



2023 Annual Report

Our Mission

Gifts of Hope Unlimited (GOHU) is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization that supports those impacted by relationship abuse by providing financial assistance, home resources, and community-focused initiatives as a step towards a safe and empowered future.

Our Vision

To assist survivors of relationship abuse to establish a new normalcy and lead them towards an upwards trajectory of a secure and empowered future, and to help fill gaps that exist within other domestic violence services.

Our Policy

GOHU does not, by policy or practice, discriminate against a person or group on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, age, disability, gender identity and expression, marital or military status, or based on any individual's status in any group or class protected by applicable federal, state, or local law.

A Reflection of Words and Meanings

Language is important. Historically, we think of domestic violence as physical violence. We now know that relationship abuse can take many forms, including, but not limited to physical violence. Victims can suffer from psychological, emotional, sexual, and financial abuse. Victims can suffer from incest, rape, or human trafficking. Victims can be adults or children. For this reason, we now use the term Relationship Abuse in our work and throughout this report.

Relationship Abuse Statistics are Overwhelming

- According to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, 10 million adults experience relationship abuse annually.
- According to National Domestic Violence Hotline, almost half of men and woman experience psychological abuse from their intimate partner in their lifetime.
- According to Council on Criminal Justice Crime Trends in 2023 report released in January 2024, physical abuse increased by 2% since 2022. This statistic only covers physical assaults.
- According to the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence, 78% of Americans don't recognize financial abuse as relationship abuse.

Any form of abuse can lead to significant mental health challenges including Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Using Legislation and Education to Protect and Prevent Abuse

While we don't get involved in political processes, it's important to understand the changes around us that impact our survivors and our work. We applaud efforts to prevent relationship abuse and policies and systems created to protect survivors.

The Massachusetts Legislature is working to make important changes to the definition of Domestic Violence in H.4241 in its 2023-2024 session. Following the lead by Hawaii, California, Washington, Connecticut and Colorado, Massachusetts is expanding the definition of Domestic Violence to include Coercive Control as a pattern of behavior intended to threaten, intimidate, harass, isolate, control, coerce or compel an intimate partner to fear physical harm or have a reduced sense of physical safety or autonomy. This bill will also make revenge porn illegal. Massachusetts is one of the last few states to take this action. If passed, these important changes will assist victims to prosecute their offenders as well as receive support in their recovery.

The Massachusetts Governors Council created their state-wide committee reviewing Domestic Violence Fatalities in 2015. In their 2023 report, they highlight important prevention programs funded by the state. In 2018, they created RESPECTfully, a state-wide campaign to raise awareness among youth on how to build and maintain healthy relationships. In 2020, they created the Healthy Relationship Grant Program which funds programs state-wide for youth-serving organizations to educate and encourage youth on building healthy relationships.

DESE (Department of Early and Secondary Education) created the curriculum framework for Pre-K to grade 12 to include age-appropriate education to prevent relationship abuse. If passed, H.544/S.268 will require consistency among all Massachusetts public schools while providing parents/guardians a process to review curriculum and remove their students from the instruction.

Our Impact Has Spread in 2023

We work within the ecosystem of partners to support survivors of relationship abuse. Each partner in the ecosystem plays an important part in helping survivors. Due to our size and agility, we focus on our key programs without duplicating efforts of other partners in the ecosystem. For example, once the survivors escape the abusive situation, and they are ready to move to new accommodations, our partners reach out to us to respond. Our committed volunteers meet with survivors confidentially to provide goods and services, and also provide emotional and financial support to assist their transition from trauma to empowerment.

Relationship abuse has long term impact. This is why our support is not a one-and-done model. Survivors become our clients who can come back when they need more essentials. Each year, we have new and returning clients. Some clients also become volunteers to pay it forward to help more survivors on their transition.

In 2023 the number of supported families had grown to 130, including 23 who live in Sudbury, 83 families referred by our partners, and 24 families who relocated from shelters in 2023. These 130 families represent 150 adults and 200 children. This is a significant increase from our pre-COVID support of 6 families. We have made significant changes to our systems and practices to help us grow the support and services we provide over the past few years.

Economic Reality Has Caused Survivors to Move Farther

The acute shortage of housing in Massachusetts has meant that survivors have had to move to a wider geographical area so that in 2023 we had clients in 23 different towns in Massachusetts. The full list of towns is Ashland, Bellingham, Boston, Dorchester, Framingham, Hudson, Lexington, Littleton, Malden, Marlborough, Natick, Pittsfield, Revere, Roxbury, Shrewsbury, Sudbury, Waltham, Watertown, Wellesley, Westborough, Weymouth, Woburn and Worcester.

Three Core Programs Supporting Survivors

In 2016, GOHU began providing support for survivors in the MetroWest region as a bridge to a safer and empowered future for them and their families. Initially police, Domestic Violence Service Network and town social workers provided immediate support to a survivor who left an abusive relationship. Once survivors were out of the abusive home, we were able to provide support with essential household items, clothing, and financial assistance. Over time we also received referrals for support from multiple other agencies dealing with relationship abuse such as REACH Beyond Domestic Violence, Voices Against Violence, RIA, Inc., and Family Promise MetroWest.

The vast majority of our clients are single mothers with young children. Our board members and volunteers include people who have themselves experienced domestic abuse. Former clients who have built a safe home have come back to volunteer so pay it forward and support more survivors on their journey from trauma to empowerment. We know the long-term effects of that abuse (particularly on mental health) so we are conscious of the need to provide assistance in a respectful, stress-free manner. Clients visit our warehouse on an individual appointment basis so that they are not pressured. Our clients have frequently commented upon the kindness with which they have been treated and the positive effect it has had on their mental health. Because we are a small organization, we are also able to meet client needs with an agility that may not be possible for larger organizations.

Product Access Program

GOHU operates a 1,600 square foot warehouse in Acton that it keeps stocked with most of the items that clients need to set up a household in new accommodation (appliances, bedding, kitchen items, bathroom items, decor, linens, lighting, etc.). If the goods are not in stock, GOHU uses its funds to acquire them. We also work in collaboration with Household Goods, another non-profit in Acton, which is able to provide furniture that may be required for any relocation. In 2023 GOHU provided goods and services to 24 families moving from shelters to their own accommodation.



Our warehouse also stocks clothing, shoes, winter items, electronics, toys, paper goods and emergency grocery gift cards. The goal is for our clients to have one stop access to all of these needs, acknowledging that those who have experienced the life-shattering trauma of domestic abuse have limited time and bandwidth. We are especially grateful to Werner Gossels for providing us with our warehouse on a rent-free basis.

Financial Assistance Program

We can provide financial assistance on a case-by-case basis to clients to avoid eviction or homelessness and to meet other needs that will help them move forward to personal independence. Our independent finance committee reviews all applications confidentially.

Education Program

We have established an education fund to support clients seeking to improve their educational, professional, or vocational opportunities. In August, 2023, Governor Maura Healy launched MassReconnect, a program that offers free community college for residents 25 years and older. Our education fund provides assistance to clients who are pursuing opportunities outside the MassReconnect program, or are not qualified under it, or need help with auxiliary expenses. In 2023 we granted three scholarships

Our Clients Share Their Stories

We often receive letters from clients sharing their appreciation for what we do. This story shows how GOHU works within the ecosystem of partners to help survivors move from trauma to empowerment.

“Nyla”, a woman with young children including a child with special needs, escaped her abusive relationship with just a few bags of clothes. She lost her job because of the abuse she endured. The Domestic Violence Service Network (DVSNS) was her first point of contact into the support network. DVSNS reached out to GOHU to help Nyla establish a new life in safety. GOHU provided linens, clothing, household essentials and personal items of all kinds. She wrote to GOHU and DVSNS saying

“I felt I didn’t need to be ashamed about what happened to me and that I deserve to rebuild my life with dignity. You are changing lives in a dramatic way through your kind interactions and small gestures. I feel like I am part of a new community that cares about me. Thank you for giving me hope.”



Others Help Us Achieve Our Mission

So many people from various communities and organizations help us achieve our mission. We couldn’t do it without any of them. A special thanks to the following people:

- ♥ Madison Knopf, a Newtown high school senior, collected socks for our clients.
- ♥ Alexia Hultin, a Sudbury Eagle Scout candidate from Troop 65, designed and built a changing room for our warehouse. She also collected many personal hygiene products for our warehouse.
- ♥ Grayden Velonis, a 12-year-old Sudbury resident, continued his annual tradition of raising money throughout the year to provide holiday gifts to three of our families. When friends found out what he was doing, they contributed also.
- ♥ Community members responded to our call for holiday gifts. With the generosity, we provided 95 gifts to 18 families.
- ♥ Girl Scouts from Troops 65254 & 89245 created 24 gifts bags to share with our clients.
- ♥ Sudbury Art Association created a program to help survivors express their emotions through art to aid in their healing process.
- ♥ Kings Corner Barbershop, located at 29 Hudson Road in Sudbury, held a fundraiser for us.

Our Board Leads the Way

Our 12-member board and many volunteers have served so many people in 2023.

Our Board:

- ♥ Board President Terry Rushfirth,
- ♥ Vice President Robin Kapiloff,
- ♥ Treasurer Arvind Goyal,
- ♥ Assistant Treasurer Marilyn Ellsworth,
- ♥ Secretary Siddhartha Goyal,
- ♥ Colleen Keelan,
- ♥ Bonnie Glass,
- ♥ Nadene Worth,
- ♥ Karen Cohen,
- ♥ Gail-Ann Simon,
- ♥ Kelly Finn and
- ♥ Diana Lannon.

Our Advisory Board:

- ♥ Alice Sapienza
- ♥ Amy Unkless
- ♥ Deborah B. Kenealy
- ♥ Len Simon

There is no paid staff so Board Members and volunteers are the corner stone of GOHU.

Financial Facts

Our financial position as we end 2023 is good.

With our expenses to a minimum, we have used 76% of our income for direct client support and 14% for educational support. Together, these represent our three core programs to provide essential products, financial assistance, and educational support for our clients. A special thanks to Werner Gossels for providing us our warehouse rent-free and the First Baptist Church of Sudbury for donating a parked storage trailer on their property. Without both, we couldn't fulfill our mission. With no paid staff, we are indebted to the ongoing commitment of our volunteers and board members to our mission.

We want to also thank our donors and grant makers. Our donors provide 33% of our income with Nalini Circle of Friends represent 14% in additional donations. Grants make up 46% of our income. Specifically, we want to thank and acknowledge receiving grants from:

- ♥ Emerson Health,
- ♥ Northern Trust Community Giving,
- ♥ Presbyterian Church in Sudbury,
- ♥ Direct Tire Community Foundation,
- ♥ The Sudbury Foundation,
- ♥ Greater Boston Realtors Association,
- ♥ Community Foundation for MetroWest.

We look forward to continuing this strong financial position and management as we continue our mission to support survivors on their journey to a more empowered future.

Balance Sheet as of 1/1/2024 (Cash Basis)

ASSETS	
Cash and Bank Accounts	
MSB Checking	\$16,579.55
Rainy Day Fund (Fidelity)	\$76,204.25
Fidelity investment income	\$3,315.35
PayPal Balance	\$4,341.88
TOTAL ASSETS	\$100,441.03

LIABILITIS & EQUITY	
Liabilities	\$0.00
Equity	\$100,441.03
TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY	\$100,441.03

Income Statement (1/1/2023-12/31/2023)

INCOME	
Grants- Organizations	\$32,000.00
Donations	\$23,096.45
Fidelity Investment Income	\$3,315.35
<u>Fund Raisers</u>	
Misc.	\$1,289.94
Nalini Circle of Friends	\$9,886.96
Total Fund Raisers	\$11,176.90
TOTAL INCOME	\$69,588.70
EXPENSES	
<u>Client Support Related Expenses</u>	
Indirect donations for Clients (Gift Cards)	\$10,416.70
Goods bought for Clients	\$28,478.02
Direct Payments on behalf of Clients	\$15,174.14
Total Client Support	\$54,068.86
Total Education Fund	\$10,300.00
<u>Warehouse</u>	
Rent	\$0.00
Expenses (Utilities)	\$1,676.50
Warehouse help & supplies	\$579.74
Insurance	\$914.24
Website support	\$719.64
Total Warehouse Expenses	\$3,890.12
Government Filings	\$53.50
Marketing	\$662.00
Grant Writing	\$1,300.00
Misc. Expenses	\$825.35
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$71,099.83
NET FOR THE YEAR	-\$1,511.13