River House, Inc.
PASSAGES

Fall 2026 Newsletter

With Survivors, Always

is the theme this year for the Domestic Violence Awareness Month of October with the added call,

Moving From Awareness to ACTION!

This October, join us as we mourn for those whose lives were taken by domestic violence, celebrate the tremendous progress our victim advocates have made for 40 years, and connect to meet our mission to protect, shelter, advocate and empower people impacted by domestic violence/intimate partner violence. Together, we must stand With Survivors. Always. Everyone has a role to play. Answer the call to action. Be a caring and consistent adult in the life of a child. Talk to friends and loved ones about healthy relationships, red flags, and domestic violence. Create a culture of consent in your home. Use social media to raise awareness among your peers by sharing River House's Facebook posts. Donate time, goods, or funds to River House. Advocate for policies that support survivors and their families. Heed the call, Move to Action now and use your gifts and talents to create a safe and kind 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 and River House Resale.
If you would like to receive the newsletters via email, please contact us at: office@riverhouseinc.org

We wish you,
Strength and Courage to accept the Call to Action

Empathy has no script. There is no right way or wrong way to do it. It's simple listening, holding space, withholding judgement, emotionally connecting, and communicating that incredibliy healing message of "You're not alone."
Brene Brown

The mission of River House is to protect, shelter, advocate 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 Scott-Munson
Financial Coordinator: Cathy
Administrative Coordinator:
Development Coordinator: Karen
Thrift Store Manager: Greer Assoc: Chevy
Group Facilitators: Lynn
Volunteer Coordinator: Jo
Shelter Advocates: Jess, Klayton, Peggy, Marilyn, Merianne & Kari
Outreach Advocates:
Crawford, Rotating Advocate
Oscoda County, Rotating Advocate
Ogemaw County, Kim
Roscommon County, Marilyn

Board Members:

Mary Beth Wakulat: President
Michelle Burkett: Vice President/ Secretary
Rev. Brian Chace: Treasurer
Rev. Elizabeth Chace
Heidi Powers

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.

Insight from our Executive Director: **Kim Scott-Munson**
& Group Facilitator, Klayton

The Silence We Must Break: Male Survivors of Intimate Partner Violence

It is time to challenge the stigma, break the silence, and extend the same compassion and support to all survivors. Often, when we talk about honoring Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) Survivors during Domestic Violence Awareness Month (DVAM), we picture female survivors and male perpetrators. That's understandable because women experience IPV at significantly higher rates, men can also be victims/survivors of physical, emotional, psychological, sexual, and financial abuse. In fact, male survivor may even face unique barriers when seeking help, including shame, fear of not being believed, concerns about how others perceive their masculinity, financial dependence, and worries about their children. Some may even struggle to recognize that what they are experiencing is abuse because of the misconception that "men can't be victims." But abuse is not about gender; it is about power and control. A man can be strong, successful, independent, and still experience violence and coercive control from an intimate partner, just as women can.

Men can also be apprehensive about reaching out for help because of these societal ideologies, which makes the first step the most difficult one for any survivor. Men may be concerned that they will be laughed at or dismissed. Some may even be afraid that they will be told to leave, or nothing will happen with the report.

At River House we serve every survivor of IPV, not just the ones we can identify with the easiest. We have groups and one-on-one services to meet the needs of the individual, not the narrative. We must create systems that every survivor feels as though they can ask for help without judgment, right down to the curriculum we use in our groups. Instead of male survivors being asked, “why didn’t you defend yourself?” or “you couldn’t stop her from inflicting this injury?” it should be, “how can I help you be/stay safe?”

Imagine finding the courage to ask for help, only to be laughed at, teased, or dismissed. For many male survivors this fear is enough to keep them in the relationship. Breaking the silence surrounding male survivors does not take away from the experiences of other survivors, it makes our response to intimate partner violence stronger. If we, as a society, are committed to ending intimate partner violence, we must be willing to acknowledge every survivor, listen without judgment, and work toward services that help everyone find safety.

I look forward to the day when I can say I facilitate a Male Survivor Healthy Relationships group and receive the same encouragement, understanding, and support that I receive when I facilitate a Female Survivor Healthy Relationships group. But that change will not happen on its own. It requires us to challenge our assumptions, confront our biases, and recognize that every survivor deserves the opportunity to heal, grow, and build healthy relationships—regardless of gender. We must do better, and we must start now.

Healthy Relationships Group Perspective

from Group Facilitator, Marilyn

Domestic Violence Awareness Month (DVAM) is a time of reflection and a time to recognize victims and survivors and how they are impacted by Healthy Relationships groups. In this group, we focus on the importance of empowering, teaching boundaries, self-awareness, and conflict resolution. Everyone’s story is different and unique, but at the same time they are all impacted by domestic violence in many forms.

In this group we encourage clients to: Respect each other’s boundaries and choices, Communicate openly and honestly without fear, Support one another in their growth and independence, Resolve conflicts without intimidation, threats, or violence, Remove the isolation factor that paralyzes and keeps them trapped.

Domestic violence can take on many forms, including sexual, physical, emotional, verbal, economical, isolation, intimidation, and many others. Recognizing warning signs such as controlling behavior, isolation from family and friends, manipulation and threats, and excessive jealousy can help prevent abuse and promote safety.

As we observe Domestic Violence Awareness Month, we encourage survivors to learn the signs of healthy relationships, to listen without judgement, and to promote healthy ways to have a better life and foster relationships rooted in respect and safety. The goal is to empower, create a safe space for survivors to communicate, have fun, and build healthy relationships within families and communities to live free from violence and fear.

The words of a client who attends the Healthy Relationships group tells the important impact the group has on empowering people to heal and become a survivor.

“Experiencing domestic violence has taken me to the very rock bottom. But out of the pain came strength, awareness, and deeper understanding of my own worth. I’ve learned to speak up for myself and protect my peace and the ones I love. I’ve learned that setting my own boundaries isn’t selfish; it’s necessary. Love does not come with fear, control, or violence. Manipulation made me sharp with red flags. Financial abuse made me become fiercely independent. The pain doesn’t stop with you; it reaches your children and family too. Today I am building a healthier, safer future. I am still healing every day. I think I always will be, but I am proud of what I came out of and survived.”

Beyond Anger: Understanding the Purpose of Women’s CHOICES Batterer Intervention

from Group Facilitator, Lynn

The Women’s CHOICES group I facilitate is made up of women who have been court-ordered to participate because of their use of violence against an intimate partner. My role is to guide and support these women as they examine their behaviors, explore what healthy relationships look like, and begin to understand the power and control dynamics that influence their relationships. Through open discussion, reflection, and journaling, we identify harmful behaviors, recognize our individual roles in those behaviors, and explore the learned patterns we have developed to cope with conflict, fear, and feelings of powerlessness. Together, we work toward replacing those patterns with healthier communication, appropriate boundaries, personal accountability, and constructive ways of addressing problems. Journaling provides an additional layer of accountability while allowing participants to recognize and document their own growth.

One of the most important lessons in this work is understanding that the women identified as perpetrators of intimate partner violence have often experienced abuse themselves. For some, the earliest experiences of abuse came from parents, guardians, or other trusted individuals. For others, violence and control have become part of the dynamics within their intimate relationships. We also recognize that some participants have used abusive tactics in response to ongoing abuse by a partner and have been identified as the primary aggressor in a particular incident. Understanding these circumstances does not excuse violence or remove the responsibility to change harmful behaviors. Instead, it allows us to examine the full context of those behaviors while maintaining accountability. We teach participants to recognize escalating patterns, develop safety plans, and identify safe ways to leave relationships when necessary, helping reduce the risk of further harm or retaliation. We also explore self-forgiveness—not as a way to dismiss past actions, but as a means of accepting responsibility, rebuilding self-worth, and moving toward a healthier, more independent future.

In many ways, our CHOICES group mirrors the work we do in our Healthy Relationships groups because the underlying dynamics of power and control can appear across relationships, regardless of how someone enters the court system. Batterer intervention is not simply about learning to control anger. While anger management may be appropriate for some individuals, abusive behavior is often rooted in learned patterns of control, entitlement, unhealthy coping mechanisms, and the belief that we can control another person rather than ourselves. Our work is about helping participants recognize these patterns, understand the harm they cause, and learn that there are healthier alternatives. We cannot change what has happened in our past, and we cannot control another person’s choices, but we can take responsibility for our own. Real change begins when we stop justifying our behaviors, start recognizing our choices, and learn to build relationships rooted in respect, safety, and accountability.

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month

In Their Words **

Carl Simmons of Ogemaw County is a veteran who served two tours in the Middle East. He's physically much larger than his abuser.

"I felt like no one was going to believe it was happening because I was much bigger than her. So, I didn't tell anyone." He said, "I just took the abuse. You hope that it will get better, but it doesn't."

"I spent two tours overseas and I felt safer there than I did in my own home." Simmons said he ignored the most obvious sign of abuse: Isolation. He hadn't spoken with his family in more than a decade but has since reached out to rebuild those relationships. He said an incident with scalding water pushed him to report to police. His partner also loaded three weapons. She had taken his truck keys, cell and wallet.

"I thought she was going to kill me," he said. "When I got to the Michigan State Police post, two troopers came around the corner to talk to me and I just started crying. Going to the police was the toughest thing I have had to do.

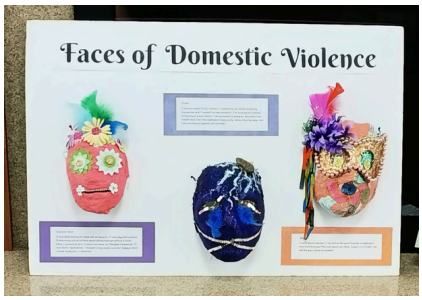
"I was broken and damaged, physically and emotionally," Simmons added.

Excerpt from Up North Voice article February 2025

** This was written by a previous client of River House. The survivors name was used with his permission. 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

The Faces of Domestic Violence were created by Victims, Survivors and Thrivers. The masks and their stories are on display at various locations in our 4 county service area.







ORSA Credit Union & Laura Killingbeck

Choose The Bear Tour was a cross-Michigan bike ride and movement to bring awareness & end gender-based violence and economic abuse.

40 years of Advocating for Change

from our Board President, Mary Beth Wakulat

Anniversaries are times for remembrance, reflection, celebration and re-commitment. River House, Inc., now 40 years young, remembers and reflects upon how it was formed 40 years ago, with the help of Grayling's Mercy Hospital, the Sisters of Mercy, dedicated staff from human service agencies, generous community members and courageous survivors. Our celebration brings with it an even stronger commitment now and in the future to support and empower victims and survivors impacted by intimate partner violence and sexual abuse as well as stalking and human trafficking.

I am both proud and grateful to have an opportunity later this month to give an update about River House's work to a meeting of Mercy Sisters, Companions and my fellow Associates, including several sisters that were directly involved in our creation and who continue to remember it through their prayers and personal support.

As a River House Board member, I was invited and honored to join staff and volunteers at their August Staff Training and to experience first-hand their dedication, commitment and hard work. As part of my involvement, I also had a unique opportunity to experience the critical work of our crisis line and intake process. I was left with even deeper respect and appreciation for both the River House mission and its staff and volunteers.

My Grandpa had an old saying (his was in French!) that "the more things change, the more they stay the same." The Book of Ecclesiastes said, "there is nothing new under the sun." Intimate partner violence, sexual abuse, stalking, human trafficking---they have all existed throughout history and all cultures. Technology both amplifies this suffering while offering support for victims via crisis hot lines, crisis text lines and ways of finding help. What HAS changed is increased awareness and support for victims and survivors. River House provides critical services, it does so through strong continued community support.

These times are tough, no denying it, as government grants shrink and food/medical benefits are reduced or severely restricted for both clients and service providers. Another old saying, I think from the US Army, "when the going gets tough, the tough get going."

River House is tough and "keeps on going." It seeks your support. Financial donations are very welcome. We always need volunteers, young, old, working, or retired. Perhaps you have a skill that could help us---retail, technology, teaching? We welcome inquiries into volunteering at our thrift store, to help with social media, to serve on our Board or a committee.

~~~If you or someone you know that is interested in giving back to our community reach out to us! office@riverhouseinc.org or 989-348-1719 ext 9

Chasing Dreams RIVER HOUSE RESALE

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

Things are hopping at the resale store! Greer and Chevy have been busy accepting and sorting useful and decorative items. The book area is warm and inviting and has become a popular place to come and sit for a minute while looking for a good book. Fall and winter clothes are out with holiday items being added daily. Volunteers are always much needed and welcome to help at the store. With a little bit of training you can be on your way to supporting River House and our community. Reach out to us via email: office@riverhouseinc.org or via phone 989-348-1719 ext 9 for an application to get started answering your call to action today.
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IT TAKES A VILLAGE
AND WHAT A VILLAGE WE HAVE!



Purses with a Purpose
by Trooper McCauley
Michigan State Police
Houghton Lake Post

Air Way Automation
Birthday Party in a Box



Bible Baptist Church
of Lupton
shelter necessities



THANK YOU

Cornhole Fundraiser Sponsors



Rose City Lion's Club
shelter donations



Grayling Eagles Club
Bingo Fundraiser



Mid Michigan Community
Health Center
Food Program



Stitching at the Springs
This Beautiful Quilt!



Edwards Community Church
for hosting the
Churches of Ogemaw Shower



Grayling Free Methodist Church
shelter needs



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

Individual & Organizational Donors

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

Fiscal Year 2027 Operating Budget

October 1, 2026 - September 30, 2027

Income

· Government Grants	$326,690.00
· Individual & Corporate Contributions	191,652.00
· Corporate & Foundation Grants	72,800.00
· Fundraising & Other Income	7,620.00
	$598,762.00

Expense

· Wages, Benefits & Payroll Taxes	$479,013.00
· Building & Occupancy	19,397.00
· Supplies & Equipment	21,056.00
· Utilities	27,180.00
· Business Insurance	19,787.00
· Professional Fees & Services	16,087.00
· Direct Service Travel & Specific Assistance	7,103.00
· Telecommunications	7,251.00
· Advertising & Fundraising	1,897.00
	$598,762.00

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

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/2BX3OBMWJUZ28?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. www.riverhouseinc.org/volunteer/

Volunteers are the backbone of our organization!
Your time is a valuable asset! www.riverhouseinc.org/volunteer/

We are truly blessed to have the support of our community! Our community is your community! Our success is your success! Join us in creating a community where everyone is free from violence. We are so grateful for your support in Crawford, Oscoda, Ogemaw, and Roscommon, the counties we serve and beyond.

River House Giving Trees

Help make it a Merry Christmas for our clients.
Trees will be located throughout the COOR counties and our administration building from mid-November through mid-December.
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