



# CONNECTING COMMUNITY

STEPS  
TO END  
DOMESTIC  
VIOLENCE

20 ANNUAL  
22 REPORT



# Anyone can be affected by domestic violence

We believe that everyone has the right to live without fear of physical, emotional, sexual, or financial abuse. We provide services, support, and education to end domestic violence in our community. All of our services are free and confidential.



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# A Message from our Executive Director

To our community,

In my time at Steps, even amid a global pandemic, the connection our supporters share with us has been breathtaking and constantly inspires my leadership. Your support has remained steadfast. The love and commitment you've demonstrated for survivors and those otherwise impacted by violence has given so many of the people we serve the strength to get through hard times.

Our team has settled into our new space, housing our staff and residents under one roof, and we have learned so much from being closely connected with the survivors we share a home with. Hosting shelter activities for all of our residents, like a Trunk or Treat for Halloween, an Easter Egg Hunt this past Spring, Mother's Day appreciation and community meals, makes everyone's time at shelter an experience in nurturing connection after long periods of isolation.

None of this would be possible without our dedicated donors and volunteers. Support from our community members has allowed us to expand our children's program – we hosted 67 children in our new shelter this past year – and turn our new house into our new home.

Our commitment to building strong connections is shared by our supporters in many ways. Foundation and individual support has made it possible for us to substantially expand our support group offerings – providing group options that range from peer support and trauma healing to job readiness and economic empowerment.

Our commitment to trauma informed work and community-supported initiatives will drive us into this new year with a focus on restorative justice, innovative practices, equitable and inclusive environments and building authentic connections amongst all of us who are impacted by violence.

We will not be successful in our work to embrace survivors and prevent future violence unless we are all committed and involved. We rely on all of you to help us continue the hard work of healing, growing and changing into the loving community we aspire to be. You give us confidence and faith that this future is achievable.

Thank you,



Nicole Kubon, MSW

**Executive Director**

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"For many, the last few years have emphasized the importance of safety and home; people and families experiencing domestic violence aren't able to fully feel the comfort of either. Steps to End Domestic Violence is a critical, life-saving resource for our families, friends and neighbors, and the services they provide are crucial to the continued strengthening and empowerment of our community."

## Our Services Through the Eyes of Service Users: Sheila's Experience

"I was placed in a hotel and I was free. I was able to breathe and my granddaughter was able to play without me being yelled at. Shortly after that, I was able to move into the shelter. I was excited and nervous at the same time. Change can be scary.

When I got to the shelter, I was overwhelmed. My granddaughter screamed and cried a bit, but when we finally moved into our room, I was overjoyed! I thought that was the ultimate prize. We were safe in a place that FELT like home. Everyone on the staff was so accommodating and careful to make sure we had everything we needed. I didn't know where I was going to go from there or what I was going to do, but I knew I had six months to stay there and my case manager helped me every step of the way.

Six months sounds like a long time, but it's not... not when you are unsure of where you are going to go afterward. Three months went by and I was diligently working with my case manager to establish long term housing.



Surprisingly, I got approved for housing and my granddaughter and I were able to move into an apartment and Steps also helped us with furniture. That was the REAL PRIZE! Being able to be in our own place after hitting rock bottom.

***A couple of months have gone by.***

***I'm STILL safe.***

***I can sleep soundly.***

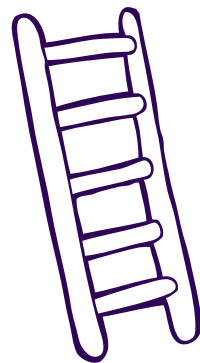
***I cry tears of joy when I think about my journey...***

***My eventful journey from rock bottom.***

Even in my attempt to express my appreciation, words cannot begin to convey how grateful I am for Steps. This organization truly embodies [it's name] because they were 'steps' in my ladder climbing back up from the bottom."

*"I called.  
It rang.*

*Someone answered.  
I began to cry as I was  
trying to answer the  
questions quickly.  
It was quick enough!  
I got away!"*



# Because of you ....

**2,079**  
**individuals**  
accessed our  
services



189 adults  
and 98  
children  
received  
emergency  
housing



89 adults  
attended our  
support groups



over 3x more  
than last year



**4,486**  
calls, emails and  
webchats came  
through our hotline

1,272 of  
those  
individuals  
were in crisis

# Connecting Survivors

## Through Support Groups

Your support helps Steps continue to offer several weekly support groups for those who have experienced or have been affected by domestic violence. Options include gender-inclusive and women aligning peer support spaces as well as a variety of opportunities for connection and skill building.

These groups offer a safe, supportive, and confidential place to connect with others, to heal, and recover. We utilize an empowerment model that centers on the person and how they can identify their values, hopes, dreams, and aspirations.

### Groups

Women's Support Group

Gender Inclusive Support Group

Job Readiness Group

Financial Literacy Group

Trauma Skills Group

Fostering Healthy Relationships

Substance Use Disorder and IPV  
Support Group

Mindfulness Corner

"When I think of the best thing that has happened because of these groups, it is the atmosphere of the agency and the personal changes in each service user.

It is the network the survivors are making by connecting with others who have been through similar experiences.

I have seen the beautiful changes that come from deciding their own values and dreams, and not anyone else's."

**- Mark Perry**  
**Groups Facilitator**





In the classroom, we work with many students from different backgrounds with a variety of life experiences. We provide workshops for students on a variety of topics ranging from teen dating violence, healthy relationships and even digital citizenship and bystander intervention.

Teaching a sensitive curriculum can sometimes elicit conversations that can present challenges. Our Education & Prevention Advocate, Laura Valastro, shares a difficult moment followed by a powerful opportunity and reflection:

“ While going through the Healthy Relationships curriculum, some of the students started making uncomfortable comments, bordering on victim blaming. I stayed focused on shifting the conversation back to the topic at hand by setting a boundary.

One of the students who had been part of the inappropriate commentary came up to me after class and apologized. He clarified that he was trying to process the scenario that had been presented. His apology took a lot of courage.

The experience illustrated the value of using a harm reduction curriculum through a trauma-informed lens and highlighted the importance of listening carefully to make sure we are teaching to the needs of all students while staying survivor-centered. ”

# Connecting Students

## Through Educational Workshops

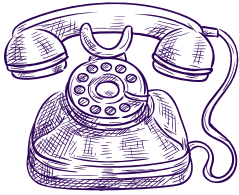
Experiences with students in the classroom are a good reminder to never make assumptions about a student's past and present, always entering the classroom with a trauma-informed approach. It's important to create safe, welcoming, and authentic classrooms where students can be themselves, have important conversations, share concerns while also having boundaries to ensure the safety and comfort of everyone in the community.



The way to truly end domestic violence is to prevent it from happening in the first place.

We presented workshops to 44 classrooms across five school districts this past fiscal year.

## Anne's Volunteer Experience : Our Impact on the Community



"I have always liked to help people wherever and whenever I could. I started teaching 2nd and 3rd grade but after moving to Vermont, I switched gears and started doing social work.

Through the Maternal Child Health Department of the Visiting Nurse Association, I visited families who were at high risk for abuse and neglect in their homes. I loved my job, it was never boring and I learned new skills like active listening! So after retiring from VNA in the fall of 1999, I decided to volunteer with Steps to End Domestic Violence and thought working on their hotline was a perfect fit!

I was happy that there was an organization to assist those who suffered abuse while involved in a 'romantic' relationship. It doesn't matter whether you identify as male or female, are better off financially or economically deprived, educated or not; domestic violence can affect all walks of life.



Working on the hotline we can listen with empathy to those who just need to be listened to or we can steer them to one of our programs that would best fit their needs.

Steps to End Domestic Violence is fortunate enough to have many programs to assist the community in several ways. Aside from the hotline, Legal Advocates are well trained to help service users navigate the legal system and the Children's Program offers stability while providing fun ways to heal and properly respond to stress.

I have only mentioned a few of the programs but they all provide a necessary component to improving the lives of those so badly scarred by domestic violence."

# Service Users by Location:

	Adults	Children		Adults	Children
<b>Bolton</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>Milton</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>Burlington</b>	<b>542</b>	<b>652</b>	<b>Richmond</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Charlotte</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>Shelburne</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>Colchester</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>South Burlington</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>102</b>
<b>Essex</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>St. George</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Essex Junction</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>Underhill</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Hinesburg</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>Westford</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Huntington</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>Williston</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Jericho</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>Winooski</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>77</b>

\*Please note many served opted not to disclose their town of residence because they felt unsafe doing so. It should be assumed that the numbers for each town are under reported\*

# Connecting Educators

## Through a Consolidated Grant

Our organization was recently the recipient of a 3-year \$500,000 federal grant focused on responding to and preventing domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking amongst youth!

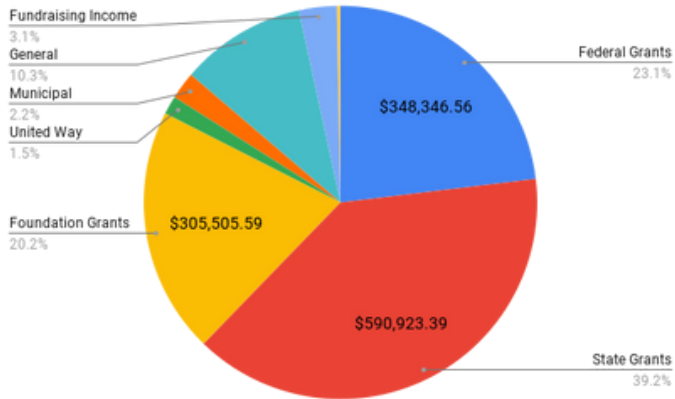


In partnership with several local non-profits committed to this work, we are launching a project to enhance support services for youth and families as well as expand training and policy development opportunities for local school staff and officials.

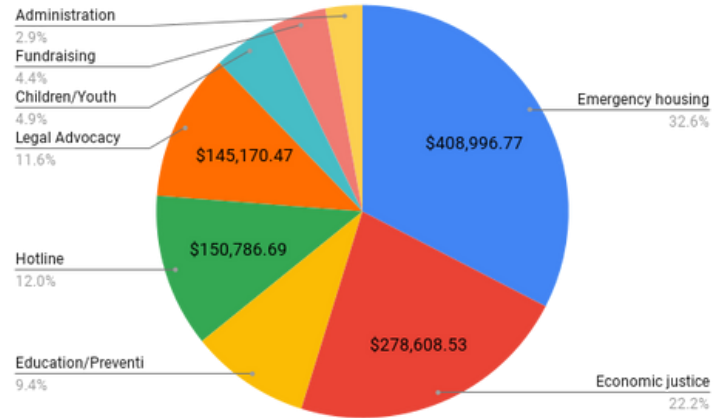
We look forward to launching this project with Colchester School District in the upcoming school year in partnership with our community. We know that this will help us move from responding to violence to preventing it and will create safer, more supportive communities for young people.

# Finances

## Revenue



## Expenses





**Team members tabling at a community partnership event working to raise awareness on how you can be a part of the anti-violence movement and support our services.**



**Volunteers gardening with community support from local KeyBank branches for "Our Neighbors Make a Difference Day".**



**Our student interns were a tremendous help in guiding survivors in multiple areas of need and are instrumental to the work we do.**



## **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.

# Get Involved

## Register for Steps for Social Change

A month-long call-to-action to set and work toward physical wellness and fundraising goals. Participants are empowered to set goals that excite them the most.

## Single Donations or Make it Monthly

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

## 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**



## Donate Goods



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 for items we're most in need of.



## Contact Us:



(802) 658 1996



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



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**TO END**  
**DOMESTIC**  
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Providing free and confidential services since 1974