

Happenings

SHE'S CONFIDENTLY FACING HER FUTURE BECAUSE YOU CARED

Regina is intelligent, articulate, holder of multiple college degrees, a successful businesswoman, a wife, an avid reader, a lifelong learner—and a domestic violence survivor. It was that quality, despite all her accomplishments, that had the greatest impact on her future.

Regina's husband abused her for years. It wore her down, humiliated her, made her ashamed and fearful—until she couldn't take it anymore. With no safe place to go, and no outside support, Regina fled to a shelter. Workers there explained how Sojourner Truth House could help her, and she settled into a healing pattern of nights at the shelter and days spent participating in STH's day-center program—relearning coping and life skills, participating with other women in peer-sharing sessions, and acquiring copies of her official records.

She also applied for jobs, which became frustrating. "I had to hide my homelessness because when you have the homeless label, the conversation changes," Regina explained. "Their perception was 'It's the homeless chick; she can't help us out.'"

Finally, Regina was able to secure housing and employment—but her trials weren't over. She



developed health challenges that limited her ability to work. Determined not become the "homeless chick" again, she used the coping skills that she'd developed during STH classes and drew upon her strengths and inner resources. She'd always been good at writing and loved learning about new things, so Regina became a freelance writer, something she could do from home. Today, Regina's health issues are under control, and she no longer carries the stigma of being homeless.

"I feel confident that I can face the future with my head held high," she shared.

In 2022, you helped provide life-transforming services for more than 120 women and children living in local shelters. Thank you for caring.

EVERY DAY, MORE THAN 27,000 CHILDREN IN LAKE COUNTY LIVE WITH HUNGER OR FOOD INSECURITY AS THEIR CONSTANT COMPANION

WHAT IS FOOD INSECURITY? HOW CAN YOU HELP?

According to Feeding America, food insecurity is a lack of consistent access to enough food for every person in a household to live an active, healthy life. In Indiana, there are 726,000 food-insecure residents. Nearly 226,000 of those are children, and more than 10 percent—27,260 children—live in Lake County. Prior to the end of 2022, the average cost in Lake County to prepare one meal for one person was \$3.22, according to the USDA. It cost \$270.48 to feed a family of four for one week, pushing more families to food banks and food pantries to stretch tight budgets.

Yet, donations to food banks are down. Traditionally, about 70 percent of the food distributed by food banks is donated, but that dropped in 2022 to 55 percent. That was also the situation at STH's food pantry. "Individual donors and organizations are not stopping by with donations of nonperishables like they used to," said Kristy Olsen, Community Resource Supervisor. "If this continues, what we are able to provide will be stretched even thinner."

The only option for food banks nationwide—and the STH food pantry—is to purchase more food directly from local grocers while prices are near all-time highs. It's a vicious cycle—greater need but fewer donations—and the perfect incubator for food insecurity.



THANK YOU, CITIZENS SAVINGS FOUNDATION

From 1997 through 2022, Citizens Savings Foundation, based in Hinsdale, Illinois, shared more than \$5 million with nonprofits in northwest Indiana and the south suburbs of Chicago that assist with housing, educating, and feeding those in need—including STH. Starting in 2014, the Foundation generously made 35 grants to STH totaling \$365,652. STH has used these funds to provide services to help many individuals and families go from homeless to housed. In recent years, Citizens' board of directors also funded special projects to enhance the safety of the upper-level in our pole barn where we store furnishings and household items, and to winterize the food-staging/storage area making possible our drive-through food pantry (pictured). We are so grateful to Citizens' board of directors for choosing to support STH! This group expended all of its funds in 2022, leaving behind a legacy of good work throughout the region.



STH has Lake County's largest food pantry program. In 2021, we provided food to 524 families each month. In 2022, with help from you, we served a monthly average of 713 families—a 27 percent increase. The need continues in 2023."

You can help relieve hunger for more northwest Indiana families by:

- *Making a monetary donation to the STH Food Pantry Program*
- *Volunteering in our food pantry*
- *Shopping on our "STH Urgent Needs Wishlist"*



ONE KEY. ONE SMILE: CELEBRATING STH'S 25 YEARS OF SERVICE



On September 18, 2022, nearly 200 people gathered to celebrate STH's 25th anniversary at Avalon Manor Banquet Center in Merrillville. The event included a plated lunch, and featured presentations by Dr. Jodi Allen FNP Program Coordinator and Assistant Professor on Nursing at Purdue University Northwest and STH board member, Dr. Vanessa Allen-McCloud, president and CEO of NWI Urban League, Sr. Shirley Bell, PHJC, Provincial Leader, and Angela Paul, Executive Director of Sojourner Truth House. Jeremias Alicea, a health educator who works with youth and a spoken word artist, composed and performed "Sojourner Strong," a moving spoken-word piece, and the 2022 Spirit Award—given every five years to honor the person who best embodies through loyalty and generosity the mission of STH, in recognition of a dynamic partnership—was presented to a surprised Dr. Jodi Allen.

Attendees also received a copy of the U.S. Congressional Record from September 15, 2022, in which U.S. Rep. Frank Mrvan recognized STH's 25th anniversary and history of dedication to helping individuals and families experiencing homelessness in northwest Indiana. The event raised nearly \$44,000 to serve this vulnerable population.

"Be present in all things and thankful for all things," Angela said after the event. "We must find time to stop and thank the person who makes a difference in our lives. The heart that gives is a happy one, for we cannot feel thankful and unhappy at the same time. Life's under no obligation to give us what we expect."



WALK FOR STH 2023



SAVE THE DATE

Saturday | June 10, 2023

8-11 a.m. CDT

Join us for the 24th 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 2022 through the following grants:

- Helen Brach Foundation, Client Celebrations
- United Way of Northwest Indiana, Emergency Food & Shelter Program
- AARP Indiana, Food Pantry Program
- The Starbucks Foundation Neighborhood Grant
- Geminus Community Partners, Moms as Teachers Program
- Geminus Community Partners, SAFE Recovery Program
- Congregation of Sisters of Saint Agnes
- Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority's Neighborhood Assistance Program (NAP) Tax Credits, Food Assistance
- John W Anderson Foundation
- Father Brunner Peace & Justice Award, Community Connection Workshops

Did you know?

- The US has the highest number of women and children experiencing homelessness out of all industrialized nations
- 84% of families experiencing homelessness are headed by women
- Over 92% of homeless mothers have experienced severe physical and/or sexual abuse during their lifetime

From Greendoors.org



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Partners in the work of the Spirit

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