



First Step Celebrates 40 Years of Service



The First Step family of survivors, staff, volunteers, board members, donors and supporters came together on May 10th, 2018 to celebrate the organization's accomplishments over the last 40 years.

The event raised \$154,000 which will provide free support services for survivors, create a First Step emergency fund, and to raise funds for the First Step ARK, an on-site sanctuary for the pets of the families in First Step's shelter.

Three hundred and forty people attended the sold-out celebration. The event was co-chaired by Karen Wilson Smithbauer and Carla O'Malley who were honored at the event along with Judy Ellis, First Step's former Executive Director, Carmen Dominguez, First Step Survivor Advocate, and Carolyn Clifford, WXYZ Channel 7 News Anchor and champion for domestic violence issues.

"We would like to thank all who helped make this event a great success. We are grateful for your support, your enthusiasm, your generosity and your commitment to First Step's mission" said First Step's Executive Director, Lori Kitchen Buschel.

You can visit First Step's Youtube channel at youtube.com/user/FirstStepPlymouth/videos to see many of the videos that were recorded documenting First Step's history and stories from survivors through the years.

If you would like to make a donation in honor of First Step's 40th Anniversary, visit www.firststep-mi.org/give or mail your donation to 44567 Pinetree Drive Plymouth, MI 48170.



A message from our Executive Director, Lori Kitchen-Buschel



Since the founding of First Step in 1978, the impact of this agency, due to the staff, board, volunteers, partners, and donors who have supported it, is infinite. In 40 years over 300,000 survivors of domestic and sexual violence, have been

touched by this work. Many survivors have endured and escaped violence so extreme they are lucky to have survived in the first place, and yet their strength, courage, and resilience prove that there is hope.

Over the past 40 years we have grown from a former group home in Plymouth, to a Canton farmhouse, to the Karen Wilson Smithbauer Center in Wayne, a state of the art 45 bed facility providing shelter, first response, advocacy and counseling. This shelter was made possible by strong community support.

As we celebrate the last 40 years, and look ahead to the next 40 years, it is not lost on me that we serve this community at the sake of survivors of violence. It is our responsibility to step into our future with a strong commitment to eradicating this violence and creating a community of zero tolerance. First Step will be here, for as long as we are needed, to provide safety and support to survivors until we are no longer needed. Unfortunately the need in our community is still great. Over 100 families seek shelter each month and no space is available for them. In the next several years we will expand our shelter capacity and grow our services county-wide while focusing on systems change and prevention.

To all staff, board members, donors, volunteers, survivors, and partners of the last 40 years, I thank you, for all you have done to ensure the success of this agency in serving our community, and for your bravery. It is an honor to serve with you.

Kindly,



Lori Kitchen-Buschel, Executive Director



40th Anniversary Celebration

Presenting Sponsors



The O'Malley
and LaFave
Families,
in honor of
Tillie LaFave



World Changer Sponsors

Beaumont

BRIDGEWATER



Ford Motor Company Fund

MASCO

PLANNED  GIVING


ANY SIZE 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



**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: <http://bit.ly/FSDonateCar>

FIRST STEP TOUCHED THE LIVES OF 8,731 PEOPLE IN 2016-2017

Total number of
survivors served
5,791 ADULTS
271 CHILDREN

Lethality Assessment
Program Screenings

704 SCREENINGS
375 HIGH DANGER

3,000 PEOPLE
participated in First Step's
**OUTREACH AND
EDUCATION SESSIONS**

134 CLIENTS
had help obtaining
Personal Protection
Orders

Community Response
Program in police/courts

**1,927 SURVIVORS
SUPPORTED**

Counseling / Advocacy
for adults & children
8,407 HOURS

**SUPPORT
GROUPS**
2,651 HOURS

**TRANSITIONAL
SUPPORTIVE HOUSING**
23 survivors and 51 children
received subsidized safe
housing (16,925 nights)
& support services

TRANSPORTATION
First Step provided 728
rides for 101 survivors


FirstStep
Peaceful Families • Safe Communities

**PROGRAMS &
SERVICE STATISTICS**
**2016-2017
FISCAL YEAR**

2016-2018 FIRST STEP BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Jennifer Hartke
President



Elaine Tingle
Vice President



June Nicholas
Treasurer



Heidi A. Naasko
Secretary



Kathleen Cronin
Member at Large



Genelle M. Allen



Jay Bonnell



Jerome Espy, Sr.



Jeff Gielniak



Carla O'Malley
Past President



Karen Mazo



Karen Wilson
Smithbauer



Beckie Thompson

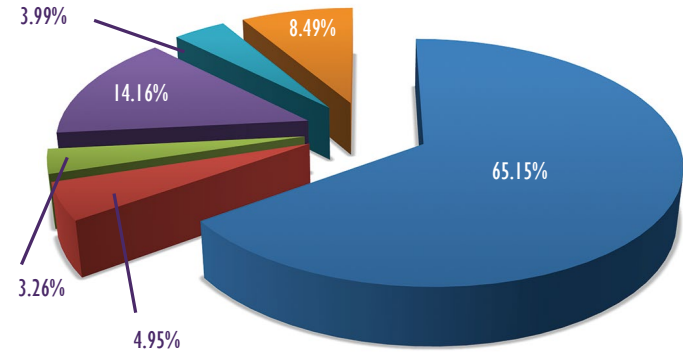
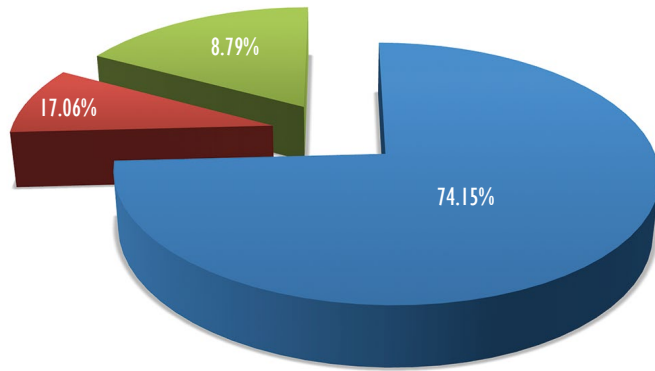


Wendy Wood-
ward

EXPENSES

REVENUE

FOR FISCAL YEAR ENDING SEPTEMBER 30, 2017. PROGRAM ENDORSEMENTS AND DETAILS ABOUT FIRST STEP'S FINANCIAL REPORTS CAN BE FOUND AT [HTTP://FIRSTSTEP-MI.ORG/GUIDESTAR](http://firststep-mi.org/guidestar)

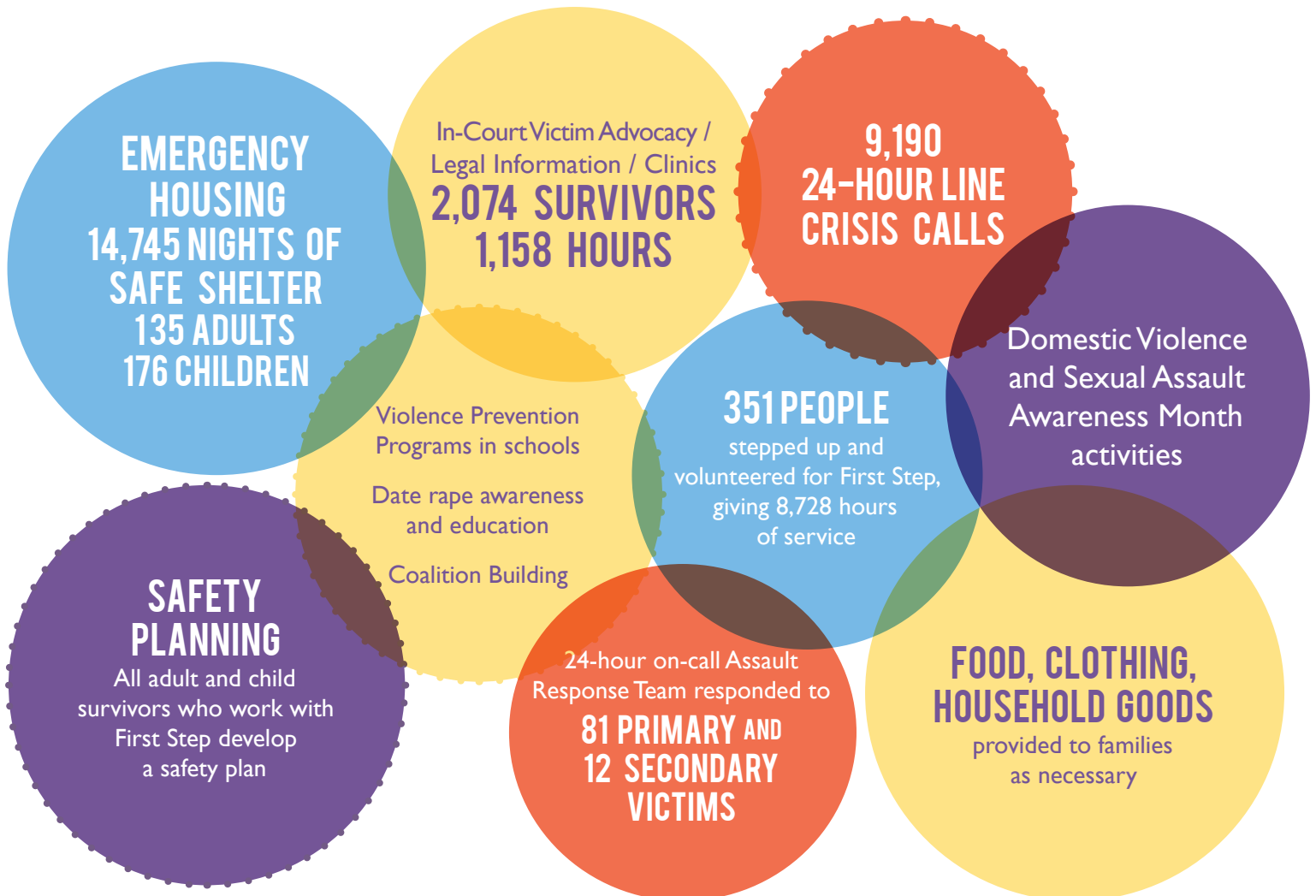


DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROGRAMMING	\$2,506,664
SEXUAL ASSAULT PROGRAMMING	\$297,071
SUPPORTING SERVICES <i>General & Administrative</i>	\$576,755

FEDERAL	\$2,308,556
STATE & OTHER	\$175,274
FOUNDATIONS	\$115,423
CONTRIBUTIONS	\$501,583
UNITED WAY	\$141,365
CONTRIBUTED SERVICES	\$300,992

TOTAL EXPENSES \$3,380,490

TOTAL REVENUE \$3,543,193





First Step History, 1978-2018



Women's shelter marks first

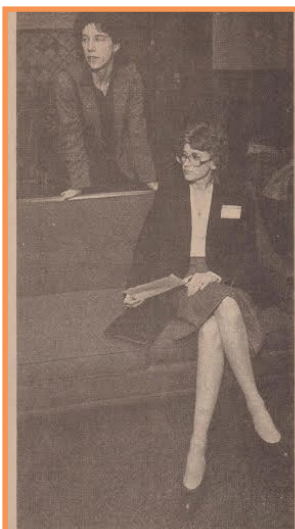


Jane Dewey (left) and Gail McKnight (right) and other agency founders, 1983

a formerly battered woman started talking with police, government officials, religious leaders, attorneys and social service providers to look at the problem of domestic abuse. With the support of the Northwest County of the National Organization of Women (NOW), she formed a task force to study the deadly issue of domestic violence and identify supports and solutions.

With the goal of victim safety in mind, the task force examined domestic violence complaints at local police departments which required those complaints to be identified and separated from all of the simple assaults with which they were classified. Their interviews with battered women reinforced their perception that there was no support or resources for women and children living in violent homes.

The task force gathered together community activists including Mary Ann Pinkerton, Sheila Ogg, Mary Jo Durivage, Louise Comey, Rev. Doug Hodges from Norwayne Baptist Church, Westland City Council Women Justine Barnes and Gail McKnight, Westland Mayor Tom Taylor, Westland Police Chief Riekland, and attorneys Margaret Barton, Margaret Tobin along with many others whose names have been faded through history (if you know of others, please share their names and stories at info@firststep-mi.org). These visionaries were the early organizers of First Step.



DAN DEAN/staff photographer

Among those at the open house were Debbie Benjamin (left), the first First Step director, and Mary Ann Pinkerton of Plymouth, the founder of the organization.

Deborah Benjamin and Mary Ann Pinkerton

Westland City Council member, Gail McKnight (who became a Judge in Westland), along with Justine Barnes worked with Westland city officials to identify funding First Step staff, including Executive Director Deborah Benjamin as well as an administrative assistant. On February 12, 1978, First Step was incorporated as a non-profit organization operating out of space at the Dorsey Center provided by the City of Westland.

In the early days, First Step volunteers provided counseling and sometimes sheltered battered women and children in their own homes. Benjamin, the board, staff and volunteers continued to seek funding and the organization grew. Eventually, Wayne County

In the mid-1970's, with no existing shelter or support services for victims of domestic violence, the grassroots work of the feminist movement led to the formation of agencies like First Step. In Western

Wayne County Michigan,

provided the farm house next to the Nankin Mills Nature Center in Hines Park as a new and expanded office space for First Step.

Under the guidance of early Executive Directors Gail Matteson Croninger and Jane Dewey, staff and volunteers answered calls 24 hours a day providing advocacy, safety planning, and linking victims to other services. They were beginning to bring the crime of domestic violence out from behind closed doors.



Executive Director, Deborah Benjamin and agency founders

By 1983, First Step opened a 20-bed shelter located in the Plymouth Center for Human Development near 5 Mile and Sheldon Roads. The building was a large brick, former group home. Families slept in one large room with dressers separating each family space. In addition, First Step opened a downriver office/non-residential counseling program in Southgate.

In 1984, Judy Ellis was selected as Executive Director and served until her retirement in 2012. During her tenure the agency grew exponentially in the number of paid staff, dedicated volunteers, and the amount of victims of domestic and sexual violence served.



Judy Ellis with staff

In 1987, First Step purchased 10 acres in Canton and converted an old farm house/nursing home on Warren and Ridge Road into a shelter, increasing shelter capacity to 42.

In 1989, First Step expanded its mission to include serving survivors of sexual assault. An Assault Response program was developed, sending advocates and volunteers to assist survivors of sexual assault at local emergency rooms, police stations and other safe places, advocating for them and referring them to additional First Step Services.



First Step Shelter in Canton, 1987-2009

In 1993, recognizing the devastating effect domestic violence has on children living in violent homes, First Step began to provide non-residential counseling specifically aimed at child survivors/witnesses.

In 1995, First Step expanded its legal advocacy program to include in-court victim advocacy.

In 1996, First Step was awarded a federal STOP grant (Services, Training, Officers, and Prosecutors) that began a model collaborative approach to domestic violence. The STOP Team included a First Step Advocate, a designated Taylor Police Officer, and a Wayne County

Assistant Prosecuting Attorney working together on domestic assault crimes in the Taylor Police Department. A few years later, that Community Response Program expanded to Dearborn and Westland thanks to funding from VOCA (Victims of Crime Act).

Thanks to office space donated by St. Robert Bellarmine Parish in 1997, First Step was able to expand its counseling programs to Redford, making it easier for survivors throughout Wayne County to access our services.



First Step Staff, 1985

In 1999, A Department of Justice grant allowed First Step to hire an attorney specializing in family violence to help survivors with legal matters. While that grant was short lived, it enabled the agency to establish relationships with other local legal organizations and build up

our volunteer attorney base. Also in 1999, First Step started a peer education program at Churchill High Schools and at the Taylor, Inkster and Romulus Teen Health Centers and the Assault Response program expanded to respond to the needs of domestic violence survivors.

In the late nineties, The Colina Foundation funded a children's advocacy and prevention programs for the Downriver communities.

In 2000, Blue Cross/Blue Shield Blue Care Network funded "Keeping Kids Safe," a domestic violence prevention curriculum designed for elementary school aged children. When that grant came to an end, the Colina Foundation provided funding so that "Keeping Kids Safe" could continue to be offered to schools in the Downriver Communities. First Step has trained and shared this curriculum with many other shelters across the state.

A HUD grant in 2001 allowed for an Aftercare Advocate to be hired. This advocate assisted shelter residents with transitions toward economic and emotional independence. Funding from HUD also made it possible for First Step to purchase a van and hire a Transportation Advocate to help clients get to appointments and meetings throughout Wayne County, where public transportation is scarce.

In 2005, First Step received a grant for a Transitional Supportive Housing Program. This program allows us to provide furnished apartments, rent-free for two years, as well as ongoing supportive services for families leaving the shelter.

In 2006, the Karen Colina Wilson Foundation provided a grant to begin an art expressions group for child survivors of violence. Also in 2006, with our existing shelter quickly deteriorating, First Step partnered with Commercial Real Estate Women-Detroit to plan for a new residential facility.

In 2007, Loren Wadington and David Treadwell signed on to co-chair a capital campaign aimed at raising funds to build First Step's new emergency shelter.

In the meantime, a grant from The McGregor Fund in 2008 allowed First Step to re-open an office in Lincoln Park, enabling the agency to better serve the communities of Allen Park, River Rouge, Lincoln Park, Melvindale, and Ecorse.

In 2009, as a result of a generous donation by Karen Wilson Smithbauer, along with many other generous supporters, First Step opened The Karen Wilson Smithbauer Center in Wayne to house



The Karen Wilson Smithbauer Center

the 24-hour helpline and non-residential counseling services. First Step continued to raise funds to build a residential wing. During this time, the agency sheltered survivors in a Canton hotel.

On May 31, 2011, First Step held the grand opening for Karen Wilson Smithbauer Center, an innovative shelter with individual apartment like suites, making it possible to shelter at least 45-50 adult and child survivors of domestic and sexual violence every night.

In 2011, First Step also partnered with Wayne County Safe to begin a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) program.

Long time staff member Amy Youngquist became CEO in 2012 and served in the leadership role until 2017.

In 2012, First Step began planning and fundraising to create a "one of a kind" Healing Garden and Playscape at the Family Center. Many volunteers and community groups supported this effort and the playscape opened in 2015.



A capital campaign started in 2014 to fund the ARK (Animals Receiving Kindness) Facility/Resource Center. The ARK will serve as a shelter for pets of families staying at First Step. The ARK will also serve as a donation storage facility. The ARK building is expected to open in the summer of 2018.

In 2015, First Step was awarded a McGregor Fund grant to establish Lethality Assessment Program in Canton. The success of that program led to its expansion to include the cities of Dearborn and Taylor.



ARK Ground breaking, October 2017

In March 2018, the Board of Directors hired Lori Kitchen-Buschel as Executive Director and charged her with leading First Step into the future.

On May 10th of 2018, First Step celebrated its 40th Anniversary.



44567 Pinetree Drive
Plymouth, MI 48170

2-5PM, SUNDAY,
OCTOBER 7th

A Chocolate Affair

LAOH Fundraiser to benefit First Step
Hellenic Cultural Center, Westland - \$30



SAVE THE DATE

ABOUT FIRST STEP

First Step is an organization 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 for peace and safety in your community.

Call 734.416.1111 for more information.

First Step
44567 Pinetree Drive
Plymouth, MI 48170
734.416.1111

First Step
Karen Wilson
Smithbauer Center
4400 South Venoy Road
Wayne, MI 48184

24-Hour Help Line
734.722.6800

firststep-mi.org
facebook.com/firststepmi

✓ COUNT ME IN!

I would like to help FIRST STEP, Western & Downriver Wayne County's comprehensive domestic & sexual assault program.

I wish to support First Step with a donation of \$_____

Credit Card: VISA / MC (circle one)

Account#: _____ Exp. ____/____ CSV: _____

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

Visit <http://bit.ly/donate-fs> (or scan the code with your smartphone) to make a secure donation to First Step.



THE MISSION OF FIRST STEP IS TO ELIMINATE BOTH DOMESTIC AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND TO PROVIDE COMPREHENSIVE SERVICES TO INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES IMPACTED BY THESE CRIMES.

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