



ANNUAL REPORT

2023 - 2024

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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 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 community.

November 2024

Dear Supporters & Friends of The Bridge,

As we reflect on the past year at The Bridge, I want to take a moment to extend our deepest gratitude to you. Your unwavering support has been a lifeline for survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault, and your partnership has made an undeniable impact on the lives of those we serve.

Every day, we witness the strength and resilience of individuals who have faced the unimaginable. Yet, we also see the challenges that remain—whether it's providing safe housing, offering criminal justice advocacy, or delivering the emotional support necessary for healing. The needs of survivors are vast, and the path to recovery is long, but with your help, we are making real progress.

Our mission remains rooted in empowering survivors and fostering a community free from violence. This year, we continued expanding our services, reaching more individuals than ever before. Through outreach programs, crisis intervention, and criminal justice advocacy, we are committed to meeting survivors where they are and offering the help they need to reclaim their lives.

None of this work would be possible without you. Whether you contributed your time, resources, or voice, your involvement has helped us provide safe spaces for survivors, ensure they receive critical care, and advocate for meaningful change in our community and beyond.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, our dedicated team, and the survivors who depend on us, thank you for your ongoing support. **Your commitment to ending domestic violence and sexual assault is not only appreciated—it is essential.**

With deep appreciation & best wishes for the new year,

Cathi L. Sampson
President of the Board of Directors
The Bridge



CRISIS INTERVENTION & *Survivor Support*

A Survivor's Lifeline

Our 24-hour Crisis Hotline is often the first point of contact for survivors in crisis, and the vital role it plays cannot be overstated.

Over the last year, our dedicated team of staff and volunteers received more than 3,200 crisis calls, where they provided immediate support, guidance, and a listening ear to survivors in need. Our staff connected with these survivors and provided crisis intervention support to 594 families with 562 children. They also arranged safe emergency shelter for 33 families and 71 individuals fleeing domestic violence.



3,220

calls to our
24-hour
crisis hotline



8.3

average
crisis calls
per day



594

survivors
received crisis
support



562

children
involved in crisis
intervention



33

families
provided safe
shelter

Each number represents survivors that began their journey toward safety and healing. They reveal the lives potentially saved and those who found light in their darkest moments. Today, the 24-hour Crisis Hotline continues to provide hope, safety, and a sense of empowerment to survivors in crisis.

Empowerment Through Advocacy

Along with managing our 24-hour Crisis Hotline, advocates at The Bridge empower survivors to regain control after experiencing the trauma of domestic violence and sexual assault. Our team provides a wide range of services including emotional support, safety planning, crisis intervention, and criminal justice advocacy. Each staff member strives to provide survivors with a sense of comfort while also advocating for their rights and well-being. We stand with survivors and work to ensure their voices are heard and choices are respected.



OUR VOLUNTEERS *In The Spotlight*

Honoring Their Heartfelt Dedication

Together, our remarkable team of 32 volunteers contributed more than 7,500 hours of invaluable services to survivors in our community. Volunteers are the foundation of our organization, providing hope, support, and advocacy to survivors during their most vulnerable moments.

This year, we recognize a volunteer whose commitment to providing hope to survivors shines bright. The countless hours she has spent volunteering on our 24-hour Crisis Hotline has brought a sense of empowerment and safety to survivors across our service area.

Meet Niki Herre

As a busy mother of five children, Niki knows the importance of enjoying the simple pleasures in life. After spending countless hours sitting in the bleachers cheering on her children, she enjoys reading, playing cards, attending concerts, and giving back to her community.



After moving to Fremont in 2015, Niki found a deeper purpose following a chance encounter with Karen Cope, a former advocate at The Bridge. She was inspired by Karen's passion and The Bridge's mission which sparked her decision to become a volunteer. For ten years, Niki has taken calls from survivors and provided them with the support and compassion they needed.

"As a survivor myself, I understand the pain and fear that victims of domestic violence and sexual assault endure. By volunteering on the Crisis Line, I can offer support and hope to those in need. The unwavering dedication of the staff at The Bridge has truly inspired me, and I'm honored to be a part of their mission to create a safer community for all."

Our team expresses our heartfelt appreciation for Niki Herre and our entire team of volunteers. Their compassion and dedication have created a powerful force for good that is vital to our mission.

Want to Volunteer? Email Info@BridgeFromViolence.com

YOUTH PREVENTION & *Education Initiatives*

Creating A Safer Future

The core of our mission is not only to respond to crises but also to prevent them through proactive education and awareness. Over the past year, we have launched innovative initiatives and strengthened partnerships, empowering our communities and schools with the tools and knowledge to foster a safer, more informed environment.

In the past year, our outreach programs engaged over 2,700 local students. Led by our Community Education Coordinator, Stacey Lichtenberg, these programs sparked meaningful conversations and equipped local youth with the tools to identify abusive behaviors, recognize the effects of violence, and understand the roles we all have in preventing it.

The Bridge also collaborates with community organizations, businesses, and government agencies to share our expertise in domestic violence and sexual assault. Through these partnerships, we help others identify warning signs, provide support, and create a network of compassion and care for survivors.

Building A Safer Community Together

This year, our team expanded our prevention training to diverse community groups, including hairstylists, government agencies, law enforcement, and small student groups such as Resident Assistants. These tailored training initiatives are crucial in equipping individuals across different sectors of our community with the knowledge and tools to proactively respond to instances of domestic violence and sexual assault.

Through education, prevention, and community engagement, we are actively shaping a future free from domestic violence and sexual assault. Together, we are creating a world where safety and respect are the norm, and no one lives in fear.



Empowering the Next Generation

Youth prevention education is key to preventing domestic violence and sexual assault before they start. Through educating youth about the basic elements of healthy relationships, consent, and respectful communication, we empower them with the tools to identify and prevent bullying, dating abuse, and violence.

These programs cultivate a culture of respect and support that spreads into the wider community. Last year, 503 presentations were given to local youth in an effort to create a safer future for the entire community.

Ultimately, youth prevention programs are an investment in creating a safer, more empowered community where everyone can thrive without the threat of abuse.



503
prevention
presentations
given



2,796
local students
reached

"The students love when you can show the impact of being a kind person. They smile more and they try and help people more in the classroom. They will run up to me and tell me the nice things they have done. That shows me they are listening, and they feel proud of themselves."

-- Stacey Lichtenberg,
Community Education Coordinator

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

United In Action

Over the past year, our team has been deeply moved by the incredible wave of support from our community. It has been inspiring to see the unity and compassion that defines our region as individuals, businesses, and organizations join one another in the mission to end domestic violence and sexual assault. Whether through food drives, care packages, or church and corporate fundraisers, every act of kindness had a direct impact on survivors by strengthening the services we provide and amplifying the support we can offer.

Your Support Creates Lasting Change

Your support provides the foundation for our mission and enables us to provide crucial resources and support for survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault. It empowers us to offer comprehensive services that help individuals rebuild their lives after enduring unimaginable trauma. Most importantly, your support creates a lasting impact and sends the powerful message that survivors are not alone.



Our Endless Appreciation

Your support has created a ripple effect that extends far beyond the services we provide to survivors. The contributions of our community have fueled our progress in raising awareness, shaping policies, and fostering healthier communities. As we reflect on our achievements, we are reminded of the collective strength that continues to drive meaningful change. The survivors who have found safety, the communities now more informed, and the future generations shaped by our prevention programs were made possible because of your generous support.

To our valued donors, supporters, and volunteers, both past and present, we deeply appreciate your generosity. For those interested in donating, we invite you to join us in making a lasting impact. Your contribution can bring hope and healing to those who need it most.

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 early morning hours, when the world was beginning to awaken, a survivor began to break free from the cycle of domestic violence. Like many survivors, her story begins with what she thought would be her happily ever after. In reality, her fairytale ending turned into a fight for survival. Today, she tells her story to provide hope for other victims of domestic violence and to show that a brighter and safer future is possible.

It was the summer of 2004 when she first moved to Fremont, NE. At 19, having aged out of the foster care system, she looked forward to her newfound freedom. She joined a local telemarketing business and through her work, she met a variety of new people. It was here that she met the man who would change everything.

It was hard not to notice him. He was charming and outgoing, and she couldn't escape the butterflies that overwhelmed her when he was near. Initially, she wasn't looking for a relationship, but he continued to ask her out for three weeks until she finally agreed. Their relationship began with lunch, and soon after, they were hardly ever apart. At first, he made her feel safe and understood, but it was not long before the relationship brought her struggle and pain.

"I would tell myself it's fine and just continue my day like nothing happened, but later, tears fell while I was quiet and alone. I never knew what verbal abuse was, but I knew about emotional abuse."

She knew he had a difficult upbringing and thought he would become a better man if she could fix him, but over time, it began to feel impossible. Before she realized it, he had isolated her from friends and family and brainwashed her into thinking they didn't care about her. Once she was isolated, the physical violence began.

"I remember the first time he put his hands on me. I couldn't make sense of the reasoning behind it. I was lost, confused, and scared because this wasn't the person I thought I knew and loved."

After their three children were born, the abuse went to another level. Her primary concern was protecting her children and sheltering them from witnessing the abuse. She often thought of leaving with her children, but after being isolated for so long, she felt she had no one to turn to for help.

Soon it was 2012. She finally decided to leave and obtained a protection order, but that didn't stop the abuse. He found her and the children and trapped them in a motel room for 48 hours. While he strangled her, he explained that he planned to kill her and then kill their children. Everything then went black as she lost consciousness.

"Those 48 hours will forever be drilled into my memory. His words are like knives cutting into my skin. I remember his hands around my neck and squeezing harder and harder with each word he spoke."

In the early morning hours, she regained consciousness and found him passed out on the motel bed. After finding her children safe, she called the police, and he was arrested while she and the children were taken to the hospital. The first person she had them call was her advocate at The Bridge. She felt safe with her advocate and knew they would never give up on her, no matter what.

Now, 12 years after she nearly lost her life, she views the moment she left as the beginning of her happily ever after. With the support of her advocate and the team at The Bridge, she created a safer life for herself and her children. She stands tall as a symbol of courage and resilience, showing that a life free from domestic violence is possible.



FINANCIAL *Overview*

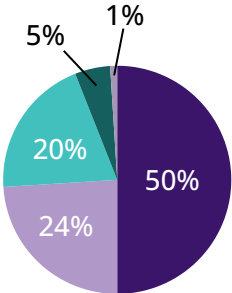
We take great care to maximize the impact of every dollar we receive, ensuring that our financial stewardship reflects the trust placed in us by our dedicated supporters, donors, and communities we serve. Our commitment to fiscal responsibility allows us to sustain and expand our efforts in advocating for a world free from violence and abuse, and we remain deeply appreciative of the collective support that makes this mission possible.

2023-2024 Expenses

Crisis Support	\$413,071	50%
Subrecipients*	\$196,679	24%
Education & Prevention	\$168,462	20%
Administrative	\$39,668	5%
Development	\$8,262	1%

Total **\$826,142**

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




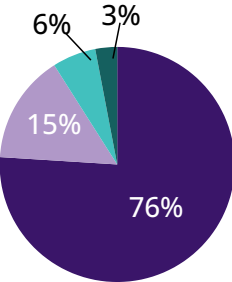
2023-2024 Revenue

Federal & State Grants	\$625,055	76%
Private Contributions	\$125,442	15%
United Way	\$50,000	6%
Special Events	\$25,645	3%

Total **\$826,142**

The fiscal year for The Bridge begins July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024

Proud Partner of the Fremont Area United Way 



OUTREACH *Achievements*

Connecting With Our Community

During the past year, our awareness campaigns reached thousands of individuals through diverse channels, including social media, community events, and fundraising activities. These efforts have not only highlighted the ongoing challenges of domestic violence and sexual assault but have also provided crucial information on the resources and support available to survivors and their families.



107

financial donors



154

in-kind donations



13

awareness events hosted



2,697

social media followers

Thanks to the collective efforts of our team, we have raised \$826,142 in grants and donations. This significant achievement reflects the steadfast support of our community and the confidence they place in our mission. From virtual events to candlelight vigils, our fundraising and awareness initiatives surpassed our expectations. Through these efforts, our network of partners has expanded, forging strong relationships with local businesses, faith organizations, and philanthropic individuals who are united in their support for survivors.

Progressing Forward

These achievements are a testament to our community's commitment to eliminate domestic violence and sexual assault. Together, we are creating the momentum necessary to shape a future filled with safety, hope, and lasting change.



Reflecting On A Year of Impact

As you move through the pages of this year's Annual Report, we invite you to pause and reflect on the path we walked together. The past year has been full of resilience, compassion, and a commitment to prevent and eliminate domestic violence and sexual assault.

This year has been a testament to the extraordinary strength of survivors, the tireless dedication of our staff and volunteers, and the steadfast support of our donors and community. We have faced challenges, celebrated victories, and shined a light on the issues that matter the most.

Your contributions - whether through time, resources, or unwavering support - make our work possible, helping us create a safer, more compassionate community. Our entire team is deeply grateful for your trust, commitment, and belief in our cause.

Together, we are creating lasting change in our communities. As we look forward to the year ahead, we continue with hope, determination, and sincere gratitude for all we can accomplish together.



Our Staff

Suzanne Smith <i>Executive Director</i>	Jennifer Thomason <i>Advocacy Program Manager</i>	Madison Laake <i>Marketing Coordinator</i>
Christy Fiala <i>Development Director</i>	Kylie Kampshneider <i>Sexual Assault Services Coordinator</i>	
Jody Bykerk <i>Shelter Program Manager</i>	Stacey Lichtenberg <i>Community Education Coordinator</i>	

Board of Directors

Cathi Sampson <i>President</i>	Kiley Cordes	Stephanie Scheer
Kate Chrisman <i>Vice President</i>	Kim Schwarz	Cindi Hermanson
Nikki Beatty <i>Treasurer</i>	Kelly Johnson	Vivian Sanchez
Claire Eckhardt <i>Secretary</i>	Kelsey Maas	
	Jena Seitz	

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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- [BridgeFromViolence.com](https://www.BridgeFromViolence.com)
- Info@BridgeFromViolence.com

- [TheBridgeFremontNE](https://www.facebook.com/TheBridgeFremontNE)
- [TheBridgeNE](https://www.instagram.com/TheBridgeNE)
- [The Bridge From Violence](https://www.linkedin.com/company/The Bridge From Violence)



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