

Issued:  
October 2024

# McLeod Alliance Quarterly News

## Change Brings More Stories

Our newsletter has a new look and new schedule!

Crow River Press has supported our organization for many years by donating 100% of printing costs for our semi-annual newsletter mailings. We are beyond grateful for their support over the many years!

Due to the recent closure of Crow River Press, our organization has made the decision to switch to a more condensed format and more frequent newsletter schedule to be fiscally responsible while still keeping the public informed. Instead of semi-annually, our newsletter will be mailed quarterly in its more condensed version.

This edition will include Qtrs. 3-4, but thereafter will follow the schedule listed below:

- 1st quarter newsletter published: January 2025
- 2nd quarter newsletter published: April 2025
- 3rd quarter newsletter published: July 2025
- 4th quarter newsletter published: October 2025

As always, we appreciate your support and the opportunity to share the work being done at the Alliance with our newsletter subscribers!

*McLeod  
Alliance Team*

## Otto Bremer Trust and Community Partners Support Housing Project

Funding provided by Otto Bremer and local community partners will be used to respond to the needs of domestic violence victims and survivors by funding long-term or permanent housing solutions to end the cycle of abuse. The primary goal of this program is for victims to have a safe escape while fleeing abuse that will establish a long-term housing plan for them and their families to break the cycle of abuse by eliminating an abuser's power and control.

Dollars received will go to assist with rent, security deposits, moving costs, and utility hookup fees. This program is a collaborative effort from multiple funding sources, including the Otto Bremer Trust: Community Response Fund, Office of Justice Programs, private donors, and All Mighty Movers.

Our team has new emails!  
No worries, we still will have access to our former emails during this time of transition. See our new contact information below:



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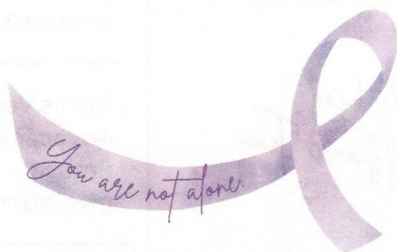
OTTO  
BREMER  
TRUST



## Survivor Shares Story for Domestic Violence Awareness Month

On a bitterly cold winter day in the middle of the pandemic, he spoke the words that crushed my soul and sent me into "freeze" mode: "Your trust doesn't matter." So cold, but finally so honest. The truth. It hit me like a ton of bricks. I couldn't catch my breath from the blow of those words, and my heart felt physical pain for two weeks. Can someone die from a broken heart? How am I still alive, I wondered? I couldn't move.

He had shattered the foundation of our marriage twice before. The first time was when he married me without informed consent, withholding information about his past. Marriage was like a hidden bear trap that I unwittingly fell into and saw no way out of. It was all my fault, he said, the confusing way he treated me—vacillating predictably between charm and coldheartedness. The years rolled on with me trying ever harder to be submissive and kind, abandoning my career to serve him, and bearing the full load of household labor. It was never enough. He insulted me, sabotaged my efforts, isolated me from the community, and made big financial decisions in secret. Any attempt I made to express an opinion, need, or feeling was met with accusation, anger, and defensiveness. There was no way to solve problems together. The iciness of this marriage reduced me to an empty shell. I didn't know who I was anymore or who I used to be. I had lost myself. Yet no one knew.



"You have options," a stranger said to me...out of the blue, at a conference I attended with my husband. How? How had she seen me? Invisible to all other eyes...no one before had ever acknowledged my silent suffering or questioned the "happy family" image he portrayed to the world. "No, I don't," I replied in stunned disbelief, imprisoned by my religious belief that divorce was not an option. But what if I DID have options? I started to wonder. This encounter marked the beginning of my healing journey.

From that pivotal day it took three years of secretive study—learning about abuse, slowly finding my voice, beginning to resist abusive tactics—with attacks in return each time—to reach the point where he fully unveiled his true self with those terminal words, "Your trust doesn't matter." In terror, I realized that the one person who had full access to my life secretly hated me from Day One. Would he stop short of killing me? I didn't know.

Finally, in desperation, I turned to the McLeod Alliance. The compassionate staff validated my experience, showed me that I was not alone, and helped me form a plan for escape. They provided moral support and encouragement so needed in my darkest hour. The Alliance helped me find answers to legal questions about the divorce process and recommended a good lawyer who made all the difference. And, when my religious leaders ganged up on me with my abuser, wanting me to stay with him, the Alliance gave me clarity and helped me find the courage to leave that unhealthy community.

Now my kids and I are safe and healthy, enjoying life in our peace-filled home. They are doing well in school. I found meaningful work that gives me joy and pays enough to meet our needs. Thank you for supporting this life-giving rescue operation, the Alliance. I don't know where we would be today if they had not helped us.

## Meet the New Board Chair: Tara Drahos

Hello, my name is Tara Drahos, and I was recently appointed as the Board Chair for the McLeod Alliance. I have been on the board for two years and I am passionate about advocating for the rights of our clients and staff. In my full-time role, I serve as the Vice President of Clinic Operations at Hutchinson Health where we see a broad intersection between mission, vision, and values with the Alliance. I have learned so much during my time with the board and look forward to continued collaboration, advocacy, and success for the organization and the community we serve.



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