



October is **Domestic Violence Awareness Month**—a time to amplify the voices of survivors, educate our communities, and work toward a future free from abuse. But while we often focus on the immediate victims, there's another group quietly watching, listening, and learning: **our children**.

Children in homes where domestic violence occurs are not just passive bystanders. Even if the violence isn't directed at them, they are absorbing every raised voice, slammed door, and moment of fear. These experiences shape their understanding of love, conflict, and self-worth.

Children are always listening. They hear how caregivers speak to one another. They see how problems are solved—or how they aren't. Over time, they begin to normalize what they experience. If violence, manipulation, or control are regular parts of their environment, children may develop unhealthy coping mechanisms that follow them into adulthood.

They may struggle with anxiety, depression, trust, or even repeat the cycle of abuse—either as victims or perpetrators—because that's what was modeled for them.

This is why it's crucial that we not only support victims of domestic violence but also prioritize **healing, education, and prevention** for the entire family. Creating safe, nurturing, and respectful environments teaches children emotional intelligence, healthy boundaries, and self-regulation.

Children learn what they live. If we want to raise a generation that chooses peace over power, love over control, and respect over fear, we must be intentional about the environments we create for them—at home, at school, and in our communities.

Let's break the cycle. Together.

INDEX	PAGE
Awareness Month	1
Children are Listening...	2
Post Separation Abuse	3
Domestic Abuse by Proxy	4
Children's Development and Future	5
Upcoming Events	6-7
Volunteering & Wish List	8
Thank you's!!	9
Electronic Giving	10
Electronic Donation Form	11

Mission Statement

HAVEN is a champion to people who have experienced abuse. We provide safety, shelter and assistance to victims and survivors in a free and confidential manner. Through education and advocacy, we support their journey of empowerment to achieve economic and emotional independence.

Children Are Listening: The Hidden Impact of Domestic Violence

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month—a time to honor survivors and recognize the ripple effects abuse has on families. Too often, we overlook one group most deeply impacted: *children*.

Impact Before Birth: Many believe young children are “too little to understand” domestic violence. But research shows that even before birth, children feel its effects. Stress from abuse during pregnancy can affect a baby’s growth, birth outcomes, and even long-term emotional health.

Children Notice More Than We Think: Children don’t have to witness violence directly to be impacted. They hear the yelling. They sense the silence after an argument. They feel the tension at home. These experiences can show up as sleep issues, behavior changes, or struggles in school.

The Biology of Trauma: Trauma can also leave biological imprints, changing how a child’s brain and body respond to stress. But this doesn’t mean the future is fixed. With safety, stability, and caring support, children can heal and thrive.

During Domestic Violence Awareness Month, let’s remember: children are not just bystanders. They are witnesses and survivors. By supporting them and making them feel safe, we help break the cycle of violence and build healthier futures.

STAGE	POTENTIAL IMPACT
PRENATAL (IN-UTERO)	Stress hormone transfer → fetal developmental risks; epigenetic changes in stress-related genes
INFANCY AND EARLY CHILDHOOD	Behavioral and cognitive disruptions; altered stress-regulation pathways
LONG-TERM & INTERGENERATIONAL	Increased risk for emotional disorders, chronic health issues; epigenetic marks passed across generations

They Will Think It Is Love

Before your children came, they were told that you would love them,
so whatever you do, however you treat them,
to them, it is love.
If you are cruel to them, they will think it is love.
If you yell at them, they will think it is love.
If you ignore them, they will think it is love.
If you walk away from them, they will think it is love.
And if you are kind to them, they will think it is love.
And if you are gentle with them, they will think it is love.
Because we cannot point at anything that exists and say, “This is love,”
so you will teach your children every day they are with you what it is.
And one day, when someone else treats them the way you treated them,
they will say,
“This is love.”
So teach them well.
No matter what you were taught yourself.

-Iain S. Thomas
@realianinthomas

What Is Post-Separation Abuse? (For Kids and Adults to Understand)

When people talk about **domestic violence**, they don't just mean hitting. It can also be yelling, scaring someone, controlling them, or taking their money. Sometimes, this happens during a relationship—but **the abuse doesn't always stop when the relationship ends**.

That's called **post-separation abuse**. It means the person who was hurting or controlling someone before is still doing it—just in different ways.

Children Are Affected Too

Even if the abuser doesn't hurt the child directly, **kids can still be hurt** by what's happening. They might feel scared, confused, or caught in the middle. These experiences can affect their feelings, behavior, and health for a long time.

This is called having **Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)**. ACEs are bad or scary things that happen when you're young—like seeing violence, feeling unsafe, or not having the love and support you need.

Common Signs of Post-Separation Abuse

Here are some ways post-separation abuse can show up:

Counter Parenting: One parent tries to stop or undo the other parent's rules just to cause problems.

Lying About the Other Parent: Saying the safe parent is "alienating" the child or making things up when it's not true.

Unsafe Parenting: Doing dangerous things or letting the child be around unsafe people.

Spreading Rumors: Telling lies to friends, family, or teachers to make the safe parent look bad.

Harassment or Stalking: Sending a lot of scary messages, following someone, or spying on them.

Using the Court to Control: Going to court again and again to scare, control, or wear down the other parent.

Money Problems: Not paying child support, or trying to stop the other parent from working.

Why It Matters

The **family court** is supposed to keep kids safe, but sometimes people don't understand what post-separation abuse looks like. That's why it's important for judges, lawyers, and counselors to learn about it—so they can make smart choices that protect children and safe parents.

Parental Alienation: Misunderstood, Misused, and Harmful to Children

In recent years, the term "**parental alienation**" has become a buzzword in family courtrooms and custody disputes. It's often brought up in high-conflict cases, especially when one parent claims the other is trying to turn the child against them. But while true alienation is a real and serious issue, the term is also being **misused—often by abusive partners—to shift blame and regain control.**

What Is Parental Alienation?

At its core, **parental alienation** refers to a situation where one parent intentionally turns a child against the other parent without a valid reason. This may involve badmouthing, lying, or interfering with the child's relationship with the other parent.

When real, this kind of behavior can harm a child's mental health, distort their understanding of relationships, and create long-term emotional conflict. It can result in the child rejecting a safe, loving parent without cause—a painful and damaging situation.

The Problem With How It's Being Used

Today, **allegations of parental alienation are often weaponized**, particularly in cases involving domestic violence or abuse. Abusers may accuse the protective parent of "alienation" when the child is actually withdrawing due to **real trauma, fear, or abuse** they have experienced.

This misuse can:

- **Shift focus away from abuse**, forcing the court to look at the behavior of the protective parent instead.
- **Silence children**, making them feel like they can't speak out about abuse without it being labeled as "coached."
- **Place children in unsafe environments**, because the court believes the protective parent is just trying to "alienate" them from the other parent.

What Children Really Need

Children thrive in environments where they feel **safe, supported, and heard**. When a child resists contact with a parent, it's critical to ask: *Why?*

- Are they afraid?
- Have they seen or experienced abuse?
- Are they being pressured by one parent?
- Is there a pattern of controlling or harmful behavior?

Instead of jumping to conclusions about alienation, courts and professionals must take time to **understand the full context**. That includes listening to the child, reviewing patterns of behavior, and recognizing when an allegation is being used as a **tactic of control**, not a cry for help.

For example, in most cases the protective parent is providing most of the care, support and nurturing of the children. This occurs because the abusive parent often demands it, and puts their own needs above those of the children. Then, when the protective parent separates, the abusive parent turns around and accuses the person to whom they had delegated most of parenting responsibility as suddenly being irresponsible, incapable, neglectful, harmful or unfit.

In listening to children, they can describe who makes sure they have regular meals, clean clothes, and help with schoolwork as well as which parent listens to them, takes time for them, cares for them when they're sick, comforts them when they're hurt or sad, makes sure they brush their teeth and reads with them at bedtime. Children may not always have the words to say who they most trust and with whom they feel safe, but in taking time to listen and observe, that will reveal itself.

Listening to children will also help identify with whom they may feel stressed, unsure or afraid. It may indicate the situations in which they have physical, emotional and psychological symptoms that result from tension, unpredictability, neglect or fear. Protective parents observe--and also hear from teachers--how their children struggle after placement time with the other parent.

Frequently, children crave the love and attention they are missing from an abusive parent, but are also confused about how that parent treats them. Many children who live in homes where coercive control is being exercised by an abuser may be conditioned to this being their normal way of living. Also, most abusers hide what they do in public, and children may appear to be more comfortable with an abuser when other adults are present.

Protecting Children Means Listening to Them

Whether parental alienation is real or falsely claimed, the result is often the same: **the child suffers**. They may feel confused, torn between parents, or afraid to speak their truth. Mislabeling a situation as alienation when it's actually a protective response can **re-traumatize children** and further empower abusive behavior.

We must approach every case with care, nuance, and a deep understanding of the dynamics of abuse. **Children aren't pawns** in power struggles—they're people with real voices, needs, and rights.

True parental alienation is rare—but the misuse of the term is not. In high-conflict custody battles, especially those involving abuse, we must be vigilant, informed, and focused on what truly serves the best interests of the child: safety, stability, and emotional well-being.

*“We owe our children, the most vulnerable citizens in our society,
a life free of violence and fear.”*

-Nelson Mandela

SATURDAY, OCT. 18TH FROM 2PM-7PM AT SAWMILL BREWING COMPANY

**WITH EXTREME FUNDING CUTS,
WE ARE RAISING MONEY TO
KEEP HAVEN, INC. OPEN!**



**SERVICES WE OFFER ARE FOR THOSE THAT ENDURE IN:
DOMESTIC ABUSE, DATING ABUSE, CHILD ABUSE,
ELDER ABUSE, SEXUAL ABUSE AND ASSULT,
AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING.**



**WE ARE ASKING OUR COMMUNITY FOR HELP!!
HAVEN, INC. HAS TEAMED UP WITH GEISS MEATS,
TO RAISE MONEY AND AWARENESS FOR OUR SHELTER
IN MERRILL, WI. HOW CAN YOU HELP?**

BE A SPONSOR!

SPONSORSHIP TIERS:

STEAK TIER: \$1,500

HAMBURGER TIER: \$750

HOTDOG TIER: \$350

CALL 715-536-1300 OR EMAIL LYNN@HAVENINC.ORG

**BUY A CARD
FOR ONLY \$20
AND HAVE A
CHANCE TO
WIN A \$300
GIFT CARD FROM
GEISS MEATS!**

**SAVE THE DATE,
COME TO THE BENEFIT!!
ENJOY FOOD, LIVE MUSIC,
RAFFLE BASKETS,
A LIVE MEAT RAFFLE,
AND OTHER PRIZES!!**

PIC•COLLAGE

SPONSORS Include:

Incredible Bank, Church Mutual Insurance, Cloverbelt Credit Union,
Billy Bob's Sports Bar, Geiss Meats, In Memory of : Tim Ziebell

Deadline to purchase entry for the \$300 Geiss Gift Certificate is October 10, 2025.

No Expiration Date!

Can be used for all Geiss Services - meat processing included!!

Does not have to be used all at one visit!



UPCOMING AT HAVEN SHOE DRIVE - STARTS 8/19/25

Drop-off: HAVEN, Monday-Friday,
8:30 AM - 4:00 PM

Additional drop-off boxes: T.B. Scott Library,
Chamber of Commerce, Dave's County Market,
The Humble, Jenny Towers, Bell Tower, Park
City Credit Union, Incredible Bank, Reindl
Printing, Lincoln County Sheriff's Office



GOAL: 2,500 pairs of shoes!
Shoes are sent overseas for those in need.

715-536-1300

www.haveninc.org

lynn@haveninc.org

THANK YOU, DONORS

Our sincere thanks to the donors listed below, who made contributions and in-kind donations to HAVEN from 3-26-2025 to 9-24-2025.

We have made every effort to acknowledge these gifts correctly.

In Memory of Judy Woller Donors:

♥ Jessica Smith		Shelly
♥ Jan Fredrickson		Rose Skic
♥ Karen Karow	Micaela McKenna	Crystal Sargent
♥ Cheryl Kanitz	Steve & Laurie Dahm	Eddie
♥ Sara Karcz	Marie Rein	Holly Radtke
♥ Kevin Reese	Barbara Crapster-Pregnot	Church Mutual
♥ Susan Sippel	Amy Heimerl	George Amelse
♥ Jill Schmunk	Joe & Mary Zahringer	Trail Pines Community Garden
♥ Stacy Stevens		Jim
♥ Mark & Irene Mehlos	Ed Weis	Lori Wendt
♥ Judy Karau	PCCU	Stephanie
♥ Leah Burdach	Anonymous X 24	Amy
♥ Hans Breitenmoser	Lynn	Rachel Gerogandas
♥ Catherine LeMay-Brown	Merrill Iron & Steel	Phyllis
♥ Judy Renaud	Dawn Pilecky	Judy & Mike Repinski
♥ Robert Weaver	Amber Nelson	Jason
♥ Central Carpet & Flooring	Brandon Hanson	Wayne Plant
♥ Christina Metzger	Edward Welch	Audry Voigt
♥ Don Dunphy	Jessica	St. Paul's Church—Ladies Aid
	Trista	Ramon Daley
Linda Becker	St. Francis Church	Holly' Greenhouse
Gloria Ziolkowski	LouAnn Grund	Lynn Muhvich
Anonymous	Ascension Episcopal Church	Lactalis
St. Stephen's United	Kat	Robbin Harder
Kenneth Bashara	Jan	Holy Cross Sisters
PCA of America	Pete McConnell	Randall Zelent
Kyle Hahn	Joanne Opsahl	TB Scott Library
St. Paul Ev Church	Bruce Sunde	
	Jean Perkins	



ELECTRONIC GIVING

Now you can have your donations automatically and regularly deposited to Haven's -Incredible Bank account.

Save time

Save checks

Give automatically, even when you're on vacation.

Automatic payment is safe, easy and convenient. To take advantage of this service, complete the attached authorization form and take it, along with a voided check, to **your** financial institution.

I authorize HAVEN and the financial institution listed below to initiate entries to my checking/savings account for payment of my donation. This authority will remain in effect until I cancel it in writing. Make this deduction from:

Checking

Savings

Monthly -----

Weekly _____

Print Name

Date

Financial Institution

Account Number

Signature

Phone

Financial Institution of HAVEN:
Incredible Bank
3210 E. Main Street
Merrill, WI 54452

Transit Routing Number-ABA: 075911742
Account Number: 0100805605

We rely on your generosity. If you would like to do a single donation, please send or drop off your check to HAVEN at 1106 E 8th St, Merrill WI 54452. -Thank you!

HOUSEHOLD ABUSE VICTIMS EMERGENCY NETWORK

HAVEN, INC.



Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Merrill, WI
Permit No. 63