



HELP of Door County, Inc.
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“Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all of the darkness”

Desmund Tutu

Hello Door County,

I write this letter after a heavy week, with heavy stories, filled with heavy problems for those we serve and those of us who serve. I write this letter after reading End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin’s 2021 Domestic Violence Homicide Report. In 2021 domestic violence claimed 80 lives in the state of Wisconsin. DV homicides took place in 21 WI counties, with a rate of 1 death every 4.5 days. I write this letter as a number of programs had a decrease in funding or completely lost funding around the state as our numbers and deaths continue to increase. **But Milly, your topic is HOPE!**



Regularly, I am asked how I and others in this work are able to stay when we are surrounded by so much darkness, fear, and ugliness. The answer always leads to hope.

We are hopeful that when people know better, they choose to do and be better. That is why so much effort is placed in preventative work and youth programming that HELP does. Youth, our Spark, Flame, and FYRE (Forging Youth Relationship Education) in particular, evoke hope. When we see them create safe spaces to learn and be comfortable or facilitate crucial conversations. We have seen how engaging with youth in what is healthy and not healthy has even led to parents receiving services. We have seen how healing has changed the future of their family’s legacy and allows for generational healing.

We are hopeful that our crisis intervention services, safety planning and advocacy will lead to victims of abuse feeling empowered and no longer isolated and alone. That they will have the opportunity to save their lives, and work towards becoming whole again; When trauma, abuse, and violence seemed to make them feel broken, and unworthy of healthy love.

We are hopeful that working with those that have abused and harmed will allow them to see the roots to their belief systems and violence. That through our Domestic Violence Intervention Program will allow them to see how their destructive behavior impacts their children, partners, and themselves.

We are hopeful that when we teach the roots of oppression, and what power and control looks like versus what equality and equity looks like it will lead to changes in behaviors. Not only in families but subsequently our community, culture, society, and world.

We are hopeful in YOU our community, and support systems that you will continue to walk in our call to be courageous. We are hopeful that you will continue to support us through your gifts of time, treasures, and talents. We are hopeful that you will spread our story and those of the many families that we serve so that they too can remain hopeful as they see the light you bring alongside us in the darkness that sometimes feels never-ending.

Thank You,

Milly Gonzales

IT TAKES COURAGE TO BE KIND

Jean Severson, Chairperson

It is an old story. And yet it was new to me because it was shared from her recent experience.

Picture this: The children run from the sandy beach where their mothers sit, splash each other and laugh and push their small bodies into the lake water. "Only up to your waist", the children are reminded. The two women, engaged in conversation with one eye on their children, are approached by a man and woman, "Where are YOU from? You aren't from here". Two more people approach, "What are you doing here you f*cking N?" One of the women still sitting on the sand, turns to them and says, "That was a racist thing to say." The four men and women throw out a couple more expletives and walk away.

As I listen, my heart is in my throat. This is the local beach in Sturgeon Bay where I took my children and now take my grandchildren. We are all white. The power and control projected through racism has not affected us. Why am I sharing this with you? Because it happened to someone I care about. Because it happened at our local beach. "Sticks and stones may break your bones, but words will never hurt you". How naive am I?

I ask myself, how does a person come to such anger and contempt towards certain people? How does a person come to project intimidating words, control who you see, control how you spend your money, physically hurt you, your children and your pets? We learn from our parents, caretakers, and social circle; it is systematic. Do you remember the song from the movie, South Pacific:

*"You've got to be taught to hate and fear,
You've got to be taught from year to year,
It's got to be drummed in your dear little ear
You've got to be carefully taught"*

Isaac Fitzgerald, author of Dirtbag, Massachusetts, recounted in an interview on WPR, the nature of violence in his family, "In a family", he said, "it can be learned so quickly. And to unlearn it can be so difficult. Violence can come like a storm. It can come out of nowhere. When it comes from people that you love, that love you, that are supposed to be caring for you, supposed to be protecting you, the hurt can run so deep that you want to bury it. That is one of the things I know about my father. It became very important to me to hide the scars. I had a deep shame around it."

Milly Gonzales is not only our Executive Director at HELP, she is our teacher. HELP of Door County serves domestic violence victims as advocates, as mentors, as educators, as a compassionate and strong voice for change. As a board member I have learned how racism, and power and control go hand in hand with domestic violence, white over colored, men over women; has been propagated for centuries through government, through commerce, through patriarchal BIPOC (Black, Indigenous people of color) dominance of power and control. Domestic violence has especially been directed toward women and children who for centuries were regarded as property. It takes courage to recognize that domestic violence can be insidious; it can start in a gradual, subtle way, but with harmful effects.

Slavery: "A civil relationship where one person has absolute power over another."

Domestic Violence: "A pattern of one person trying to dominate and control another person."

White Supremacy: "The belief that white people are superior to others and thus should dominate them."

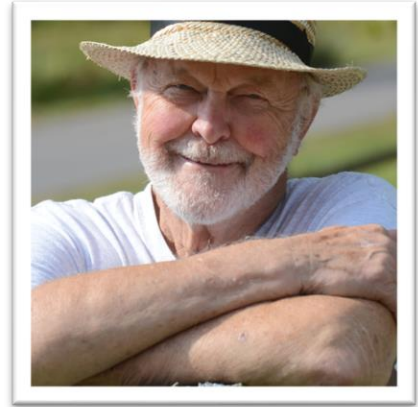
It has taken me awhile to process the ties between those three descriptions. The centuries of culture which exploited enslaved people, women and children, only started to change in the 19th century. The common denominator is power and control. It is a way for men to show their strength. It is a way to intimidate and silence others. It is the propagator of domestic violence.

I went to the same beach last week. It was a calm, warm day. Families smiling and enjoying. No sign of racism. Because all of the people looked like my family. White. Would I have the courage to stand up to another being verbally assaulted? Would I have the courage to offer help to a family member, friend, neighbor who I feel is being abused? It is true in today's society that we need courage to stand down the ugliness towards another that we see and hear. This is a belief and also a plan for action. Please take it on with me. It takes courage to be kind.

Anne Kok Social Justice Award Winner

The Anne Kok Social Justice Award was established in 2008 to honor Anne's contributions to our community, both in the prevention and elimination of domestic violence, as well as her actions to promote social justice. Anne directed HELP of Door County for four years, beginning in 1985 and continued her commitment to HELP in her later years as a Board Member.

This year's award winner is ... **DON HEERINGA**



Don has been a volunteer, advocate, and supporter for numerous non-profits over the years and his commitment to the organizations he served has no boundaries. We, HELP of Door County, have been both honored and blessed when he chose to serve on our Board. We cannot put into words how valuable his leadership has been. It is through his knowledge, experience, and guidance that we have been able to grow our organization as we continue to provide services for victims of domestic abuse.

Don: It has been a privilege and an honor to work alongside of you. Learning, unlearning, and carrying forward the foundational work and leadership you have given to all of us connected to HELP of Door County. I admire you and am so appreciative to have started this journey as Executive Director with you by my side.

*- Milly Gonzales
Executive Director*

Introducing TRACEY ROBERTSON, Manager of Programs



After many years of working in the Door County Community, Tracey Robertson, a native Chicagoan, has joined HELP in September as our Manager of Programs. Tracey's background is as a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Expert and Activist who served as the award-winning Cofounder and Executive Director of a grassroots, non-profit social justice organization located in Oshkosh, Wisconsin for close to a decade. In that capacity, she developed and facilitated anti-racism education and training internationally.

Tracey has decades of professional experience that includes entrepreneurship, public speaking, business development, project management, and community organizing.

Tracey has received numerous commendations for her professional contributions including a "You Make a Difference Award" for Exceptional to the Oshkosh Community by the Oshkosh Collaboration Workgroup and being named one of the 44 Most Influential African Americans in Wisconsin by Madison365.

Tracey is a published author and is currently working on her second book, an autobiography entitled, Growing Up Stained. In her free time, she enjoys teaching and learning American Sign Language, baking, and spending time with her grandsons.



Diverse & Resilient

United Way of Door County



Door County Community Foundation, Inc.

WOMEN'S FUND OF DOOR COUNTY



We value our Community Sponsors



Please see below our **WISH LIST** for our clients:

- * Dish Soap (small bottles preferred)
- * Cleaning Supplies
- * Baby Soap
- * Baby Wipes
- * Baby Wash
- * Baby Shampoo & Conditioner
- * Deodorant
- * Shampoo & Conditioner
- * Lotion
- * Tampons
- * Toilet Paper
- * Paper Towels
- * Laundry Detergent (small bottles preferred)

We need help with the following:

- HOTLINE OPERATORS
- VISITATION AND EXCHANGE FACILITATORS

Please contact our offices at 920-743-8785

