

Safety Net News

Fall 2022

Published by the McLeod Alliance

Alliance Celebrates New Grants



Alliance Advocate Ofelia Vergara with staff members from the Glencoe Area Community Foundation.

“At the McLeod Alliance we are so grateful for the generosity of the Glencoe Area Community Foundation for helping us serve our mission of providing education, empowerment, protection and advocacy to domestic violence victims in our community. This grant will help specifically with providing protection and education about the services we provide, and act as a quick resource to victims that is easily accessible and concealable. This resource not only helps our law enforcement spread our mission, but also provides confidential resources to those in our community who need our services the most.” ~*Amanda Raisanen,*

Executive Director



Vergara focuses on Hispanic outreach in McLeod County

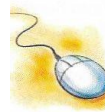
In an effort to provide outreach to Hispanic migrant workers, Ofelia presented McLeod Alliance information during orientation at Seneca Foods in Glencoe. “Hispanic Community outreach is extremely important- no one deserves to live in violence. People need to be aware of all the resources available in the community, and most importantly, know their rights.” —Ofelia Vergara, Alliance Advocate



The Alliance was awarded the UWMC Community Small Grant, presented by Debra Siensen, Program Manager from United Way of McLeod County.



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For current news, log onto:
www.mcleodalliance.org

From the Director's Desk: McLeod Alliance welcomes Amanda Raisanen as new Executive Director!

Raisanen comes from a background of leadership, with a strong emphasis in both business practices and finance. She acquired her Master's in Business Administration in spring of 2020 from Western Governors University, and has gained industry experience in both healthcare and leadership through her employment at Bethesda and Divine House Inc. Raisanen transitioned in her new role mid-July of this year and is welcomed on behalf of the Board of Directors and staff at the McLeod Alliance.



Amanda Raisanen

"I am incredibly humbled and excited to take on this new role as Executive Director for the McLeod Alliance. It is an honor to serve an organization that has been in operation in our community since 1992. As I transition into this role, I recognize the responsibility I will take on to provide leadership and fulfill the many needs of our community. I will do so by being a good steward of the funds our grantees and donors graciously provide and committing to building a space where collaboration in our community to eliminate domestic violence can be achieved. I am so passionate about this cause, and know how critical our work is for the survivors and victims of domestic violence in McLeod County."

*~ Amanda Raisanen
Executive Director*

From the Board Chair: Welcome!

Greetings!
Please join me in welcoming Amanda to our Alliance family. We are all excited to have your talents leading the team and are looking forward to a bright future.

Continued on page 3...



Sandi Sportelli

Seasonal Changes

Continued from page 2

Having a new director and fall coming has gotten me thinking about seasonal changes. Yes, I know...two potentially scary things, change and snow on the horizon...haha! Different “seasons” in life bring us careers, relationships, children, furry children, and lessons. I was thinking back on when my beautiful and furry Nala came into my life, how I was grieving the loss of the one before her, not knowing, she too was sent to me for a purpose. You see my last furry child, Samantha, was like me, she too was a domestic abuse survivor. We survived together, which sometimes I think it was more her saving me, but nonetheless we were bonded because of our trials. I have often said my Sammie came back to me as a butterfly, anyone see the irony??

October not only brings some beautiful scenery, but also Domestic Abuse Awareness Month. Domestic violence is prevalent in every community, and doesn’t discriminate on who it affects. Physical violence is often accompanied by emotional abuse or controlling behavior. Domestic violence can cross generations and last a lifetime. Just because someone’s relationship looks so perfect on social media or in public DOES NOT mean it’s not happening at home. Please do me a favor, watch for signs in your own circle and help who you can. Remember we at the Alliance are here for you today and always!

Thank you for continuing to support McLeod Alliance!

~ *Sandi Sportelli*
Board Chair

ALLIANCE WISH LIST



The community donates many needed items to the Alliance for which we are forever grateful. Currently needed items:

Tissues, Paper Towels

Diapers (size 4, 5, 6)

Fabric Softener

Laundry Soap/
Dryer Sheets

Toilet Paper

Baby Wipes

Meet Our Newest Member... Tara Drahos

Family? My late husband and I raised two wonderful children in the Hutchinson area. My daughter is 24 and graduated from the University of MN with an Animal Science degree. She works for the Humane Society and lives in St. Paul. My son is 20 and attends the University of Wisconsin, River Falls where he plays football and is pursuing a degree in Biology as he aspires to be a chiropractor someday. I am very close to my mother who also lives in Hutchinson and to my late husband's family who live in the area.



Employment? I have been employed by Hutchinson Health for nearly 21 years. My current role is the Vice President of Clinic Operations and I work with very talented leaders to oversee the day-to-day functions of our clinics and patient registration. I have been in this position for nearly three years and prior to this role, I was the manager of the Mental Health Clinic at Hutchinson Health for 13 years. I have a passion for ensuring the highest quality care for the mental health of patients in our community and surrounding areas and am pleased to still be able to serve the needs of that particular patient population.

Hobbies? I love to travel and I have been very fortunate as I have visited beach destinations many times. I have also been to Europe several times and Ireland is my favorite destination. I also love to read, listen to music, walk, and watch movies. I also own a Harley Davidson motorcycle and generally take a short motorcycle trip each summer with friends (always wear a helmet folks!).

Why serve on the Board? I believe strongly in the mission of this organization. The work they do is invaluable to the community and I want to ensure their message is not only communicated, but proliferated to increase awareness. After hearing more about the individual roles of each staff member, I also want to ensure they know they have the support of the board. I also want to serve as an advocate for the victims as they are the purpose for the mission and many are unable or unwilling to speak for themselves.

Hopes for the Alliance? My hope is that the McLeod Alliance will continue to grow in their donor base to be able to do more things for their clients. I hope there is growth in the awareness, not only of their good work, but in the overwhelming prevalence of domestic violence.

Thoughts for the public? I have lived in the area for nearly three decades and had no idea of the breadth and scope of the work of the McLeod Alliance. The staff are tireless in their pursuit of justice, kindness, grace, and patience. They do amazing work with very little recognition from the community. That's not why they do it, though. They do it because it's their passion. It has to be, because the work can be painful to witness and they must each manage their own emotions and build their personal resilience. I challenge all community members to learn more about the McLeod Alliance and to follow in the footsteps of the staff by living a life of justice, kindness, grace, and patience. My other thoughts go out to all of the victims of all ages, genders, ethnicities, races, etc. Abuse takes many forms and just because someone isn't hitting you, it doesn't mean you aren't being abused. The McLeod Alliance is ready and willing to help you.

A Letter from Sheena P.

With April being National Child Abuse Prevention Month, I thought it to be a perfect time to show the true culture of Tech-Etch and what our company can do for our community. I approached Tim here in Litchfield and explained that my daughter Audryna was murdered almost 8 years ago, and McLeod Alliance saved my life when I needed it most. Tim quickly responded with, “Anything for the children, and we will figure something out”.

A little of my story of the past 7 ½ years:

My daughter Audryna was brutally murdered by her father and his girlfriend when she was 3 years old. This changed my entire world. I tried by myself to manage my grief, but this grief was too much to manage on my own. Day 50 after losing my daughter, I woke up feeling like I could not go on living anymore. I knew I had to survive my loss. I had my son to live for, but the pain was unimaginable and unbearable. That morning I Googled “Who do I go to when I cannot live in my pain anymore?” McLeod Alliance was the top response.



I drove to their building and waited for them to open up that morning. I was greeted by Glynis, and I had to admit to her that I wanted to die. I told her my story of losing Audryna, and that I was trying to make sense of what I could not come to terms with. Glynis embraced me and told me there was no making sense of what happened, and every emotion I felt, I was entitled to. The longer she and I sat there talking, the more I knew I was where I needed to be. Glynis brought me to speak with the legal advocate so I could understand what I was up against and what was to come in the following years in the court system. They were there with me to ensure my daughter was brought justice. They continued to remind me I was not alone in my grief, loss, and now the fight for Audryna. The amount of time and energy they spent advocating for Audryna and myself can never be repaid, but I will always try.

I became stronger because of the Alliance. I fought the court system for years and demanded the perpetrators be held accountable. I went on to speak at law enforcement, EMT, and firefighter conferences throughout the United States to remind them of the power of being a mandated reporter, shared Audryna’s story, and spoke of laws that protect children. Sharing Audryna’s story is always hard, but I do this so that other children do not lose their lives, and so that others can stand and be strong. I will continue to fight to protect those who are suffering and those who no longer have a voice. But I could not have done this without McLeod Alliance helping me find my strength and reminding me I didn’t stand in this fight alone. I know anyone working for the Alliance goes to work every single day expecting they will see the worst of the stories walk through their doors, but they do this with love and courage.

News Briefs



McLeod Alliance spoke at the Brownton Women's Club 100th Year Anniversary Celebration in May.



Advocacy Coordinator, Glynis Vacek, receives a donation from Temple Lodge 59.



In May, Temple Lodge 59 hosted their annual Pancake Breakfast fundraiser at the Elk's Lodge in Hutchinson. They organize and host this annual event in an effort to raise funds for McLeod Alliance.

Continued from page 5...

#JusticeForAudrynaGrace #ChildAbusePrevention

I am so blessed to work for a company that is willing to give to an amazing cause to ensure victims have what I was given so many years ago. Thank you all at McLeod Alliance for all you do every single day. Tech-Etch appreciates you beyond measure. Tech-Etch is proudly able to donate \$740 in memory of Audryna Grace and all the children who have lost their lives to abuse. Please remember, if you find yourself or know someone in an unsafe situation, you are not alone. Please reach out to your local Law Enforcement or your local Alliance for Victims and they will ensure you have the services you need. You will never fight alone.

Calendar of Events

As always, stay updated on McLeod Alliance events on Facebook & Instagram!

October

- Domestic Violence Awareness Month (DVAM2022)
- McLeod Alliance Board Retreat

November

- 11/23 Office closes at 3:30 pm
- 11/24 Office closed for Thanksgiving
- 11/25 Office closed for Thanksgiving
- Annual Fund Drive

December

- 12/22-12/27 Office closed for Christmas
- 12/30 Office closes at 3:30 pm

January

- National Stalking Awareness Month
- 01/02 Office closed for New Years

February

- Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month
- Bowlathon

Like us on Facebook & Instagram!
Find McLeod Alliance & become a supporter.



News Briefs



Welcoming Proclamation signed by Mayor of Glencoe, Ryan Voss. Bilingual Advocate & Hispanic Outreach Coordinator, Ofelia Vergara, is a member of the welcoming committee, a grassroots group of community members working to build a sense of belonging in Glencoe.

This is their 2nd year hosting the Welcoming Week Block Party, which is held in September.



Alliance staff partners with UWMC at the 2022 McLeod County Fair.



Tech-Etch Litchfield Donated for National Child Abuse Prevention Month in April. Pictured above is Alliance advocate, Glynis, and Sheena P.

A Gracious Thank You to Our Donors! (December 2022- August 2022 Donors)

Anderson, Marlys
Anonymous Cash Donation
Beckmann, Travis
Benefit Community Action Fund
Benevity Community Impact Fund
Bening, Jeanette
Blackbaud Giving Fund
Brosz, Brian & Glennis
Brownton Women's Club
Cannon, Mike & Amber
Charities Aid Foundation of America
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Citizen's Insurance Co.
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Hutchinson Health Care Auxillary
Hutchinson Women of Today
Inglis, Mary & Tom
Johnson, Brett & Shari
Johnson, Ralph & Geri
Just Giving
Kiwans Club of Hutchinson
Lemke, Laure & Lee
Lindstrand, Phyllis

Lopez-Re, Nora
McLeod Coop Power
McLeod County
McLeod County VA program
Minnesota Masonic Charities
Network for Good
New Journey United Church of Christ
Office of Justice Programs
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Otto, Jane & Chris
Petersen, Susan
Pilgrim, Paulus
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Schott, Gary & Deb
Schutt, Kim
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St. Boniface CCW
St. Paul's Women's ML
Stearns Foundation
Stewart Lions
Tech-Etch, Inc.
Temple Lodge #59
Thrivent
United Way of McLeod County
Vineyard Methodist Church
Violence Free MN
Wal Mart
Ward, Mary Ann
Weber, Bob

McLeod Alliance Thanks Community for Support:

Thank you to all the groups and individuals who have generously donated to us. Your gift truly makes a difference in the lives of those affected by domestic violence! We apologize, however, if we have accidentally omitted your name. Please let us know and we will publish it in our next newsletter.



Legal Advocate, Karina Robeck, provides teen dating violence prevention education to youth in our community. In the Spring, Robeck was invited to speak with students at New Century Academy. If you're interested in McLeod Alliance speaking to your middle or high school students, contact us!

McLeod Alliance, Inc.
P.O. Box 393
Hutchinson, MN 55350

**Receiving duplicates? Incorrect
addresses? New person in position?**

We'd like to know. Please contact the Alliance by mail, e-mail, or phone, and we'll take care of the problem. Thanks!

McLeod Alliance, Inc.
Staff

Executive Director
Amanda Raisanen

Advocacy Coordinator
Glynis Vacek

Bilingual Advocacy Program
Ofelia Vergara

Legal Advocate
Karina Robeck

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United Way . . .



United Way of McLeod County

United Way
Helps Here

Telephone: 320-234-7933
Out of Area: 800-934-0851

E-Mail: mavdv@hutchtel.net
Web site: www.mcleodalliance.org





A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO OUR 2021 FUND DRIVE DONORS!

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Schwab Charitable Fund
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