



The Dwelling Place

Shannon's Story of Strength and Dignity



She met him when she was 15 and married him when she was 22. The abuse began after they were married. As a child, she learned about the Lord from her Grandmother. When she was 20 years old, Shannon committed her life to Christ. She attended college and obtained her associates degree before getting married.

Their first child arrived and they needed to move to a new location because the employment options were limited where they lived. They came to Minnesota and moved in with his parents. Soon after their arrival it was apparent to Shannon that her husband had grown up in an abusive home. His unstable behavior and inability to secure a job created tension and more verbal abuse.

Shannon's husband wanted them to move again but she had found a job and did not want to leave it. He left for awhile and then returned. At first things went well, but as time passed the abuse increased. Shannon witnessed emotional, verbal, and physical abuse between her in-laws and husband and experienced abuse as well. Her husband would often berate and torment Shannon as she prepared to go to work in the morning. He insisted on driving her to work (telling her he couldn't trust her and that he knew she was having affairs) which most often caused her to arrive upset and late for work. She was often in tears by the time she got to her job.

Shannon became pregnant with their second child. One morning, her husband was so physically abusive that he was strangling Shannon. She was trying to get ready for work when it happened. She was frightened and distraught as he drove her to work. Arriving late, (once again), her supervisor met her and, seeing the condition she was in, called the police. They took her to a local crisis shelter and helped her with an Order of Protection against her husband. Her in-laws refused to help her and felt she had over-reacted. They told her she was no longer welcome in their home.

While at the crisis shelter Shannon learned about The Dwelling Place. They felt it would be a good fit for her and her children to have a place to live for a longer period of time. When she arrived at The Dwelling Place she immediately felt at peace and couldn't believe a place like this actually existed. A few months later, her baby was born. The staff and women living there provided the support and care she and her children needed. Shannon and her children are thriving as they heal and gain strength in this safe place. She is not afraid of the future because she remembers what life was like before The Dwelling Place and knows she can move forward in Christ's strength to provide for herself and her children.

Ephesians 6:10 "Be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power."

Strength Grows at The Dwelling Place



This has been an amazing year as we have seen God build strength in The Dwelling Place based on the solid foundation of Christ's amazing power! Our great God has enabled us to welcome and serve a significantly larger number of women and children and we hold a firm commitment to help each one build strength and dignity with God's Word and Christ's love.

Why is this so critical? A safe place to call home is *just the beginning* of the journey for families whose lives have been shattered by abuse. Abuse destroys hope, freedom, the dignity of a home, safety in relationships, financial stability, and emotional health. It brings shame, fear, and feelings of being without value or worth. The trauma women and children have experienced crushes joy. Abuse diminishes strength and spirit as it steals the birth-right of dignity and value that is God's intent for every person. Abuse breaks relationships, hopes, and dreams by leaving wounds that can last a lifetime.

But, there is hope! The trauma of abuse does not get the last word! It is not a more powerful or shaping influence than God's redeeming hand. God enters into the pain of each woman and child to bring healing. God is their strength and foundation.

"The name of the Lord is a strong fortress; the godly run to him and are safe." —Proverbs 18:10

At The Dwelling Place, we walk alongside women and their families, sharing the love of Christ, helping them to be known and understood, listening to their stories, and believing them. Every day we see the miraculous power of God changing lives, restoring hope, restoring value and worth, and providing a strong foundation to build their lives upon.

We thank God for providing this amazing opportunity, together with you, to open the door and provide a safe home and advocacy for women and children wounded by abuse.

Linda J Wiza

Linda Wiza, Executive Director

I'm so elated and blessed to have a safe place to live for myself and my daughter. Just to have somewhere that's beautiful and comforting to call home is a BLESSING itself. Being at peace and having hope for a better future is definitely what The Dwelling Place provides.

Long Awaited Alumni Program Begins!

Our new Alumni Program provides a way to sustain the supportive relationship we have with women after they move from our homes. The Alumni Program has long been needed to successfully transition women into the community and encourage their long-term success. Challenges many encounter include advancing career options to move beyond a low-income lifestyle; planning ahead for a crisis whether that is loss of a job, health, auto repairs, etc. Just one incident can set off a chain of events that could jeopardize their stability and prompt a return to an abuser. This is a crucial period to reinforce the strides made during the residential program.



Grace Eller, Alumni Program Coordinator, and Jacquie Skog, Support Group Leader, desire to bring these benefits to participants:

- Continued case management to promote achievement of goals and dreams
- Monthly educational support groups with child care
- Continued mentorship through volunteers to ensure strong biblical community connections
- Access to community resources information and referrals
- Continued sense of community with staff, volunteers and other participants

Current residents express relief as they near graduation because they know they will have access to ongoing support. The Alumni Program will help participants have continued success in living a life free from abuse.

Jacquie sees the Alumni Program as being an extension of the “continuum of care” time line in the lives of the women we have sheltered, prayed for and encouraged to live their lives free from anger and abuse. Often they lack the support and nurture of a loving family. Many women suffer from doubts and fears and benefit from ongoing support to identify proactive ways to manage emotions and needs. All too often, the destructive cycle is repeated when there’s an absence of a supportive network of people to remind a woman of her worth and value in Christ as well as her possessing the strength of character to live in freedom from abuse.

As God continues to build strength at The Dwelling Place, we believe the addition of the alumni program will strengthen the impact of The Dwelling Place ministry. We thank God for this opportunity to help graduates feel the support and encouragement to think proactively to avoid crisis and live without fear of the future.

The Dwelling Place has helped me gain strength by showing me that it's okay to express my pain without being judged and actually listening to everything I've been through, and understand it does take time to heal.

2019 Gala Highlights

With over 600 guests at the Earle Brown Heritage Center, our 21st Annual Gala was a meaningful time to share how God has been building strength and providing dignity in the lives of women and children at The Dwelling Place.

- The Dwelling Place residents shared their personal stories through video and live interviews.
- Gala guests were affirmed in their ability to make a difference with their support because each person holds the key to provide strength and dignity for women and children.
- Guest artist, Aaron Shust, provided songs of praise to God as well as assurance that God invites and welcomes us to be safe and at home with Him.



Roy Anderson, Board Chair, presents the 5th Annual Karen Leverentz Volunteer of the Year Award to Hank and Donna Breems

Upcoming Events in 2020

April-May:

Annual Spring Flower Fundraiser (Gertens and Keller Williams- Roseville)

June:

The Dwelling Place 2020 5K Race (Location TBD)

October 10, 2020:

The Dwelling Place 22nd Annual Fall Gala



Enhancing Trust

The Sacred Trust of Your Financial Support

This year, through your financial support for The Dwelling Place, **you are providing more homes and beds** than ever before for women and children fleeing abuse. **You enable supportive staff** to come alongside each woman and child with Christ's love, empowering them to move through barriers that have held them back from the lives God intends for them. **You open the door** to invite families into a safe place to lay their head, have time to breathe and heal without anxiety. **You offer the opportunity** to help them learn who they are in Christ and gain the resources and tools they need to build strength as they move forward to live free of abuse. **You make a difference** for each one because lives are stronger when they are transformed by Christ's love!

Your gift is a sacred trust to us. We use what God provides as stewards of His incredible grace and daily care. We are deeply grateful for each giver and every gift. Thank you!
