



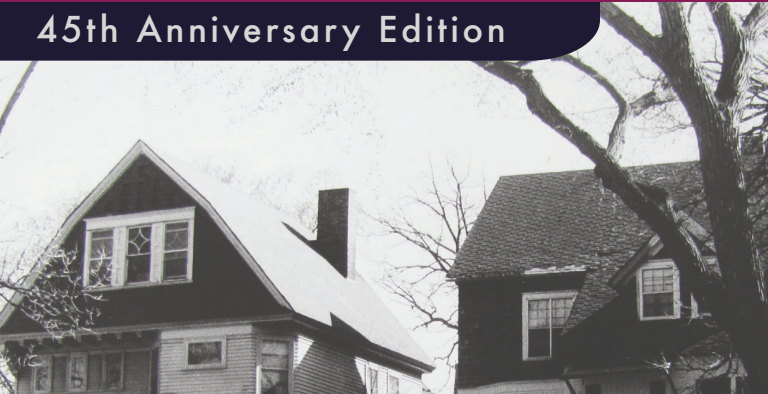
**Women's Advocates**  
Breaking the cycle of domestic violence.

588 Grand Avenue,  
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55102

[wadvocates.org](http://wadvocates.org)

Admin 651.227.9966  
24 Hour Crisis Line 651.227.8284

## 45th Anniversary Edition



## 45 years ago...

By Estelle Brouwer, Executive Director

Forty-five years ago, a group of smart, tough, passionate women started something big here in St. Paul, just as groups of women scattered across the country were doing something similar. All these women had seen enough. They knew women were suffering at the hands of abusive spouses and partners, and it was time to do something about it. So here in St. Paul, they started Women's Advocates. Forty-five years later, women are still suffering and we're still sheltering and helping them heal.

Marking this big anniversary has caused us to look deep and hard at all that we know about domestic violence, all that has been done, and all that remains to be done.

We are motivated and inspired by the women we work with every day, by their stories, their trauma, their journeys to healing. We are energized by the knowledge that working together, we CAN turn the tide on domestic violence. Will you join us in this work?



*A Women's Advocates' collective meeting in the 1970's*

## By the time we're 50...



Women's Advocates has completed a new five-year strategic plan; residents, staff, Board members, supporters, and partners have envisioned where we would like to be by our 50th anniversary in 2024. Women's Advocates has a history of forging paths and creating models where none previously existed, and for the next five years, we plan to continue that trend. Today, we recognize that abuse doesn't start with physical violence, it starts with gender, racial, and economic inequities.

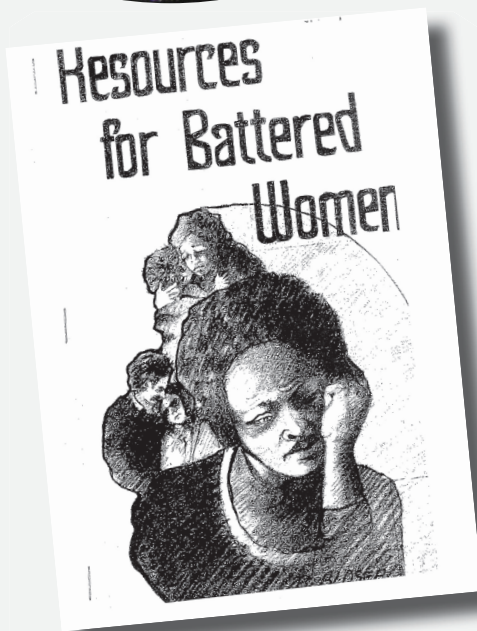
Our new plan puts us on the path to address these root causes of abuse while continuing to provide a safe, supportive environment for victim/survivors and their families. Women's Advocates will mobilize its staff, Board and partners to take a leading role in advocating for women and families so they can live safely and without fear of control and oppression. We will address domestic abuse through a survivor-focused, community-facing Continuum of Safety\* while grounding all our work in the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion. To make this work possible, we will creatively leverage resources in the community, strengthening our efforts and connecting as many survivors as possible to sustainable safety and wellness.

*\*see pages 4-5 for more information*



# On October 11, 1974, the first domestic violence shelter in the U.S. opened its doors.

That shelter was known as the "Women's House" - and it was led by a collective of women called "Women's Advocates." The collective spent the years leading up to this night dedicating their time, homes, and safety to a grassroots effort that surged out of a consciousness raising group. This is how Women's Advocates began. There was no term for domestic violence at the time; it was generally thought to be a private concern not meant for public attention or response. A group of determined people here in St. Paul sought to change that. Soon after, groups of determined people all over this country and the world followed suit.



## Collective action & activism

October 11, 1974, was the culmination of Women's Advocates' grassroots mobilization, consciousness raising, and activism. They pushed back against systems that denied women their right to independence, equality, and safety from their intimate partners' violence and control. The collective of women who started Women's Advocates resisted hierarchy and male dominance. They paid dearly, facing threats, anger, derision from community leaders, and encouragement to do something "less inflammatory."



## The trailblazers learn & adapt.

The collective of Women's Advocates provided shelter and resources to over 1,500 women and children in its first three years. Lessons were learned on the spot regarding overnight shelter scheduling, training volunteers, making consensus-based decisions as a collective, figuring out security systems, and recruiting community support.



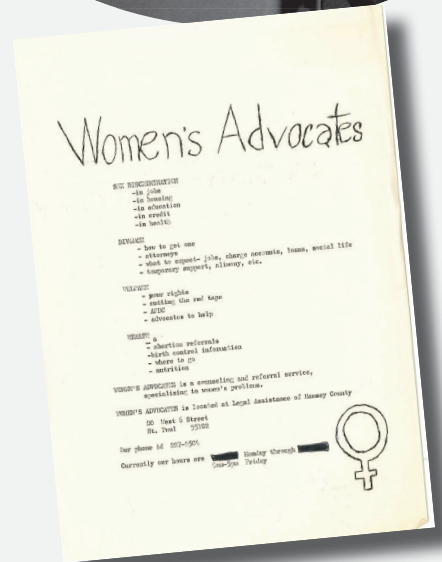
# Sharing our history

Twin Cities PBS has created a documentary series of six short videos based on the story of Women's Advocates. This series documents what it took to launch Women's Advocates: a team of committed people who invaded the Mayor's office, protested police apathy, and hid families in their homes, eventually opening a shelter in a dilapidated building they called the "Women's House." This collective of women spent sleepless nights watching over one another, sharing house chores, managing crises as a team - all without the support of the greater community.



# Lessons for today

Forty-five years later, domestic violence still exists and causes women to call Women's Advocates' crisis line 24 hours a day. Despite a network of domestic violence shelters across the state, today only six percent of callers to Minnesota domestic violence crisis lines find the shelter they need. And according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, one in three women in the U.S. has experienced rape, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner in her lifetime. As we mark the 45th anniversary of the founding of Women's Advocates shelter - the first of its kind - we are committed to better understanding the forces that came together to make it happen, and to transforming that learning into actions that will end domestic violence once and for all.



# See the documentary!

Visit [www.wadvocates.org/about/documentary](http://www.wadvocates.org/about/documentary) to watch the documentary, learn about our history in women's safety, and find out about today's efforts to address the insidiousness of violence against women.



# DOMESTIC ABUSE IS A PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE.

Women's Advocates addresses domestic abuse on a continuum of safety. Focusing on survivors of domestic violence, we provide safety resources, crisis intervention, emergency shelter, and continued advocacy and housing to strengthen stability after shelter.

## A CONTINUUM OF SAFETY FROM ABUSE



90% of the 250+ property managers we surveyed feel prepared to connect a tenant to safety resources after our domestic violence resource training.



Women's Advocates staff of over 30 people learns together and shares resources on healing and safety.



Soon, half of the women leaving our shelter will be able to participate in our Aftercare Program for a year after leaving shelter.



# Women's Advocates & prevention

**WHERE WE LIVE** So tenants can have access to safety resources, we provide landlord safety resource training. Safety at home requires access to resources for those experiencing domestic violence. We also ensure that domestic violence advocates are trained in being housing advocates, and vice versa.

**WHERE WE LEARN** Teachers and students can be great advocates for safety. We're visiting schools to offer dating violence/healthy relationship workshops to train people in schools about safety resources for people experiencing dating/domestic violence. We also engage with students to build peer-based safety resource crews within schools.

**WHERE WE WORK AND GATHER** Women's Advocates is piloting a new 'Safety Resource Crew' program to deploy resource packets to targeted locations across the Twin Cities. Customers who visit businesses may then be able to access safety resources at their dentist, salon, restaurant or gas station if they are experiencing domestic violence and need to find ways to get help.

## Strengthening in-shelter care

**GROUP HEALING** Oasis of Love, a 33-year-old culturally-specific domestic violence support and advocacy organization located in North Minneapolis, will offer a three-week therapeutic healing program for domestic violence survivors at our shelter. Oasis of Love's mission is to support survivors from crisis to success.

**RESIDENT AND STAFF HEALING** To meet the healing needs of program participants and address vicarious trauma experienced by staff at Women's Advocates, Dr. Sheila Sweeney, PhD, LICSW, provides reflective consultation with staff in group and individual settings.

**PARENT/CHILD HEALING** Women's Advocates is partnering with the Greater Minneapolis Crisis Nursery to adapt and train staff on the Nursery Way™ model, an evidence-based curriculum aimed at creating a safe space where mothers and children can build on relationships with each other, without judgement, using a trauma-informed lens.

**HEALING FROM INSTITUTIONAL OPPRESSION** Women's Advocates is focusing its work around diversity, equity, and inclusion, to address the racialized trauma of our program participants and staff who have experienced racial oppression. We are also working to address equity and inclusion in our policies and practices.

## Safe, sustainable homes for survivors

**DOUBLING AFTERCARE PROGRAM** Women's Advocates is doubling the size and impact of its Aftercare program this year. In the next four years our goal is to provide Aftercare programming to all residents who leave our shelter. Our Aftercare program includes continued advocacy, rent support if needed, and emergency funding to prevent a return to one's abuser or homelessness.

**FRIENDLY LANDLORDS** A "friendly landlord list" is being built for residents seeking to rent after leaving Women's Advocates. This group of landlords meets with staff and residents and has received training on safety resources.

**TENANT TRAINING** The Community Stabilization Project, a tenant advocacy organization in St. Paul's Rondo neighborhood, partners with Women's Advocates to offer a 12-week tenant rights and responsibilities training at our shelter. Residents who complete the training receive a "Ready to Rent" certificate, which is recognized by landlords and can provide a helpful edge in the housing search.





## Housing & domestic violence addressed together

This year, Women's Advocates was fortunate to receive a grant from the Headwaters Foundation for Social Justice for educational outreach to housing providers. As part of this grant, Women's Advocates is training housing providers and landlords on the warning signs of domestic violence, financial abuse, the connections between domestic violence and housing instability, and local resources for survivors. In the coming months, we will provide trainings at the Minnesota Multi-Housing Association annual conference, for groups of landlords, and for agencies such as St. Stephen's Human Services, Clare Housing, and Alternative Homes. With 1 in 3 homeless women in Minnesota being homeless as a direct result of domestic violence, we are thankful for the opportunity to make a difference by forming these educational partnerships with housing providers.

## Clothesline Project

The Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women (MCBW) hosts an annual volunteer effort called the Minnesota Clothesline Project, inspired by the national art project of the same name started by women in Massachusetts as a memorial for people who died as a result of domestic violence. Each year, volunteers decorate shirts honoring these victims. Women's Advocates' team members contributed two shirts this year, honoring David Leonard Riess and Shana Lynn Hollins.



## Partners are essential to our work.

Women's Advocates meets survivors of domestic violence at the nexus of emergency and significant life change. Victim/survivors require safety from violence, legal advocacy, access to housing, connections to livable wage employment and education, access to childcare and transportation, and recovery from financial abuse. It takes a community of connected people and organizations to join together with each survivor in their journey towards safety. Over 150 organizations work with Women's Advocates to ensure each survivor has access to resources they need for their own journey to safety. We would like to thank each person and organization that has helped women and their children mobilize a safety team. You do this hundreds – maybe thousands – of times each year and we are grateful.



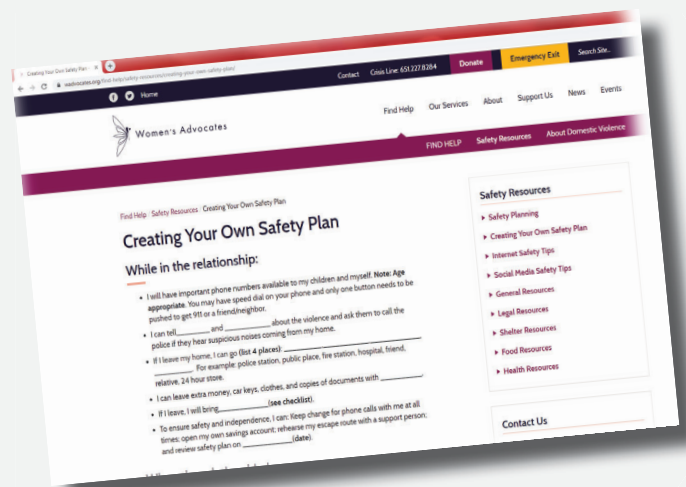


# 24/7 safety resources by phone & online

Our experienced, compassionate Crisis Resource Advocates answer Women's Advocates' crisis line (651-227-8284) 24 hours a day; and various safety resources are also available on our website at [wadvocates.org/find-help](http://wadvocates.org/find-help). Recently it was noted that there is a peak time when both our phone line and our web resources are accessed -- the lunch hour on weekdays. To the seasoned advocates at our shelter, this is no surprise. During the lunch hour, a person may be at work or school with access to phones or computers that are not monitored by their abuser. People seeking safety from abuse are careful, resourceful, and planful about their wellbeing. Shelter is the most common request from crisis line callers. Callers and web visitors also seek information about Orders for Protection, mental health support, and affirmation of their experiences.

## Survivors supporting one another

When residents arrive at Women's Advocates, they often have been isolated by their abuser. They also find themselves living in a new environment (our shelter) with total strangers. Morning groups are hosted at Women's Advocates five times a week, and they're a great way to build community. Group is a chance for shelter residents to share with one another, learn together, and gain affirmation about their efforts to find stability and safety for themselves and their children. The Mindfulness Group is led by Women's Advocates' Mental Health Therapist. The Housing Group is co-led by the Community Stabilization Project, a tenants' rights organization based in the Rondo community, and Women's Advocates' Housing and Aftercare Advocate. The Chemical Health Group is led by Eric Bacon of Healthcare for the Homeless. The Circle of Togetherness is the resident council at Women's Advocates, where residents drive the focus of the group, topics of conversation, and discuss issues that arise in a shared living environment.



## Women's Advocates

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### Our mission:

Women's Advocates walks  
with victim/survivors and  
our community to break the  
cycle of domestic violence.

**WATCH THE TWIN CITIES PBS SERIES ON WOMEN'S ADVOCATES' HISTORY  
AT [WADVOCATES.ORG/ABOUT/DOCUMENTARY](http://WADVOCATES.ORG/ABOUT/DOCUMENTARY)**

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