



FRIENDS, INC.
Advocacy • Empowerment • Prevention

ANNUAL REPORT

2024

Our Mission: To empower those affected by Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault by offering safety, support, and community awareness.

Our Vision: We envision a socially just community where all voices are heard, where all gender identities are made to feel safe, and where all acts of Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault, and oppression are neither accepted nor tolerated.



Letter from the Executive Director

A year in review

Dear Friends and Supporters,

As we reflect on the remarkable year that was 2024, I am filled with immense gratitude and pride in the work that FRIENDS, Inc. has accomplished. Since our founding in 1978, we have been committed in our mission to support individuals and families impacted by Domestic and Sexual Violence. This year, more than ever, highlighted the critical importance of our services and our commitment to being a resource for all members of our community.

In 2024, we were able to provide a significant increase in support, reaching over **7,000** individuals through all of our programs. This growth reflects not only the continued need for our services but also the resilience and strength of those we serve. Violence does not discriminate; it affects individuals of all ages, races, genders, and socioeconomic backgrounds.

This year was also one of growth and redirection for FRIENDS, Inc. We adapted and expanded our services to better meet the evolving needs of our clients. Our dedicated team worked tirelessly to ensure that every individual seeking our support felt heard, valued, and empowered. I am continually inspired by their compassion, professionalism, and unwavering commitment to our mission.

We could not do this work alone. Our dedicated volunteers, generous donors, committed Board of Directors, and incredible community partners are the foundation of our success. Together, we have built a network of support that uplifts those in need and strengthens our community.

As we look ahead to 2025, we are filled with hope and determination. We are excited to continue growing and finding innovative ways to serve our community.

Thank you for your unwavering support and belief in our mission. It is because of you that we are able to make a difference, *one life at a time*.

With gratitude,

Jesikah Becker
Executive Director
FRIENDS, Inc.



FRIENDS, Inc. **Board of Directors**

Archie Graham

President
*Moraine Park
Technical College*

Mary Lynn Bennett

Vice President
Retired

Jim Jahnke

Treasurer
Kettle Moraine YMCA

Lori Torner

Secretary
*Northwestern
Mutual Insurance*

Eric Grinwald

*West Bend
Police Department*

Eileen Evans

*Deputy County,
Attorney*

Karen Bialas

Aurora Medical Center

Barseana Simond

Retirement Understood

Dan Buss

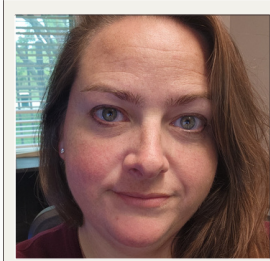
West Bend Insurance

Meet the Team!

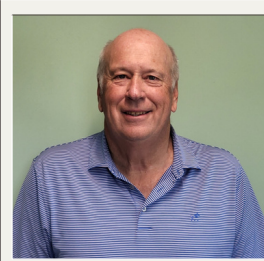
Our incredible work wouldn't be possible without the dedication of our amazing team. Together, we're committed to making a difference every day!



Jesikah Becker
Executive Director



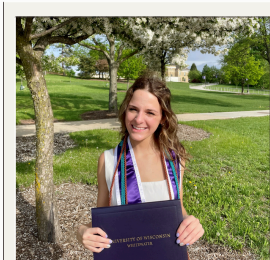
Sara N.
Shelter Manager



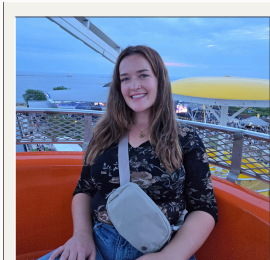
Daniel R.
Finance Manager



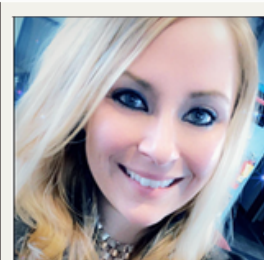
Kimberly R.
Operations Manager



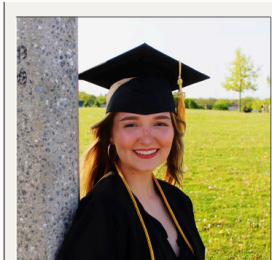
Brooke C.
Children's Advocate



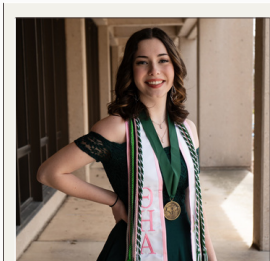
Cassandra S.
Sexual Violence Advocate



Katrina T.
DV/SV Advocate



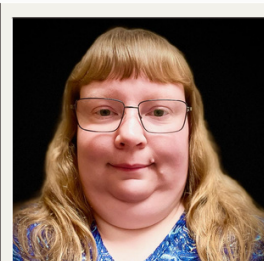
Olivia L.
Legal Advocate



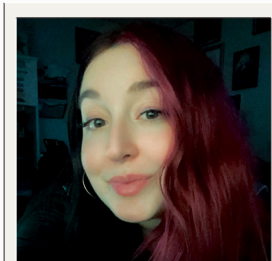
Annelise F.
Outreach Specialist



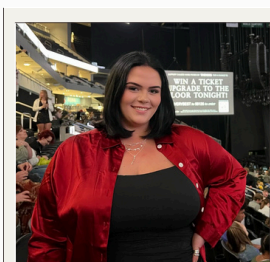
Lana D.
Crisis Advocate



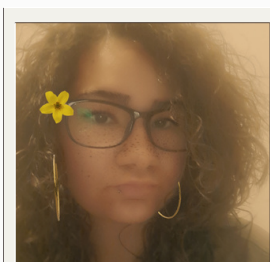
Jennifer K.
Crisis Advocate



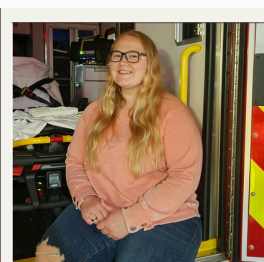
Catlyn O.
Crisis Advocate



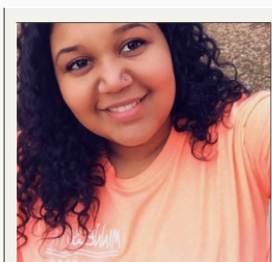
Hannah K.
Crisis Advocate



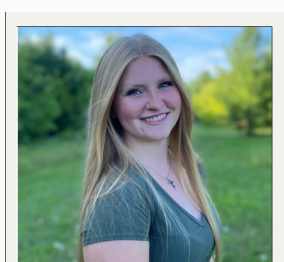
Ariela N.
Crisis Advocate



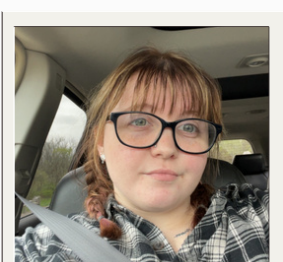
Tanya Z.
Crisis Advocate



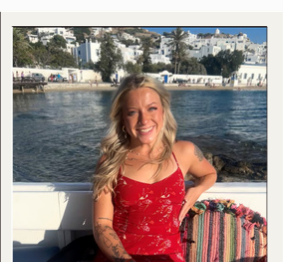
Elena D.
Crisis Advocate



Lydia W.
Crisis Advocate



Alexa F.
Crisis Advocate



Miyah C.
Crisis Advocate

Our Services

All of our services are free and confidential. Support is available to all individuals regardless of gender, race, citizenship, sexual orientation, disability, income, religion, or age.



24/7 Crisis Line

Dedicated staff are available 24/7 to support survivors of Domestic and Sexual Violence through our Crisis Line.



Emergency Shelter

Short-term Emergency Shelter is provided to individuals and families who are fleeing from abusive relationships.



Adult Advocacy

Advocates offer support to help empower survivors reach their goals. Our Advocates can help develop individualized safety plans, develop boundaries and goals, encourage positive coping skills, educate individuals about abuse and healthy relationships, and provide systematic advocacy.



Children's Advocacy

Advocates provide support to children ranging from 3 to 17 who have been impacted by Domestic and/or Sexual Violence. Through advocacy, children can discuss their emotions, learn healthy coping skills, and learn about different forms of abuse.



Support Groups

A variety of support groups are available for adults, teens, and children on a rotating basis.



Legal Advocacy

Our Legal Advocate offers support navigating the legal system, advocacy at charging conferences, restraining order assistance, service representation/court support, and assistance with general family law questions and forms.



Community Prevention Education

Our education team offers age-appropriate community prevention education presentations developed for elementary, middle, high school, and adult audiences. Prevention topics address the different types of harassment, healthy and unhealthy relationships, technology safety, and more!



Community Advocacy

Our Advocates respond 24/7 to community crises at four participating local hospitals. Advocates offer immediate support to individuals who have been Sexually Assaulted during the time of their Sexual Assault Forensic Exams.

Advocates also respond to the Lakeshore Child Advocacy Center, where children who have experienced or witnessed abuse undergo forensic interviews.

Our Impact

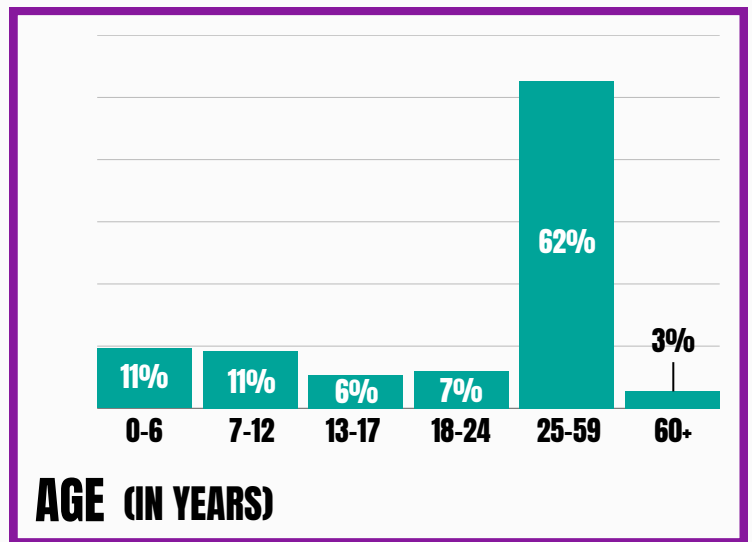
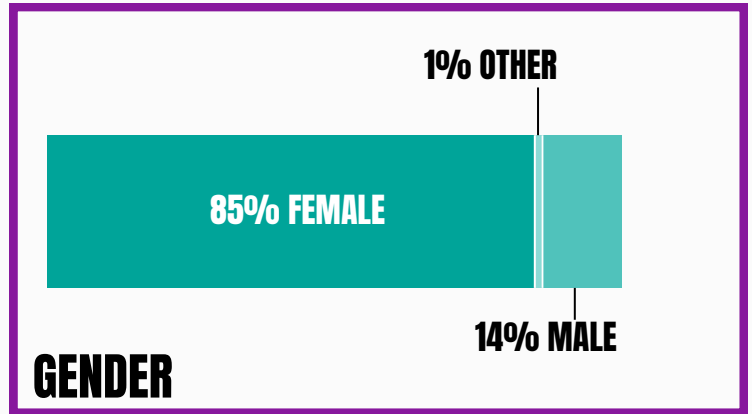
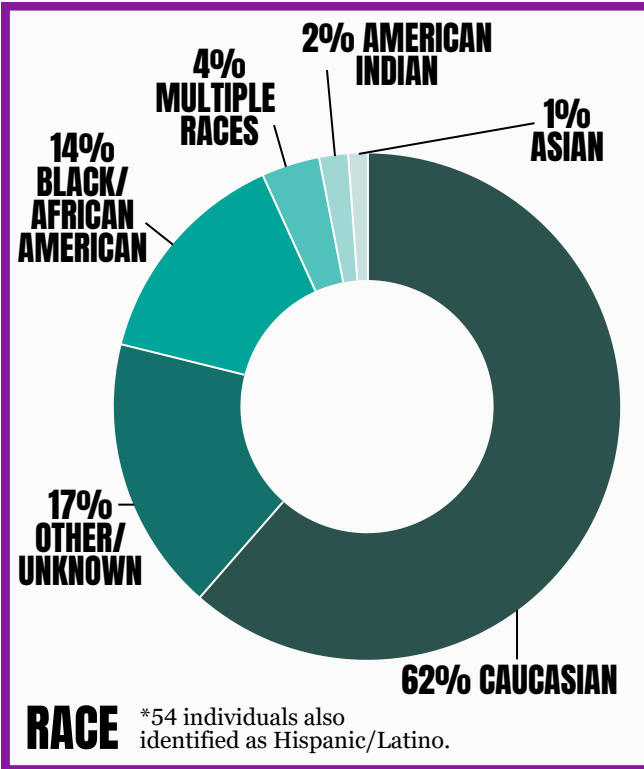
- ◆ Conducted **119** COMMUNITY EDUCATION PREVENTION PRESENTATIONS reaching **5,052** individuals.
- ◆ Provided SHELTER to **164** survivors (86 adults, 78 children), offering a total of **5,659** nights of SAFETY.
- ◆ Answered **1,774** HOTLINE CALLS providing **605.55** hours of support.
- ◆ **206** survivors received LEGAL ADVOCACY.
- ◆ **276** survivors in the community received 1v1 ADULT ADVOCACY.
- ◆ **111** children in the community received 1v1 CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY.
- ◆ **20** survivors of sexual assault received support at local hospitals during their SEXUAL ASSAULT FORENSIC EXAMS.
- ◆ Provided support during **56** CHILD FORENSIC INTERVIEWS at LAKESHORE REGIONAL CHILD ADVOCACY CENTER.
- ◆ **80** people received gifts during the holiday season through our ADOPT - A - FAMILY PROGRAM.
- ◆ Provided **355** rides for individuals needing TRANSPORTATION SUPPORT to meet their goals.
- ◆ **19** SUPPORT GROUPS offered to survivors.

2023-2024 COMPARISON

2023 Statistics			2024 Statistics		
24/7 Crisis Line Calls	Calls: 1,442	Hours: 505.4	24/7 Crisis Line Calls	Calls: 1,774	Hours: 605.55
Emergency Shelter Stays	People: 73	Nights: 5,241	Emergency Shelter Stays	People: 164	Nights: 5,659
Adult Advocacy (Non-Residential)	212		Adult Advocacy (Non-Residential)	276	
Children's Advocacy	76		Children's Advocacy	111	
Education/Outreach	162 Presentations, reaching 3,212 individuals		Education/Outreach	119 Presentations, reaching 5,052 individuals	
Hospital Sexual Assault Responses	20		Hospital Sexual Assault Responses	20	
Child Advocacy Center Interviews	39		Child Advocacy Center Interviews	56	

Demographics

Our clients represent a wide range of diverse demographics. We take pride in providing support to everyone we serve.



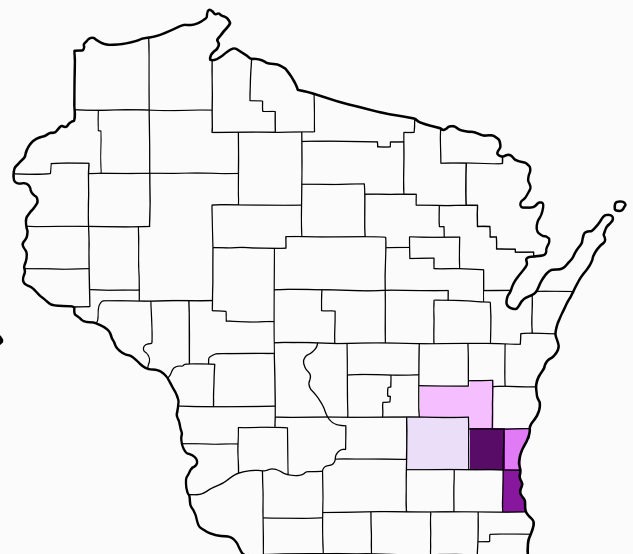
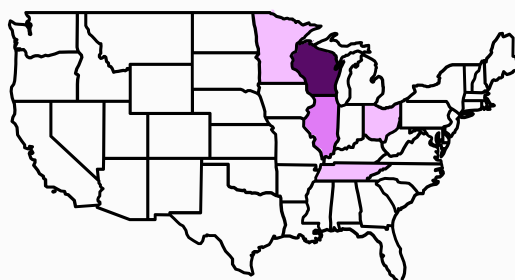
Client Geography

COUNTIES

- Washington: 67%
- Milwaukee: 16%
- Ozaukee: 2%
- Fond Du Lac: 1%
- Dodge: 1%
- Other: 13%

STATES

- Wisconsin: 99%
- Illinois
- Ohio
- Minnesota
- Tennessee



Survivor Spotlight

Melissa's Story

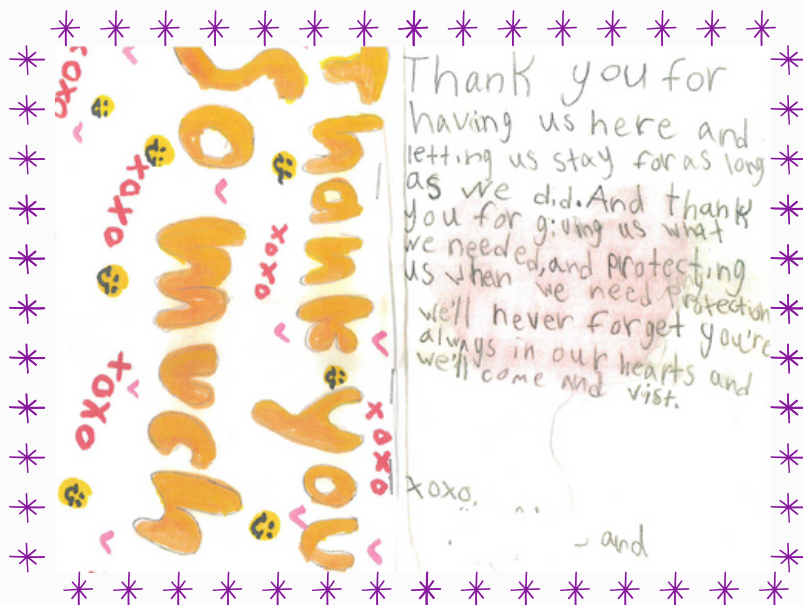
Melissa came to FRIENDS, Inc. in December 2023 after enduring over 40 years in an abusive marriage. Her life had been consumed by fear, manipulation, and control. Her abuser used gaslighting to make her question her reality, convincing her she was “crazy” and unstable. Daily emotional belittlement slowly dissolved her self-esteem and left her feeling worthless. Physical intimidation compounded her suffering—her abuser would block doorways, hide her car keys, and take her purse and phone to prevent her from leaving. He controlled their finances, leaving her financially dependent, and deliberately hid or withheld her belongings to make her doubt her memory.

The abuse extended beyond Melissa’s immediate relationship. Her abuser spread lies about her mental health to family and friends, isolating her further. Even Melissa’s beloved cat was harmed as a cruel means of exerting control and instilling fear. Despite years of being made to feel powerless, Melissa showed extraordinary courage in seeking help to reclaim her life.

FRIENDS, Inc. supported Melissa with a range of services tailored to her needs. Through 1:1 advocacy, she gained insight into the dynamics of abuse and processed the trauma she had endured. It wasn’t until Melissa saw the Power and Control Wheel during her first advocacy appointment that she fully grasped the depth and scope of the abuse she had suffered. Together, she and her advocate developed a safety plan that enabled her to leave the shared home in December 2023 with law enforcement support. Melissa found temporary refuge with her family while searching for independent housing.

To aid her recovery, Melissa attended FRIENDS, Inc.’s monthly support groups, connecting with others who understood her experience and finding validation in their shared stories. FRIENDS, Inc.’s legal advocacy team guided her through the complexities of her divorce, offering support at court hearings and addressing legal challenges. The organization also provided resources like a YMCA voucher for self-care, access to a business center for printing legal documents and housing searches, and referrals to therapy, employment, and transportation assistance.

Today, Melissa has rebuilt her life. She is free from her abuser, living independently in her own home, and reunited with her cat. Her divorce is finalized, and she has achieved financial independence with her own bank accounts and stable employment. Melissa continues to heal and grow through ongoing support groups and advocacy. Her courage to break free from decades of abuse and reclaim her life is a testament to her resilience. FRIENDS, Inc. is honored to have been part of Melissa’s journey to freedom and empowerment.



Two of the children in our shelter wrote a thank-you letter to the team before moving into their new home.

Volunteer Impact

A HUGE thank you to our **26** incredible volunteers who supported FRIENDS, Inc. this year!

At FRIENDS, Inc., we offer volunteer opportunities tailored to fit any skill set or time commitment. This year, we were excited to introduce two new roles: **Hotline Support Volunteer** and **Bilingual Support Volunteer**—expanding the ways you can make a positive impact.

We also established a partnership with the Washington County Community Development Department! Through this program, participating volunteers can receive financial support toward securing new housing in exchange for their valuable contributions.

Volunteer Spotlight!



Bilingual Support Volunteer

“I have been volunteering at FRIENDS, Inc. as an interpreter for Spanish-speaking clients. My husband and I lived/worked overseas for many years--a few Spanish-speaking countries, but other countries where I did not speak the language (Korea, Jordan, Turkey). While there, I had to depend on bilingual friends to help me get around and understand the culture. It was not easy!! As a result, I am very empathetic to those who are experiencing the same struggles in this country, and I continually strive to pay it forward by helping whomever I can for as long as I am able.”

-Barbara

Local Volunteer Partnerships

Katelin Grambsch

Community Development Coordinator

“Washington County Community Development Department is grateful for the partnership we have with FRIENDS, Inc. Their organization serves as one of our Participating Agencies through our Heart & Homestead Earned Down Payment Incentive and accepts our Recipients as new volunteers for their wide variety of programs. These new motivated volunteers go through extensive training to gain the skills needed to help FRIENDS, Inc. carry out their impactful mission. It is truly a win-win for us to be partnering with FRIENDS, Inc. because together we are not only helping new homeowners but also supporting services for survivors of domestic and sexual violence.”



FRIENDS, Inc. Volunteer Opportunities

24/7 Crisis Hotline Volunteer: Assist with answering our 24/7 hotline. Support with completing intake assessments, develop safety plans for survivors, and identify the next steps for crisis resolution.

Sexual Assault Victim Advocate: Support victims of sexual assault at the time of their Sexual Assault Nursing Exam (SANE) and provide information about FRIENDS, Inc.'s services and other community resources.

Grocery Shoppers: Travel to the Full Shelf Food Pantry in West Bend to pick up groceries set aside for our shelter residents and brings them to the FRIENDS, Inc. shelter.

Childcare Provider: Provide childcare for clients during support groups or one on one advocacy appointments.

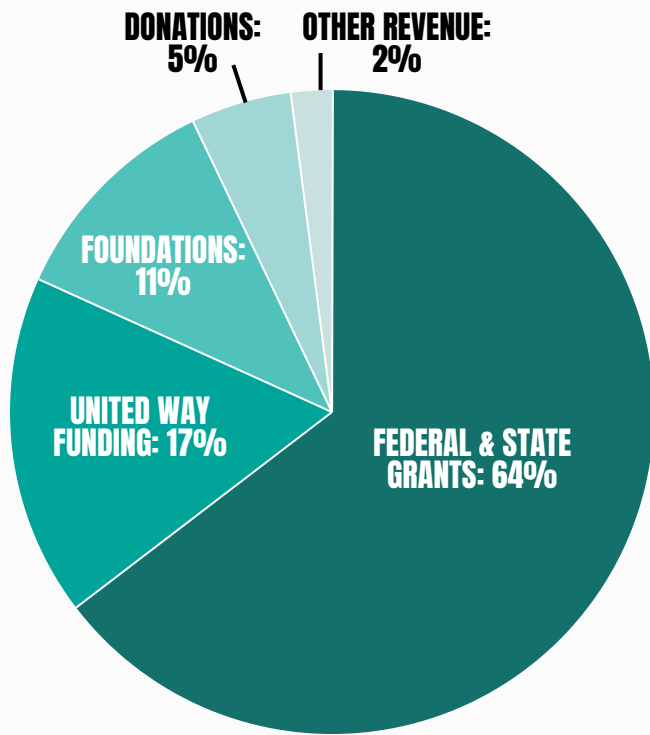
Bilingual Support: Offer interpreting and translation support to help the FRIENDS, Inc. staff best serve victims of domestic and/or sexual violence. Interpret in one on one appointments, groups, or translate general documents.

Maintenance Volunteer: Provide assistance with general maintenance in and around our facility.

Community Event Volunteer: Provide support and representation at FRIENDS, Inc. events and tabling opportunities throughout the community.

General Volunteer: This volunteer role is for anyone who has a skill or passion that could make a difference to our clients or facility.

Finances

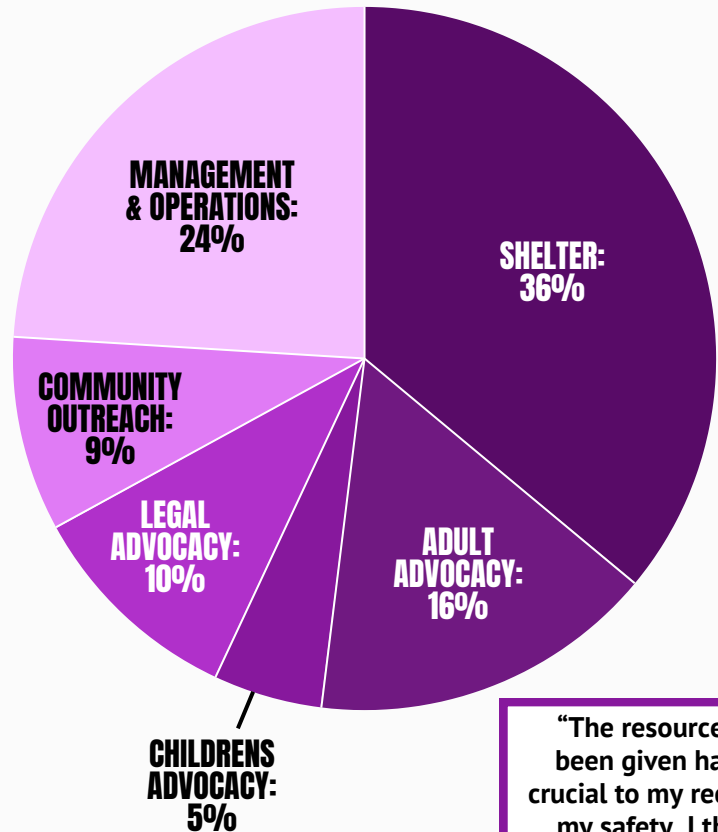


REVENUE

Federal & State Grants	\$663,272.39
United Way Funding	\$166,750.00
Foundations	\$110,081.31
Donations	\$44,422.74
Other Revenue	\$19,698.58
Total	\$1,004,225.02

EXPENSES

Shelter	\$317,996.95
Management & Operations	209,563.83
Adult Advocacy	\$144,000.14
Legal Advocacy	\$94,241.19
Community Outreach	\$88,445.16
Children's Advocacy	\$49,428.04
Total	\$905,283.25



"The resources I have been given have been crucial to my recovery and my safety. I think this place is amazing and I hope more benefit from them as I have!"
-Client Testimonial

Gratitude to Our Supporters

We want to extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone who supported our agency and mission in 2024. Every act of generosity, no matter the size, has made a meaningful impact on our work. While we deeply appreciate all contributions, we'd like to take a moment to acknowledge a few efforts from this year. Thank you for being part of our journey and helping us make a difference!



Greater Milwaukee & Waukesha County



United Way of Washington County



Wisconsin Department of Children and Families



Office for Victims of Crime
Helping Crime Survivors Find Their Justice



Kiwanis
WEST BEND EARLY RISERS



piggly wiggly



Weasler[®]

FERGUSON



The power behind possible[®]

Oscar C. & Augusta Schlegel Foundation



West Bend and Germantown locations

NORMAN SCHOWALTER TRUST

KEVIN WALSH FAMILY FOUNDATION

KRAEMER CHARITABLE TRUST



Looking Ahead to 2025: A Year of Growth and Impact!

As we look ahead to 2025, **we are filled with excitement and optimism for the future.** The impact of our work is more important than ever, and we are eager to build on the incredible progress we've made. With the number of individuals and families we serve growing every year, we remain fully committed to expanding our reach and enhancing our services.

In the coming year, we are planning to make even more strides, including:

- **Launching Additional Support Groups**: Expanding wellness and youth groups to ensure more individuals have access to the support they deserve.
- **Increasing Community Prevention Education**: Reaching more schools to provide vital prevention education that empowers our youth to be part of the solution.
- **Expanding Community Partnerships**: Strengthening collaborations to guarantee that clients have access to the resources and opportunities they need to rebuild their lives.
- **Providing Access to Legal Representation and Rental Assistance**: Enhancing support for individuals in crisis by increasing access to crucial legal and housing resources.

These are just a few of the exciting ways we plan to grow and serve our community in 2025. But while we're excited about the future, we must also acknowledge a significant financial challenge that lies ahead. Due to changes in federal funding, **we are facing a nearly \$400,000 reduction in our annual budget,** stemming from cuts to the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) fund. VOCA has been a critical source of support for organizations like ours, however, over the years, VOCA has been depleted due to reduced deposits from federal criminal fines and fees. Despite national efforts to replenish this fund, the cuts are now being felt across the country, and unfortunately, we are not immune to their impact. While this reduction is beyond our control, it only strengthens our efforts to continue serving survivors.

This challenge shows just how crucial community support is to the work we do. As we face these funding cuts, **your support becomes even more vital.** Every donation, every volunteer hour, and every partnership will help bridge this gap, ensuring that we can continue to provide the services and support survivors need and deserve.

Together, we will rise to meet these challenges and make 2025 a year of growth, hope, and continued support for those who need us most. **Thank you for standing with us** as we move forward, and for helping us ensure that no one is ever left without the care they need.