no help to her—just that the solution I was trying to give had already tried and failed. What she taught me that day was so valuable to me and the way that I have approached every client since. Empowering a person involves listening to what help a client is asking for and giving them tools to achieve their goals. It means not always having the answers and admitting that my priorities might not be theirs. It involves helping clients find their own way and not mine.

Every single person who walks through the doors has their own story, and a set of unique experiences. What's also true is how bonded we all are despite our many differences. We are all sisters and brothers in a sense, and we are more alike than we realize. There is truly no way to look at a person and tell if they are a survivor of violence, but chances are most of us have been impacted by it in one way or another. I was told once that at any given time you are in a room with at least one survivor. That left an impression on me as well. A survivor can look like a doctor, a lawyer, a teacher, a police officer, a florist, a grandmother, an uncle. Violence stretches across all ages and socio-economic backgrounds. Education for ourselves, and especially for future generations, is so important for stopping the cycle of abuse from continuing. It starts and stops with how our society views violence and women.

I am truly grateful that my life experiences led me to River House. I have learned so much from not only my co-workers, but each survivor I have had the pleasure of meeting, and also from those voices on the crisis line that I may never get to put a face to. I have received a valuable education from each and every one of them that has made me a better advocate, sister, daughter, and friend.

Mailing List



We are updating our mailing list. If you are not the person listed on the label or would like to receive our newsletter electronically, please contact us at 989-348-3169 or volunteer@riverhouseinc.org

Sexual Assault Awareness Month

Crystal Rose, Sexual Assault Advocate

I am the Sexual Assault Program Advocate for River House, Inc. My services are free, and appointments can be flexible. Right now I facilitate a Healthy Relationship Support Group located in the CMH building in Prudenville every Friday from 8:30 am to 10:00 am. These groups are open and anyone interested is welcome. I also co-facilitate with Murphy, whom is a faithful volunteer of River House as well as a partner of Monarch Center Counseling, a Healing from Abuse support group specifically for survivors of domestic and sexual assault. If you or someone you know are interested in attending one or both of these groups please feel free to call me at River House.

The statistics in 2007 show that 1 in 6 women and 1 in 33 men will be sexually assaulted in their lifetime making a total of 248,300 sexual assaults that take place per year. I've included a few tips to reduce the risk of becoming a victim of sexual assault:

- Don't pressure anyone into having sex, "No" means "no."
- Don't listen to or tolerate or tell rape jokes.
- Stay aware of your sexual desires and limits and communicate them clearly.
- Be aware of social pressures or expectations to "hook up."
- Trust your intuition.
- Be direct about your limits if you don't have to be nice to people at your own expense, especially if it means doing something that doesn't feel right to you.
- Don't assume that if someone wears "sexy" clothes and flirts they want to have sex.
- Look out for your friends especially if they're drinking. Most acquaintance rapes happen when one or both parties are intoxicated. Having sex with someone who is mentally or physically incapable of consent or is underage is rape.
- Sex without consent is a crime.

Generous Groups Make Children Happy Each Year

Thanks to a few special groups and the kindness of our community, Christmas was extra magical for many of our area families this year.

The 4th grade classes at Grayling Elementary made "Giving Tree" ornaments for children and families in our service area.

Many local agencies and groups such as the Gaylord offices of DNR and DEQ as well as the Criminal Justice Program at Kirtland and many other generous donors put smiles on many children's faces Christmas morning.

There is much generosity and compassion in our area even in these tough economic times.

Special Thanks to our Sponsors!



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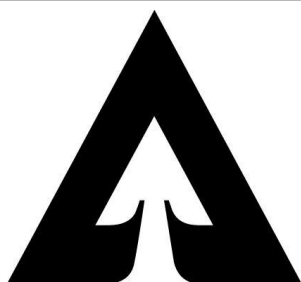
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The River House, Inc. website now has Pay pal capabilities. If you wish to make a donation using paypal, click on the DONATE button associated with the fund of your choice. The website can be found at www.riverhouseinc.org

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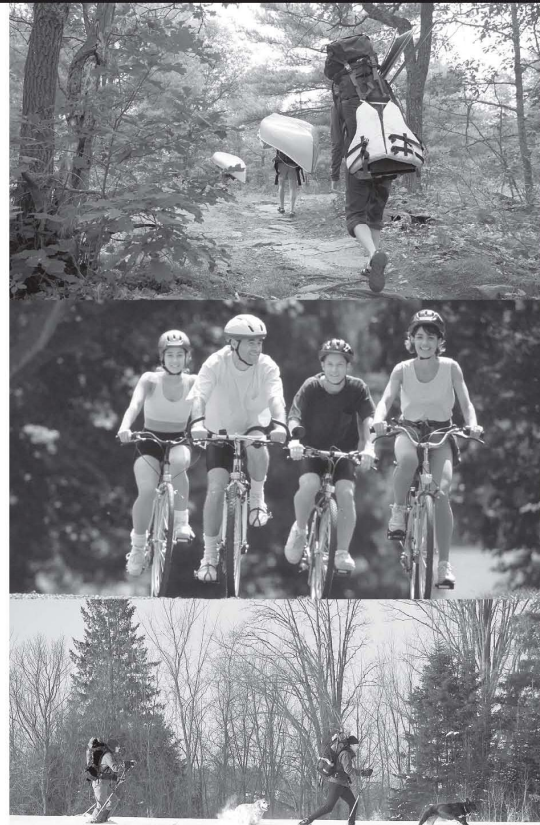
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Newsletter Sponsorships

This year River House is offering a new opportunity for giving. We annually publish a newsletter in April and October.

You may want to consider including one or both of these publications in your community development or advertising budget this year.

The newsletters reach over 2000 families in Crawford, Ogemaw, Oscoda and Roscommon Counties and other parts of the region. All you need to do is provide us with your business card or desired print specifications.

For more information or to receive a sponsorship price list you may call 989-348-3169 or contact us by email at

volunteer@riverhouseinc.org



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