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# 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

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STEPS  
TO END  
DOMESTIC  
VIOLENCE

## Business Sponsors

Bia Diagnostics

The Pomerleau Family Foundation

KeyBank

Birdseye

Ben & Jerrys

Redstone

Gravel & Shea

Farrell Distributing

Comcast



The community gathered for our Candlelight Vigil and Speak Out



Team members working on our core values during a staff retreat

## Our Mission...

is to assist in the transition to a safe, independent life for all those who have been affected physically, sexually, emotionally, or economically by domestic abuse and to promote a culture that fosters justice, equity, and safety.

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Anyone can be  
affected by  
domestic violence



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## A MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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This is the time of year when we, as a team, make space in our busy schedules to reflect back on the year behind us, what we have done, and how we go about the important work of healing with survivors and building a more engaged community. It's also a time when we plan for the year ahead of us... how do we sustain the work that is best serving survivors and how do we respond to the ever-changing needs of our entire community? Who is helping us get the work done? Who else do we need to join us to make real change happen?

You are the people helping us get the work done. You are also the people who can help us determine who else needs to be at the table to bring about the change we want to see in our community – to work from a more peaceful, caring, non-violent, non-judgmental place.

Answering these questions and making these plans, together with our community, is always at the forefront of our work – and this year it is particularly important. As we approach our 50th anniversary, we are investing our attention and resources in learning from our past work and strategizing for our future.

We hope you will join us in the journey ahead as we maintain our commitment to serving survivors while moving towards an increased commitment to preventing violence from happening in the first place. We trust that you will hold us accountable and speak up for your families and community – tell us what you'd like to see and how you can help us get there.

Yours in community,



Nicole Kubon, MSW

**Executive Director**

## Board of Directors

Mariah Ogden, **Chair**

Ana Burke, **Vice Chair**

Gail Beck, **Treasurer**

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Susan Gordon

Erica Dean

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Jonathan Chapple-Sokol

Sarah Howe

Emily Fredette

Scott Cohen



Imagine a society where people are not subject to abuse, violence, or death from an intimate partner. Imagine a society where intergenerational cycles of misogyny and trauma no longer exist.

As a general pediatrician, I know that a healthy society, a very good society, is one where people are safe and autonomous. Steps offers people the realization of self efficacy, while liberating them from the terror of violence and abuse. When people live with agency and peace, their children, future grandchildren and great grandchildren will thrive beyond measure. The fabric of our community is healthier because of the work here at Steps.

- Scott Cohen

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## PET-FRIENDLY SHELTER PROJECT

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As many as

**65%**

**of domestic violence victims are unable to escape abusive situations because they are concerned about what will happen to their pets.**

When it comes to emergency housing, we are always working to reduce the barriers survivors face in fleeing an unsafe situation and making a new start. Steps recognizes that the lack of pet-friendly shelter options is a huge barrier for many survivors as they consider making that exit plan. Many survivors are unwilling to leave their pets behind and even more return to unsafe homes because the instability that comes with fleeing, without the companionship of their pets and with the worry for their safety, is too much to handle.

This past year, we had the opportunity to make a deep investment in overcoming this barrier by applying for funding from the Red Rover Foundations' Safe Housing grant program to create a more pet-friendly space in our shelter. We were awarded over \$50,000 to turn these dreams into a reality.



“We are extremely grateful to be chosen as a recipient of the RedRover Safe Housing grant. Steps to End Domestic Violence has seen the barriers that are created when a survivor is unable to flee with their companion animals. By creating a more supportive shelter environment for survivors and their companion animals, the healing process can truly begin.”

- Ciara, Director of Housing Services

As of 2023, our shelter is officially able to house survivors who are fleeing with their pets. Some of the things we are doing during this transition are...

- Replacing carpets and furniture in rooms that make cleaning up after pets more manageable
- Building a fenced-in pet area for pets to get exercise
- Providing supplies such as food, leashes, toys, and more when a survivor has to flee with limited items
- Maintaining a reserve fund for veterinary bills to make sure that all pets are healthy

We are so grateful for the support from the Burlington Obedience Training Club and the Chittenden County Humane Society for partnering with us on this effort!

**91%** of survivors indicated that their pets' emotional support and physical protection are significant in their ability to survive and heal.

# With your help...

## Service Users by Location

**Our hotline fielded 4,397 calls, emails, and webchats, assisting 1,199 individuals in crisis, and offering emergency services, support, and referrals**

**An average of 61 new survivors called the hotline each month**

	Adults	Children
Bolton	1	4
Burlington	535	623
Charlotte	4	2
Colchester	107	156
Essex	53	56
Essex Junction	47	62
Hinesburg	24	53
Jericho	10	15
Milton	48	73
Richmond	18	23
Shelburne	38	55
South Burlington	95	88
St. George	2	5
Underhill	6	8
Westford	2	2
Williston	29	39
Winooski	72	79

**117 male-identified adults were served**

**We provided emergency shelter to 247 adults and 159 children**

**30% more households than last year**



# Laurie's Experience

An interview with a Steps' volunteer



"EVERY TIME I COME IN  
(THE SHELTER) I LEARN  
A LOT, INCLUDING THE  
IMPORTANCE OF HAVING  
GOOD BOUNDARIES."

## Why did you choose Steps to volunteer for?

"I was new to Vermont and seeking an opportunity to connect with the community in a meaningful way. I researched non-profits who were doing good work and was so excited to learn about Steps. I am interested in the intersection of domestic violence and housing insecurity, a devastating combination. I was impressed with the work Steps is doing to provide emergency housing to people fleeing abuse."

## How was your experience going through training?

"Honestly, my hotline training was much more involved than I expected. My respect for Steps grew during training because the team takes all interactions with survivors very seriously. Before I started, my hands and heart were ready to go, but I was humbled by the training. I'm honored to have an opportunity to connect with callers on the hotline."

## How have you seen Steps providing for survivors through the hotline?

"You never know what someone might be seeking when they call. Empathic listening is important, and providing a nonjudgmental, respectful ear is validating. The agency does a great job at validating survivors' feelings and experiences while providing resources within the organization and local community."

## How do you see Steps cultivating community?

"The Shelter itself is a beautiful community. Service users and staff can exchange a "Good morning" or "How are you" when we see each other in the hallway. I feel like we are sharing a building, a community, a connection with each other that I wouldn't feel if our offices were off-site. We're all in this together. Another way Steps creates community is through support groups. There can be a lot of shame around abuse – and isolation. To find and connect with others going through similar struggles through a support group is powerful."



# #THATSNOTOK Coaster Campaign

1.

## Brainstorm

Early last Fall we started brainstorming an awareness raising campaign we could explore for Domestic Violence Awareness Month. Something that could spark conversations about the common signs we see and hear about in unhealthy relationships. We wanted to do something unconventional and approachable that could help our community explore the topic together and on their own terms. We often talk about these examples as “red flags” and we knew that the term was popular on social media so an idea started to come together...

2.

## Development & Design

At a staff meeting, we created a LONG list of “red flags” or examples of things that we often came across in our work that were signs of an unhealthy or abusive relationship. From this list, we worked through ideas for the best medium for getting these examples out in the public view. Vermonters love their local breweries, bars and restaurants and we thought that coasters might be an approachable way to start all sorts of conversations while also being discreet enough for a survivor to tuck away in their pocket or bag if they wanted to keep our contact number for use later.

3.

## Launch!

So we designed and printed 6 different coasters that shared examples of “red flag” behaviors in relationships with the hashtag #THATSNOTOK. We rallied local restaurants, bars and breweries to join our coaster campaign, distributing over 10,000 coasters. The campaign even made the local news! People responded enthusiastically and we were happy to hear the feedback...



# What people had to say about the campaign...

**Ali N.**

Monkey House

"Our staff were really excited to be able to have [the coasters] and bring awareness to Steps. They were all happy to be a part of a community that supported your mission."

**Laura V.**

Education and Prevention Advocate

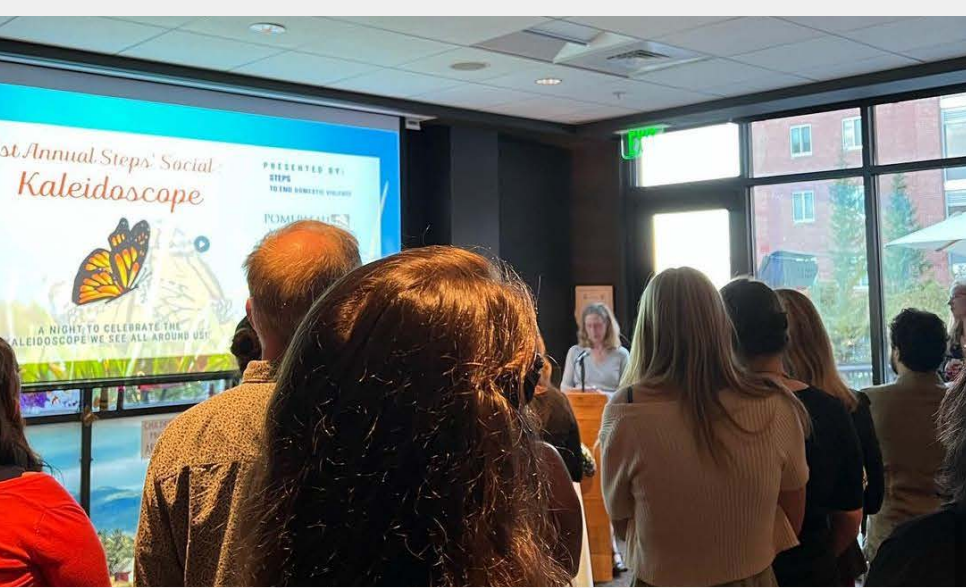
"The coaster campaign is a really unique, beautiful way to get the message out to the community about how prevalent intimate partner violence is. Every time I saw a coaster out in the community, I smiled, and hoped that it was making a difference of at least one person to start taking the steps of leaving an abusive relationship."

**Kylie C.**

Team Member

"It's great to have these in the community to normalize talking about domestic violence and introduce those in need to our services."





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## STEPS SOCIAL KALEIDOSCOPE

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Even before the pandemic, our team envisioned separating our one major annual event into two: one with a focus on physical wellness and self-care (Steps for Social Change) and one on emotional wellness and creativity.

COVID had other plans for us and, while we were able to launch Steps for Social Change virtually back in 2020, it was not until this past Spring that we finally hosted our first Steps' Social: Kaleidoscope.

Our first social, hosted at Hotel Vermont, was everything we could have hoped for and more. It was attended by almost 100 community members, including survivors, staff, community partners, our local sponsors, artists, musicians and our Vermont Attorney General, Charity Clark. We dressed up, ate food, laughed, cried and connected around the shared value of healing survivors and our greater community. We were overjoyed by the success of this gathering and we cannot wait to see you all again this Spring.



LOCAL ARTIST, SAVANNAH, LIVE  
PAINTS DURING THE EVENT



# DID YOU SPOT US IN THE COMMUNITY??

We love attending local events to meet and talk with our community.

We think it's important to connect with community partners, have a presence around town, and meet as many folks as possible to:

- show survivors and their loved ones that we are here to help,
- spread the word about the services we have available and,
- make sure anyone can easily learn more about how they can make a difference to end violence in their community.

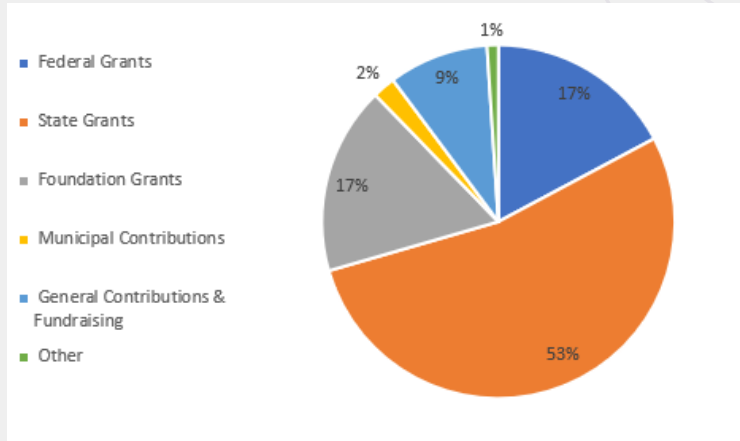


#K9 DUKE

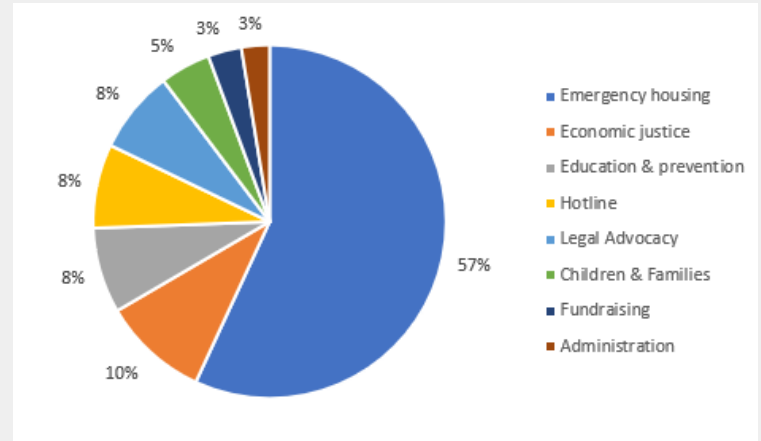


# FINANCES

## Revenue



## Expenses



# Get Involved

## Register for the Steps for Social Change 5K run/walk

Join us for our community event this Fall! Set your own physical wellness goal or register for our 5k and raise funds for Steps! Join us to celebrate at our Field Day on September 30th!

## Become a Sustaining Donor...

In any amount – help us continue our work by offering free, life-saving services to those who have been impacted by domestic violence by committing to a monthly donation.

## Dedicate Your Event

Birthdays, bridal showers, and barbecues – Ask guests to donate in lieu of gifts or host an event to help teach your community about what we do. Contact us if you need brochures or to collaborate with us to create custom signs!



Give Today!  
[stepsvt.org](https://stepsvt.org)



# Help with our wishlist



We are often in need of common household items. We help about 4,000 individuals each year with services, support, and the things they need to create and maintain a safe home.

Be sure to check out our current needs list and Amazon Wishlist for items we're most in need of.





## Ready to take the leap?

Join the anti-violence movement and start feeling more prepared to stand up against intimate partner violence.

### Contact Us:



(802) 658 1996



[steps@stepsvt.org](mailto:steps@stepsvt.org)



[www.stepsvt.org](http://www.stepsvt.org)



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