



HAVEN, INC.

HOUSEHOLD ABUSE VICTIMS EMERGENCY NETWORK

A strong community is built on acceptance, compassion, and shared responsibility. When we embrace people as they are, without judgment, we create a sense of belonging that allows individuals and families to thrive. By focusing on reducing harm and offering meaningful support, communities can break cycles of pain and build pathways toward healing.

Ending violence is not just about stopping harm—it is about fostering understanding, safety, and connection.

In these efforts, we are guided by the values of empowering families, believing survivors, celebrating pride, and protecting the most vulnerable which is all essential to promoting and protecting one's mental health for a stronger, healthier society.

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UNLESS

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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.

Protecting Kids Starts With Us

Every parent, caregiver, and community member wants children to grow up safe. We work hard to protect kids from visible dangers, but the reality is, many children who experience harm are hurt by someone they know and trust. That's why prevention matters. That's why **safe adults matter**.

What Is a Safe Adult?

A safe adult is someone who helps build the very strengths that protect children.

A Safe Adult:

- ♥ Listens without judgment
- ♥ Takes concerns seriously
- ♥ Respects children's boundaries
- ♥ Models healthy behavior
- ♥ Speaks up when something isn't right
- ♥ Continues learning about child safety



About **1 in 7 children** experience abuse or neglect each year. Most children are harmed by someone they know and trust. Children who experience ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences) may face increased risks to their health and well-being. ACEs can include experiences like abuse, neglect, domestic violence, or instability in the home.

Research shows that **just one safe, supportive adult** can help reduce the long-term impact of trauma. Safe, caring relationships build resilience, and stronger futures.

Join the Movement: Take the Safe Adult Pledge

This April, HAVEN invites you to be part of prevention. Visit us at **Polka-Dotted Pie (914 E. Main St in Merrill) on April 9th & the 23rd 8 am to 12 pm** and sign the "Safe Adult Pledge".

Because protecting kids doesn't start in crisis; it starts with connection, awareness, and everyday actions. You don't have to be perfect to make an impact. By showing up, listening, and supporting the children and families around you, you are helping build a safer, stronger community for everyone.

Sexual Assault Doesn't Always Look the Way People Expect

April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month, a time to raise awareness, support survivors, and remind our communities that sexual violence is an issue that affects people everywhere.

In communities like Lincoln County, it can be easy to believe that serious issues like sexual assault happen somewhere else, in larger cities or to people we don't know. The truth, is sexual assault exists in communities of any size, including our own.

One of the most misunderstood realities about sexual assault is that it rarely happens the way people imagine. Many people picture an attack by a stranger in a dark place. In reality, most sexual assaults are committed by someone the survivor knows, a friend, partner, acquaintance, coworker, or classmate.

Because the person responsible is often someone familiar, survivors may struggle with confusion, guilt, or fear about speaking up. They may worry how others will react, or if they will be believed. In smaller communities those fears can feel even heavier.

As a community, we have the power to create a culture where survivors are believed, supported, and not left to carry their experience alone. Listening without judgement and offering support can make a big difference.

What Can Our Community Do

Ending sexual violence is something survivors should not have to face alone. Everyone in our community can play a role in creating a safer Lincoln County.

You can help by:

Listening and believing when someone shares their experience.

Speaking up when you hear victim blaming comments or harmful myths

Teaching younger generations about consent, respect, and healthy boundaries

Sharing local resources, like Haven, with those who may need support



For many survivors, the first response they receive can shape whether they ever speak about it again.

One simple but powerful step our community can take is the Start By Believing pledge, which encourages people to respond with compassion and support when someone shares their experience.

Community members can take the pledge at startbybelieving.org and help create a culture where survivors feel heard, believed, and supported.

Stop by **Auntie Rays (812 E. 1st St in Merrill)** on **April 14th and 28th, from 8AM to 12PM**, to take the pledge and enter to win a raffle basket.

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Honoring the Volunteers Who Strengthen Our Community

JOANN MILEWCZYK & RIVER



JoAnn and River's visits bring joyful moments, happy attention, and bright smiles for the kids.

River loved all the attention and love he got from the kids! We will be back in the future.

EILEEN GUTHRIE & MAGGIE



Eileen and Maggie's visits brought smiles, calm moments, and a comforting presence.

Maggie and I began volunteering at HAVEN in October 2017, hoping to bring a little joy and calm to clients and staff. Maggie loved being petted or brushed, or simply sharing her gentle presence. One of my favorite memories was watching her patiently earn the trust of a young boy who was cautious at first. By the end of our time volunteering, they had become good friends, and I could not have been more proud.

ROBBIN HARDER & HEMI



Robbin and Hemi's visits build connection, strengthen community, and create a sense of belonging.

Hemi and I became a certified therapy dog team in 2023, and have completed over 200 visits. I feel volunteering is a way to strengthen the community. Our time at H.A.V.E.N. is unique because we can connect with so many staff and clients. Every visit is different, and yet every visit fosters connections and a sense of belonging for everyone involved.

ROSE WENDORF, BINDI & ROYAL



Rose, Bindi, and Royal's visits bring gentle comfort, joyful moments, and warm connection.

I started with my Doberman, Legend, in 2017. A special memory for me is when we were requested to come for a young boy who was close to Legend, to help him say goodbye and calm his fears about moving somewhere else. I have enjoyed visiting, especially with the children.

SARAH MONTI



Sarah's compassion creates safety hope and healing every day.

I began volunteering at HAVEN in 2011 as a tutor for three siblings and soon began helping other children during Tuesday evening groups while their mothers attended sessions. Over time, I also provided transportation so clients could attend important appointments and court appearances. Serving as a shelter advocate allows me to use my teaching and counseling skills to help clients feel safe, supported, and confident as they move forward. Volunteering at HAVEN continues to be a meaningful way for me to care for others in our community.

KIM BARTSCH & ZUMA



Kim and Zuma's visits create smiles, ease worries, and brighten days.

Zuma and I are grateful to HAVEN for inviting us to volunteer. We've been training since she was 16 weeks old. HAVEN was our very first visit as a certified therapy team. We were naturally a bit nervous, but the team and clients at HAVEN made us feel right at home. Their warm welcome calmed our 'newbie nerves' and confirmed exactly why we want to do this work.

MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS WEEK IS MAY 3-9, 2026

All forms of relational abuse take a significant toll on the mental, emotional and physical health of the adults and children who experience it. In our work at HAVEN we recognize this and understand the reasons that these intentional, personal, complex, and cumulative types of abuse cause so many challenges for those who are targeted. We know the courage of those who have survived what many cannot even imagine, and we support survivors in finding empowerment and healing.

When an adult client's situation involves a child or children, safety for the children is a priority concern. Living with an abusive adult absolutely affects any child in the home. **It may or may not be** direct physical or sexual abuse, neglect of basic needs, or drug endangerment. It is always the physical and emotional symptoms of living in stressful and unpredictable circumstances on a daily basis. It is trying to appease or conform to the dictates of the abusive adult. And even if approval is gained temporarily, always being on guard. It may be when the abuser explodes with yelling and violence, or during the silent waiting filled with tension and fear. It may be waking in the middle of the night or having nightmares. It may be trying to protect themselves or someone else in the family. It is also feeling they can never be good enough, especially in the eyes of the abuser.

These children depend on the protective parent or adult in the home with whom they have primary attachment to provide love, stability, comfort, understanding, basic needs, predictability and safety. As that adult is also being targeted with abuse, their ability to protect the children can be compromised at times. When the protective parent along with the children separate from the abuser, the abusive parent often portrays or accuses the person to whom they had delegated most of the parenting responsibilities as suddenly being irresponsible, incapable, neglectful, harmful or unfit. Because the abuser feels a loss of control, this is a tactic to regain it, and continue abuse toward both the other parent and the children. Although children may crave the love and attention they are missing from an abusive parent, they are also confused about how that parent treats them. The idea that abuse ends when the parents separate is false. A parent who perpetrated abuse in any form still presents considerable risks to children and the other parent that should be fully recognized and seriously factored into decisions regarding safety, custody and placement.

It's often said that children are resilient, but in reality, their brain and body development are being impacted by the toxic stress they experience, and they are coping to survive. This is known from significant advances in neurobiology, including research about child development and the increased risks to lifelong health from childhood abuse and trauma. When the relationship children have with their protective parent--with whom they have primary attachment--is honored and prioritized, they will experience the love, nurture and stability that supports both their healing from abuse and their future mental, emotional and physical health.

Protecting our Elders

June is Elder Abuse Awareness month, and raising awareness is crucial to ensure the safety, dignity, and well-being of our elderly population. It is reported that over 2 million Americans over **60 have** experienced some form of abuse. Elder abuse is any sort of treatment towards an individual that causes loss or harm to an elder.

These forms of abuse can vary from:

- Neglect
- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Financial abuse & exploitation
- Emotional abuse
- Isolation
- Psychological abuse
- Abandonment



One of the core issues in addressing elder abuse is, most cases go unnoticed which leads to under reporting. Many elders are reluctant to report their abuse due to fear, lack of physical or cognitive abilities, shame, the abuser is a loved one, or someone they may depend on. This is why it is crucial for family members, caregivers, and communities to recognize the warning signs of elder abuse. Some of the warning signs can be unexplained injuries, sudden changes in financial situations, aggression, withdrawal from social activities, or signs of neglect like poor hygiene, bedsores, malnutrition, or unclean living conditions.

Being aware and preventing elder abuse begins with educating yourself; learn about the signs of abuse and neglect. Staying connected with your parents, an elderly neighbor, a patient, or loved ones will help you notice if there are any changes in their behavior, mood, or physical condition. If your loved one has a caregiver, be sure to monitor their interactions, maybe even drop by unexpectedly. Building trust with the elderly loved one will help them to feel safe to speak with you regarding their safety. If you are allowed, keep an eye on all their legal and financial interests.

If you suspect elderly abuse, report it immediately. Contact adult protective services or law enforcement in your area.

“Those who respect the elderly pave their own road toward success.”

-African proverb

A Message to Our Community This Pride Month

In places like Lincoln County, life can feel quiet and close-knit. Many people know each other. Community can be a strong and caring thing. But for some LGBTQ+ people, that same closeness can also make life harder.

Studies show that LGBTQ+ people face higher rates of violence than others. This includes domestic violence, sexual abuse and child abuse. It has also been found that many LGBTQ+ youth feel unsafe in their own homes.

For many young people, **the first hurt does not come from strangers, it comes from someone they trust.** Caregivers and communities are meant to protect and support children. But sometimes, the individual is not fully understood or accepted for who they are. This can lead to harsh words, rejection, or even abuse. That kind of pain does not just go away. It can stay with a person for years, affecting their mental health and sense of self. In some cases, it can lead to thoughts of suicide. Research shows that **45% of LGBTQ youth seriously considered suicide in the past year.**

In small or rural communities, finding support can feel even more difficult. LGBTQ+ individuals may stay silent out of fear of being judged, outed, or not believed. That is why community matters so much. **A safe, supportive community can change lives.** When people feel seen, heard, and accepted, they are more likely to reach out for help. Support can come from many places: friends, teachers, neighbors, or local organizations. Even small acts of kindness can remind someone they are not alone, and that can make all the difference.

This Pride Month, we're asking you to be part of the solution.

You don't need to have all the right words. You don't need to be an expert. But you can:

- ♥ Choose kindness, even when it's unfamiliar
- ♥ Speak up when something isn't right
- ♥ Create space for others to feel safe and heard
- ♥ Continue learning, even when it's uncomfortable



While Pride Month is a time to celebrate and uplift LGBTQ+ voices, the need for support doesn't end when the month does. Advocacy, safety, and respect must exist in our communities every day, not just in June.

If you are part of the LGBTQ+ community and navigating something difficult, please know this:

- ♥ You deserve to be safe.
- ♥ You deserve to be heard.
- ♥ You deserve support that respects every part of who you are.

There are people in this community who care deeply, and who are here for you.

THANK YOU, DONORS

Our sincere thanks to the donors listed below, who made contributions and in-kind donations to HAVEN from 1-1-2026 to 3-23-2026.

We have made every effort to acknowledge these gifts correctly.

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