

SPRING 2021

TRANSFORMING LIVES
THROUGH CHRIST'S LOVE



*My people will live in peaceful dwelling places,
in secure homes, in undisturbed places of rest.*
— ISAIAH 32:18

The Dwelling Place



It's A Family Thing

As a child, Harper could not have known how the abusive behaviors of grandparents and parents would affect her life as dangerous patterns of shame, guilt, fear, and loss blended with the intrinsic need for security, love, and belonging. Her parents divorced when she was 11. Her father, a severe alcoholic, was in and out of her life as often as he was in and out of treatment. At 20 years of age, she had to take her dad to treatment and saw how serious his addiction had become.

A few years later, Harper married and had three daughters. When things began to go badly, Harper thought she would be better off on her own. She left with the children (ages 3 years, 2 years, and 10 months) and they divorced. Soon after, she connected with an ex-boyfriend. The relationship was toxic and did not work out. Harper left again, this time with their child. A few years later, she met a man who, she thought, was amazing. Nine months into the relationship, she realized he was just like her father, verbally and mentally abusive to her. She felt everything was her fault, because she already had two failed relationships. Who else could be to blame? Harper shared custody of her three daughters, but began to skip her weekends because of the turmoil in their home. After her fifth child was born, she left him for almost a full year. However, she did go back, and her sixth child was born.

"I hid it (the abuse) and didn't tell anyone. What is apparent to others is not the reality. People can put on a show; trying to protect them. I didn't want them to witness it."

Harper thought she could change him and make their relationship work. She felt guilty as the downward spiral continued while she "left and repeatedly returned to" him. She was concerned about what this was doing to her daughters (now teenagers), so Harper and her children moved in with her mother. A routine developed with her children and things were starting to feel good again.

After a year apart, he called Harper. He told her he had cancer and had only a short time to live. Two years earlier, her father had died from cancer. Now the father of her two youngest children had only six months to live! She went into guilt mode, quit her job, and let him move into her Mom's house, deciding to forgive and help him. However, it was all a lie and he did not have cancer at all. He played upon her emotions to take advantage of her, her mother, and their children.

*For I am about to do something new. See, I have already begun! Do you not see it?
I will make a pathway through the wilderness.
I will create rivers in the dry wasteland. —ISAIAH 43:19*

He severely beat her and left with their children. In the ambulance, Harper realized how dangerous he was and it had to end. From the hospital, she went to a crisis shelter and stayed about three months. She had no idea how she was going to move forward. A woman at the shelter told Harper about The Dwelling Place and suggested she call them. She needed to move by September. The Dwelling Place' earliest opening was in October. The staff told her, "God has a plan. He knows the timing." Although Harper knew about God from her childhood (attending Catholic school,) it was not until space opened at The Dwelling Place for September that she began to realize God might have a plan for her.

"Every morning I wake up and thank God for The Dwelling Place because my entire outlook on things changed while I was there."

The Dwelling Place gave Harper time to heal and rebuild relationships with her children. She learned that Family-life is supposed to be safe and happy (not yelling and screaming). Through Bible Studies and classes, she learned how life could be different. She learned how to change and find a new way. In addition, Harper was able to address the guilt she felt (the biggest struggle she faced) by receiving Christ's love, forgiveness, and grace for herself. Her children were becoming healthier and she was becoming healthier. She had to work hard to get to that place, but her faith grew through it.

Her ex was trying to take their children from her and the court date was set. Staff asked Harper for prayer requests. Her reply was startling: "I want you to pray for his death." She cried and prayed with the staff member. She was three miles from the courthouse when she decided to forgive her ex. She experienced freedom as she surrendered everything to God. The custody decision went in her favor. In the summer of 2020 (during a pandemic) housing became available for Harper and her family. Her love for God's Word continued and Harper led Bible studies for women (safely outdoors) during the summer months. She saw God remove so many insurmountable barriers and coordinate so many details to provide a home. Harper thought, "None of this would have been possible without The Dwelling Place!"



Before she moved, staff offered her a mentor with the Alumni Program. At first, she was not sure it was a good idea. Harper was concerned someone would interfere and control her. She wanted to have her own home and do things herself. She reluctantly agreed and discovered her mentor was a wonderful person! She and her mentor began a book study. Her mentor became a friend for Harper, one who offers accountability and encouragement to stay on track. Her mentor is a steadying force who openly shares about life and is a trusted sounding board.

Harper's prayer is that she broke the cycle of abuse in her family. Although her family relationships are not perfect, they are so much better. She and her children are learning to understand that having a healthy family life includes being willing to talk through problems and not react. "I am learning to 'stop, think, and pray' before I respond." Harper says she lives a "fairly boring" life these days, but it is so peaceful!

"Nobody as a grown woman, with children, wants to be told by anyone how to parent your children, where to be, or to have restrictions. But, to break the bad habits that developed from the past it is necessary in order to do the hard work."

"You can do it. It is not easy. You have to want it. It is so worth it."

If you would like to learn more about volunteer or mentorship opportunities at The Dwelling Place, please go to our website www.thedwellingplacemn.org

Answers to Prayer: Additions of Important Staff Roles



Bekah Backman,
Director of Programs



Carolyn Lowder,
Accountant (PT)

God provides in beautiful ways and always “just in time!” We are grateful for the addition of these staff members to fill critical roles in our team since November of 2020. *Employment opportunities and job descriptions are provided on our website as staff needs arise. If you or someone you know has interest in joining our team, please let us know.*

We were able to welcome new residents (women and children) since November who are now on their journey to healing and freedom from abuse. Thank you for your prayers and support for each one!

Friend and Fund Raising Events

Event updates and information always provided on our website: www.thedwellingplaceshelter.org/events-calendar



May 21, 2021

Spring Gathering: It's A Family Thing
Rockpoint Church, Lake Elmo, MN

Complimentary Event: Onsite and LiveStream options

Registration begins April 12

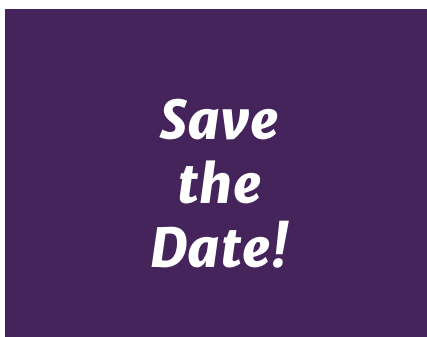


June 19 – July 19, 2021

3rd Annual Run Strong! 5K

Updates and information regarding virtual and onsite options provided on website

Registration begins May 1



October 16, 2021

23rd Annual Gala

Earle Brown Heritage Center, Brooklyn Park, MN

Onsite and Livestream Event

Registration begins August 1

News and Updates from LeNae Williamson, Executive Director



Here we are already in the springtime of 2021! That sounds so good, doesn't it? In spite of the many challenges of 2020, we certainly saw numerous ways the Lord faithfully provided for our residents and staff at The Dwelling Place! We saw more women and children transition into places of their own than any other year in our 23 year history. Also, by diligently using caution and adding safety protocols, we remained open and Covid free! All praise and glory to Jesus!

Our board and leadership team recently completed a Strategic Planning process. I will share more in the coming months, but one key initiative is to identify ways to advance even further in the healing and wholeness of the residents we serve. We believe a key factor to this will be the opportunity for our residents to build healthy relationships that extend beyond their time in our homes. With our alumni roster growing, the time has come to provide a dedicated full-time staff member to coordinate and develop the alumni program. In addition, we hope to create ways that are more natural for residents and potential mentors to connect early on. We believe these steps will help mentorship become an essential part of our culture as women witness the authenticity of relationships firsthand. Our ultimate goal is for each resident to self-select their mentor and begin that relationship while in the TDP Program.

Additionally, I am excited to share our **2021 Spring Campaign "It's a Family Thing"** that includes a hybrid event (limited in person and unlimited online access) on Friday, May 21 at Rockpoint Church in Lake Elmo, MN. Our theme, **"It's a Family Thing,"** was chosen because it accurately portrays both sides of the issue surrounding domestic abuse. Domestic abuse may happen behind closed doors, but all of us bear the effects of it. God tells us, when speaking of the Body of Christ in I Corinthians 12:26, *"If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together."* As God's people, we are the front line defense and offense against difficult cultural issues. Therefore, while abuse happens most frequently in the nuclear family, the solutions (prevention, awareness, education, healing and recovery) requires each of us doing the part God calls and equips us to do.

Why a spring event? Well, mainly because we believe this is an important time to come together to share The Dwelling Place ministry with others! Being the "still new" executive director of The Dwelling Place, I am eager to meet you! You, our donors, volunteers, prayer partners and friends, are a vital part of what makes The Dwelling Place a beautiful network of Christ's love.

So, as I steadily become more fully integrated to all things "Dwelling Place", you are an important piece of this puzzle with whom I would love to connect! Your prayers, your time, and your financial gifts are critical for us to continue the work given to us by the Lord to do. It is an honor and a blessing to serve the women and children who reside at The Dwelling Place. Each woman is a heroine to me, doing the hard work of recovery. **Thank you for rejoicing along with us at their success and thank you for praying for them when they struggle to find their foundation.** I guess that's all part of what it means to be a member of God's family, right? I sincerely hope to see and meet you on May 21st!

Blessings Always in Christ Jesus,

LeNae Williamson, Executive Director

940-44th Ave. NE, Unit #21307 Columbia Heights, MN 55421

Business Office: (651) 221-0405 | Housing Office: (651) 776-4805

www.thedwellingplacemn.org | [thedwellingplacemn](https://www.instagram.com/thedwellingplacemn) [dwellingplaceshelter](https://www.facebook.com/dwellingplaceshelter)