

the Bridge

VIOLENCE ENDS.
EMPOWERMENT BEGINS.



ANNUAL REPORT

2022 - 2023

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Our Mission

The mission of The Bridge is to prevent and eliminate domestic violence and sexual assault. We work to enhance safety and to promote equality in relationships. We are opposed to the use of violence to control the lives of others. The Bridge is committed to eliminating violence in the lives of women, children and men through empowerment, education and social change.

What We Do

The Bridge is a domestic violence and sexual assault crisis center that serves five Nebraska counties including Burt, Cuming, Dodge, Saunders and Washington.

We provide emergency, confidential shelter, a 24-hour crisis hotline, advocacy, education and youth prevention programs specifically targeting dating violence, bullying, stalking, domestic violence and sexual assault.

In partnership with schools, social service agencies, churches, law enforcement and local governments, we are increasing the safety, health and well-being of our shared community.

November 2023

Dear Friends of The Bridge,

As we begin to reflect on 2023, we feel immensely proud of everything we accomplished as a team. 2023 was a year of program growth focused on survivors across the community.

It takes each of us shining our light to end domestic abuse and sexual assault. As you read the stories in this year’s Annual Report, take note of the tremendous impact you have on survivors when you shine your light for them. We invite you to visit us often on social media, read our blogs and sign up for our newsletter to stay connected to us in the coming year.

From our volunteers to staff to our board members and countless individuals who have donated their time, resources and expertise, I salute you. Your contributions, whether in the form of financial support, hours of service, or advocacy, have been instrumental in our achievement this year. I am profoundly grateful to have the opportunity to extend my heartfelt thanks to all of our supporters.

We know our vision for a more peaceful and just world is attainable - if we continue to work together. **Thank you for joining us in this life-changing work and for being part of makes The Bridge From Violence what it is - a place of hope.**

In peace and gratitude,



Suzanne Smith
Executive Director



CRISIS INTERVENTION & Survivor Support

No One Should Suffer Alone

Our hotline is often the first point of contact for survivors in their moments of crisis, and the vital role it plays cannot be overstated.

In the last year, our dedicated staff and volunteer team fielded more than 3,000 calls, offering immediate support, guidance and a listening ear to those in need. Staff advocates provided crisis intervention support services to 588 families, including 609 children. The team also helped provide safe shelter to 24 families fleeing violence.



3,000

calls to our 24-hour crisis hotline



8.2

average crisis phone calls per day



588

survivors received crisis support



609

children involved in crisis intervention



24

families provided safe shelter

These statistics represent not just numbers but lives forever changed and futures potentially saved. The hotline remains the lifeline for survivors, providing safety, empowerment and hope in the face of danger and despair.

We Stand With Survivors

In addition to managing a 24-hour crisis hotline, The Bridge advocates work with survivors to regain control after experiencing the trauma of domestic violence and sexual assault. These professionals provide a wide range of crucial services including emotional support, safety planning and guide survivors through the criminal justice process helping to file reports and protection orders. Our staff is not only a source of comfort but also champions for survivor's rights and well-being, ensuring that their voices are heard and their choices respected.



OUR VOLUNTEERS In The Spotlight

Celebrating Their Remarkable Work

Our dedicated team of 41 volunteers collectively contributed more than 9,000 hours of invaluable services. Volunteers are the unsung heroes of our organization, providing hope, support and advocacy to survivors during their most vulnerable moments.

This year, we chose to highlight a volunteer whose commitment has truly stood out. She exemplifies the power of compassion, resilience a dedication to making our community a safer place.

Meet Margarita Flores

For nearly ten years, Margarita served as The Bridge's Spanish Services Coordinator before she transitioned to another position in education. But she wanted to still contribute to The Bridge's mission, and so began her volunteer journey.



Since serving as a volunteer, Margarita's impact has been nothing short of extraordinary. Over the past three years, she has consistently demonstrated her deep empathy and determination to make a difference in the lives of survivors as a bilingual crisis-line operator.

Her support has been anchor for many, providing both solace and strength during their most challenging moments.

"Being able to help survivors understand the dynamics of abuse, encouraging them to love themselves and motivating them to identify and use their own strengths to overcome the abuse, has been one of the most rewarding experiences I have ever had."

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to our volunteers, including the incredible Margarita Flores, for their unwavering compassion and dedication. Thank you for being the shining stars in our mission to end domestic violence and sexual assault.

YOUTH PREVENTION & Education Initiatives

Empowering Communities & Schools

At the heart of our mission at The Bridge is a commitment to not only respond to crises but also to proactively prevent and educate against domestic violence and sexual assault. Over the past year, we have undertaken an array of initiatives and renewed partnerships to empower our communities and schools with knowledge, resources and tools to build a safer, more informed environment.

Last year, we reached more than 4,000 students in our local area. These programs, delivered by our experienced educator, Stacey Lichtenberg, have fostered important conversations and provided young minds with the tools to identify abusive behaviors, the effects of violence and the roles we all have in preventing it.

The Bridge also collaborates with community organizations and government entities. By sharing our expertise in domestic violence and sexual assault, we equip these groups with the knowledge and tools needed to recognize the signs of abuse, provide assistance and create a supportive environment for survivors.

Strengthening Partnerships

In a significant step this year, The Bridge presented prevention training to several key Saunders County agencies including victim advocates, attorneys and law enforcement. Training initiatives like these help promote a cohesive and informed community response, ensuring survivors receive the comprehensive support they deserve.

Through the power of education, prevention and community involvement, we are forging a path toward a future free from domestic violence and sexual assault and where everyone can live free from fear.



Shaping Change

Youth prevention education programs play a pivotal role in preventing domestic violence and sexual assault in our communities. By educating the next generation about the principals of healthy relationships, consent and respectful communication, we instill values and knowledge necessary to recognize and prevent bullying, dating abuse and violence.

Not only do these programs break the cycle of violence by addressing the root causes but they also foster a culture of respect, empathy and support that extends far beyond the classroom.

Ultimately, youth prevention programs are an investment in building safer, more inclusive communities where individuals can thrive free from the threats of abuse.



465
prevention
presentations
given



4,000
local students
reached

"I liked how Ms. Stacey came in and talked about positive things and how to be a better person. I learned that it only takes just ONE caring person to change the world for another. Thank you for teaching us how to recognize problems we might see and how to stand up to report it."

-- 7th Grader, Fremont Middle School

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

United In Action

In the last year, The Bridge has been overwhelmed by the outpouring of support from our community. It is heartening to witness the unity and compassion that defines our region, as individuals, businesses and organizations have rallied together to stand against domestic violence and sexual assault. From paper drives and care packages to church and corporate fundraisers, all community support we received directly benefited survivors and enhanced the effectiveness of our services.



Gratitude Beyond Words

The impact of your support has been felt not only in the services we provide to survivors but also the strides we've made in awareness, shaping procedures and promoting healthier communities. As we look back on our accomplishments, we are reminded of the collective strength, and continues to be, a catalyst for change.

The survivors who have found safety, the communities that have grown more informed and the future generations who are learning from our programs - all of this is made possible by your contributions. From the bottom of our hearts, we thank you.

Your Support Matters

Your support is invaluable to The Bridge. It provides the essential resources and funding necessary to offer a safe haven and comprehensive services to survivors who have experienced unimaginable hardships. Your support also signifies that you stand with those who have endured trauma and it sends a powerful message that survivors are not alone.

To our donors, past, present and future, your contributions matter, and we thank you for being a cornerstone of our mission. For those considering donating, we extend our warm invitation to join us in this transformative journey. Your support is a powerful force for change.

Donating is simple and there are several ways to contribute to our mission:

- **Mail-In Donations:** Use the envelope provided in this annual report to send a check or money order to The Bridge.
- **Online Donations:** Visit our website to make a secure online donation using your preferred payment method [BridgeFromViolence.com/Ways-To-Give].
- **In-Kind Donations:** Give items from our urgent needs list to make a tangible impact in the lives of survivors [BridgeFromViolence.com/Needs-List-1].

A SURVIVOR'S STORY

Turning Pain Into Power

In the stillness of the night, when the world seemed to fade into darkness, a survivor found the strength to escape the grip of domestic violence and embark on a courageous journey toward healing and self-discovery.

Today, she serves as an inspiration to all survivors, and her children as an embodiment of the incredible resilience that can be found within those who have faced unimaginable challenges.

Her story began when she hired a man to train her dog. She was 24 years old and he was ten years older. Looking back, there were several red flags but he said all the things a young woman would want to hear, and he was very persuasive.

"We moved in together and before long, I was pregnant. That's when he first hit me."

Over the next 28 years, his violence escalated and included every kind of abuse, physical, sexual, verbal, mental and emotional. He kicked, punched, choked and broke her nose. He routinely threatened her, called her names and forced her into sexual situations that made her uncomfortable.

"I desperately wanted out. I tried to get away but I had nowhere to go."

She used to work a full-time job early in the relationship, but he insisted she stay home. By that time, she cared for their three young daughters and suddenly found herself isolated at home, unable to support her family on her own and terrified of losing custody of her children.

So she stayed, enduring abuse and trauma for years thinking it was the only way to protect her family. She begged him for a divorce. His response was more threats and violence. Either choice, to stay or leave, she was risking her life.

The night she called the police, he was arrested and charged for making terroristic threats. But after a couple of days, he bonded out of jail and she was preparing for the worst. So she forwarded the detective on the case a phone recordings of his threats. The detective called her back to apologize, he never should have been able to get out of jail. He was arrested the next day and served three and half years in jail.

"It's one thing to read about it in a report but after listening to his threats, the detective was mortified at how extremely disturbing and violent he was."

She shares her story in the hope that it will bring awareness to the tragic epidemic of domestic violence. Her message to survivors is simple but powerful,

"Domestic violence thrives on secrecy and silence."

Finding her advocate, the team at The Bridge, helped her take the first steps on a transformative journey from violence to hope; from victim to survivor. Today, she stands as a beacon of hope for other survivors. Her journey is a reminder that every survivor has the potential for a brighter, more hopeful future. With courage and resilience, they can rewrite their stories and find the strength to heal, grow and thrive.



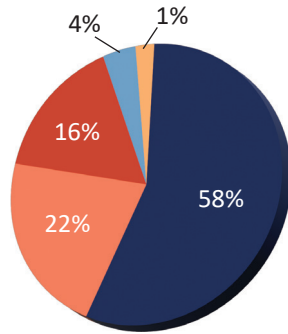
FINANCIAL Overview

We take great care to maximize the impact of every dollar we receive, ensuring that our financial stewardship reflects the trust placed in us by our dedicated supporters, donors and communities we serve.

Our commitment to fiscal responsibility allows us to sustain and expand our efforts in advocating for a world free from violence and abuse, and we remain deeply appreciative of the collective support that makes this mission possible.

2022-2023 Expenses

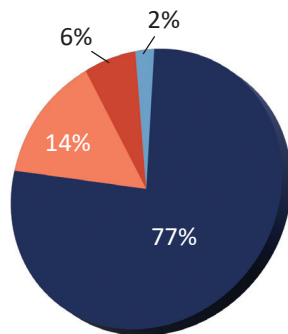
Crisis Support	\$459,656	58%
Subrecipients*	\$172,422	22%
Education & Prevention	\$125,363	16%
Administrative	\$31,875	4%
Development	\$7,500	1%
Total	\$796,816	



*The Bidge is committed to community and collaboration. The subrecipient dollars are allocated to other partner agencies through collaborative grants.

2022-2023 Revenue

Federal & State Grants	\$617,060	77%
Private Contributions	\$112,117	14%
United Way	\$50,000	6%
Special Events	\$17,639	2%
Total	\$796,816	



The fiscal year for The Bridge begins July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023.

OUTREACH Achievements

The Power Of Connection

Over the past year, our awareness campaigns reached thousands of individuals through various mediums including social media, community events and fundraisers. These campaigns not only shed light on the pervasive issue of domestic violence and sexual assault but also provided information on available resources and support.



434

financial donors



500

in-kind donations



8

awareness events hosted



51%

increase in web traffic



2,113

social media followers

Through a concerted team effort, we secured \$796,816 in grants and donations, a testament to the unwavering support of our community and the trust placed in our mission. Fundraising and awareness initiatives ranging from virtual events to candlelight vigils, have not only met but exceeded our expectations. We've expanded our network of partners, nurturing collaborative relationships with local businesses, faith organizations and philanthropic individuals who share our commitment to survivors.

Sustaining Progress

These achievements highlight our community's dedication to ending domestic violence and sexual assault and the growing momentum that propels us toward a brighter, more secure future for all.



Reflecting On A Year of Impact

As you turn the pages of this year's Annual Report, we take a moment to reflect on the journey we've traveled. This past year has been one of resilience, compassion and unwavering commitment in our mission to combat domestic violence and sexual assault.

It's a time to acknowledge the incredible strength of survivors, the dedication of our staff and volunteers and the support of our donors and community. We've faced challenges, celebrated triumphs and continued to shine a light on the issues we care so deeply about.

Your contributions, whether through time, resources or resilience are the foundation upon which we continue to build a safer, more compassionate community. We are grateful for your trust, your dedication, and your belief in our cause.

Together, we are a powerful force for change, and we look forward to the year ahead with hope, determination and gratitude.



Our Staff

Suzanne Smith
Executive Director

Jody Bykerk
Shelter Program Manager

Stacey Lichtenberg
Community Education Coordinator

Jody Koziol
Washington County Outreach Coordinator

Jennifer Thomason
Advocacy Program Manager

Kylie Kampschneider
Sexual Assault Services Coordinator

Luisa Soto
Crisis Intervention & Bilingual Advocate

Madison Laake
Marketing Coordinator

Board of Directors

Kiley Cordes
President

Vickie Cameron
Vice President

Kate Chrisman
Treasurer

Cathi Sampson
Secretary

Nikki Beatty

Cindi Hermanson

Becky Novacek

Stephanie Scheer

Kylee Stanley, M.D.

Claire Eckhardt

Stay Involved

At The Bridge, there are many ways to get involved and make a meaningful impact. Explore the right opportunity for you to contribute to our mission.



Volunteer

We have lots of opportunities for you to have an impact.



Attend An Event

Check out the calendar of events we update regularly on our website.



Keep Informed

Subscribe to our newsletter and follow us on social media.

Connect With Us

Serving Burt, Cuming, Dodge, Saunders & Washington Counties

Fremont Office

402.721.4340
141 S Union Street
Fremont, NE 68025

Blair Office

402.533.4411
810 N 22nd Street
Blair, NE 68008

24-Hour Crisis Line

402.727.7777
888.721.4340 (toll free)

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 [TheBridgeFremontNE](https://www.facebook.com/TheBridgeFremontNE)

 [TheBridgeNE](https://www.instagram.com/TheBridgeNE)

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