



River House, Inc.

PASSAGES

Fall 2025
Newsletter



With Survivors, Always

is this year's theme for the Domestic Violence Awareness Month of October.

Domestic violence impacts millions of people each year, but it can be prevented. It requires the voice and power of individuals, families, communities, and institutions. We can all choose "one thing" that adds a valuable and powerful component to transforming our communities into safe spaces. Choose to use our voice to stand against victim-blaming, discrimination, and violence to end the stigma towards victims and survivors. Choose to listen to victims and survivors without judgment, and respect their choices. Choose to encourage others to support victims and survivors of domestic violence, and honor the advocates that work tirelessly to ensure the well-being of all survivors. Choose to use your voice and power to create a safe community for all! Contact River House for the many ways you can help.

To keep informed visit us at: RiverHouseInc.org and on Facebook @ [River House](https://www.facebook.com/RiverHouse) and [River House Resale](https://www.facebook.com/RiverHouseResale).

If you would like to receive the newsletters via email, please contact us at: office@riverhouseinc.org

**We wish you,
Support in all your life's challenges**

In order to empathize with someone's experience, you must be willing to believe them as they see it, and not how you imagine their experience to be.



Brene Brown

The mission of River House is to protect, shelter, and empower people impacted by Domestic Violence, Intimate Partner Violence, Sexual Assault, Human Trafficking and Stalking. We are here to provide individual and group support and emergency shelter. If you or a loved one are or have ever been a victim/survivor, our

Crisis and Support Line is here to listen. **24 hours a day, 7 days a week**

You are not alone! We are here to Help!

- ☎ 989-348-3169 Voice Crisis Hot Line
- ☎ 888-554-3169 Toll-Free Crisis Hot Line
- ☎ 989-889-0545 Text Crisis Hot Line
- ☎ 989-348-1719 Administration
- ✉ office@riverhouseinc.org
- 🌐 www.riverhouseinc.org



River House Staff:

Executive Director: Kim
 Financial Coordinator: Cathy
 Administrative Coordinator: Barbara
 Development Coordinator: Karen
 Thrift Store Manager: Greer Assoc: Chevy
 Youth Advocate: Jessica
 Group Facilitator: Lynn
 Volunteer Coordinator: Jo
 Shelter Advocates: Jess, Klayton, Peggy, Marilyn, Emily, Lisa
 Outreach Advocates:
 Crawford County, Rotating Advocate
 Ogemaw County, Kim
 Oscoda & Roscommon Counties, Barbara



Board Members:

Mary Beth Wakulat: President
 Michelle Burkett: Vice President
 Jennifer Fuhrman: Secretary
 Jason Gomez: Treasurer
 Wanda Feick-Chall
 Deb Williams
 Chris Huntington-Langsdorf

River House is always looking for new Board Members. If you have a passion for our Mission, please consider joining our team. Call us or Email us at: office@riverhouseinc.org for more details



From the Desk of our Executive Director
Kimberly (Kim) Scott



River House Marks 40 Years of Advocacy: A Reflection and a Call to Action

It has been quite a year—and quite a journey.

As you read this, we've officially entered Fiscal Year 2026, which means River House is celebrating its 40th anniversary. It's hard to believe we've been advocating for survivors for four decades. In many ways, it feels like time has flown by, and yet, the depth of the work—the heartache, the healing, the triumphs—makes it feel much longer.

These walls have seen it all. They've held the pain of survivors, the determination of advocates, and the tireless commitment of volunteers and board members. Faces have changed, but our mission remains the same: to educate the community about the many forms of Intimate Partner Violence and Sexual Assault, and to support survivors with compassion and strength.

These issues don't just impact individuals or families—they create ripple effects throughout our entire community. They damage local economies, disrupt our schools, and even affect tourism in our rural towns. And despite our efforts, violent crime rates in our four COOR counties have not gone down—in fact, in most cases, they've increased between 2019 and 2024.

Safety scores are now a key factor in economic development. When communities are deemed unsafe, it becomes harder to attract new residents or businesses. The impact is widespread—and deeply felt. And yet, while the need for our services grows, our funding continues to shrink.

Like many victim service agencies, River House is being asked to do more with less. We continue to support and empower survivors on an increasingly bare-bones budget. Every dollar is stretched to preserve direct services, which remain our highest priority. But we are also acutely aware that we're not the only ones feeling the strain. Our community is in the midst of a housing crisis. Many of our residential clients can't afford rent, let alone other basic needs. The question is no longer, "Why don't they leave?" but rather, "Can they afford to leave?"

To those of you reading this—thank you. You are likely already familiar with River House, with the realities survivors face, and with the challenges that service agencies like ours are battling every day. You haven't turned a blind eye. For that, we are truly grateful.

Now, we ask one more thing:

Can you help us find a solution?

Whether it's through advocacy, funding, volunteering, or simply sharing our message, we need our community more than ever. After 40 years, our mission is as urgent—and as vital—as it has ever been. Let's keep fighting for safety, healing, and justice. Together.

Falling for a Cause ~ Fundraiser

A good time was had by all!

Many Thanks to Karen, our Development Coordinator, her team of board members, volunteers and our communities for their generous contributions.

The silent auction was a huge success with lots of cool stuff.

A big shout out to our sponsors Community Financial Credit Union, Top Tire, Lumber Jack Lodge and the Northern Blend Chorus of MI.

Hope to see you all there next year for a good time supporting a good cause!



Human Trafficking Update Community Partner , Deb Williams

Sharon (name changed) grew up in a dysfunctional home where she was sexually and physically abused. Then she met Frank who showered her with gifts and love. When he asked her to do things she didn't want to do he told her "if you loved me you would." This is how Sharon became a victim of human trafficking. She is one of the many survivors I have met who all have a story of how they became involved as a victim of human trafficking. Sharon and the many victims of human trafficking is the reason that we formed the Human Trafficking Community Group. Our mission is to educate the community on human trafficking and promote awareness that human trafficking is real and does occur everywhere, even in our rural communities.

Human trafficking involves the use of force, fraud or coercion to exploit a person to commit sex acts or forced labor. It is not a choice for an individual to become enslaved.

Some Facts about human trafficking include:

- The average age of the victim is 12 to 27 years.
- Human trafficking is a \$150 billion dollar global industry.
- Human trafficking is the fastest growing criminal industry in the world, second only to the drug industry. You can sell a package of cocaine once. You can sell a person over and over again.
- Michigan has one of the highest overall rates for all human trafficking in the nation.
- Internet grooming and trafficking is widespread, especially with young people. It is estimated that at least 30% of young people on the internet will be approached by an internet trafficker.

-The lifespan of a human trafficking victim is 7 years. What can we do to support the victims and survivors of this modern day form of slavery? My friend Sharon was one of the 1% who escaped the world of human trafficking. She did this with the support of the community and programs for the victims and survivors of human trafficking.

One of the places that provides support, safety and shelter for survivors is River House Inc. It does this by providing housing and programs to help survivors overcome the trauma they have been subjected to. By supporting River House, you not only support these survivors, but survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault.

For more information visit the River House webpage or visit our facebook page (Human Trafficking Community Group)

If you suspect human trafficking call 1-888-373-7888.



October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month

In Their Words **



I am a survivor of domestic violence. I grew up being physically and sexually abused all my childhood. I believe that led me to get into bad relationships that weren't healthy for me. I also was always running to men to get away from my parents. My parents always tried to keep me close in every way possible where it was hard to get away from them. Men were always my way out I thought. I ended up in a very controlling and abusive relationship. It got so bad I thought I was going to die if I didn't get away. I called shelters for help but everyone I called had no openings. I was limited on places to go and had no money due to the man making me quit my job for control. I ended up in another terrible situation with another man that was sexually abusive. Luckily, this time I found out about the River House and they had an opening. The night I got to River House was the first time in my whole life that I felt like I was finally "safe". I was provided with many resources that made it able for me to get my own place. I was able to find a job while at RH and save money which really helped. It's been two years since I first came to RH. I stayed for about 3 months until I got into my own place with the help of NEMCSA. Now, I am over halfway done with my business studies degree. I started an LLC that I am going to be doing e-commerce with. My life just keeps getting better and it all started because RH took me in and helped me get back on my feet after leaving an abusive man. River House groups helped me heal in many ways. With the help I received at River House I started loving myself. The staff was very loving and caring to me and that meant the world to me.

** This was written by a previous client of River House. The name was omitted for confidentiality. River House does not take credit for this work of writing. It was the writer's intent to spread hope to other survivors in a time of despair. All submission are anonymous.

If you or someone you know would like to contribute to "In Their Words" please mail your entry to:
P.O. Box 661, Grayling, MI 49738 or e-mail to
office@riverhouseinc.org with the subject: Passages Submission



Spot Light on a River House Board Member:

My name is Michelle Burkett, and I am very proud to be a volunteer and member of the Board of Directors for River House, Inc. Looking to have a closer connection with my community and nature, I moved to northern Michigan in 2012 where I learned of River House, and their mission to serve and empower survivors of Intimate Partner Violence and Sexual Abuse. I have been affected both personally and professionally by Domestic Violence. I am a Registered Nurse that has provided care, support, and resources to patients, a friend that has helplessly watched victims lose their lives, and I am a survivor. These situations inspired me to support this organization in its efforts to end Domestic Violence and support the healing of those impacted by it. Domestic Violence touches 1 in 3 women and 1 in 4 men during their life, which means we have all met someone that has been affected by it. I would invite and encourage you to consider joining this organization and volunteering to support its crucial mission to end Domestic Violence in our communities.

"Look for the helpers, you will always find people that are helping" ~Fred Rogers.

~~If you or someone you know that is interested in giving back to our community, we are always looking for caring people to join our board. ~~~

Reach out to us via email: office@riverhouseinc.org or via phone 989-348-1719 ext 9



Meet a Shelter Advocate

My name is Marilyn Jones. I am a shelter advocate and crisis line assistant. I came to Chasing Dreams River House Resale one day and saw the "volunteers needed" sign for River House. I was drawn in. I inquired and soon received a call from Karen at River House. The rest is history. I advocate for the women and children that come into our program. I assist individuals that are in crisis on the hotline. If they meet our criteria, which includes victims of Intimate Partner Violence, Domestic Violence and/or Sexual Assault, I set them up to come into the shelter and hope we have room for them. We get them settled into our "safe space". Then with the various resources available, help them get their lives together. I love what I do here. I am on a mission to help women, to empower them, to advocate for them in whatever way I can. Life happens to us all. I'm here to make a difference in the lives of those that pass through our doors needing help.

Greer, our manager, and Chevy, our new associate, have been busy rearranging the store, switching around departments and making them more inviting. We have a new and improved cozy "library style" book area. Come in and sit for a minute while looking for a good book. Lots of interesting things things have been donated. The shelves are being stocked daily with holiday items as the season nears. New items in all departments are also being added daily. Volunteers are always welcome and needed to help at the store, please contact the Administration Offices for an application.



Open: Tuesday - Saturday 10-5
6375 W M72 Highway, Grayling



IT TAKES A COMMUNITY

Corporate & Foundation Grant Funders



Sisters of Mercy
 Alden & Vada Dow Foundation
 DTE Foundation
 Community Foundation for Northeast Michigan
 Food Bank of Eastern Michigan
 Roscommon Community Foundation



On Saturday, September 6, 2025, the US Naval Sea Cadets - USS Michigan Division answered our call and performed a very dignified flag raising ceremony at our Administration Offices. The flags were graciously donated by Jason Gomez.



Individual & Organizational Donors

| | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Bethlehem Lutheran Church | Fresh Start Community Ministries |
| Chace Family | Good Shepherd United Methodist Women |
| Cambridge Family | Judy & Gerald Dill |
| Carol & Fred Chidester | Dominican Sisters-Grand Rapids |
| Houghton-Higgins Lake Elks Lodge | Knights of Columbus #6548 |
| Jim & Mary Peterson | Lois Furtaw |
| Larry & Starr Garter | Nancy Griffin |
| Paul & Gail Gotter | Janet & Steven Wachowski |
| St. Stephen of Hungary-CCW | Sue Balger |
| Karen & Dale Buhlman | Resurrection Life Center |
| Abigail Ertel | Scott Foster |
| St. John Ladies Aid Society | Rose City Lions Club |
| Joshua Lewandowski | St. Francis CCW & Father Al Pillarelli |
| William Feathers | St. Mary Women's Club |
| Bear Lake Christian Church | Thomas & Jane Kozlowski |
| Craig Younkman | Timothy & Oralia Miller |
| Joyce VanWormer | David & Elaine Jansen |
| Frances Sartori | Gladys Munoz |
| Douglas & Diane Ploe | Edwards Community Church |
| Rusty Nuts Car Club | Gail Lee |
| Jayne Siglin | James Ostling |
| Jon & Beth Nicholas | Jeffrey Campbell |
| Margine & Michael Jurkovich | Lynn & Paul Hanna |
| Richard & Janet McBride | Michelson Methodist Women |
| Sharon & Mark Miller | Mio Lions Club |
| Steve & Kristen White | St. Hubert Men's & Women's Clubs |
| Thomas & Sally Kemmis | Kiwanis Club of West Branch |



Community Financial Credit Union & Top Tire of Houghton Lake for your generous donation in sponsoring our "Falling for a Cause" fundraising event!

Many THANKS to our volunteers you are essential to the work we do to protect, shelter, and empower people impacted by domestic and sexual violence.

There are many ways community members and groups can support survivors in Northern Michigan here are a few.

Gift Cards: \$5-\$10 for gas and grocery

Nonperishable Donations: cleaning supplies, laundry supplies, trash bags, toilet paper, diapers etc.

Financial Contributions: Visit our website for a link to donate via credit card or Paypal <https://www.riverhouseinc.org/donate/>

Amazon Wishlist: Via our website link above or follow this link:

https://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls/2BX3QBMWJU2z8?ref=wl_share

Monthly Needs List: Updated monthly and available at our administration office, Chasing Dreams Resale store, Facebook and our website.

<https://www.riverhouseinc.org/donate/needs/>. It can be emailed or mailed to you by contacting our office.

iGive: By registering at www.igive.com and indicating River House Inc. as your chosen "cause", up to 26% of your purchases will be donated to River House. There are no extra fees and over 600 stores participating.

Shop and support Survivors!

Your Time: Become a volunteer! We have something that works for you and your area of interest and expertise. Whether at the shelter, resale store, community event, fundraiser, as board member or many other areas, your time is valuable to our mission.

Fiscal Year 202 Operating Budget

October 1, 2025 - September 30, 2026

Income

| | |
|--|---------------------|
| · Government Grants | \$326,690.00 |
| · Individual & Corporate Contributions | 183,665.00 |
| · Corporate & Foundation Grants | 68,000.00 |
| · Fundraising & Other Income | <u>7,520.00</u> |
| | \$585,875.00 |

Expense

| | |
|---|---------------------|
| · Wages, Benefits & Payroll Taxes | \$461,422.00 |
| · Building & Occupancy | 21,560.00 |
| · Supplies & Equipment | 23,098.00 |
| · Utilities | 25,945.00 |
| · Business Insurance | 18,855.00 |
| · Professional Fees & Services | 15,135.00 |
| · Direct Service Travel & Specific Assistance | 9,610.00 |
| · Telecommunications | 8,320.00 |
| · Advertising & Fundraising | <u>1,930.00</u> |
| | \$585,875.00 |

Volunteers are the backbone of our organization!

Your time is a valuable asset!

We are truly blessed to have the support of our community! They seem to hear what we need when we "put it out to the Universe". If we are discussing a need at a meeting, those items seem to miraculously appear as donations. Our success is your success! We are so grateful for our support in Crawford, Oscoda, Ogemaw, Roscommon, the counties we serve and beyond.



It's almost that time of year!

River House Giving Trees



is our way of ensuring that everyone receiving services through River House, Inc. will have gifts under their tree. It is open to all clients, whether they are residential in shelter or clients who receive services through one of our outreach programs. Trees will be located throughout the COOR counties from mid-November through mid-December.

If you would like to place a Giving Tree at your business or for the location of a tree near you, please contact us at 989-348-1719 ext 9