



Safety Net News

October, November, December 2020

Published by the McLeod Alliance

Remembering lives tragically lost

Intimate partner homicide victims honored in annual memorial



The VFMN memorial featured Lori Greene's art, which was created for the Survivors of Sexual Assault Memorial in Minneapolis.

By Jane Otto
McLeod Alliance Volunteer

In 2020, 28 people died as a result of domestic violence. The oldest person was 72. The youngest were three children under two. Four victims were pregnant. Six were bystanders, four of whom were family members attempting to stop the violence. Many children were in the home when their parents were murdered. They were strangled, stabbed, and beaten. Half of the victims were shot.

Violence Free Minnesota (VFMN) Communications Director Becky Smith shared this information

during the VFMN's Intimate Partner Homicide Memorial on January 26. This was the 10th annual memorial and the first virtual one. That afternoon 172 attended the virtual memorial.

"It is our sincere intention to use this platform and the voices of advocates and elected officials to honor your loved ones as we work toward a world free of violence, harm, and fear," Smith said as she welcomed those who attended the virtual memorial, particularly family and friends of the victims.

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Lori Greene mosaic art

Learn more about the art featured in the Intimate Partner Homicide Memorial hosted by Violence Free Minnesota.

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Log onto our Web site at
www.mcleodalliance.org
for current news.

From the Director's desk:

Christmas project sponsors make holidays happy

Hi all...what a holiday season we had here at the Alliance. Thank you, first of all, to all those who helped sponsor our Christmas Connection Project.

Ten local families had a merry Christmas this year because of your generosity. I also want to personally thank everyone who donated cash or supplies to help.

We are so grateful to have a community that supports us. The Annual



Rhonda Buerkle

Fund Drive is about to wrap up for this year. A list of all who donated will be published in the spring newsletter.

We are sad to not be able to see everyone at our annual Bowlathon in February. Please be sure to look for information for the next event in upcoming newsletters and on Facebook and Instagram.

Stay safe and have a happy New Year!

Rhonda Buerkle
Executive Director

From the Board Chair:

2020 – a challenging year in many ways

Let me start by saying thank you to the many of you who support our organization through the Annual Fund Drive. Your continued support is why we can continue to help so many people.

For those of you who support the bowlathon, I hope you find fun ways to challenge yourself and your teams to raise money differently. Virtual walkathon, video game challenges, or other ways if you want to continue to support our group in a team competition.

In reflecting on 2020, it was a hard year, full of change and tough decisions for our organization, community and many of our supporters. Many faced lay-offs, uncertainty, and months of business closures. Everyone needed to change how they did things.

Honestly, 2020 for me is a blur, trapped among binge watching television programs, figuring out how to work from home or work safely in an office facility, learning to be the teacher when online school wasn't enough, and keeping my family on track at school. I am just glad we are coming out the other side soon.



Susan Noyes

Not only has this year been a personal challenge, those challenges continued in every aspect of life. Our group had to figure out how to support our clients in different ways. The hardest was the distance from clients when we knew they needed comfort that only a face-to-face interaction or hug can bring. I think many of us are reflecting about the little things in life: hugs, conversations with friends, going to school, attending meetings in person and just the ability to be near another human being.

2020 also brought on other fears for me.

Confinement is not my strong suit. I was afraid for our victims, and for those who could

become victims because of this unusual situation. Many families faced situations they have never faced before and the stress of everything could bubble out of control.

My fears slowly subsided as some things started to open, and kids went back to school. Everything ebbed and flowed for a while, but now I see light at the end of our tunnel. Good times with friends and family will be upon us soon. Until then, stay healthy and safe and thank you for your continued support.

Susan Noyes
Board Chair

Kind hearts, good deeds done

McLeod Alliance Christmas project

Despite the Covid pandemic, the Alliance had 12 sponsors who made happy holidays happen for 10 client families.

The Alliance is so thankful to all the sponsors for making the project possible while in the midst of a pandemic.

Holiday shopping was a bit different this year, but that didn't deter the sponsors. The challenge for advocates Ofelia Vergara and Karina Robeck was organizing the project without the help and enthusiasm of advocate Glynis Vacek, who was out of the office until January.

After the shopping and wrapping was complete, sponsors brought their gifts to the Alliance office. One client, however, asked if she could wrap the gifts herself.

If you are interested in being a Christmas project sponsor for 2021, contact the Alliance office at 320-234-7933.



Pictured above right: The children of one anonymous sponsor bringing the Christmas gifts to the office.



Pictured right: Jennifer Walz's family donated 28 tie blankets this past December, many of which were given to our Christmas Project recipients this year.

Voicing a collective commitment

Continued from front page

VFMN has been collecting data on intimate partner homicides for more than 20 years. Since 1989, 733 people have died due to domestic violence. As the coalition collects that data each year, Smith said, “We understand that each victim has a story beyond their murder . . . Each person has someone who misses their presence and strives to keep them in their memory.”

These memorials began 10 years ago at the request of the victims’ loved ones. However, they also asked that the memorial “be an opportunity to create a meaningful systemic change and work towards a violence-free Minnesota,” Smith said.

This year’s memorial had four speakers, all of whom focused on the systemic change needed to curb domestic violence and to address the causes for the disparity in the number of people of color who are too often domestic violence victims.

Sixty percent of 2020’s victims were people of color, Minnesota’s Lt. Gov. Peggy Flanagan said. Systemic racial disparities compounds violence by limiting services to these women, she said. “We must operate with equity and anti racism at the core of our actions.”

Flanagan and State Sen. Mary Kunesch-Podein spoke about Minnesota’s task force Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women. Co-chair and creator of the task force, Kunesch-Podein, said the task force studies why indigenous women are more likely to be murdered or go missing. “From 2010 to 2018,

“We share a collective commitment to each other to work toward a violence-free Minnesota.”

~ Becky Smith
Communications Director,
Violence Free Minnesota

eight percent of those domestic violence victims were American Indians, though they are only one percent of the population in Minnesota,” she said. “We all know it’s not just them who suffer this disparity through generations.”

The state senator said it’s the intention of the task force that the positive changes made through its recommendations bring about good results for all communities.

Minnesota Department of Public Health commissioner, Jan Malcolm echoed similar sentiments telling viewers that Covid has brought relationship violence in public view. Public health crises do not cause relationship violence, but combined with the “isolation, economic fallout, lack of social contact, and reduced resources cannot be ignored.”

Malcolm stressed that relationship violence is a public health issue. In addition to the violence, it impacts the emotional, social, financial and sexual health of those victims, as well as the safety of entire communities.

“No one should ever be made to be threatened in their own homes,” said Artyce Thomas, executive director of Rochester’s Women’s Shelter and Support Center. Thomas’s hope is to have

the capacity to help twice as many victims. She added that she says that “with confliction, as it is also my hope to work myself out of a job.”

This memorial, of course, is also to remember and honor those victims. State Rep. Tim Miller, State Rep. Ruth Richardson, and State Sen. Julie Rosen read the names of those 28 people while their photos were displayed. Watching the memorial virtually alone with little or no distractions, made each face shown strike a somber and melancholy chord over and over again.

Prior to the names being read, Thomas discussed how advocacy programs are “beacons of lights” for these victims and illuminate paths to safety and dignity. “As we fondly remember our dear loved ones,” she said, “let us all promise to continue to let our individual light shine through volunteering, through words of affirmation, through policy, and through activism. Whatever that thing is for you, do it. Do it with kindness and do it with love.”

The entire memorial service can be watched on YouTube. Enter Violence Free Minnesota Memorial in the search field.



Artyce Thomas



Becky Smith



Lori Greene of Mosaics on a Stick created the panels that tell the story of survival and are part of the Memorial to Survivors of Sexual Violence. The memorial is located in Boom Island Park in northeast Minneapolis. The art was shown during the VFMN memorial while Elena Anderson read her poem, "Daybreak."

Memorial to Survivors of Sexual Violence

This memorial is the first of its kind in the nation. Survivor and founder of the organization Break the Silence, Sarah Super pitched the idea to the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board in November 2015.

In October 2020, the memorial was celebrated virtually, thanks to a team of landscape architects, community organizers, project planners, financial managers, and construction planners, in addition to Super and artist Lori Greene.

To learn more about the memorial or to view the Survivors Memorial celebration, visit the website at survivorsmemorial.org.

Our wish list

The community donates many needed items to the Alliance for which we are forever grateful. Presently, our clients particularly need:

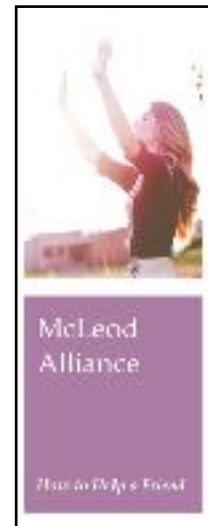
- ✓ Plastic utensils
- ✓ Tissues
- ✓ Kitchen-size trash bags
- ✓ Dixie cups
- ✓ Napkins

Cash donations are always appreciated. We can then use the money toward specific items that we may need later.

Thank you for your generosity!

Brochures available

If you, your business, or school would like some of the Alliance flyers, "How to Help a Friend," please call the office at 320-234-7933 or email besafe@hutchtel.net. The brochure offers guidance as to helping others in abusive relationships. The brochure is also available in Spanish.



News briefs

Alliance seeks new board members

Executive Director Rhonda Buerkle said the Alliance is presently seeking new board members. Board members meet monthly to provide programming support and ideas, review agency finances, support and evaluate the director, and research fundraising ideas among other duties.

If anyone is interested or for more information, contact Rhonda at 320-234-7933 or mavdv@hutchtel.net.

Alliance office is open

Please remember that the Alliance office is open 8 a.m. –

4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

The staff asks that you call, if possible, prior to coming as many issues can be addressed over the phone. Proper hygiene procedures are also followed.

Weekly support groups

Every Wednesday Bilingual Advocate Ofelia Vergara leads a Spanish-speaking support group for survivors. The meetings are about 90 minutes long. The group adheres to social distancing guidelines. Also, our other support group still meets at 6 p.m. every Thursday. For more information, call Ofelia at 320-234-7933.

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THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROUS LOCAL CONTRIBUTIONS

October 1 through December 31, 2020

Monetary

Jon Krogh
Lucille Newcomb
Frontstream
Don & Jaqueline Glas
Connie Ericson
Degree of Honor #182
McLeod County V.A.
Cris & Linda Remucal
Paulus Pilgrim
Walmart of Hutchinson
GFWC of Silver Lake

Blackbaud Giving Fund
Burich Foundation
House on a Hill
Network for Good
Kruse Family
Bear Lake Beavers 4-H

In-Kind

Joyce Krycil – Hygiene products
Vineyard United Methodist Church – children's blankets
JoAnn Gueningsman – phones

Jennifer Walz – tie blankets
Jessica Rand/Tetra Pak – medicine
DeeDee – coats & jackets
Peace Lutheran Church - books
Katharine - sweatpants
Denise Nohner - beauty products
Beth & Jason Madison - Play Station gift card
Steph O./Hutchinson Mental Health – Cash Wise gift cards, gas cards, trash bags, hygiene products, tissues



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.

How we can help stop domestic violence

The following ideas are from the website [ideas.Ted.com](https://ideas.ted.com), “How we can help end domestic violence.” It features activist Esta Soler, who helped pass the Violence Against Women Act more than 25 years ago and Leslie Morgan Steiner, author, activist, and domestic violence survivor. Steiner’s memoir, *Crazy Love*, spent three weeks on The NY Times bestseller list.

- Make sure that any kid who’s been exposed to violence gets help early.
- Create programs in schools and communities that give people healthy relationship tools.
- Create prevention programs for young athletes in middle school, high school and college that teach young athletes that domestic violence is not acceptable.
- Raise awareness of the complexity of domestic violence. All relationships and situations are

different. We shouldn’t be asking, “Why doesn’t she leave him?” but “Why does he hit someone who loves him?”

- *Break the silence. You have no idea who you’re helping when you talk about it. You might be a lifeline to someone. The only way we can get past the ignorance is to talk openly about it.*

- *Don’t call this a women’s issue. Eighty-five percent of victims are women, but the vast majority of perpetrators are men. It’s critical that men be engaged as spokespeople, too. The victim needs the most help, but it’s important to know why men feel that it is somehow acceptable to beat the people who love them. Batterers need to get help so they don’t continue to do this.*

- *Start having conversations about domestic violence when kids are just starting to date. Typically when they transition from elementary to middle school may be one of the best places to start. Research has*

found that kids who came from homes where a high level of violence existed used these types of programs more successfully than kids in general.

- *If you’re a doctor or nurse, screen for violence exposure.*

“It’s not about just getting people help after they’ve been hurt. Let’s prevent this,” Soler said.

You can read the entire article at [ideas.Ted.com](https://ideas.ted.com) or listen to Soler’s talk at TED Talks: How we turned the tide on domestic violence.

Steiner’s talk is also at TED Talks: Why domestic violence victims don’t leave?



Calendar of Events

February

Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month

February 16: 5:15 p.m. McLeod Alliance Board digital meeting

March

National Women’s History Month

March 16: 5:15 p.m. McLeod Alliance Board digital meeting

April

Sexual Assault Awareness Month

April 20: 5:15 p.m. McLeod Alliance Board digital meeting

Ongoing

Hispanic Support Group meets weekly on Wednesdays, while Support Group meets Thursdays. Masks and social distancing are required.



McLeod Alliance, Inc.
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Receiving duplicates? Incorrect addresses? New person in position?

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

McLeod Alliance, Inc. Staff

Executive Director
Rhonda Buerkle

Advocacy Coordinator
Glynis Vacek

Bilingual Advocacy Program
Ofelia Vergara

Legal Advocate
Karina Robeck

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Please invest in your local
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Helps Here

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