

December Newsletter

Survivors ÷ Covid + Holidays = Loneliness

Special Dates

- **Dec 1** - Giving Tuesday
- **Dec 7** - Volunteer mtg.
- **Dec 12** - Nick's Run for Response
<https://www.responseva.org/upcomingevents>

Current Needs

- Paper towels
- Swiffer Wet Jet pads and liquid
- Liquid hand soap
- Women's underwear

It may feel like a cliché to talk about loneliness at the holidays, but for our survivors it is a very real struggle. Add in the isolation and limits that come with a pandemic and the struggle only intensifies. When we talk about loneliness it's important to distinguish it from isolation, although the two can definitely go hand in hand. As we know, abusers often use isolation as a tactic to exert power and control over their partner; the limits imposed by the current pandemic serve to further isolate victims of domestic violence. But loneliness is more of an internal, psychological state of being that inflicts pain on the person experiencing it.



So why do the holidays seem to intensify these feelings of loneliness in survivors of intimate partner violence?

- Some of our clients may be experiencing their first Christmas without their partner; although they may have left an unsafe, abusive situation, leaving what is familiar can often be difficult.
- Added to that is the change in their social circle; in any separation there is a loss of friends as folks "take sides" and ally themselves with one or the other partner. This often extends to family members, which is made even more obvious during the holidays.
- Our current pandemic limits normal outlets for alleviating loneliness, such as visiting friends, eating out, socializing in bars, attending concerts, etc. Survivors who are still in the abusive situation may have fewer opportunities to distance themselves from the abuser's control tactics.
- Social media often shows our "picture perfect" holiday scenes, which can trigger loneliness in survivors who feel that their holiday is much less than perfect.
- Christmas is a time that emphasizes home and family; survivors who are living in a shelter or with friends may be missing those key ingredients for what creates a "happy holiday".

As we can see, there are lots of reasons why loneliness may be a struggle that our clients face, but there are some ways to help ease that loneliness: helping a survivor to create new traditions rather than trying to recreate the old ones; suggesting that folks join a virtual meet-up group or support group; advise survivors to go out of their way to help another person, or to initiate conversation; help the person connect to a church if they express an interest in spiritual help; encourage survivors to express their loneliness to a close friend and help the friend know what the survivor needs.

So during these unusual times, thank you for taking the time to learn about the struggles that our clients face; thank you for your understanding and support.

Introducing Our New Court Advocate

Kylie Stottlemeyer



We would like to extend a warm welcome to Kylie Stottlemeyer, who will be starting her new job with us as Court & Community Collaboration Coordinator on Dec 7!

Kylie comes to us from Mary Baldwin University where she is majoring in Criminal Justice; she will be graduating in May as she completes her senior thesis, which focuses on the importance of a community policing paradigm when assisting victims within our society. She is also pursuing a minor in Sociology which will help her to understand the structures and reality of our society.

In addition to her outstanding academic career, Kylie has been active in numerous student organizations including the SGA Executive Committee, R.I.S.E. Mentor Board, Inter-Club Council Board, four Honor Society Boards, and has held office in several other campus organizations.

Kylie’s connection with Response extends back to her high school days when she was a founding member of Response’s TAB (Teen Advisory Board) at CHS. She also recently completed the Level 2 volunteer training here at Response. Kylie is very passionate about assisting victims and connecting with the community—she is so eager to begin her new position that will allow her to do just that! Welcome, Kylie!

Around the Shelter

Our bulletin board



It’s November, which means Thanksgiving, which is a great time to think about mindfulness and gratitude! Our latest bulletin board gives clients and staff a chance to think about ways to focus on staying present. Some suggestions are to spend time outside, avoid “toxic” people, volunteer, and spend time in nature. What can you do to practice mindfulness and self-care?

Recap of Events

Moving Beyond Support Group



The end of November brought the conclusion of our Moving Beyond support group; Moving Beyond was an eight-week support group for survivors of domestic and sexual violence, which was facilitated by our Domestic and Sexual Violence Services Coordinator, Sarah Hulver.

Participants were both in-and out-of-shelter clients, with an average of six participants each session. Due to covid-19 restrictions, we used a hybrid virtual and in-person setup, which seemed to work pretty well! Throughout the eight weeks, we focused on life skills and healthy relationships; personalized safety plans were also top priority as survivors learned ways to ensure they're maintaining their safety. Some of our topics included healthy boundaries, red flags in relationships, assessing anger styles and how to cope in a healthy manner.

When asked what survivors wanted to get out of a support group, the number one answer was "to not feel alone in this journey"; at the end of our last group they all said that this was accomplished and that they now feel like they don't have to walk through the healing process alone. We plan to have another support group start up after the new year; our groups are open to the public so stay tuned for those dates!

Volunteer Training

We are so happy to announce that we now have 4 more volunteers! Jackie Schmutz, Jessica Albright, Kylie Stottlemyer, and JoAnn Crawford have all completed the Level 2 volunteer training and are ready to help Response with our mission of helping people overcome the problems of domestic and sexual violence. Congratulations to you all—we look forward to having you on our team!

Adopt-A-Family

Just an update on our Adopt-A-Family program as we enter December. As you probably know, Sabrina Shirkey, our Children and Youth Services Coordinator, works hard throughout the fall making sure that our former and present clients are able to provide gifts for their children for Christmas.



After having each adult fill out a form for their children indicating sizes, hobbies, and favorites, she then matches each family with a donor. The benefactors drop off their purchases at the shelter, where the gifts are labeled for each family; the receiving families are then asked to pick up their gifts during the week before Christmas. The gifts are left unwrapped so that the parents can see what their children will be receiving, and can have the satisfaction of helping to provide a surprise for their children.

We are pleased to say that all of our families have been matched with donors at this time—what an outpouring of generosity from our community! Thank you to all who have helped to spread the word or provided gifts for this wonderful program!