



River House, Inc.

PASSAGES

Spring 2026
Newsletter

Looking Back, Moving Forward

is this year's theme for Sexual Assault Awareness Month. It is also the theme here at River House, Inc. as we observe 40 years of protecting, sheltering, advocating, educating, and empowering victims and survivors of Sexual Assault, Intimate Partner Violence and Human Trafficking in our four county area and beyond. Looking back we honor the history and growth of our mission. and those who had the vision and follow through to lay the foundation for change. Moving forward we focus on support, safety, healing, prevention and awareness. Our work continues to help create a world where everyone is free from sexual violence. A place where all are safe, valued and respected.

Remember every voice matters and every action counts.

We thank you for your support of the

Survivors, River House and Chasing Dreams Resale.

Together we help make our community and the world a better place.

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,

A world free from sexual violence



1986 - 2026

River House, Inc. Observing 40 Years of

Protecting
Sheltering
Advocating
Empowering

People impacted by
Intimate Partner & Sexual Violence

The purpose of humanity is joy and
lifting one another up, creating
together versus destroying.

Jeremy Hansen, Artemis II

The mission of River House is to protect, shelter, and empower people impacted by 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, 365 days a year

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
 Group Facilitator: Lynn
 Lead Shelter Advocate: Jess
 Shelter Advocates: Klayton, Peggy, Bekah, Merianne
 Outreach Advocates:
 Crawford County, Rotating Advocate
 Ogemaw County, Kim
 Oscoda County, Barbara
 Roscommon County, Marilyn



Board Members:

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

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

April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month



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

Human Trafficking Awareness

Human trafficking is happening in northern rural Michigan, and the isolation of rural communities can make it easier for traffickers to operate and harder for survivors to get help. With fewer shelters, fewer trauma-informed providers, and long distances between towns, victims may have limited safe options and little privacy when trying to reach out. Michigan is consistently one of the states with a high number of trafficking reports, and the National Human Trafficking Hotline has identified over 3,300 trafficking cases since 2007, involving nearly 7,000 victims statewide. These numbers are widely believed to be underestimated, because many survivors do not report due to fear, shame, threats, or dependence on the trafficker for housing, money, or basic survival. Rural trafficking is not always dramatic or obvious—it often looks like “a boyfriend,” “a ride,” “a place to stay,” or “someone who helps,” until control and exploitation take over.

Human trafficking is also inseparable from intimate partner violence and sexual assault, because traffickers commonly use the same tactics as abusers: isolation, threats, financial control, coercion, and repeated violence. Many traffickers are not strangers—they are romantic partners who exploit trust and then force victims into commercial sex or labor. This matters because domestic violence and trafficking are not separate crises; they are often the same crisis wearing different labels. Nationally, about 1 in 3 women and 1 in 4 men experience physical violence by an intimate partner in their lifetime, showing how widespread relationship-based control already is. In sex trafficking, sexual assault is not a side effect—it is the core of the crime. Survivors may be raped repeatedly, forced to perform sex acts, and punished for resisting, creating long-term trauma that is compounded when communities dismiss them as “choices” or “bad decisions.” Northern Michigan must respond by funding survivor-centered services, training schools and healthcare workers to recognize trafficking, and treating Intimate Partner Violence, Sexual Assault, and Trafficking as connected violence—because silence and inaction are what traffickers count on.



Sexual Assault Awareness

Barbara, Administrative Coordinator

April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month.

When I was first trained as an advocate almost 20 years ago, I was given the following one question quiz. I now invite you, our readers, to take the same quiz for yourself.

The English word Rape is derived from the Latin word “Rapere” which means:

- A. To Attack
- B. To Steal
- C. To Tarnish
- D. To Cut

All these answers seem to describe the results of a sexual assault.

The correct answer is B.

To Steal, but what is being stolen?

Whether we are discussing rape or some other form of sexual assault outlined on our continuum, we are still talking about stealing. The victim loses something and the individual taking, gains something, but what?

POWER, Personal Power, power over one’s own life, emotions, sense of security, sense of safety and in some cases one’s identity is stolen. A sexual assault isn’t really about the physical act as much as it is about stealing power away from another by asserting one’s power over another in such a way as to render the victim into complete submission.

Sexual assault covers a lifespan. Victims range from infancy to the elderly. There are no socioeconomic boundaries, no racial boundaries and no gender boundaries left untouched.

Here at River House, Inc., we diligently strive to believe in victims, to actively listen to what they share with us, to validate their feelings and experiences, and lend our support as they begin their healing journey. We tell them they are not at fault for other people’s actions, and we offer choices and resources to assist them. We also work to broaden our connections with the sexual assault response collaborative teams and raising public awareness. My hope is you will join us in supporting victims. Please contact us for additional information about our work and for ideas about how you can join us.



Meet our new River House Board Member:

My name is Jason Gomez, I am the treasurer for the Board of Directors. I grew up in Northern Michigan, and enjoy the many things our community has to offer. I spent many years in the medical field, where I witnessed intimate partner violence often. I personally know many people who are survivors, and I have seen how it affected them. I enjoy being involved at River House because it allows me to continue to help my community and give back in a meaningful way.

In my role on the board, I also hope to help bring awareness to the realities of intimate partner violence in all its forms. While women are most often affected, approximately 25 percent of survivors are male, and they face unique challenges in speaking up and finding support. As treasurer, I get to help guide the financial security of River House presently, and into the future, to ensure its mission continues and people have access to resources.

---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

In Their Words **

A survivor's story



Join us October 23rd
at Lumber Jack Lodge of West Branch
for River House, Inc.'s
40th Anniversary Celebration
Dancing for River House Gala

97%

When I first heard that number, I didn't really let it sink in. Now I know better.

We hear stories like mine all the time—shared quietly, questioned quickly, and forgotten even faster. They're talked about as if they belong to someone else, somewhere else. Something unfortunate, but distant. I used to believe that too.

What I didn't realize was how easily a moment that feels safe can become something else entirely. How trust can dissolve without warning. How your body can understand danger before your mind is ready to name it.

What stays with me most isn't just what happened—it's who it involved. Someone I trusted. Someone familiar. That betrayal changed how I see people, how I see myself, and how safe the world feels. Healing hasn't been a straight line. It comes in fragments—good days and hard ones, moments of strength interrupted by sudden reminders I never asked for.

I've learned how quickly doubt replaces compassion. How easily people look for reasons not to believe. It's easier to dismiss a story than to sit with the discomfort of knowing how common these experiences really are.

Because the truth is, 97% of women will experience some form of sexual harassment or assault in their lifetime. That number isn't abstract—it represents people like me, carrying stories we didn't choose.

I'm still healing. Still learning how to trust again, how to feel safe in my own body, how to ask for gentleness without guilt. And I know now that what makes a difference isn't advice or assumptions—it's being heard.

Listening matters. Believing matters. And acknowledging these stories, even when they're uncomfortable, is where real change begins.

** 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 submissions 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

Stalking Awareness

Marilyn, Outreach Advocate

Stalking is a pattern of unwanted, repeated, obsessive behavior by an individual toward another person. Stalking is a crime rooted in Power and Control. For clients fleeing domestic violence, stalking is often escalated into violent acts. Stalking can have significant effects on individuals, particularly after an intimate partner relationship. Victims often experience threats of physical harm and emotional distress, leading to symptoms like post-traumatic stress, depression, and anxiety. Some of these victims have even considered or attempted suicide because of the long-lasting effects associated with stalking. Stalking is frequently linked to intimate partner violence (IPV), with many stalkers being current or former partners. The relationship between stalking and violence highlights the need for support and resources for victims to navigate their experiences. Stalking behaviors can escalate from obsession to violence, often resulting in intimate partner homicide. Victims are encouraged to seek help and consider options such as restraining orders and shelter for safety.

When a victim attempts to leave the relationship, often the abuser will physically follow and monitor their whereabouts. The stalker will also use threats of intimidation to keep the victim paralyzed, withhold financial support, threaten to take the children away from them, monitor their every move, causing problems at their workplace, use video and trackers devices, and even physical harm.

We continue to advocate, educate, and empower the victims of intimate partner relationships on how to flee the abuse. Safely housing these clients is so important during these times. Letting these victims know that they are not alone makes a world of difference. Just showing support during these difficult times means a lot. We assist with PPO's (personal protection order) and other resources that are needed. Outreach advocates can assist with court appointments and victim impact statements. We are thankful for the support of law officials, community partners, volunteers, advocates, and donations. Everyone deserves to live a healthy, wholesome life free from violence and abuse.

in April we celebrate

Volunteer Appreciation Month

Meet a River House, Inc. Volunteer

I am a volunteer here at the shelter. I assist with childcare. Through the years I had often thought of helping out at a domestic abuse shelter after retiring. That day came and I went online and learned about River House. I was drawn to this area of volunteerism after supporting a dear friend and a loved one through their experiences enduring years of domestic violence. Today they are both survivors, and for that I am grateful. As I looked through the volunteer section of the website, childcare caught my eye and touched my heart. I began volunteering last summer. It has been a joy interacting with the kids and seeing them excited to do puzzles, play games, or just having fun with the toys in the playroom. It's especially meaningful knowing they have the comfort of a safe environment. I also help keep the infant and children's closets organized to be ready to provide anything that is needed for their care. It has been a real pleasure getting to know the staff and other volunteers that make it possible for River House to provide their much needed services in the community. Being a part of it has been a very rewarding and fulfilling experience.

Volunteers are the backbone of our organization!

Your time is a valuable asset!

Many THANKS to our volunteers!
Whether at the shelter or the resale store, you are essential to the work we do to protect, shelter, and empower people impacted by intimate partner violence and sexual assault.

7 BENEFITS OF VOLUNTEERING

1. Reduces Stress
2. Combats Depression
3. Prevents Feelings of Isolation
4. Increases Confidence
5. Gives a Sense of Purpose
6. Ignites Passion
7. Makes You Happy

With Gratitude

We would like to thank these community partners for their financial support and raising awareness for River House, Inc.



Munson Healthcare for the generous financial contribution and help sprucing up our facilities.

Transnation Title Agency, Next Home Up North, My City Homes & Loans Inc. & The Pines Theatre for organizing and hosting the *A League of Their Own* movie fundraiser.



Kirtland Community College Women's Basketball Team for your donations to our Christmas campaign.



Kalkaska Seven Day Adventist's for their continued donations for the shelter

Tinker's Junction for hosting our Bingo Fundraiser!

Design Systems for the amazing spread of food and decorations for the shelter Thanksgiving Day celebration.

PLEASE SUPPORT THESE BUSINESSES THAT SUPPORT OUR MISSION

TINKER'S JUNCTION
TRANSTATION TITLE AGENCY
NEXT HOME UP NORTH
MY CITY HOMES & LOANS INC.
THE PINES THEATRE
JACK MILLIKIN INC.
DUBOIS LUMBER & RENTAL CENTER
MUNSON HEALTHCARE
We appreciate you!



River House thanks you for your donations:

TINKER'S JUNCTION Westside Diner
Smoke & Mirrors Hair Studio
NESTER CHEVROLET Northstar Auto Wash
DEAD BEAR BREWING CO Timber & Thyme Market
Mi Mezcalito Mexican Grill **Super 8 Grayling**
HIDDEN HOOK BOOKSELLERS *Two Rivers Deli*
Grayling Restaurant Up North Candle Depot
Denkholm Family Chiropractic
BOB'S BUTCHER SHOP/BUTCHER'S WIFE

Thank You to our Funders

Consumers Energy Foundation
Crawford County Kellogg Youth Fund
Munson Healthcare
Dominican Sisters - Grand Rapids



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/2BX3OBMW/UZ28?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.

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 to our support in Crawford, Oscoda, Ogemaw, Roscommon, the counties we serve and beyond.



Thanks to all who participate in our **THE CLOTHESLINE PROJECT** Raising Awareness and Breaking the Silence of **SEXUAL ASSAULT**



A SHOUT OUT to all who:

Contributed to the huge success of **GIVING TUESDAY**
Hosted a **CHRISTMAS GIVING TREE**
Donated items from the **GIVING TREES**
Local businesses and organizations who sponsored **DONATION DRIVES**



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

At Chasing Dreams we are busy processing all the interesting items, new and gently used, that are donated daily. There are always amazing and unique treasures to be found. The proceeds from the resale store support River House, Inc.'s mission to protect, support and empower victims/survivors of Intimate Partner Violence and Sexual Assault. We provide essential items to survivors and the community. Volunteers are the backbone of our mission, always welcome and needed to help at the store, please contact the Administration Offices for an application.