

Celebrating 5 Years!

Aurora Healing & Advocacy Services Giving Circle

Standing with Survivors

The Giving Circle is unique – The Giving Circle began with a question in the summer of 2016 – what if a group of 10 champions founded a circle of support for Aurora’s abuse response programs? The answer was swift: the Aurora Healing & Advocacy Services Giving Circle held its kickoff on November 3, 2016 with 10 Founders and 11 Charter Members. They agreed that members would donate \$1,000 each year, pool their gifts and come together to allocate funds annually, beginning in 2017, to support projects suggested by abuse response program leaders.

This year we celebrate their 5th annual allocation.

The Giving Circle is successful – Since 2017, the Giving Circle has allocated more than \$153,000 to support a wide array of projects that help survivors of sexual and domestic violence.

The Giving Circle is diverse – The Giving Circle brings together people who are passionate about helping survivors and celebrating their strengths. Members are of all ages, racial backgrounds, genders and sexual orientations, and are survivors and allies.



Photos left to right: Top Row: Thrive Honoree Anya Gordon with David Caruso; Michael Gielow, Katie Wilke, Renee Johnson, Jean-Marie Poindexter; Cristy Garcia-Thomas; Nick and Kathy Turkal; Bottom Row: Shawn Hittman and Herica Silva, Thrive Honorees; Zoom Meeting; Renee Johnson and Ruth Gosse

Giving Circle support by the numbers

The Giving Circle has allocated **\$153,750** since 2017.



\$37,550 to **Safe Mom Safe Baby** to provide counseling, basic needs and safe housing for pregnant and new moms experiencing domestic violence



\$32,340 for **Healing Services** for survivors receiving short and long term healing therapy



\$49,360 for **Crisis Care** for victims receiving emergency medical care including clothing, transportation and equipment to improve patient experience



\$14,000 for **24/7 Hotline and Text Line** awareness campaigns, improved access and victim privacy



\$13,500 to **Care for the AHAS Caregivers** including stress reduction, self care and education



\$7,000 to the **Milwaukee Sexual Assault Review** collaboration of law enforcement, criminal justice and health care partners

HOPE SHINING BLUE

A Denim Day celebration honoring survivors of sexual and domestic violence

Since 2014, **Giving Circle members have personally donated more than \$111,000** to support Hope Shining Blue through tickets, tables and fundraising at the event, and helped solicit sponsorships totaling more than \$39,000.

Healing is a journey. The Giving Circle paves the way.

Lighting the Path

“Survivors of sexual violence often suffer from long term effects to their mental and physical health. There are very few spaces where male survivors can share their feelings with each other and know that they are not alone. The Healing Center’s Male Survivor Retreat truly helps them heal.”

- Aaron Evans
Trauma Therapist



In 2018, the Aurora Healing Center hosted a two-day Male Survivor Retreat, the first event of its kind in Wisconsin, and survivors from Wisconsin, Illinois and Texas found it to be powerful and healing. The Giving Circle allocated full funding for the event in October 2019 and again the men asked for it to return in the future. The Giving Circle generously continued its support and, after a two-year hiatus due to the pandemic, the retreat will return next year.

The facilitators are Aaron Evans and Mike Lew, a nationally known psychotherapist who has facilitated similar retreats for 30 years and has helped thousands of men heal from the effects of childhood sexual abuse, rape, physical violence, emotional abuse and neglect.

Through physical activities, music, writing exercises and group small group discussion, the men will explore together the impact of their abuse and find creative outlets to release their anger and shame in a safe place to share feelings.

The retreat will return in Fall 2022 at Friends Meeting House, a warm and welcoming facility surrounded by woods and walking paths in Milwaukee’s Riverwest neighborhood. Thanks to the Giving Circle, there is no cost for survivors to attend beyond their travel expenses.

The Giving Circle has allocated more than \$32,000 to support healing services like the Male Retreat for survivors receiving healing therapy.

“Another question I am frequently asked is, “What do you mean by recovery?” It has taken me a while to answer that one. I had been depending on other people’s definitions of recovery until I developed one that worked for me – just as you must come to one that makes sense for you. Mine is simple. For me, it is about freedom.

Recovery is the freedom to make choices in your life that aren’t determined by the abuse. The specific choices will be different for each of you. The freedom to choose is your birthright.”

- Mike Lew, *Victims No Longer*

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Bridges to Safety and Self-Sufficiency

The Aurora Healing & Advocacy Services Safe Mom Safe Baby program supports pregnant women and new moms whose lives have been upended by domestic violence. Pregnant survivors of domestic/intimate partner violence are referred to Safe Mom Safe Baby and paired with a nurse case manager who makes sure they receive comprehensive services that lead to a healthy birth and a safer life. The program provides access to prenatal and postpartum care, advocacy, trauma-informed counseling, coordination with community resources, parenting and financial education and safe housing through the Safe Home Environment (SHE) program that provides subsidized and safe housing at St. Catherine Residence for women and their children who have no other safe place to live. The SHE program was launched by our Centennial Partnership with the Junior League of Milwaukee.

Since 2017, the Giving Circle has allocated \$37,500 to support Safe Mom Safe Baby projects including décor and items for the St. Catherine's common area and cribs for the moms living there, support to sustain the nurse case manager position and bridge funding in 2022 as the Junior League of Milwaukee five-year partnership sunsets.

This support changes lives!

At five months pregnant, Alexandra found herself homeless and in an abusive relationship with nowhere to turn.

“At one point, I was sleeping in my truck. My child’s father threatened to kill me numerous times. I feared for my life as well as my unborn child’s,” she shared. “I was on the verge of giving up.”

Then Alexandra’s doctor referred her to the Aurora Healing & Advocacy Services Safe Mom Safe Baby program, which supports pregnant women and new moms whose lives have been affected by domestic violence. Through access to comprehensive care and community resources, the program improves the health and safety of the mother and her baby.

“I met with Andrea Grant, the nurse case manager, and shared my story. Andrea signed me up for the Safe Home Environment (SHE) program, which provided a safe place for

me to live,” said Alexandra. “It alleviated a lot of worry and stress that allowed me to focus on my pregnancy. It gave me the new start I needed during an extremely difficult time in my life.”

The support didn’t stop there. “I was introduced to another amazing woman. Shirley Combs provided the love and guidance that I lacked in my life. She inspired me to create a better life for myself and baby.”

Shirley is a Healing Volunteer Coordinator. Part of her role is working with mothers on goal setting and lifestyle changes.

“I also coordinate monthly room visits to ensure both mom and baby have safe living conditions,” explained Shirley. “And I work



to create a culture of mutual respect while building healthy relationships.”

Together with Andrea, the nurse case manager, they ensure moms and babies are connected to medical care. “In addition, we promote safe sleeping habits by providing each mom with a pack ‘n play for their children,” shared Shirley.

Alexandra’s son, Elliot, was born on October 30, 2020. Both she and her son are doing well as he celebrates his first birthday.

“Thanks to the SHE program, Safe Mom Safe Baby and the awesome ladies at Aurora Healing & Advocacy Services, I’m on my way to becoming self-sufficient!” shared Alexandra.



Earlier this summer a new SHE mom was carrying her baby on her forearm and was reluctant to use the Hop streetcar or bus line, or even walk in nice weather because the baby in car seat was too heavy to carry. She was missing her follow up in person WIC appointments and trying to buy formula outside of the valuable supplemental program. She had even missed her last Wisconsin Works in person appointment that linked her to food share benefits. Thanks to a Giving Circle allocation, she received a new stroller and has been able to easily attend her appointments with a new set of wheels and bonus storage space. Baby Elijah was over the top excited to be headed out on his first adventure in his new stroller!

Signposts along the way

One of the projects enabled by the Giving Circle is much needed community outreach for the Hotline and the recent addition of a Text Line to help survivors communicate privately. In 2017, the group allocated \$4,000 in seed money for an awareness campaign to promote the hotline that supports survivors 24/7, no matter where they live. The Giving Circle allocation inspired guests at the 2018 Hope Shining Blue event to contribute another \$26,000 to help spread the word.



The ads appeared on social media and in signage placed later that year in bars, restaurants and bus shelters throughout

Milwaukee. Since then, posters created by this campaign have been placed in public spaces each year.



This year, a Giving Circle \$10,000 allocation updated these posters to include the text line number and supported the printing of yard signs that are being placed in the community by Giving Circle members and volunteers this fall.

“This will enable more people who experience sexual and domestic violence to know that they are not alone,” said Nicky Glaser, manager of Volunteer & Advocacy Services. “No matter what. No matter when. Help is here and it really is just a phone call or text away.”

Hear what inspires Aurora Healing & Advocacy Services Giving Circle members

“ I am a survivor and proud to be a part of the Giving Circle. This circle has supported me in using my voice and making an impact so that survivors know they are not alone. ”

- Candace Sanchez



“ My original involvement was attending Hope Shining Blue to support a cause close to a friend's heart. What I didn't realize was how much of an impact the event would have on me, and how much it moved me to hear the stories of so many individuals already facing adversity, only to experience domestic and sexual violence on top of that. To see their growth since their trauma, the support and care that was provided them and the confidence and smiles on their faces really made me feel like I could help have a positive impact on an individual's life. ”

- Andrew Janeczek



“ After my first Hope Shining Blue event, I was impressed hearing the survivor stories and what Aurora Healing & Advocacy Services has done to help them. I want to make myself aware of what services are available and aware of who we can help. ”

- Nancy Jacobs



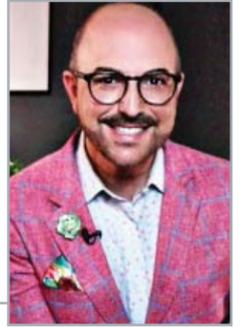
“ I am inspired by the courage of survivors and the caregivers who make it all happen! ”

- Renee Johnson



“ The care givers, counselors, foundation leaders and survivors inspire me. I've seen first hand how our contributions on behalf of the Giving Circle change lives - in small ways and in big ways. ”

- David Caruso



“ I was 28, a single mom of 2 kids under the age of 2 and found myself in a situation where I didn't know who to turn to for help. My two girls were the victims of abuse and after making it through our experience, my daughters and I pledged to help others. The Giving Circle provides us a community in which to do that. I'm so proud that the programs we fund help advocate for change and support the 24/7 Crisis Hotline and Text Line. I know there are moms who don't have to feel like I felt because Aurora Healing & Advocacy Services is here to help them. ”

- Jean-Marie Poindexter



“ I believe we are here to serve others and this is one way for me to serve that I feel really makes a difference in the lives of others. ”

- Cheryl Hill



In Loving Memory of Mark Natzke

“ I enjoy giving back and understand the critical need for funding to help survivors of abuse get started on their healing journey. ”

- Mark Natzke (in memoriam, 1968 - 2021)



Celebrating five years of impact!



A group of members gathered for a photo in 2018. Left to right, standing: Cheryl Hill, Renee Johnson, Rachel Peete, Jean-Marie Poindexter, Melissa Goins, Mark Natzke, Marquette Baylor, Meg Grogan, Candace Sanchez; seated: Maureen Schuerman, Kathy Turkal, Michelle Zapinski, Shawn Hittman, Sally Turner, Herica Silva.

Thank you to all our Giving Circle members over the last five years

Marquette Baylor	Linda Haag	Laura & Stephen Kollatz	Herica Silva ^
Annette Blanchard ^	Lindsay Hammerer	Chrissy Kruger-Gruendyke	Cristy Garcia-Thomas *
David Caruso *	Gail Hanson	Adrienne Lovett	Raechell Thuot & Craig Williams ^
Emma Chaves	Cheryl Hill ^	Tracy Milkowski ^	Jeff Tjugum
Tom Cooper ^	Satchidanand Hiremath	Mark Natzke ^ +	Kathy Turkal *
Linda Davis *	Shawn Hittman *	Lindsay Olson	Sally Turner ^
Chris Doerfler ^	Monica Hocum	Katie Ott	Markley Ward
Susan Dwyer	Mark Huber *	Rachel Peete ^	Katie Wilke ^
Mike Gielow	Nancy Jacobs	Jean-Marie Poindexter ^	Leslie Winger *
Melissa Goins	Andrew Janeczek	Mindy Lubar Price *	Allen & Alena Witkowski
Anya Gordon	Renee Johnson *	Candace Sanchez	Michelle & Michael Zapinski
Ruth Gosse	Jill Kahabka	Chris Schindler	Stacey Zysk
Trent & Jackie Graham ^	Eric Kase ^	Maureen Schuerman *	
Meg Grogan	Vivian King		

*Founder ^ Charter + Deceased

To learn more about Aurora Healing & Advocacy Services and the Giving Circle, visit aurorahealthcare.org/healing-advocacy-services or contact Sarah Katsandonis at sarah.katsandonis@aah.org.