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## Thank You Volunteers and Donors!

We continue to be uplifted by the generous gifts of time, funds and supplies that our donors and volunteers offer us. Since the new year began, we have had two excellent volunteer trainings to prepare people to answer our crisis line, provide child care during group programming and serve as on-call intervention advocates. Our newest meal prep volunteers entice our senses with their creative and

delicious meals! The community's willingness to support us through in-kind donations such as putting together welcome bags, organizing donation drives or simply calling and asking "what do you need right now?" is truly a gift. Our newly launched Amazon wish list has allowed people who may not be able to physically come into our office to donate exactly what we are most needing. Lastly, we are

always moved by people's generosity as we receive financial donations, particularly around the winter holidays. Those donations allow us to continue to provide the high quality of service we strive for and to have an "unpredictable" fund for clients for things like emergency lock changes or fixing car windows that have been broken by an abuser. Thank you for all you do to support safer families and communities!



*Remember to follow-us on Facebook to see happenings at Sojourner! Type in this link to go to our page: [Facebook.com/sojournerproject1](https://www.facebook.com/sojournerproject1)*



*We now have an Amazon Wishlist! We update this list regularly based on our needs! Items are shipped directly to Sojourner! Log-in to amazon, click on "find a list or registry" and type in "Sojourner Project" ....our list will pop right up! We appreciate the support!*

## Growing Through Gardening... *An Intern's Approach to Healing and Self-Care*

*Katy, Intern*

When I was growing up, my mom planted a vegetable garden in our backyard. Some of my favorite memories are of running out into the garden to collect herbs to be used in the food we were cooking. While trying to think of a goal for my time here as an intern, I wondered if I could recreate this idea within the shelter. After researching the use of gardening in therapeutic settings, I thought the creation of a garden, supported by the residents that stay with us, would be an opportunity for everyone to learn about alternative therapy methods. I thought it could be a potential opportunity for a new group that would focus on self-care disguised as gardening.

The first week we held Growing Through Gardening, the group members were so excited to get their hands in the dirt. I expected there to be some hesitation about getting dirty or soil getting under their nails, but each group member

immediately started putting their hands in the dirt and mixing in the water so we could plant the seeds. Stories were shared of their own childhoods, being in their grandma's kitchens and learning how to cook using fresh ingredients. As we finished, it was obvious that the members felt more connected to each other and were proud of the care they had taken planting their seeds.

From creating the shelves that house the plants, to starting lesson plans for future facilitators after my internship is over, I'm very proud of what the group has become in the short time since it has begun. The residents in the shelter have been very engaged in interacting with the plants and sharing how to care for them with their children. I've been so impressed with the connections the women have been able to make between caring for the plants and caring for themselves.



*Above: Katy and an indoor garden*



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## A Closer Look: Community Legal Advocacy Department

*Holly, Community Legal Advocacy Department Coordinator*

Sojourner's Community Legal Advocacy Department has served thousands victimized by domestic violence. Our clients or survivors as they are often called, are women, men and their children who live in western communities of Hennepin County. The department consists of 3 full and two part-time legal advocates. Victims are referred to us by many sources including 8 police departments, (Minnetonka, Hopkins, Golden Valley, Wayzata, Orono/Mound, South Lake Minnetonka, Minnetrista/ St.Bonifacious and Deephaven), hospitals, social workers, employers, therapists and community social service programs.

Legal Advocates help clients:

- develop safety plans
- offer consultation of safety plans for children
- prepare protective orders
- understand court processes and victim's rights
- provide personal support throughout the legal processes and beyond

If an abuser is convicted of a crime, they are often under the court's jurisdiction for a time of one year to several years. We continue to offer support during that period because some abusers violate conditions and clients often need and want help to address those issues. Sojourner's legal advocates also provide support for clients in civil court proceedings including custody, child protection, and housing.

Currently, to more fully serve our communities, we provide advocacy and supportive services to those who have been victimized by sexual assault and elder abuse. We have seen a steady increase in the number of clients who are sixty years and older, which reflects the changing populations in the communities we serve. In addition to the legal advocacy, our program also offers a weekly support group and on-site therapy. All of our services are free and confidential.

Client feedback related to the knowledge and competency of our advocates and the benefits of our services have been very positive. It is clear, that overall, those we serve feel safer, more in control of their lives and are hopeful about the future.



P.O. Box 272, Hopkins, MN 55343

952-933-7433

24-Hour Crisis Line: 952-933-7422

[www.sojournerproject.org](http://www.sojournerproject.org)

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## A Trauma Informed Approach to Healing from Abuse

*Shelley Strohmaier, MA, LMFT*

Studies show that a large majority of domestic abuse victims develop Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. As a psychotherapist providing therapy services to Sojourner's

clients, I recognize that virtually all the women and adolescents I see have experienced trauma in their abusive relationships. To help them heal emotionally from their psychological, neurological, and physical wounds, I use a trauma informed approach. Trauma informed therapy does not refer to specific therapeutic techniques, rather it is an overall philosophy for providing care, and the overarching goal of treatment is recovery from trauma.

In trauma informed therapy, instead of asking what is wrong with a client, the counselor explores what happened to the client, i.e., how has the experience of trauma contributed to their mental and emotional health challenges. A trauma informed therapist works collaboratively with clients to identify specific goals for therapy. We provide a safe environment for clients

to process about the abuse they've experienced and learn tools for coping with the pain associated with their trauma.

A key element of trauma informed care involves focusing on a survivor's strengths. For instance, individuals are given an opportunity to see how resourceful they were in managing a very difficult experience. Through processing and education about the dynamics of abusive relationships, clients can let go of the shame that often results from having been in an abusive relationship. A trauma informed therapist helps clients recognize that the depression or anxiety they may be experiencing is a normal response to the trauma they've experienced. Finally, resiliency and trauma-resistant skills training are also a part of treatment. Trauma survivors are taught alternative coping strategies that can be used to cope with past trauma and to help them avoid abusive relationships in the future. Perhaps most important, trauma informed therapy provides clients with encouragement that, through processing about the trauma, they can heal from it and move forward in a positive direction.