

A photograph of a young woman with long brown hair, wearing a light gray zip-up hoodie. She is looking upwards and to the right with a contemplative expression. The background is a blurred green park with trees and a white fence.

# ANNUAL REPORT 2024 - 2025

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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 2025

Dear Supporters & Friends,

I have definitely felt the power of resilience, commitment, and community this year. We thank you for your unwavering support and loyalty.

Every day, The Bridge works with individuals who are being abused, threatened, and isolated. Thousands of calls are placed to our 24-hour Crisis Line from victims and survivors who rely on our team to answer, and our dedicated team never misses their call. Earlier this year, the Federal dollars that annually play a vital role in ensuring that The Bridge's support services are readily available...weren't there. That funding was unexpectedly frozen, reduced, and the continuing cuts have left our services, and so many others, vulnerable and at risk.

We looked to our community, as we have so many times before, to help build an essential safety net for our support services. I am filled with gratitude for our incredible community, staff, Board of Directors, volunteers, partners, and donors. Despite this year's challenges, we continued to provide safety and support to more than 500 domestic and sexual assault victims and their 651 children. Our prevention efforts continued as we connected with local students in 57 classrooms to reduce their risk of entering an unhealthy relationship, enhance their understanding of healthy relationships, and prepare them for the ever-changing societal landscape.

The Bridge is strong, resilient, committed, and part of an amazing community. Together, we are impacting lives. **Although we will stay busy supporting those in crisis over the holidays, we will also celebrate the countless survivors who now sleep peacefully, knowing they are safe.**

From the bottom of my heart, thank you for your support.



Suzanne Smith

*Executive Director  
The Bridge From Violence*



# CRISIS INTERVENTION & Survivor Support

## With Survivors, Always

Oftentimes, our 24-hour Crisis Hotline is the first resource a survivor in crisis turns to. Day or night, weekends or holidays, our qualified team of Advocates and volunteers are available to provide essential crisis support and advocacy services to families and individuals impacted by domestic violence and sexual assault. This initial contact becomes the foundation for a survivor to begin finding empowerment and safety.



From July 2024 to June 2025, our dedicated team responded to more than 2,361 crisis calls from survivors searching for someone to listen, support, and guide them as they find their path to safety and healing. Throughout the day and night, our team provided crisis intervention and safety planning to 572 survivors with 651 children. Our Advocates and Advanced Crisis Line Volunteers also provided emergency shelter to 40 individuals in immediate danger of being found or harmed by their abuser.



2,361

calls to our  
24-hour crisis hotline



572

survivors received  
crisis support



651

children involved in  
crisis intervention



40

families provided  
safe shelter

Behind each of these numbers are survivors throughout our community who know they do not have to remain silent or alone. These statistics represent potential lives saved and individuals who have discovered that escape from abuse is possible. Our 24-hour Hotline remains a steadfast resource for our diverse community to find hope and support when it is needed most.

## Empowerment Through Advocacy

The Bridge staff meet survivors where they are in their journey to most effectively support their empowerment. For individuals impacted by domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, or dating violence our team provides a range of free and confidential services including emotional support, safety planning, crisis intervention, temporary emergency shelter, criminal justice advocacy, and referral information. Each of our Advocates are committed to maintaining The Bridge as a comfortable environment for survivors as they advocate for each survivor's rights and well-being. We are dedicated in our mission to ensure survivors' voices are heard, valued, and respected.

# OUR VOLUNTEERS In The Spotlight

## Celebrating Their Impact

United together, our outstanding team of 31 volunteers dedicated nearly 9,000 hours to raising awareness in our community and providing vital services to survivors in our 5-county service area. Volunteers strengthen the foundation of The Bridge and ensure survivors continue to receive support and advocacy during the most vulnerable moments of their journey to safety.

This year, we shine a spotlight on a volunteer who continues to exhibit a strong commitment to providing hope and support to survivors. The countless hours she has spent volunteering on our 24-hour Crisis Hotline and during essential awareness events have empowered countless survivors of domestic violence across our service area.



## Meet Marti Vanderhall

When Marti has a free moment outside of the time she dedicates to her two sons and two dogs, she embraces the joys of reading, yoga, concerts, time with friends & family, and giving back to her community.

In the past, Marti always volunteered at her children's school and events. Now that she has watched her kids grow from young kids to young adults, Marti searched for new local volunteer opportunities. After discovering The Bridge and learning more about the volunteer opportunities, Marti decided to become a Crisis Line Volunteer and assist with awareness events.

*"When I came across The Bridge, I admired their mission and work. The Bridge is a place where victims can find dedicated and caring people who will listen and help them. I hope that the people I listen to know they are not alone and how strong they really are. They really can go from surviving life to thriving in life."*

All of us at The Bridge extend our heartfelt appreciation for Marti and our entire team of volunteers. Their steadfast commitment to shining a light of hope for survivors has built an essential foundation for The Bridge to continue providing safety and support to our community.

Want to Volunteer? Email [Info@BridgeFromViolence.com](mailto:Info@BridgeFromViolence.com)

# YOUTH PREVENTION & *Education Initiatives*

## Taking Action for the Future

At the center of our mission is not only the commitment to respond to crises but also to prevent them through proactive education and awareness. Throughout the past year, we continued to launch innovative collaborations and strengthen our initiatives to empower our communities and schools with the tools to foster a safer, more informed environment.

From July 2024 to June 2025, our outreach initiatives reached over 2,200 local students. Led by our Community Education Coordinator, Stacey Lichtenberg, these programs fostered valuable conversations among local students about how to identify abusive behaviors, recognize the impact of violence, and acknowledge the roles everyone has in preventing it.

To further progress the impact of The Bridge's prevention efforts, our team collaborates with local organizations, businesses, and government agencies to share our expertise in domestic violence and sexual assault. Through these partnerships, we enhance our community's skills in identifying warning signs, providing support, and creating a network of compassion for survivors.



## Together We Create A Safer Tomorrow

The Bridge is proud to have continued expanding our prevention training to a wide range of local groups, including churches, government agencies, law enforcement, and first-year college students. These uniquely tailored training sessions are vital to equipping individuals across our diverse community with the knowledge and tools to proactively respond to instances of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, and dating violence.

By utilizing education, prevention, and community engagement, we are taking action to shape a future free from domestic violence and sexual assault. Together, we are moving forward toward a world where safety and respect are deeply engrained in our interactions.

## Supporting the Next Generation

Youth prevention education is vital to our goal of preventing domestic violence and sexual assault before they start. Educating local youth about the foundational elements of healthy relationships, consent, and respectful communication empowers them with the tools to recognize and prevent bullying, dating abuse, and violence.

Along with our efforts to disrupt the cycle of violence, these programs cultivate a culture of respect and kindness that flows into our wider community. Last year, our Community Education Coordinator gave 519 presentations to local youth to build a safer future for our present-day community and beyond.



519

prevention  
presentations given



2,293

local students reached

# COMMUNITY SUPPORT

## United In Action

Our team continues to be astounded by the heartfelt support from our community. It has warmed our hearts to witness the unity, compassion, and kindness that defines our region as individuals, businesses, and organizations join one another in the mission to prevent and eliminate domestic violence and sexual assault. From holiday family adoptions to church and corporate fundraisers, every act of kindness has directly impacted survivors by strengthening The Bridge's support services and resources.



## Our Everlasting Gratitude

This past year, we saw firsthand how your support created a ripple effect spreading far beyond our survivor support services. Our community's contributions fueled our progress in raising awareness, shaping policies, and fostering safer communities. Looking back on our achievements, we are reminded of the collective strength that continues to create powerful change. The survivors who found safety, increased community awareness, and growth in youth empowerment were made possible thanks to you. Our entire team is deeply thankful for your continued support for survivors and our overall community.

## Your Support Build A Path to Safety

Your ongoing support enables further progress in our mission and the accessibility of resources and support for survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault. Every contribution helps ensure that The Bridge can continue offering free and confidential services to individuals in search of healing after enduring unimaginable trauma. Most importantly, your support directly creates a lasting impact and shows survivors that they are not alone.



## Double Your Impact

To further secure access to The Bridge's services, the Rupert Dunklau Foundation has graciously awarded The Bridge with a matching gift of up to \$20,000. With this generous gift, each dollar you give will have double the impact and go even further in supporting those who have been impacted by domestic violence and sexual assault. We are deeply thankful for your support and consideration.

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

On average, it takes 7 attempts before a survivor leaves an abusive relationship for good. For one local survivor, the story she shares about her own escape from domestic violence shines a clear spotlight on the hardships survivors face when leaving.

Growing up in a protective family, she yearned to spread her wings and live life on her own terms. After enrolling at Midland University, her world expanded and she longed to connect with people who had grown up far away from Nebraska.

As she became more involved on campus, she found her path frequently crossing with a carefree, popular student who came from the Big Island. After exchanging phone numbers and spending time together at gatherings with friends, she couldn't stop herself from daydreaming about the next time she would see him again. She found herself getting closer to him and feeling like she was on cloud 9 when they were together.

In one night, he made a choice that would push her off of the cloud, and plummeting to the ground.

*"He showed up at my dorm room...hung out for a while, raped me, and stole my sunglasses. Then he left, without a care in the world. He had just taken what he wanted from me the whole time...There was a sadness that crept in that night."*

As time passed, he made small talk with her as if nothing had happened. Then, as her senior year began, her relationship with him evolved into something more serious. Once she moved back home, she spent more time at his place in an attempt to regain the independence she missed from her time on campus. Initially, she loved hanging out with

his friends, but soon her carefree joy transformed into overwhelming anxiety from his growing control and

The arguments escalated, the fights became more frequent...and then he turned violent.

Months passed by filled with constant fighting, which led her to move back in with her parents. Their home provided a place for her to plan a future away from Fremont, but when she told him goodbye, he broke her car's side mirror, threw her phone into the snow, and did everything he could to stop her. Somehow that night, she found the courage and strength to get into her car and drive away.

She moved to Minnesota hoping that distance would bring peace. Peace did come, but not long after crossing paths with him after visiting a mutual friend, she was pulled back into the chaos. After six months of secretly dating, she was ready to leave again, but this time it was different. She was pregnant with twins.

*"When our daughters were almost 3 months old, I realized I finally had something to live for...After being raped by him again and made to feel like I was only good for sex, I decided it was time to get my daughters a life where they could grow up and never have to be hurt by him. I got help from The Bridge getting away until he was arrested."*

The relief brought by his arrest was short-lived. While he was incarcerated, scheduled court-ordered visits brought the difficult challenge of leaving her 7-month-old daughters at the prison with him for an hour. When they returned, she hid her heartbreak while she comforted her distraught and crying babies. She relied heavily on Jennifer, her Advocate at The Bridge, for support while she stayed strong for her girls. It was only when he was released from prison and far away in Hawaii that her constant stress and fear began to ease.

*"I'm sure none of the stress and hurt from those times will ever be completely gone...but you learn to live with the scars and make them into something that can still be beautiful, which I feel like I have been able to do."*

Now with three beautiful daughters and a supportive partner, she closes her story with a message of hope and healing.

*"The thing about healing is that everyone has their own way, and not everyone will like the way you choose. Sometimes I can't believe all of that was ever my life. I am so grateful to be able to stand here today knowing I survived. I am so much stronger than I ever believed."*

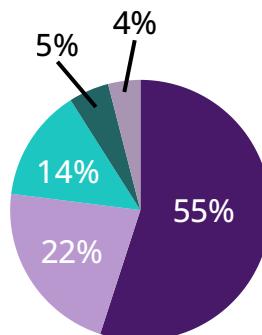


# FINANCIAL Overview

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.

## 2024-2025 Expenses

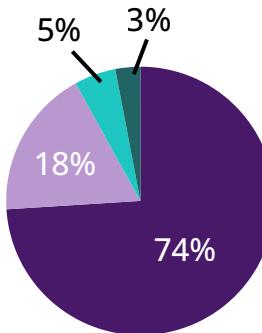
Crisis Support	\$527,135	55%
Subrecipients*	\$201,790	22%
Education & Prevention	\$131,783	14%
Administrative	\$47,500	5%
Development	\$40,000	4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$948,208</b>	



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

## 2024-2025 Revenue

Federal & State Grants	\$701,608	74%
Private Contributions	\$162,093	18%
United Way	\$50,000	5%
Special Events	\$34,507	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$948,208</b>	



The fiscal year for The Bridge begins July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025

Proud Partner of the Fremont Area United Way 

# OUTREACH Achievements

## Elevating Outreach & Survivor Support

As this past year flew by, our awareness campaigns reached thousands of individuals through a range of diverse channels, including social media, community events, and fundraising activities. These efforts not only succeeded in highlighting the current challenges of domestic violence and sexual assault but also shined a spotlight on essential information regarding resources and support available to survivors and their families.



**263**

financial  
donors



**167**

in-kind  
donations



**17**

awareness  
events



**3,036**

social media  
followers

As a result of our collective efforts, we raised over \$940,000 in grants and donations. This powerful achievement showcases the enduring support of our community and the deep faith they place in our mission. Whether virtual or in-person, the results of our fundraising and awareness efforts surpassed our expectations. With each campaign and event, we successfully expanded our network of partnerships while also forging stronger relationships with local organizations and individuals united in their support for survivors.

## Moving Forward Together

All the achievements from this past year are a testament to our community's steadfast commitment to stand with survivors and eliminate domestic violence and sexual assault. Together, we have the momentum necessary to fill our future with respect, hope, and safety for all.



# Reflecting On A Year of Impact

After traveling through the pages of this year's annual Advocate Report, we hope you will join us in taking a moment to pause and reflect on our journey together thus far. The months between July 2024 and June 2025 overflowed with resilience, compassion, and our community's unwavering commitment to prevent and eliminate domestic violence and sexual assault for our generation and the generations of the future.



This past year's progress stands as a testament to the remarkable strength of survivors, the dedication of our staff and volunteers, and the support of our friends, supporters, and the wider community. We faced unforeseen challenges, celebrated victories, and brought a spotlight to the issues that matter most.

Your gifts provided through time, resources, and unwavering support made our work throughout the year possible. Each and every contribution brought us closer to a safer, more compassionate environment for all. The Bridge team is truly grateful for your trust, commitment, and belief in our cause.

There is no doubt that together we are creating lasting change in our community. Looking to the year ahead, we move forward with hope, determination, and sincere gratitude.

## 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.



### Stay Informed

Subscribe to our newsletter and follow us on social media.

## Our Staff

Suzanne Smith  
*Executive Director*

Stacey Lichtenberg  
*Community Education Coordinator*

Madison Laake  
*Marketing Coordinator*

Rossana Jaeger  
*Spanish Speaking Services Coordinator*

Jody Bykerk  
*Shelter Program Manager*

Jennifer Thomason  
*Advocacy Program Manager*

Kylie Kampshneider  
*Criminal Justice Advocacy Coordinator*

## Board of Directors

Cathi Sampson  
*President*

Kiley Cordes

Stephanie Scheer

Kate Chrisman  
*Vice President*

Kim Schwarz

Cindi Hermanson

Nikki Beatty  
*Treasurer*

Kelly Johnson

Vivian Sanchez

Claire Eckhardt  
*Secretary*

Kelsey Maas

Jena Seitz

## 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)



[BridgeFromViolence.com](http://BridgeFromViolence.com)



[TheBridgeFremontNE](#)



[TheBridgeNE](#)



[The Bridge From Violence](#)



141 SOUTH UNION  
FREMONT, NE 68025