



Annual Report FY 2022

mysistersplacedc.org



From the Executive Director and Chair of the Board

It is with great pride that we share My Sister's Place (MSP) FY2022 Annual Report. As you will read, the survivors we serve are the true heroes and heroines, who are an inspiration to us all. MSP credits its success to the survivors' resilience and brave decisions to choose a different path, create a fresh start and a desire for a better life for themselves and their families. The survivors we serve, our clients, are active participants in helping MSP create a culture of constant evaluation and evolution, and to improve and grow programs that would best serve others experiencing similar trauma. Our partners, supporters, volunteers, and staff are still passionately committed to the mission – it is our ultimate shared goal that in order for our clients to thrive, we must create a safe and empowering environment for the families we serve.

The end of 2022 marked extraordinary expansion for MSP. We opened a new shelter, Sanctuary II –increasing our emergency shelter capacity by nearly 50%. DC Mayor, Muriel Bowser, was with us to cut the ribbon to this beautiful new facility built in response to the urgent need for emergency beds for domestic violence survivors. We have also expanded our footprint throughout our other programs, adding services for another 150 families in transitional housing.

Now, more than ever, our work is even more critical. Pandemic stress and job losses have led to vastly increased rates of domestic violence. Combined with inflation and a lack of affordable housing, and resources, domestic violence survivors face catastrophic barriers. Given these increased barriers, we have significantly increased our commitment to provide safe housing and supportive services in moments of crisis. Along with secure and safe housing, we work with our clients to ensure long-term self-sufficiency and stability. With your help, we supplied emergency shelter, transitional housing, and a variety of supportive services to 146 adults and 201 child survivors in FY 22 alone. The numbers are impressive, but not as impressive as the individual stories of strength and perseverance, and the many successes our clients achieved. In 2022 one of our clients bought their own home! Another started a non-profit organization to help other survivors, and several started their own businesses.

In this report, you will find information on exciting programs and services provided to our clients, and inspirational stories of survival and growth. Together, we are changing the lives of hundreds of families. We are so grateful to everyone for their steadfast support and commitment to MSP.

Sincerely,

Shawn M. Wright, Chair of the Board of Directors

Mercedes Lemp, Executive Director

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Bailey Williams



We all want to live in safe, secure homes where our families can grow and thrive. Domestic violence brings turmoil into homes, trapping families in dangerous situations.

With My Sister's Place, survivors can return to normal lives. Our compassionate community welcomes families into a safe environment where they can focus on building a happy and healthy life. Our advocates know each situation is different, so they listen to what each family needs and quickly make it happen.

At our shelters, families have their own bedrooms, a secure playground, and nutritious meals. The staff even hosts birthday parties for each child. An advocate works with each family to set its own goals—and reach them. This partnership continues for life: Staff provide connections to the tools families need, including long-term housing, financial assistance, career development, and art therapy.

Join My Sister's Place in building a safe, supportive community for all families in the Washington metro area.



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.

For nearly 45 years, MSP has been an innovator in changing lives by providing care through hotline, emergency shelter, transitional housing, financial support, supportive services and continued aftercare to help survivors build and maintain independent lives. This past year, MSP expanded across all facets of our programming to serve more survivors desperately in need of safe housing. We aim to be an innovative leader in the victim services space as we continue to grow to meet the unmet needs of survivors in the DMV.



What's New

In September 2022, My Sister's Place was excited to open our second emergency shelter for survivors of domestic violence. The additional space, named Sanctuary II, expanded our emergency shelter bed capacity by nearly 50% and now provides additional domestic violence survivors/survivor families the safe shelter they urgently need. The building is newly renovated and accessible to community resources, good schools, and pertinent social services. Sanctuary II is housed in a building that My Sister's Place acquired with a grant from D.C.'s Office of Victim Services and Justice Grants.

The new shelter was urgently needed and was years in the making. MSP's first 45 bed shelter, Sanctuary Plus, is almost always at capacity and frequently is unable to accommodate domestic violence survivors desperately seeking safe shelter. Without access to safe housing in moments of crisis, survivors risk homelessness, escalated abuse, and even death.

We are very grateful to Amerigroup DC for being our first corporate sponsor. Adrian Jordan, president of Amerigroup DC noted, "As part of our mission to support the whole health needs of the people we serve, Amerigroup DC is proud to play a role in the establishment of their new shelter that will provide additional resources for abuse victims and their families."

Please continue to support My Sister's Place as we expand our footprint and serve more survivors.



Our Impact

Survivors' Perspectives

"My Sister's Place creates a community of belonging where I felt supported and empowered to grow towards my own goals... and then I realized that I can dream even bigger. With hard work and the village of kind people having my back, my children and I have a future that we deserve."

— A.W.

"Since getting my own place, I've gotten my peace. I've been able to be free. I've got to be myself! I've gotten to entertain friends, family, church, loved ones, and more. I love to cook so I'm excited to be able to cook and socialize without that being a problem for someone else. I like having the choice to open or to close my door. Who I want over and who I don't want over. I don't have to argue with people about my peace so yeah, I'm thankful!"

— M.E.

Our Impact

Programs and Services

Sanctuary Plus

Sanctuary Plus is one of our emergency shelters for survivors fleeing domestic violence and their children. Home to 15 families, or up to 45 residents, at a time, Sanctuary Plus provides residents with counseling, case management, daily coaching, and referrals to enable them to successfully move to permanent housing and independence.

A survivor, J.P. had attempted to leave her abuser in the past, but when she would call for help, she felt like the barriers in place made it impossible to leave. After nearly giving up, J.P. reached out to My Sister's Place in what she called a "last ditch effort." When she called, My Sister's Place's hotline manager answered and quickly arranged to transport her and her children to shelter.

Within a few weeks of acclimating to her new environment, she reported feeling less on edge, as did her children. Working with her trauma-informed and survivor-centered case manager, she began safety planning to ensure her and her children's safety when they left the shelter during the day. Her case manager also helped her get copies of necessary documentation so that she could enroll her children in pre-school. Within 6 months, J.P. was able to move into one of MSP's transitional housing programs.



Sanctuary II

Sanctuary II, which opened in September 2022, is My Sister's Place's second shelter for domestic violence survivors. Sanctuary II expanded our emergency shelter bed capacity by nearly 50% and provides an additional 18-20 survivors/survivor families a year safe shelter they urgently need. The building is newly renovated and accessible to community resources, good schools, and pertinent social services.

When our bilingual community advocate pulled in, taking a survivor and their family to our newly opened shelter, despite face masks, you could see the survivor was radiant with a smile. One of the kids was peacefully napping, the other



was eager to explore and find out what the excitement was all about. Greeted by a small group of MSP staff members, the new residents had a choice to make---which apartment unit should they make their temporary home? The little girl fell in love right away with the first apartment the family viewed, saying in a foreign language “Yes, this is the one. I want this one.” The mom was humble, but you could see that her eyes were sparkling with joy, gratitude, and perhaps a twinge of relief.

Transitional-to-Permanent Housing

Our innovative housing programs help families fleeing from domestic violence move from crisis and homelessness to safety and stability. Our staff provide case management and other supportive resources aimed at empowering participants. 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 long-term self-sufficiency and freedom from abuse.

A.B. is a hardworking mother who wanted to live independently, and better provide for herself and her daughter. But A.B. and her daughter were stuck in an unsafe environment and didn’t have the resources to live independently. Her daughter’s school referred A.B. to My Sister’s Place, where a passionate community of volunteers, staff, and neighbors empowered the small family, ultimately helping them find a safe home to grow and thrive. Within days of meeting her Community Advocate, A.B. and her daughter moved into a secure apartment of their own. My Sister’s Place also provided financial support, so A.B. could pay rent and pay off her car loan during this transition. With time, A.B. landed a higher-paying job that better provides for her family and A.B. and her daughter were able to move into a better neighborhood with more resources and closer access to services.

Move-In Program

Our Move-In program collects gently used furniture and other household items so that when a survivor moves out of the shelter into transitional housing, they can move into a fully furnished and well stocked place they can truly settle into and call home.

L.J. received exciting news right before Christmas that she could move from shelter into one of our transitional housing programs. She wanted her four children to finally have their own place so that they could start building happy memories again. However, apart from clothing, the only possession she had to bring was a tiny Christmas tree and some bathroom belongings because she found out all her furniture was lost due to a storage bill that went unpaid. Within six hours, two days before Christmas Eve, a generous donor stepped up with the house full of furniture and five volunteers stepped up to the plate at a moment’s notice. The next day, our staff and volunteers delivered beds, tables and chairs, a sofa, and some other essential items to L.J.’s new home. Despite the treacherous weather, this Move-In was a true Christmas miracle.



Fresh Start Fund

The Fund has helped many families with one-time payments, such as items clients need for their homes, car repairs, educational opportunities, job certifications, child related expenses, and more. The Fresh Start Fund ensures that a small financial setback does not undermine all the progress a client has achieved. The Fresh Start Fund has been especially critical during times of high-inflation, helping many clients pay for basic necessities such as food, utility bills, and transportation.



When J.E. entered our transitional housing program she was a few semesters away from finishing her B.A. in HR administration. She had put completing her degree on hold out of financial necessity. After working with her Community Advocate to create a safety plan and get a job, J.E. decided that she was ready to finish her degree. Earning her degree would make it possible for J.E. to secure a higher paying job which would allow her to better support her children and spend more time raising

them, rather than working multiple lower wage jobs to make ends meet. With support from the Fresh Start Fund, J.E. was able to get both childcare and tuition assistance so she could go to school in the afternoons and evenings and know her children were well taken care of. Upon completing the degree, J.E. worked with her advocate to update her resume, job-search, and prepare for interviews and was able to secure a job within a matter of months.

Aftercare

Clients exiting our housing programs receive ongoing contact with case-management staff to support them in their independence, including counseling, referrals to community-based services, and advocacy. Our goal is to provide active outreach and assist clients in building long-term supportive systems within their communities, to reduce the likelihood of future victimization.

After G.P. finished her time in RISE Transitional Housing, she kept in contact with MSP's dedicated Aftercare Advocate. Throughout her time in RISE, G.P. was able to stabilize her family, and begin putting money away in savings. Due to financial circumstances and safety concerns, she and her children moved from apartment to apartment frequently---sometimes as much as 3 times a year. Her goal was to be able to purchase a home of her own, creating long-term stability for her family and beginning to build wealth. However, she was burdened by a cumbersome car loan which put a strain on her monthly budget, as she needed the car for transportation to and from her job. She connected with MSP's Aftercare Advocate who was able to have the car loan paid off through MSP's Fresh Start Fund. With the car loan now paid off, G.P. was able to take advantage of D.C.'s programs for first time homebuyers and put a down payment on a home!

Children's Program

MSP provides specialized programs to support the children who come to us with their parents. We are proud to be one of The Homeless Children's Playtime Project sites and to be a part of the 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.

Children who arrive at our shelter with their parents are in a precarious position. They are typically young and vulnerable and oftentimes moved out of the only home they know at a moment notice, leaving many of their toys and comfort items behind. When James Smith-Williams of the Washington Commanders first arrived at our shelter for an evening of reading and games, the children's eyes instantly widened. With his warm and inviting demeanor, the kids eagerly circled around him as he read book after book, as the moms were given a chance to take a deep breath and relax. Prior to arriving, James had worked with MSP's team to gather the shoe sizes of all everyone living in shelter, and the excitement in the room as our staff rolled the cart full of shoes echoed throughout the building. As little as a new pair of shoes might seem at first glance, the gesture symbolized that they were cared for and worthy and can even boost their confidence.



Outreach & Education

Our programs include regular community training and educational events for service providers and community members. We also have a Latino Outreach Program, which provides specialized resources to DC's Spanish speaking residents.



To raise awareness during Domestic Violence Awareness Month, we partnered with the women of Alpha Chi Omega at American University to host a community event on Purple Thursday to both stand in solidarity with survivors and educate college students on domestic violence and resources for help. Throughout the day, over 200 students, faculty, and staff came together to talk to MSP staff, pick up our swag, and paint a community mural. It was a welcome moment to relax for the students in the throes

of midterms, and students got a taste of our Art Therapy program as they created inspirational art. College is typically the first time that young adults live away from their families, so education on healthy relationships and resources available to them is paramount.

Our Impact

FY 2022 Program Impact in Numbers

MSP served a total of **146 adult survivors** and **201 child survivors** throughout all programs.

89 survivors provided with **safe, secure shelter** for an average of **118 days**.

4738 case management and advocacy sessions were provided.

During case management, **66 safety plans** and **81 goals** were set with survivors.

84 sessions held to assist survivors with **increasing income, gaining employment, or education** program placement

Conducted **31 psycho-education workshops** and **86 youth activities** for shelter residents.

347 survivors served through the **Sanctuary Emergency Shelter, RISE, RISE Plus, and FRSP programs**.

131 survivors transitioned to transitional or permanent housing.

Conducted **4 Domestic Violence and Bystander Intervention trainings**.

36 weekly DV resource clinics held in the community and virtually.

Partnered with **36 community services providers** to meet the needs of the survivors we serve.

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

Events & Key Partnerships

How We Honored DVAM In 2022

What a wonderful month October was thanks to community support and partnerships! We kicked off the month at Bison Impact Group's HBCU Golf Tournament which supported HBCU students and the fight against intimate partner violence through My Sister's Place. Over 150 HBCU grads came together for a day of friendly competition on the golf course. For our signature Purple Thursday Event, we set up at American University with our friends at the Alpha Chi Omega Sorority. Throughout the day, 250 students, faculty, and staff stopped by to paint a community mural, learned about domestic violence, and picked up ribbons to wear in solidarity with survivors. Thank you to all the other organizations as well who raised awareness for domestic violence in October through lunch and learns, sign-making, shopping proceeds events, and more.



We welcome your support year-round! Be part of ending the cycle of violence today by supporting, volunteering, and raising awareness in your community.

Football, Food, and Festivities

Look at that smile! James Smith-Williams of the Washington Commanders comes to our shelter on a regular basis to read books to the children, bringing endless giggles, laughs, and smiles to the children's faces and giving their moms a much-needed moment of respite. Through MSP's partnership with Set The Expectation, James-Smith Williams generously brought brand new sneakers to all the moms and kids in the shelter this past fall. He didn't end there --James Smith-Williams hosted our annual Thanksgiving Dinner. James flew in a private chef who made a delicious meal complete with all, literally all, of the fixings. These events show our families that they are cared for, deserving, and worthy.



Kids Will Be Kids

By the numbers, My Sister's Place serves more kids than adults. Due to safety concerns, child survivors of domestic violence aren't often able to go to community fairs or carnivals, so we are so grateful to our friends at Riveron for hosting and staffing a kids carnival event at a local park this summer. Complete with games, snacks, and prizes, all the kids and moms had a wonderful time where they could relax and be carefree for a few hours! We look forward to continuing to find innovative ways to partner with Riveron and other corporations this coming year.



Thank You For Your Support

The past years have been challenging for all, and especially for survivors of domestic violence. This past year especially, we have seen our community simultaneously grow and band together to meet the needs of domestic violence survivors.

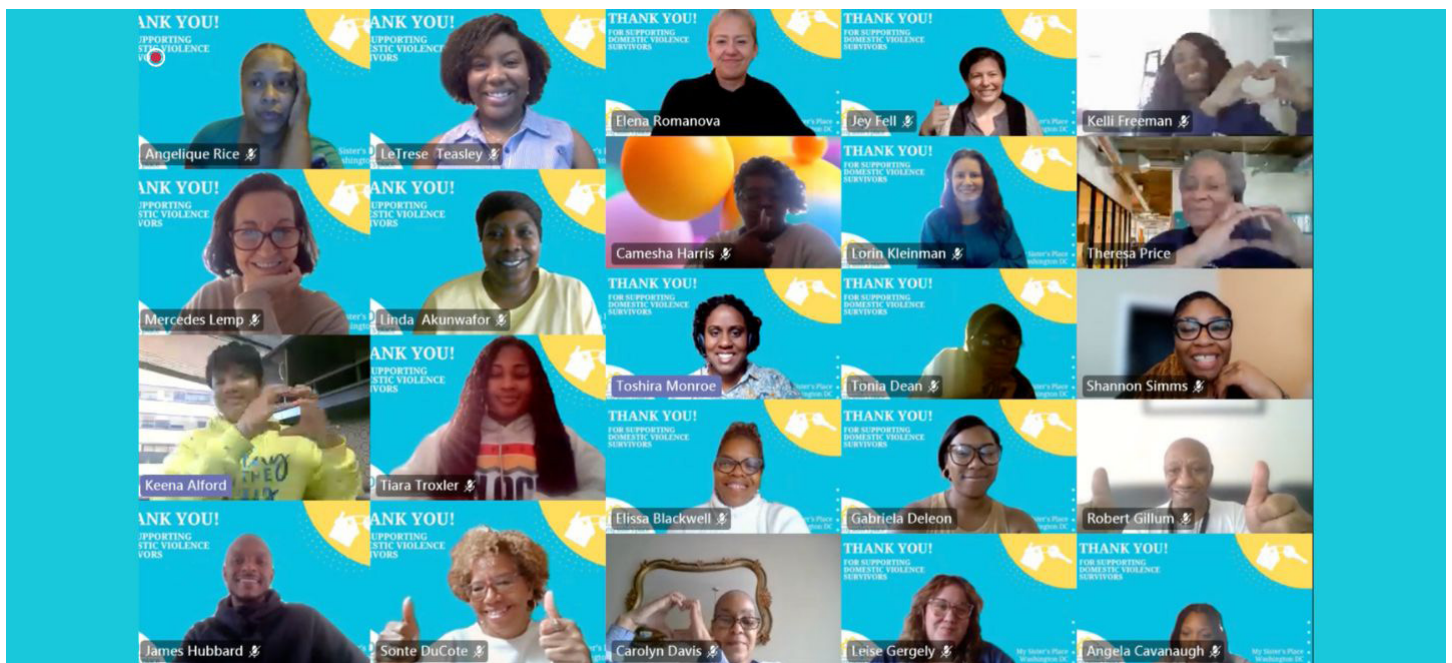
The survivors we serve truly are heroes—thank you for rooting for them, asking how you can get involved, and making sure they have a huge community of supporters behind them.

Your partnership truly provides the opportunity for survivors to forge new futures. One of our clients is set to finish her Associates Degree in Business Administration this spring and is also working a job in HR. Your support allowed her to pursue the degree which allows her to better support her two children. Another client has been promoted within her job at a fire department, allowing her the flexibility to move into an apartment of her own and giving her the agency to choose who she invites in to protect her peace.

As we continue our work, we humbly ask that you continue to stay engaged, speak up and raise awareness within your community, and donate to our mission. While there are certainly hurdles ahead, we are optimistic that the future is bright for the survivors we serve.

Thank you for being an exceptional community!

With gratitude and hope,
My Sister's Place



Thank you from My Sister's Place

Impact as Told by Staff & Community

"My Sister's Place is about lifting up survivor families, making sure that they have what they need, and that they're not left behind. It's such a wide spectrum of what they do just to support these women and their children. They think of everything."

— **Amy Berger, MSP Board Member**

"My Sister's Place helps mothers regain control and gain responsibility for their lives and those of their children in a safe, supportive environment. It's a community of passionate advocates who listen to what each family needs and makes it happen."

— **Casey H., Community Member**

"I'm so grateful for all that you do to make our world a safer, more loving place, especially for those in need and in crisis."

— **Laura G., Donor**

"Our organization is about is uplifting women, making sure that they have what they need, and that they're not left behind. What I love about My Sister's Place is that if you have ideas they always say, 'Yes, we could do that.' Our Executive Director is always willing to take on a new idea and let you spearhead it."

— **Camesha C. King, Director of Programs**



Transparency & Core Values

My Sister's Place is committed to transparency, efficiency, good governance, and integrity. You can find our full financial statements on our website, under Impact and Transparency section.

Rated by Charity Navigator as 'Exceptional,' the My Sister's Place Team adheres to five core values. These values are central to our work and provide the throughline to how we care for survivors and each other.

- 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





My Sister's Place

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