



April is Sexual Assault Awareness and Child Abuse Prevention/Family Strengthening Month

May is Mental Health Awareness Month

June is Elder Abuse Awareness and Pride Month

Sexual abuse, child abuse, elder abuse and oppression against LGBTQ+ can have severe and lasting effects on mental health. Survivors of sexual and child abuse often experience PTSD, depression, anxiety, and difficulty forming healthy relationships into adulthood. LGBTQ individuals facing oppression—including discrimination, rejections, and violence—are at a higher risk for mental health struggles such as depression, suicidal ideation, and substance use. When individuals experience abuse—whether it be sexual, emotional, or physical—it can deeply damage their self-worth and mental health. Low self-esteem often leads to feelings of powerlessness, shame, and isolation. This can result in unhealthy coping mechanisms, such as substance abuse, self-harm, or withdrawing from social interactions. Over time, these struggles may prevent individuals from contributing positively to their communities or forming supporting healthy relationships.

Through our work to break the cycles of interpersonal abuse and violence, HAVEN is hands-on involved in the reduction of the intergenerational trauma that creates much of the caseloads for social services, law enforcement, the courts, mental health and medical services. Recognizing this, the continuity and scope of funding for HAVEN does impact the social health of the wider community, and the ever growing caseloads of all the aforementioned entities.

Addressing abuse and self-esteem issues, but more so, preventing abuse at the individual level, through advocacy, community support, and education, is crucial to breaking harmful cycles and fostering healthier, more resilient communities.

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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.

Understanding Sexual Abuse, Assault, and Harassment

Sexual violence impacts everyone. Anyone can be a victim of sexual violence, and people who commit sexual abuse, assault, and harassment exist in all of our communities. This underscores why it's important for all of us to care about sexual violence and take steps to promote the safety and well-being of others.

Sexual violence is an umbrella term that includes any type of unwanted sexual contact — including sexual abuse, assault, and harassment.

Forms of sexual violence include:

- Rape or sexual assault
- Sexual harassment
- Sexual abuse
- Unwanted sexual contact/touching
- Sexual exploitation and trafficking,
- Exposing one's genitals or naked body to others without consent,
- Nonconsensual image sharing and/or coercion (including AI-generated imagery)
- Words and actions of a sexual nature against a person's will and without their consent

Statistics show:

- Over 53% of women and over 29% of men reported experiencing contact sexual violence.
- More than 1 in 4 non-Hispanic Black women (29%) in the United States were raped in their lifetime.
- 1 in 3 Hispanic women (34.8%) reported unwanted sexual contact in their lifetime.
- More than 4 in 5 American Indian and Alaska Native women (84.3%) have experienced sexual violence in their lifetime.
- 2 in 5 LGBTQ+ young people (39%) reported that they have been forced to do “sexual things” that they did not want to do.
- 32.9% of adults with intellectual disabilities have experienced sexual violence.

QUICK FACTS Statistics for Sexual Assault Survivors of HAVEN in 2024

- 18 Survivors of Sexual Abuse
- 83 Survivors of Sexual Abuse and Domestic Violence
- 32 Adult Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse
- 13 Survivors of Sex Trafficking
- 2 Survivors of Child Pornography

Strengthen your Family through Communication

One common question parents have is, "When is the right time to talk about sexual education, particularly in terms of keeping my child safe?" The answer is simple: it's never too early, but it can be too late. That's why it's important to have these conversations sooner rather than later.

Early Development and Understanding Boundaries

Young children often lack the language or understanding to fully grasp certain concepts, such as personal boundaries and consent. For example, if you're tickling your child and they say, "No, stop!" but you continue, they may struggle to understand that "no means no." While you may think, "But I'm the parent," it's important to remember that, according to Children's Hospital of Wisconsin, more than 80% of child abusers were trusted adults known to the child. One of the first lessons parents can teach is that it's always okay for children to say "no" or "stop" if they feel uncomfortable—even with family members.

Talking About Secrets vs. Surprises

Another key conversation to have with young children is about the difference between secrets and surprises. Surprises are temporary and will be shared eventually, but secrets—especially those about their bodies—are not okay. Encouraging open communication helps children understand that they can always talk to a trusted adult if something feels wrong.

Keep Conversations Simple and Ongoing

For younger children, keep the conversations short, simple, and age-appropriate. While these discussions can be difficult, especially since no parent wants to imagine their child being a victim of abuse, the reality is that the average age for abuse to begin is just nine years old. Starting these conversations early not only helps prevent abuse but also lays the groundwork for easier discussions about difficult topics as they grow older. It also empowers children to speak up if they ever feel uncomfortable.

The Impact of Early Conversations

As an advocate, I can't tell you how many adult survivors have shared painful memories, saying things like, "I didn't feel comfortable telling anyone what I was going through," "I didn't have the language to explain," or even, heartbreakingly, "No one believed me."

You can help prevent this. Being a parent or guardian isn't easy, but with the right tools, you can help keep your child safe.

QUICK FACTS Statistics of Child Survivors of HAVEN for 2024

- HAVEN supported 47 child survivors between the ages of 0 - 17 years
- 40 child witnesses to domestic violence
- 5 survivors of sexual abuse
- 2 survivors of child abuse (physical/neglect)

[Prevent Child Abuse Wisconsin | Children's Wisconsin](#)

[Understanding Child Abuse and Neglect | Wisconsin Department of Children and Families](#)

Protecting our Elders

Elder abuse is a serious issue that affects millions of older adults worldwide. It can take many forms, including physical, emotional, financial, and even neglect. Raising awareness about elder abuse is essential to ensuring the safety, dignity, and well-being of our senior population.

One of the biggest challenges in addressing elder abuse is that it often goes unnoticed. Many seniors may be reluctant to report mistreatment due to fear, shame, or dependency on their abuser. This is why it is crucial for family members, caregivers, and communities to recognize the warning signs, such as unexplained injuries, sudden changes in financial situations, withdrawal from social activities, or signs of neglect like poor hygiene and malnutrition.

Preventing elder abuse starts with education and vigilance. Encouraging open communication, checking in regularly on elderly loved ones, and ensuring they have access to trusted support systems can make a significant impact on their safety. Additionally, advocating for stronger protections, such as stricter laws against financial exploitation and enhanced care standards in nursing homes, can help safeguard seniors from harm.

Elderly individuals deserve to live with respect, safety, and dignity. By increasing awareness and taking proactive steps to prevent abuse, we can create a society that values and protects aging populations. If you suspect elder abuse, it's important to speak up and report it to the appropriate authorities. Together, we can help protect our seniors and ensure they receive the care and respect that they desire.

QUICK FACTS Statistics for Elder Abuse in 2024 reported to HAVEN

- 16 Survivors between the ages of 61– 90 reached out to HAVEN for support.
- 10 Survivors were victims of domestic violence
- 5 Survivors were victims of domestic violence AND sexual abuse
- 1 Survivor was a victim of sexual abuse

“The true measure of any society can be found in how it treats its most vulnerable members.” - Mahatma Gandhi-

[Adult Protective Services: Report Alleged Abuse | Wisconsin Department of Health Services](#)

[Elder Abuse Hotline](#)

Show Support for Different Identities

Being an ally to the LGBTQ+ community is more than just supporting equal rights; it's about fostering an inclusive society where everyone feels safe, respected, and valued. Allies play a crucial role in breaking down barriers, challenging discrimination, and amplifying the voices of LGBTQ+ individuals.

One of the most important aspects of allyship is education. Understanding the history, struggles, and experiences of LGBTQ+ people helps create empathy and allows allies to advocate more effectively. Whether it's learning about key moments in LGBTQ+ history or understanding the significance of pronouns, staying informed makes a difference.

Speaking up against discrimination is another essential part of allyship. Whether it's in the workplace, at school, or within families, allies can use their voices to challenge harmful rhetoric and create spaces where LGBTQ+ individuals feel safe to be themselves. Even small actions, like correcting misinformation or shutting down offensive jokes, contribute to a culture of respect.

Support also comes in the form of visibility. Attending Pride events, supporting LGBTQ+ businesses, and advocating for inclusive policies in workplaces and schools demonstrates solidarity. Representation matters, and when allies stand beside LGBTQ+ individuals, it reinforces the message that equity is a shared responsibility.

Ultimately, being an ally means fostering acceptance, kindness, and equality. By actively supporting LGBTQ+ people in everyday life, allies help build a world where everyone can live authentically and without fear.

“In Wisconsin, researchers found 39% of LGBTQ+ youth seriously contemplated suicide in the past year. That number was even higher, 44%, for transgender and nonbinary youth.”

“LGBTQ+ kids aren't at a higher risk of suicide because of their sexual orientation or gender identity, the report emphasized, but because of how they are treated in society.”

QUICK FACTS Statistics of LGBTQ+ Survivors of HAVEN in 2024

- 6 Survivors of Hate Crimes due to their gender and/or sexual orientation
- 4 Survivors of Sexual Abuse
- 7 Survivors of Sexual Abuse and Domestic Violence
- 1 Survivor of Sex Trafficking

[Diverse & Resilient](#)

[The Trevor Project - Suicide Prevention for LGBTQ+ Young People](#)

The Importance of Community in Mental Health

In today's fast-paced world, where digital connections often replace face-to-face interactions, the importance of community in maintaining mental health cannot be overstated. Humans are inherently social beings, and having a supportive community plays a crucial role in emotional well-being.

A strong community provides a sense of belonging, reducing feelings of isolation and loneliness—two significant factors in mental health struggles. Whether it's family, friends, support groups, or local organizations, having people to turn to during difficult times helps individuals cope with stress, anxiety, and depression. Studies show social support can lower stress levels, improve self-esteem, and even boost resilience against mental health challenges.

Beyond emotional support, communities offer practical help, such as sharing resources, providing encouragement, or simply offering a listening ear. Engaging in community activities, whether through volunteering, attending social events, or joining local groups, fosters a sense of purpose and connection, which are vital for mental well-being.

In contrast, social isolation can lead to an increased risk of mental health conditions, including depression and anxiety. This is why it's essential to actively cultivate and nurture relationships, seeking out communities that uplift and support one another.

Ultimately, mental health is not just an individual concern but a collective responsibility. By fostering inclusive, supportive communities, we can create environments where people feel safe, valued, and empowered to thrive.

QUICK FACTS— Mental Health in Wisconsin

- 859,000 adults in Wisconsin have a mental health conditions (3x more than the population of Madison)
- 70,000 Wisconsinites age 12-17 have depression and 41.8% of them did not receive any care.
- 4,515 people in Wisconsin are homeless and 1 in 5 live with a serious mental illness.
- in Wisconsin, 888 lives were lost to suicide and 231,000 adults had thoughts of suicide in the last year.

[WisconsinStateFactSheet.pdf](#)

[Home | Mental Health America](#)

[The Semicolon: Symbol of Hope in Mental Health](#)



The Semicolon: A Powerful Symbol
Your story is not over; it's merely paused.

Show Your Support and Get Involved with these Upcoming Events!

Wear Blue for Child Abuse Prevention— April 4th, 2025

Denim Day—April 30th, 2025

What is Denim Day?

The Denim Day story began in Italy 1992, when an 18-year old girl was raped by the 45-year old driving instructor who was taking her to her very first driving lesson. He took her to an isolated road, pulled her out of the car, removed her jeans and forcefully raped her.

She reported the rape and the perpetrator was arrested and prosecuted. He was then convicted of rape and sentenced to jail. Years later, he appealed the conviction claiming that the sex was consensual, leading the Italian Supreme Court to overturn the conviction and release the perpetrator. A statement from the court argued that because the victim was wearing very tight jeans, she had to help remove them, and by removing the jeans it was not rape but consensual sex. This became known through Italy as the “jeans alibi.”

Enraged by the verdict, the women in the Italian Parliament launched a protest wearing jeans on the steps of the Supreme Court. This protest was picked up by international media which inspired the California Senate and Assembly to do the same on the steps of the Capitol in Sacramento. Patti Occhiuzzo Giggans, Executive Director of Peace Over Violence, saw this in the media and thought everyone should be wearing jeans to protest all of the myths about why women and girls are raped. Thus, Denim Day in LA was born. The first Denim Day in LA ever was held in April 1999, and has continued annually since then.

Mental Health Awareness Week—May 12-18, 2025

This year’s theme is ‘Community’.

“Being part of a safe, positive community is vital for our mental health and wellbeing. We thrive when we have strong connections with other people and supportive communities that remind us that we are not alone. Communities can provide a sense of belonging, safety, support in hard times, and give us a sense of purpose.” (MFH, 2025)

Raise Your Voice— 4th Annual Mental Health Awareness TBA

Wear Purple for International Elder Abuse Awareness Day— June 15th, 2025

Northwoods Pride 2025 Festival— June 21 11:00-5:00pm @ Hodag Park

[Mental Health Foundation | Everyone deserves good mental health](#)

[Homepage - NAMI Northwoods](#)

[World Elder Abuse Awareness - Building Strong Support for Elders](#)

www.northwoodspride.com

We know that individual skills and interests vary and that not everyone can volunteer the same amount of time. Therefore, we offer a variety of opportunities with various time commitments.



Fundraising: Plan and organize events to raise money and/or provide items for HAVEN.

Shelter Advocate Support:

Assist with shelter advocates in answering the 24/7 crisis line and supporting the residents.

*Full volunteer training will be provided.

Transportation: Transport clients to various appointments when needed, and/or to the shelter, (which may include locations outside of Lincoln County). Must have a valid driver's license and liability insurance.

Child Care/Child Activities: Come to the shelter and read a book or engage in activities with the kids. Help during Youth Support Group.

*Full volunteer training will be provided.

We welcome all individuals to apply as volunteers who are committed to our cause.

Volunteer opportunities can range from short-term to long-term, and locally or remotely.

If you are interested in becoming a HAVEN volunteer, please contact HAVEN at 715-536-1300 or email volunteercoordinator@haveninc.org

We look forward to hearing from you!

HAVEN's Wish List

Contact HAVEN at 715-536-1300
Donations can be dropped off at HAVEN,
1106 E 8th Street, Merrill, WI, 54452 during business
hours, Monday-Friday 8am-12pm

SUPPORT GROUP NEEDS

- ♥ Consider sponsoring a support group meal.

Bottled water

Juices

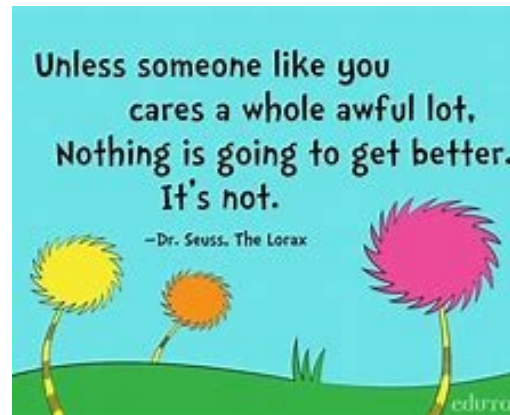
SHELTER NEEDS

Gifts cards from Merrill Chamber, County Market,
West Side Market, Golden Harvest and/or Walmart.

Kleenex

New Pillows

Toilet Bowl Cleaner



Thank

You

THANK YOU, DONORS

Our sincere thanks to the donors listed below, who made contributions and in-kind donations to HAVEN from 1-1-25 to 3-26-25.

We have made every effort to acknowledge these gifts correctly.

Please contact us and accept our apologies should any error or omission be discovered.

Crista Bobinski

Park City Credit Union

Erika Dombeck

Lynn

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Lori Wendt

JoAnn Opsahl

Mary Wydeven

Amy

Jim Bjorkland

Julie Janssen

Denise Kraklow

Merrill Iron & Steel

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Eileen Guthrie

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ELECTRONIC GIVING

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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.

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Date

Financial Institution

Account Number

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Phone

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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!

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