



Annual Report 2021

My Sister's Place
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mysistersplacedc.org



From the Executive Director and Chair of the Board

It is our honor and pleasure to share My Sister's Place FY2021 Annual Report.

2021 was a difficult year for everyone and those facing domestic violence faced an especially hard time. During the pandemic, domestic violence surged nationwide and Washington, D.C. was no exception. My Sister's Place saw an increased need for our services and a rise in the severity of cases. The worsening economy disproportionately affected our clients and made the past year even more challenging. In this environment, MSP has worked even harder to provide extra support to more families fleeing domestic violence.

Nevertheless, we are proud to report that My Sister's Place was able to provide uninterrupted care and respite to the burgeoning number of clients who depend on us to escape turmoil and violence in their lives, and also to grow our services.

Yet we were only able to do so because of the talent and dedication of our staff, our donors, our volunteers, and our board. And for that, we are very grateful. And let us also say that we are continually amazed at the resilience and fortitude of our clients, who, despite all odds, forge ahead and are able, with support, to make new lives for themselves.

With your help, we provided emergency shelter, transitional housing, and supportive services to 160 adults and 285 child survivors. These numbers are impressive. But they pale in comparison to the successes our clients achieved despite almost insurmountable obstacles that stood in their way.

Consider Cindy's story. After experiencing a lifetime of abuse and poverty, Cindy fled to MSP's shelter, motivated to change her life, begin healing, and pursue her dreams. She had already been accepted into a vocational program for her chosen career, and worked with staff to explore employment options to finance her education. Diligent and determined – she secured three options for part-time work and prepared to return to school. After only two months at our shelter, Cindy became one of the first five families served in our RISE, MSP's transitional-to-permanent housing program. She thanked our agency saying, "The world has so much to offer; and thanks to MSP, I have a second chance." She now lives in a home she built for herself and is equipped for success in a career she loves. Most importantly, she is safe, stable, and living independently.

In this report, you will find information on the programs and services we provide to our clients and the activities MSP undertakes to raise awareness and build a better and safer community. You will read stories about survivors that inspire us every day to continue to serve MSP's mission to shelter, support and empower survivors of domestic violence and their children, while providing leadership and education to build a supportive community.

We are profoundly grateful to all of you for being an important part of our supportive community and for your part in changing the lives of hundreds of families. We could not do it without you.

Sincerely,

Shawn Wright, Board Chair & Mercedes Lemp, Executive Director

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Our Mission

My Sister's Place (MSP) shelters, supports and empowers survivors of domestic violence and their children, while providing leadership and education to build a supportive community.

MSP is unique in offering a full continuum of care, from emergency shelter through transitional-to-permanent housing. Our experienced team of case managers and residential counselors provides clinical counseling, case management, and comprehensive services to empower survivors to recover and thrive. MSP also provides training, case consultation, and advocacy to engage communities to prevent violence and abuse.

What's New

We are excited to share two of our newest programs that bring our clients one step closer to being successful in transitioning to, and maintaining, their permanent housing and independence.

The **Move-In Program** and **Fresh Start Fund** provide vital support to our clients as they pursue opportunities to gain stable housing, and as they work toward self-sufficiency. The Move-In program recognizes that while clients are eager to move to transitional housing, they often prolonged their stay in shelter because they simply did not have furniture or even a bed to sleep on. The Move-In program collects gently used donated furniture and other household items, so that when a client moves out of the shelter into transitional housing, they are able to move into a fully furnished and well stocked place they can truly call home.

The Fresh Start Fund was created to tackle barriers clients were facing in gaining self-sufficiency. Especially during Covid-19, MSP found an increased need for financial support. The Fund has helped many families with one-time payments, such as security deposits, items clients need for their new homes, car repairs, educational opportunities, job certifications, and more. Often times the inability to pay for one thing can undermine the progress our clients have worked so hard to attain. The Fresh Start Fund ensures that a small financial set back does not undermine all the progress a client has achieved.

MSP is proud to be known as a “low barrier” program, accepting all who seek our services. MSP’s goal is to support all survivors who seek help by providing high-quality, trauma-informed services that address clients’ individual needs at all points of their journey, increasing their safety, well-being, empowerment, and self-sufficiency.





Our Impact

Survivors Perspective

*"I almost lost hope, and MSP restored and brought my hope back. **The love and support has permanently lit the light which I was seeing from a distance.**"*

— X. D.

*"When I came to My Sister's Place I was scared, I was broken and my self-esteem was shattered. I was homeless. Being a victim of domestic violence breaks your spirit, your mental health, any sense of hope. **But I'm here to let someone know that there's hope... regardless of your situation you can surpass anything that you put your mind to.** Believe in miracles because I went from substance-abuse caused by a domestic violence situation to becoming an independent and self-motivated business owner. Thank you!"*

— T.P.

Our Impact

Supporters and Partners Perspective

*"When I found out that my dear friend experienced domestic violence, I found a way to channel my feelings of helplessness into action. I have been an active and avid supporter of MSP's efforts since. As a realtor and a neighbor in this community, I believe passionately that everyone deserves a safe, secure place to call home. I am so grateful my friend found the shelter and support she needed at a critical time in her life. **And I am proud to support the good work of My Sister's Place.**"*

— Frank Snodrgass, Supporter

*"We participated in the program that we called "Winter Hugs." We launched it in honor of Tina Turner whose music we have been dancing to. You are just like Tina, having been in a domestic violence situation and now moving from surviving to thriving. **Know that I see you and honor your journey and sending you hope and faith that better times are ahead for you.**"*

— Michelle

*"To truly address the epidemic of domestic violence, we have to come together as a community to educate, to advocate, and to implement non-destructive ways of being in relation with one another. **The Coalition is strengthened by having My Sister's Place as one of our members.** They bring knowledge and thought leadership to the Coalition as we work to ensure that DC has a comprehensive response system to meet the needs of survivors as they navigate towards safety, as well as a prevention infrastructure that leads us to less violence in the homes of District residents."*

— Dawn Dalton, Executive Director, DC Coalition Against Domestic Violence (DCCADV)

Our Impact

Programs and Services

Sanctuary Plus

Our emergency shelter provides a safe haven for survivors of domestic violence and their children. Sanctuary Plus residents receive counseling, case management, daily coaching, and referrals to enable them to successfully transition to permanent housing and independence.

Transitional-to-Permanent housing

Our innovative program helps families fleeing from domestic violence move from crisis and homelessness to safety and stability. Our staff provide case management and other supportive resources aimed to empower participants of this program. Rental payments are subsidized by MSP for one or two years. Families have the option to remain in the homes they have made for themselves, promoting longterm self-sufficiency and freedom from abuse.

Community Outreach and Education

Eradicating domestic violence requires a coordinated community response that embraces prevention and intervention. My Sister's Place collaborates with district partners and community members to ensure that service providers and community members are equipped to appropriately respond to victims' needs.

Aftercare

Upon exiting our residential and nonresidential programs, survivors are provided ongoing contact with case-management staff to support them in their independence. Services include counseling, referrals to community-based services, and advocacy, as needed. Our goal is to assist clients in building long-term supportive systems within their communities, to reduce the likelihood of future victimization.

Children's Program

MSP provides specialized programs to support children. We are excited to be one of The Homeless Children's Playtime Project new sites and to have been chosen to be part of the new National Children's Museum Community Membership Program. These, and other partnerships, add to the comprehensive support we offer children suffering from their unique experience with domestic violence.

Move-In's

MSP's Move-In Program coordinates the donation of gently used furniture and other household items, along with coordinating a group of volunteers to move-in and decorate an apartment so that clients move into a fully furnished and equipped home, including linens, kitchen supplies and decorations. Often times volunteers fill children's rooms with an abundance of toys. Clients are overwhelmed and incredibly grateful to see their new, fully furnished homes.

Fresh Start Fund

The Fund helps clients with one-time unanticipated expenses that can destabilize their ability to remain safely housed and their ability to continue on a path of self-sufficiency. Expenses covered by the Fund include moving costs, an unexpected car repair bill, a large utility bill, and offset unforeseen hardships such as additional food costs and support for child-care that allows clients to work while their children attend virtual school. The Fund has also helped clients pay to further their education and obtain employment related certifications.

Our Impact

Program Impact in Numbers

MSP served a total of **160 adult survivors** and **285 child survivors** throughout all programs.

110 survivors provided with **safe secure emergency shelter**

1247 case management and counseling sessions provided to adults and children

98 survivors transitioned from shelter, or other crisis locations, to transitional housing

57 sessions held to assist survivors with securing **employment, increasing income, or education** program placement

94 survivors served through transitional housing programs on an on-going basis

18 domestic violence survivors moved to independent permanent housing

40 Move Ins completed to help clients establish homes

57 psycho-education workshops and **70 youth activities** conducted for shelter residents

49 individual safety plans designed, **96 client goals** set, and **57 financial and budgeting plans** created with survivors

Partnered with **more than 30 community services providers** to meet our clients' needs

117 Fresh Star Fund grants awarded to help families with unexpected expenses when needed most

Conducted 8 Domestic Violence and Bystander Intervention trainings to **over 200 community participants**

20 weekly domestic violence resource clinics held in the community and virtually

Established relationships, formal agreements, and domestic violence tenant right **education with 38 local landlords to better serve survivors** in transitional to permanent housing.

News and Events

Making Memories of Wheeling to Freedom: A Partnership to Bring Joy

My Sister's Place, Target, Schwinn and Pacific Cycle came together to give a gift of joy to Washington, DC area children. One of the many wonderful volunteers MSP works with, Jin Chon, brought the idea forward and did much of the leg work to connect partners in this effort. A bicycle is more than just a toy, so much more. Jin knows just how much children enjoy riding their own bikes. Riding along a bike path or even a city street - alone or with friends- can make a child feel positive, happy and empowered - and leads to happy memories. As a result of Jin's efforts, 171 children of MSP clients, ranging from four year old's to the teens, now have bicycles, accesories, and helmets. And a ticket to joy.



How We Honored Domestic Violence Awareness Month in 2021



With our sponsors' support, we brought joy to some of the children we serve. Great Zucchini, a wonderful magician, entertained the crowd and **many laughs were shared.** We also hosted a great event with our former client and new Board Member, **Sharon Wise.** If you missed it, we invite you to view our **#PurpleThursday Signature Event** [HERE](#).

Volunteers around the area joined us for a virtual campaign posting photographs to support our work. We welcome your support year-round! Don't wait, take action now by supporting, volunteering, and raising awareness.

Incredible & Healing: Exhibit of Art Works Created in Art Therapy

MSP's Art Therapy Program is offered to adults and children. It encourages healthy coping and communication, while focusing on empowerment through the creative arts. We invite you to visit our second annual virtual exhibition, [Journey to Freedom](#).

Journey to Freedom is a collaborative art exhibit between DC-based artists and survivors of domestic violence. It takes the viewer through different stages of the journey, from suffering and pain to healing and hope.

Produced in collaboration with Deaf Abused Women's Network.

Thank You For Your Support

We remain deeply grateful to our DMV community, partners and many generous donors who make our work possible and inspire staff and clients to achieve success.

Because of generous foundation, corporate and individual support, our clients are getting what they need to thrive. One of our clients made the decision to receive a high school diploma for her 30th birthday. She takes classes while her children are in day care and is working a food delivery job. She credits her strength and perseverance to knowing that she is not alone and MSP and its supporters are by her side. Another client opened her own business after working with our workforce development coach and with MSP's financial support of her professional training.

We hope that you will continue to stay engaged, volunteer, donate and share our mission with others in an effort to stop the cycle of abuse, empower lives and teach younger generations to do better. Together we will continue to find resilience, success, happiness, and health for our clients and for their children.

We are deeply grateful for your support.



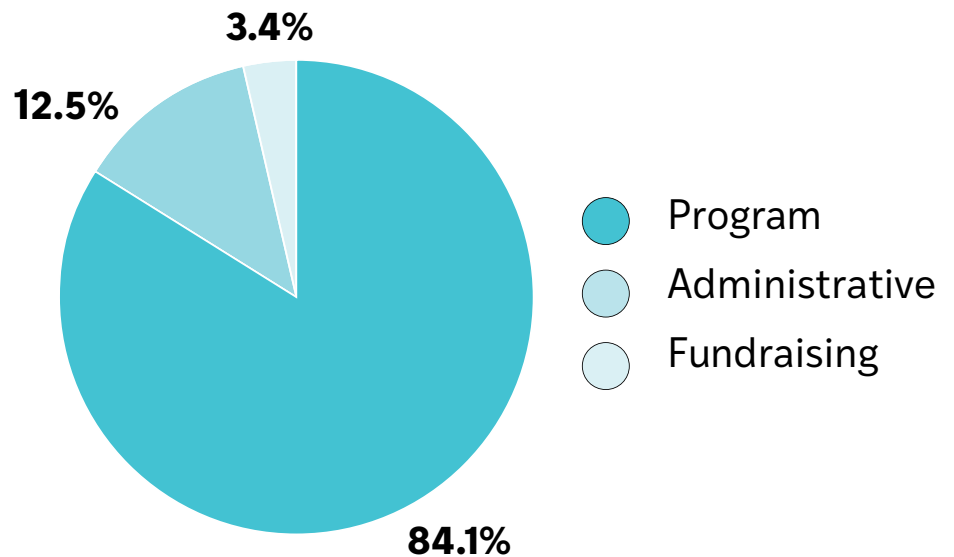
Transparency & Financials

My Sister's Place is committed to transparency, efficiency, good governance, and integrity. Our annual audit and IRS 990 Forms are located on our website. (Section Impact and Transparency)

Rated by Charity Navigator as

'Exceptional,' My Sister's Place adheres to these core values:

- Demonstrate Professionalism, Integrity, and Excellence
- Support Wellness and Self-Care
- Provide Person-centered and Trauma-informed services
- Foster an Environment of Trust, Transparency, and Respect
- Delivery Services Intentionally and Passionately



MSP's Annual Budget Expenses



CATALOGUE FOR
PHILANTHROPY





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