

Pursuing Hope with Astounding Courage



Bekah Backman
Director of Programs

Our Gala was a very sweet time for us to celebrate how The Dwelling Place is indeed More Than a Home. This is not just a “cliche statement” to make us look impressive, but runs deeply through the intentional choices that are made in what we do in our classes, how we handle case management, the culture we continually try to improve building as a staff, and the way we rely completely on the Lord for guidance.

At the Gala, James Stuart, Anoka County Sheriff, challenged men to rise up in our community to fight against domestic violence and be examples of how to love, honor, and respect women. And, as those lurking, often unseen, perpetrators continue to hurt the vulnerable around us, we are all responsible to heed the Psalm 10 cry to the Lord to “forget not the afflicted.”

I have the privilege of knowing and working with the beautiful women and children who come through our doors. Their names and faces are protected, but the individuals are very real. They look just like your neighbor or coworker or the woman who sits next to you at church or your child’s friend from school and they have faced realities that are astronomically difficult to endure. As Sheriff Jim spoke, I began to think of how the residents of TDP are the biggest advocates of all as we fight for this injustice to cease. They have taken the very brave step of *leaving* by turning from years of brainwashing and threats of ‘what may happen’ if they left. *They let go* of financial stability and *experienced loss* of family and friends and community. They are tenacious in facing the demons in their lives to be crusaders for freedom and to stop generational cycles of abuse.

Their courage is really astounding!

They are my heros for justice as they do this hard work, cheer each other on, cry together, pick each other up, trip up and then try again. They begin to imagine a life that was never exemplified for them, breaking the norms of what is acceptable and familiar in their families of origin or the neighborhoods they have lived in. They dare to begin believing that the Lord God made them for more. He has a purpose for the gifts He has given them. He loves not like an abusive husband or earthly father, but as the Eternal One, creator of their souls, who will not turn His back on them. What an incredible journey to watch! I am so grateful for all of those who have faith in what we do, especially those who don’t get to see, but still believe, and so generously support us with prayers, encouragement, and, of course, the finances to do what we do.

Written by Bekah Backman

*The Lord is king forever and ever; the nations perish from his land.
O Lord, you hear the desire of the afflicted;
You will strengthen their heart;
you will incline your ear to do justice to the fatherless and the oppressed,
so that man who is of the earth may strike terror no more.*
Psalm 10

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FALL 2021

TRANSFORMING LIVES
THROUGH CHRIST'S LOVE



*My people will live in peaceful dwelling places,
in secure homes, in undisturbed places of rest.*
— ISAIAH 32:18

The Dwelling Place

More Than a Home



Our 23rd Annual Gala this October held the theme *More Than a Home*. Executive Director, LeNae Williamson spoke about The Dwelling Place's mission and our commitment to be *more than a home* to the women and children who come through our doors. LeNae stated, "Our homes are also a place where residents know that they are welcome and that they belong. This is the true definition of home: A place where you can simply show up and be; feel welcome, feel safe and accepted just as I am. I am confident that most of our residents would

agree that, if that was all we offered, they would still be incredibly grateful. But, the Lord has asked that we dig deeper, go farther, and desire more for the women and children who reside in our homes each year."

If we wonder how women living at The Dwelling Place experience 'more than a home,' this tribute from a recent graduate provides greater understanding:

"One year ago today, I was in a dark place; suffering from mental and physical abuse, poor health and depression. I had no idea where I was going when I walked away from it all, but I trusted God and I never turned back. Today, I want to give thanks to Jesus Christ who sacrificed His life for me.

He led me to The Dwelling place, protected me, comforted me and gave me everything I need to move forward. Reflecting back on my journey, I realize I have lost so much, but at the same time, I have gained more than I thought was possible. When I arrived at The Dwelling Place, I only had a walker and a suitcase. Now, I'm leaving with a car, an apartment of my own, a U-Haul full of furniture, and a job that I thought was unattainable. God is good! He has done great things for me and provided me with lifelong friends from the Dwelling Place."

I know the plans I have in mind for you, declares the LORD; they are plans for peace, not disaster, to give you a future filled with hope.
Jeremiah 29:11 CEB

MISSION

The Dwelling Place is a Christian ministry providing healing and hope to victims of domestic abuse through supportive services and a safe transitional place to call home.

Breaking the Cycle



Celeste Hofstede
Children's Program
Coordinator

When I tell people that I work with children escaping domestic violence and traumatic situations, I constantly get the response, "Kids are resilient and bounce back quickly". Although it is true that children are resilient, forming that resiliency does not happen overnight. Children experience many side effects caused by trauma, even as infants, that can last throughout the duration of their life. Symptoms such as anxiety, night terrors, hyper activity and vigilance, anger, and exhaustion are just some of the things I have seen when children first move into The Dwelling Place. Healing is a process that takes time, especially with kids. Yes, kids can bounce back, but only after truly taking the time to fully invest in them.

This month our Children's Program is focusing on the Fruits of the Spirit. While taking some time to reflect on the Fruits of the Spirit in terms of the children at TDP, I have come to the realization that the process of healing within children falls perfectly in line with what is stated in Galatians 5:22-23.

Helping children heal requires so much **love** and consistency while reminding children that they are valued. Being **joyous** and encouraging about a child's accomplishments is essential to the healing process. Creating a **peaceful** and safe space is needed for the healing journey. **Patience** while working with children who have big emotions is, often hard, but absolutely necessary. Teaching **kindness** and showing **goodness** over time while assisting children in their healing leads to positive relationships and healthy boundaries. Putting God first and allowing him to speak into the children's lives and their mothers allows **faithfulness** and trust to form. **Gentleness** when working with kids is important to show that each child is treasured. And lastly, helping children work through different emotions and find ways to cope with those emotions involves **self-control**.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

Galatians 5: 22-23

In order to break the cycle of domestic violence and create change to the issue of domestic violence within our communities, it is essential to spend time focusing on children and investing in them.

Talking to Jesus



This summer, residents and their children had the opportunity to go to the MN Zoo, thanks to Tickets for Kids who provided free entrance and to Grace Church of Roseville who provided bag lunches!

On the way home, while most kids were sleeping, one excited 4-year-old began talking to Jesus about the animals she saw, while another 7-year-old sang along to the worship music on the radio.

What a sweet example those two little girls are for us to talk to our friend Jesus and to rest in worship!

The Volunteer of the Year



LeNae Williamson announced the recipient of the **7th Annual Karen Leverentz Volunteer of the Year Award** for 2021 at our recent Gala. Roy Anderson has faithfully supported and participated in The Dwelling Place ministry for over 20 years in many ways, but mostly through his steadfast leadership, commitment, and dedication to the mission of The Dwelling Place ministry.

Roy has served on the Dwelling Place board for close to 12 of those years and has contributed countless hours through house acquisition and remodel projects, board work, and staff support. He has been an enthusiastic and faithful ambassador and spokesperson for The Dwelling Place within our community.

Thank You, Roy!

2021 Staff Additions

God has been faithful in providing us the people we need to serve our mission! This year, we welcomed to the staff Brenna Kelly as Children's Program Assistant; April Gard-Durow as Director of Marketing and Communications, Suzanne Richardson as Case Manager, and Donna Gapinski (*not pictured*) as Alumni and Volunteer Coordinator. Pray for them as they begin their work in our mission.



Brenna Kelly,
Children's Program
Assistant
May



April Gard-Durow,
Director of Marketing
& Communications
June



Suzanne Richardson,
Case Manager
September



The End of Summer Picnic brought together Staff, Board, Volunteers, Residents and Alumni for food, fun, bubbles and games.