



SUPPORTING SURVIVORS DURING COVID-19

This year has brought many changes to First Step. Adjusting to the COVID-19 pandemic presented unique challenges for our programs to continue providing services. First Step's leadership and staff acted swiftly and efficiently to make sure that survivors of domestic and sexual violence were supported during the pandemic. A majority of First Step staff are working off-site, with the exception of our shelter and helpline staff. Our staff continue to provide the many needed services that First Step offers.

EMERGENCY SHELTER

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, First Step, like many other organizations, had to make best practice changes to ensure the safety of the survivors who come to us for shelter. These new standards included deep cleaning, free personal protective equipment, screening, and quarantine protocols for people awaiting testing, or testing results.

Changes were also made to the shelter's occupancy standards to adjust for increased health and safety

protocols. Typically, suites are shared between two families or individuals, but in response to the pandemic, suites now accommodate only one family or individual at a time allowing them to safely quarantine in the event of a COVID-19 diagnosis. First Step made these changes to eliminate any barriers or worries someone seeking shelter may have – such as concerns of being exposed to COVID-19. Being able to now offer families and individuals their own suites has been very appreciated and relieving.

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CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY PROGRAMS

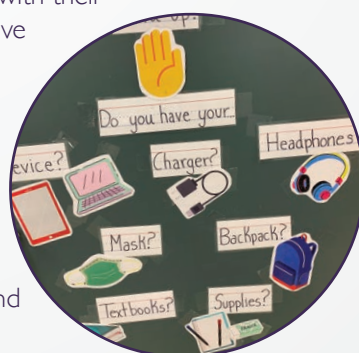


tutoring help from the Nurturers. Wayne-Westland Schools have been incredibly supportive and have a great relationship with First Step.

The Detroit Zoo provided a special trip for the Residential and Transitional Housing families. Our families were able to go after hours for a private tour, which helped to limit contact for social distancing purposes. The Zoo provided transportation, a meal, a guided tour, and all the children received a plant to take home. Trips like these are important for families to have time to relax together and form happy memories, even during these difficult times.

The start of the school year presented unique challenges for shelter clients and staff.

For parents, being in shelter comes with increased stress and emotional challenges, and combined with navigating virtual learning and increased monitoring of children, residents were overwhelmed. First Step's Children's Staff took this challenge head on and converted the Communal Dining Room into a virtual classroom where children could have their own workspace, with their own devices, and receive



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EMERGENCY SHELTER (CONTINUED)

One big addition to First Step's shelter was providing Wi-Fi for clients throughout the building. This became especially important when common spaces were closed, leaving residents and their children needing things to occupy them. Generous donations and special grants allowed First Step to purchase electronics, such as smart TVs, tablets, laptops, headphones, and hand-held gaming devices, to help pass the time. With the start of school, students now have access to Wi-Fi for virtual learning.

A new service provided for clients in shelter was the "Snack Cart," where residents can pick out individually wrapped snacks, which Program Coordinators, Catherine and Sally, say was the biggest hit of all!

Our incredible 24-hour helpline staff took on more responsibilities with sanitizing and cleaning the shelter. To better support our First Responders, advocates working offsite now help answer the helpline from home. Unfortunately, staff have noticed an increase in lethality when callers contact the helpline. This includes increases in strangulation, threat or use of weapons, and an increase in physical violence. Initially, calls had decreased because survivors no longer had as much time away from their abusers to contact First Step. Now staff are more frequently taking on longer, emotional support calls.

The community has been incredibly supportive of First Step during the pandemic by making donations of much needed essential items, as well as stress-relieving and activity type items.



COMMUNITY RESPONSE PROGRAM

First Step's Community Response Program helps victims identified through police departments and courts throughout Wayne County. First Step also provides in-court victim advocacy and support through legal clinics. This year, First Step added an advocate to help clients file personal protection orders. This has been a wonderful addition, as our advocate has the added opportunity to identify and inform survivors who are not current clients, that First Step resources are available to them and they are not alone.

Courts closed to comply with COVID-19 restrictions, bringing normal operations to a halt. When court resumed, only a limited amount of people were allowed in the buildings; and a website was created to be able to view and participate in court remotely. This gave First Step's Community Response Advocates the ability to still communicate with the courts, provide in-court support to survivors, and made getting information quicker because everything was digital. This has allowed First Step's Community Response Advocates to have increased flexibility and the ability to reach more courts than would normally be possible because they do not have to travel to each individual site, but can easily sign on and attend whatever court in Wayne County the client needs.

Nicole Neal Goodson of Legal Aid & Defender, First Step's 2020 You Are the Light Gala Community Partner Honoree, used to host weekly legal clinics at First Step's Karen Wilson Smithbauer



Community Response Team

Family Center. When First Step decided to work remotely, Nicole and the Community Response team had to get creative to safely support clients needing legal advice. Nicole decided that clients could call the Legal Aid & Defender offices directly to schedule phone or video meetings. This has given clients more accessibility to Legal Aid & Defender's services as some barriers, like transportation, were no longer an issue. First Step is grateful to Nicole Neal Goodson and Legal Aid & Defender for being so flexible to meet clients' needs during this difficult time.

VOLUNTEERING AND COMMUNITY EDUCATION

First Step has used this time to evaluate, adapt, and improve both the Volunteer and Community Engagement programs in response to COVID-19 and for the future.

You may have noticed a lot of changes to our volunteer program this year! Audriana, our Community Engagement & Volunteer Program Coordinator, has been working enthusiastically to improve the volunteer program. Audriana has been implementing new online tools, taking feedback from volunteers, and more importantly, has been keeping volunteers engaged and safe during the pandemic. To stay up to date with our program, you can visit firststep-mi.org/volunteer.

First Step now has a Speakers Bureau, where trained experts from our programs can present on a multitude of topics to all types of groups. We now have the capacity to do virtual engagements as well!



Casey, volunteer; power washed the Wayne office

If you are interested in scheduling a training or presentation with First Step, please visit firststep-mi.org/community-engagement

FIRST STEP'S ADVOCACY PROGRAMS



Melissa, First Step's Sexual Assault Advocacy Program Coordinator, reports great flexibility and willingness of both survivors and staff to adjust to the new ways that First Step is providing advocacy and counseling. Video and phone counseling have created new opportunities for clients that have had barriers connecting to services in the past. By being pressed to think outside of the box, these new counseling tools can be used beyond the pandemic to make receiving services even easier for future clients.



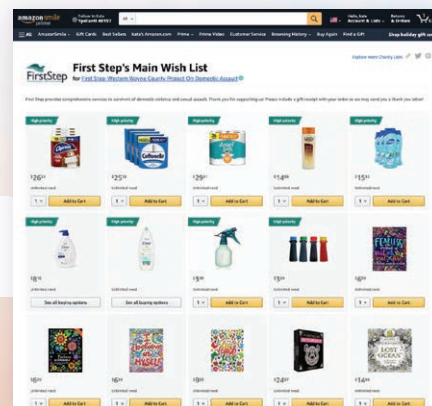
Our Wish List contains items that First Step and the families we serve could use the most. You can make contact-free donations using our Amazon Wish List.

VISIT [BIT.LY/FSWISHLIST](https://bit.ly/fswishlist)

OR POINT YOUR PHONE CAMERA AT THIS IMAGE



amazon **wishlist**



First Step is still accepting new, unused items at our Wayne Facility, 4400 Venoy Road, Monday-Friday from 9:30a- 4:30p.

All donations are greatly appreciated but monetary donations are needed most! Please consider donating the cash value or gift cards instead of the actual item. First Step leverages suppliers to get discounts on food and supplies. Your monetary gift may also help First Step cover essential operational expenses such as phone, electricity, heat, etc. Gift cards allow us to support our clients and assist our operating expenses throughout the year. Gift cards from Walmart, Kroger, and Meijer are the most helpful. Donations are being accepted at our Plymouth office, 44567 Pinetree Drive, Fridays ONLY from 9:30a-4:30p.

Visit firststep-mi.org/donate for more information, including our children's wish lists, and call 734-722-1772 with questions.

First Step held its You Are the Light Gala on September 25th, 2020. When the pandemic forced the cancellation of First Step's You Are the Light in-person Gala in May of 2020, event volunteer tri-chairs, Kathleen Cronin, Genelle Allen, Diane Allen and their event planning committee had to figure out how to transform an in-person party into a virtual event. With the help of Motown Digital Studio and Kat Nelson from Spaulding DeDecker (Video Production), First Step recognized the 2020 You Are the Light Honorees: Judith Barr, Carolyn Baetz, MASCO, Nicole Goodson - Legal Aid and Defender Association, and John Seedott.

WXYZ TV News Anchor Carolyn Clifford emceed the event which featured the awards presentations, live and silent auctions, remarks by Lori Kitchen-Buschel, and videos featuring inspiring and courageous stories told by survivors who were helped by First Step.

First Step netted nearly \$110,000 with this virtual event. First Step's Lori Kitchen-Buschel said, "Thanks to all of our sponsors, especially Karen Wilson Smithbauer, our Luminescence Sponsor, and to Jim and Cathy Proppe and Bridgewater Interiors who were our Brilliance Sponsors." A recording of the event is available on First Step's website at www.firststep-mi.org/gala.



First Step Gala Team at the studio



First Step's virtual team: Sandi, Ailsa, Carrie and Gabrielle



Emcee Carolyn Clifford



Boxed meal deliveries from Jef Zak catering

YOU ARE THE LIGHT

Virtual GALA

September 25, 2020



Awardee Judith Barr receiving award from Ilene Hogan



Awardee Carolyn Baetz



Awardee Nicole Neal Goodson



Awardee John Seedott

MASCO

Awardee MASCO

Did you miss it?

The event is available on First Step's website at firststep-mi.org/gala



MARGARET DUNNING FOUNDATION PLEDGES FUNDS FOR A CHALLENGE GRANT TO FIRST STEP

First Step VAN CHALLENGE!



The Margaret Dunning Foundation has issued a challenge to First Step donors and supporters. If First Step can raise \$20,000 for a new van this year, the Margaret Dunning Foundation will match the donations. Safe and reliable transportation is one of the most important services First Step provides for survivors because it allows them to access employment, shopping, schools, court dates, and other important appointments. First Step will use the funds to purchase a new mini-van, cargo trailer and trailer hitch.



To contribute to the First Step Van Challenge, visit give.classy.org/van today!

MARGARET DUNNING FOUNDATION FUNDS WAYNE SITE IMPROVEMENTS



Wayne Parking Lot Repairs and new commercial fridge and freezers funded by Margaret Dunning Foundation grant



The Margaret Dunning Foundation donated \$62,000 for capital projects at the First Step Karen Wilson Smithbauer Center in Wayne, MI.

This generous donation will allow First Step to resurface and repair the parking lot, add walls and privacy doors to 10 shelter bedrooms, and replace refrigerators and freezers in 10 shelter suites and the commercial kitchen. First Step Executive Director, Lori Kitchen-Buschel said, "We are so grateful to the Margaret Dunning Foundation for improvements at First Step's Wayne and Plymouth locations. The foundation's investment in First Step has helped to make our facilities safer, more efficient, and beautiful." First Step expects to complete these improvements in 2021.

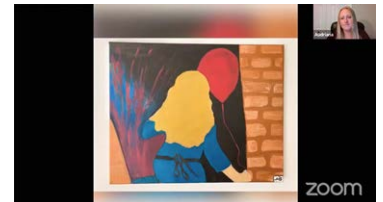
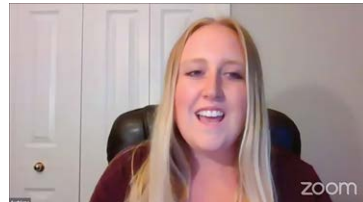
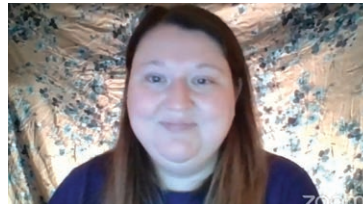
The Margaret Dunning Foundation was founded by Ms. Dunning in 1997. The Foundation supports charitable programs primarily in Western Wayne County, Michigan, and educational programs focused on the automobile and transportation industries.

FIRST STEP'S TEA HOUSE TOAST GOES VIRTUAL!

October was Domestic Violence Awareness Month. Traditionally, in October, First Step hosts its Tea House Toast event, which celebrates survivors and raises awareness about domestic violence. In order to accommodate for COVID-19 safety guidelines, we decided to make this event virtual. Survivors shared their stories, art, and poems about their journeys experiencing domestic violence. In addition, First Step staff hosted an expert panel to discuss common questions about domestic violence and First Step services.



The event was streamed live on First Step's Facebook page and is still available for viewing by visiting www.facebook.com/firststepmi



A FEW FIRST STEP HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2020



Soroptimist of Trenton Check Presentation



Wayne Westland Community Schools presented First Step a plaque for appreciation of partnership



Beaumont Donation



Home Depot Donations



Holiday Shopping



ADT Check Presentation



FIRST STEP'S TRUNK OR TREAT EVENT



First Step staff decorated tables, and dressed up, for residential clients to 'trick-or-treat' on First Step's playground.



DID YOU KNOW THAT DONATING YOUR VEHICLE TO FIRST STEP IS EASY AS PIE?

CARS makes donating your car, truck, motorcycle, RV, or boat easy. They take care of everything from the pick-up and sale to sending you the donation receipt and necessary tax documents. Vehicle donation pick-up is always free to you and most vehicles can be picked up within 24-72 hours. You'll receive an initial car donation receipt upon pick-up and then CARS will work to turn your car into cash to support First Step. Once your vehicle is sold, we will provide you proper tax forms in time to file.

Visit careasy.org/nonprofit/first-step-western-wayne-county to donate your car today.





ABOUT FIRST STEP

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

First Step offers temporary emergency housing, counseling, advocacy, transitional housing, assault response, 24-hour helpline 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 734.722.1772 for more information.

First Step
44567 Pinetree Drive
Plymouth, MI 48170
734.416.1111

24-Hour Helpline
734.722.6800

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

firststep-mi.org
facebook.com/firststepmi
@firststepwaynecountymi

COUNT ME IN!

I would like to help FIRST STEP, 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.

