Through a Child’s Eyes

THE FIRST STEP CHILDREN’S PROGRAM

For too many children, home is far from a safe haven. Every year, hundreds of millions of children are exposed to domestic violence in their own home.

Witnessing violence has a powerful and profound impact on their lives and their hopes for the future. Children who grow up in violent homes are more likely to become victims of abuse. Even children who are only exposed to domestic violence, and are not direct victims themselves, develop some of the same behavioral and psychological problems as children who are physically abused.

First Step believes that all children have the right to a safe and stable home environment. Many children suffer in silence with little support. Children who are exposed to violence in their home need trusted adults to turn to for help and comfort as well as services that will help them cope with their experiences. First Step’s children’s program provides these important services free of charge, including individual and group counseling. These services assist children in overcoming the trauma of domestic and sexual violence. Last year, First Step provided support to 447 children to help them stay emotionally and physically safe. First Step advocates (counselors) also work with children to explore feelings, develop communication skills, enhance self-esteem and achieve other goals identified through individual and family counseling.

First Step has several underlying principles for our children’s program.

First Step believes children need a safe and secure home environment. They should feel safe from harm and know that those they love are also protected.

Every child in First Step’s program works to create a personal safety plan so that they will know what to do if violence breaks out in their presence and how to safely reach out for help. Each year, First Step shelters more children than adults in its transitional housing and residential shelter programs.

Children need to know that there are adults who will listen to them, believe them and help them. They need to know they are not alone and the violence they are witnessing or experiencing is not their fault. Our advocates work with children and their parents to reestablish the bond that is often broken between the non-abusive parent and the child. To help with families reconnect and rebuild, First Step offers parenting skill sessions and support groups to assist with this process.

Children need a sense of routine and normalcy. In First Step’s shelter and transitional housing programs, advocates help children get enrolled and transported to school, so they do not fall behind. Fun recreational activities are also provided to help children adjust to shelter life. Field trips to the Detroit Zoo, Animal Shelters, Greenfield Village and Imagination Station help children to have fun in a safe space, with trusted adults. It is often hard for traumatized children to be free of worry. Field trips allow them this safe space to be a kid. First Step also has a beautiful playground and healing garden on site. This child-friendly site has play areas for children of all ages and incorporates all the architectural

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Celebrating courage, peace, and hope in the lives of survivors

SAVE THE DATE!
THE HISTORIC 40TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION!

FirstStep
Peaceful Families • Safe Communities

THURSDAY
MAY 10, 2018
6-10:30 pm

YOU ARE INVITED!
Come spend an evening with us transforming our future and celebrating 40 years of success at First Step!

FOX HILLS GOLF & BANQUET CENTER
8768 N. Territorial Rd., Plymouth, MI

More info and tickets: firststep-mi.org/40

DINNER
ENTERTAINMENT
DRINKS
AWARDS
DANCING
First Step Plymouth Office Gets an Extreme Makeover

Thank you

Special Thanks to event chairs Karen Mazo and Joan Hennessy for their leadership on our Strength Determination and Power Cocktail Hour event. The event netted $41,637 for First Step. Special thanks also, to World Changer Sponsor, Karen Wilson Smithbauer and Justice Sponsor, Joan and John Hennessy from Hennessy Engineers.

First Step is pleased to announce that we have been awarded a $100,000 grant from the Margaret Dunning Foundation to renovate and upgrade the First Step Administrative and Counseling office in Plymouth. Funds will be used to replace the mansard roof and soffits, install a new asphalt parking lot, professionally paint the building exterior, install new security doors and replace the heating and cooling system.

Ilene Hogan, First Step Interim CEO said that “We are thrilled to receive this grant. Our Plymouth office was in need of major repairs. These types of infrastructure improvements are often more challenging to fund than “feel good projects” like a playground or program project. Because of the investment of the Dunning Foundation, First Step’s office in Plymouth will look beautiful in the neighborhood and provide a safe and comforting atmosphere for survivors, donors, employees and other community leaders who partner with and support our mission.”

The Margaret Dunning Foundation was founded by Ms. Dunning in 1997. The Foundation supports charitable programs primarily in western Wayne County, Michigan, and educational programs focused on the automobile and transportation industries.

Much needed replacement of the First Step parking lot began December, 2017.
The First Step Children’s program (Cont.)
features of a hospital healing garden, helping children play and connect with nature.

Children need to learn that domestic violence is wrong. They need practice learning non-violent methods of resolving conflict.
Children have to observe and experience peaceful role models to break the cycle of violence. First Step advocates and volunteers offer counseling/coaching for parents, cooperative play, conflict resolution and serve as peaceful role models.

First Step also offers school-based programs such as Keeping Kids Safe. This award winning, First Step curriculum is designed for 3rd and 4th grade students to learn about domestic violence. At the end of the workshop, children better understand what domestic violence is and that they are never to blame for the violence. During these sessions, children will also learn how to stay safe if they are ever exposed to domestic violence. Each child is given a safety plan worksheet that they can complete with a counselor or trusted adult. Safety plans are developed to be specific to each child’s situation.

First Step also offers risk reduction presentations to high school students covering topics such as sexual assault, domestic violence, consent and healthy relationships.

We believe that much can be changed by bringing this problem out into the open and by providing supportive services to children. Together, we can create a brighter and more peaceful future for children who are impacted by domestic violence.

To learn more about our Children’s Program, please visit www.firststep-mi.org to learn more or to get involved.

Facts and concepts from this article were sourced from the Unicef report, Behind Closed Doors, The Impact of Domestic Violence on Children.
First Step Breaks Ground on Resource Center and Facility for Pets

On October 13, 2017, First Step held a groundbreaking ceremony for the Animals Receiving Kindness (ARK) and Resource Center.

This new 1,876 square foot building will feature an area for individuals and families in our shelter to house, visit and play with their pets. The building will also have a climate controlled storage area for donations such as diapers, school supplies, backpacks, food, clothing, toys and household goods.

We decided to take on this project because research has shown that perpetrators of domestic violence often have a pattern of abuse involving other members of the household including pets. A study of First Step’s helpline confirmed that 50% of survivors seeking shelter were concerned about the safety of their pet. Ailsa Blunk, Chair of the First Step ARK Committee said “We believe this new program will remove a barrier to entering shelter as survivors will no longer be left with the the difficult decision to either leave their pets behind or remain in the abusive environment. The sad fact is that animals who are left with their abusers often face injuries, torture or even death. We also know that having their beloved companion animal nearby will provide comfort to the adults and children in the shelter.”

To learn more about the ARK and see the building progress visit facebook.com/firststep-mi
COUNT ME IN!

I would like to help FIRST STEP, Western & Downriver Wayne County’s only comprehensive Domestic & Sexual Assault program.

I wish to support First Step with a donation of $________

Credit Cards: VISA / MC (circle one)

Account#: ________________________________

Exp. ___/___  3 Digit Security Code:  __________

Signature: __________________________________

Name: ___________________________________

Address: __________________________________

City/State/Zip: ______________________________

Phone: ____________________________________

Email:  ____________________________________

(Checks payable to First Step)

Please fill out this form completely and mail to:
First Step, 44567 Pinetree Drive, Plymouth, MI 48170

DONATE ONLINE!


or scan this code with your smartphone. To scan the code, you’ll need a free app like QR Scanner or ShopSavvy.

HAVING A BIRTHDAY?

Make your birthday mean even more! Birthday’s are a time when our friends and family love to be generous and celebrate! If you are having a Birthday party this year and want to cut down on the clutter or calories, please consider dedicating your birthday party to First Step! You can set up your birthday donation campaign on our website and invite your guests to make a small donation in lieu of a birthday gift.

To get started, please visit https://www.classy.org/campaign/Give-Your-Birthday/c152583 to set up your donation page. We will walk you through the easy step by step process to have your page ready to go in minutes.

At First Step, we understand how important it is to have volunteers on our team! In fact, we rely on you to help us create a strong support system for survivors in our community.

Last year over 600 people stepped up and volunteered at First Step, taking on projects like family fun nights, nurturing, assault response, or providing support to clients involved in the legal system.

What types of opportunities are available?

Project-Based Occasional Volunteer Opportunities

• Individuals, groups, or students fulfilling a school service project are invited to help with projects.
• Plan an activity for current shelter residents such as movies, games, crafts, outdoor or indoor children’s activities, hair styling, manicures, makeup, massage, yoga or exercise.
• Organize and clean the shelter playroom, storage, kitchen, dining room or pantry areas.
• Receive and organize donated items.
• Light maintenance or yard work.
• Work in our garden planting, weeding, and harvesting fruits and vegetables.

Consistent Volunteer Opportunities:

• Volunteer on a consistent basis for a direct client service program or general office duties.
• Assault Response, Community Response, Administrative Support, Career Center, Life Skills, Child Mentoring Activities, Reception Desk, Special Projects
• Residential Shelter: Cleaning and Childcare, Cooking Lessons, Homework Assistance, Story Telling, Children and Teen Activities, Wellness and Fitness Activities.

UPCOMING 2018 TRAININGS

FIRST STEP CORE TRAINING:
All trainings are required and are from 9:00am – 3:30pm.
Saturday, January 20
Sunday, January 21
Saturday, January 27
Sunday, January 28

SPECIALIZED TRAINING:
For some of our volunteer positions, a specialty training will be required. Prospective Childcare Volunteers and Assault Response Advocates will be required to attend a specialized training session.

LEGAL:
Tuesday, February 13
5:30pm – 8:45pm

NURTURING:
Thursday, February 8
6:00pm – 7:30pm

ASSAULT RESPONSE:
Saturday, February 17
9:00am – 4:00 pm

Go to firststep-mi.org/getinvolved or call Kathleen Howard at 734.656.0739 for more info.
Here’s how you can help

Please consider donating gift cards or the cash value of an item you would like to donate. First Step leverages suppliers to get discounts on food and supplies and your monetary gift may help us cover essential operational expenses such as phone, electricity, heat and counseling. All donations, whether monetary or in-kind, help First Step in our mission to create peaceful families and safe communities. Thank you. Your support is appreciated.

GIFT CARD NEEDS
Kroger, Walmart, Meijer
Gas cards
Drug stores

PERSONAL CARE ITEMS (FULL-SIZE)
Hair care products (shampoo/conditioner)
Hair care products for women of color
Hair brushes
Wide-tooth combs
Body wash
Hand and body lotion
Deodorant
Hand sanitizer
Feminine hygiene products

BABY ITEMS
Baby bottles (standard size 8 & larger)
Diapers (sizes 4, 5 & 6)
Pull ups
Baby wipes
New clothes
Diaper rash cream

FOOD & DRINKS
Food storage containers/bags
Cold cereals
Canned goods (soups, vegetables, etc.)
Juice
Hot chocolate
Coffee

BEDROOM ITEMS (NEW)
Bath and hand towels
Wash cloths
Twin blankets
Twin sheet sets
Pillows

KITCHEN SUPPLIES
Cleaning Supplies
Liquid dish soap
Garbage bags
Disinfectant wipes
Laundry soap
Aluminum foil
Dishes, pots, pans & skillets

BATHROOM ITEMS
Toilet paper
Bath mats
Toilet bowl cleaner
Shower curtains & liners/ hooks
Cleaning supplies

PAPER PRODUCTS
Paper towel
Paper plates & bowls
Plastic silverware & cups
Kleenex

MICHELLEOUS
Laundry baskets
Storage containers w/lids

Provide Financial Support
Cash donations of any amount are always the most efficient way to support the free services offered by First Step to families affected by violence.

Download our complete Wish List at firststep-mi.org
Please note: We are unable to accept used toys or used clothing due to lack of storage. We will be happy to refer you to the clothing banks we use to donate these items. Thank you for your understanding!

First Step is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. Your donation may be tax deductible to the extent allowable by law. Your contribution may qualify for a federal tax deduction.

For more information, or to discuss donating larger items, call 734-713-0652 or email info@firststep-mi.org

Consider Donating A Vehicle To First Step

To learn more about the donation process or to get started please call 855.500.RIDE (7433) or visit First Step’s car donation site at:

Any sized planned gift can make an enormous difference!

For further information or to receive our planned giving brochure, please contact Theresa Bizoe at tbizoe@firststep-mi.org or 734.656.0730.
Find more info at www.firststep-mi.org/donate

firststep-mi.org
ABOUT FIRST STEP

First Step is an agency in Wayne County, Michigan that provides comprehensive services to support survivors of domestic and sexual violence.

First Step offers temporary emergency housing, counseling, advocacy, transitional housing, assault response, 24-hour help line services, children’s services, training and education to survivors and to the community.

Help work to make your community violence-free by becoming involved with First Step: volunteer, donate, and stand up against violence in your community.

Call 734.416.1111 for more information.

CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE!

www.firststep-mi.org

We would like to thank Verizon for sponsoring the publication and distribution of First Step’s newsletter.