

Happenings

"Sojourner Truth House is our family!"

Isabel's small home in Gary was never meant to house seven children—three were hers and four belonged to other family members. It was crowded and chaotic, but also stable—until a severe thunderstorm sent a huge walnut tree crashing through the roof. The damage was unreparable, and just like that, Isabel and her children were homeless. She turned to friends for help who offered sympathy and a couch—but only for a day or two. Finally, out of options, she reluctantly entered a local homeless shelter.



"Although I'd seen rough times, I'd never had to go to a homeless shelter before," Isabel recalls. "I was in a state of denial. My kids were preschoolers and I kept telling them everything was going to be okay, but deep down I had no idea what I was going to do."

She put on a brave and cheerful face, but inside she felt the depths of despair. She had no prospects, no money, and no hope. One day a van from Sojourner Truth House pulled up at the shelter, and some of the other women encouraged her to get on. "At first, I wasn't too sure about being at Sojourner," Isabel said. "I didn't think anyone could help me. Because of the bad choices I made, I had no self-esteem at all. But the leaders at Sojourner were so welcoming, and they really cared about me and what I was going through. They taught me that I couldn't help my children until I learned to love myself."

Through her efforts and those of STH staff, Isabel was able to move out of the shelter into an apartment of her own—furniture and beds included.

"I have so much hope for the future," she said with a smile. "I've started a small business doing nails and make-up, and I want to go to nursing school. I love Sojourner, and so do my children. Sojourner Truth House is our family."

With your support, STH faithfully and intentionally fulfills its mission to help women like Isabel improve the quality of their lives through advocacy and integrative services.

In 2021, you helped provide services for hundreds of individuals and families like Isabel's. THANK YOU!



Helping Lake Countians Stay Housed in 2021

Last year, nearly 5,400 people in Lake County filed for rental assistance through the federal Emergency Solutions Grant Program. It was an overwhelming number, and staff at STH pitched in to help the Continuum of Care Network of Northwest Indiana manage the applications and prevent homelessness for more residents. They were the only two agencies in Lake County that agreed to assist with the anticipated tsunami of need.

In 2020, the U.S. Congress passed the CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act, which appropriated \$4 billion in funds for the Emergency Solutions Grant Program (ESG) to “prevent, prepare for, and respond to coronavirus, among individuals and families who are homeless or receiving homeless assistance and to support additional homeless assistance and homelessness prevention activities to mitigate the impacts created by coronavirus.” The need was dire: between March 2020 and November 15, 2021, nearly 70,000 evictions were filed in Indiana alone.

Between December 2020 and October 2021, STH accepted applications from those seeking ESG assistance. The program paid rent in arrears to get clients caught up on rent, and reimbursed STH for the case management, case monitoring, and home inspections that staff provided to keep 102

individuals and families throughout Lake County in their homes. In all, STH managed more than \$617,000 in ESG program funds for homelessness prevention.

Lake County Government offices are now running the Geminus Emergency Rental Assistance program, and STH continues to receive calls and emails for aid. “The programs that provided additional food stamps and unemployment ended last October, but with COVID’s unpredictability and the economy’s high inflation rate, we’re still anticipating need,” said STH Executive Director Angela Curtis.

Thank you for caring about our neighbors in Lake County—women, children and families. More are finding help through the services of STH because of YOU.



THE COST OF ONE HOMELESS PERSON

Homelessness is an economic community problem. People without housing consume public resources such as emergency rooms, mental health and addiction treatment services, and jail stays. They generate expense, rather than income or savings, for the community. According to endhomelessness.org, in 2018 the government spent an average of \$35,578 per year for every person experiencing homelessness.



Taking Steps to Reduce Homelessness **ONE FAMILY AT A TIME**

What if it happened to YOU?



More than 10 million Americans are currently unemployed.

Now imagine that you are one of them.

- You can't find a living-wage job.
- Your savings are gone.
- You lost your house.
- You are down to your last \$1,000.

Can you make it through the month?

TAKE THE CHALLENGE.
Go to playspent.org

When STH reported in 2020 that 45 clients moved into their own stable homes, it potentially saved the Gary-area economy MORE THAN \$1.6 MILLION.

While the holidays were approaching and families were preparing meals and spending time together, Sojourner Truth House was reminded of all our clients who would be faced with frigid winter temperatures, food insecurity, and unstable housing. Sojourner would like to say thank you so much for all that you do for the individuals we serve. Your support and that of the community—especially during the pandemic—also allowed us to be creative in continually providing services to our clients.

There are many ways you can help us continue our efforts. One is to become a monthly giver, which allows us to provide daily meals for our participants who attend our day center programs, and cleaning kits to our clients in their own homes. Our food pantry is the largest in Northwest Indiana and your support enables us to feed more families. Please visit our new website for our list of needs under *Donate Items*.

Financial donations also help provide furniture and household items for our clients moving into their new homes, and the technological tools needed for our clients to continue with their employment, entrepreneurship, and schooling. Through your support, we can provide financial assistance to our clients to pay housing application fees and deposits.

Sojourner Truth House has some great things coming down the pipeline in 2022! We look forward to sharing with you our success stories. Please continue to support our efforts as we continue to do the work that will allow our clients to maintain their sustainability—**one family at a time.**

If you would like to attend one of our **Coffee and Conversations** or **schedule a private tour**, please visit our website at www.sojournertruthhouse.org or call (219) 885-2282.

—Angela Curtis, Executive Director



WALK FOR STH 2022



SAVE THE DATE

Saturday | June 11, 2022
8-11 a.m. CDT

Join us for the 23rd Annual STH Walk for Sojourner Truth House!

For more information—or to register as a walker or team leader—go to walkforsth.org.

Thank You to Our Foundation Partners

We're grateful for the support provided in 2021 through the following grants:

- The Legacy Foundation, for housing and food
- Helen V. Brach Foundation, COVID Relief
- Timken Company Charitable and Educational Fund, COVID Relief
- Lake County Master Gardeners Association, the Community Garden
- United Way of Northwest Indiana, COVID Relief
- Geminus Community Partners, Moms as Teachers Program
- SAFE for Lake County, Recovery Program
- Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes, the Community Garden
- Father Brunner Peace and Justice Award, Community Connection Workshops
- John W. Anderson Foundation
- PHJC Mission Foundation
- Walgreens Charity of Choice
- Mercy Fund of the Catholic Foundation of NWI, Transportation



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Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ



Partners in the work of the Spirit

Sojourner Truth House is a ministry of the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ.