

Mission: WISE provides advocacy, safety options and support services to survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, and sex trafficking. WISE empowers individuals and families through respect and equality, and works toward strengthening our communities through awareness, prevention and education. WISE is a non-profit organization. All of our services for victims are free and confidential.  
Vision: Empowering individuals to create violence free communities.

## New Shelter

As you may know, WISE has been working on plans for a new shelter. The shelter we are using now is over 100 years old and has outlived its useful life. We looked into renovating the current shelter in 2016 and it was estimated that it would cost \$660,000. Even if we were to renovate, we could never heat and cool it properly because there is no way to add duct work, so we would still have rooms that are cold in the winter and hot in the summer. It was the consensus of the WISE facilities committee that it was most likely not feasible to renovate/remodel the existing structure due to the layout of the building as well as the general condition of it.

Initially, we looked for properties to purchase, but we weren't able to find anything that was affordable and would provide enough space to house 19 clients and children. WISE started working with architects and planning with contractors early in 2023 to make plans to build a new shelter. After several months of planning, the cost of the project kept increasing. By July 2023, the architects were talking about the project costing up to \$3 million. After discussion with the board and other members of the community, we decided that a \$3 million dollar shelter build was not financially feasible so we started looking in another direction.

Our Program Director found a wonderful property in Big Rapids Township that was for sale. It is a newer property, constructed in 2004-2005, which would allow us to leave all of the problems we have with the current shelter behind. WISE Administration and the board decided that this property presented an amazing opportunity and offered significant savings from the \$3 million build project we were considering. The sellers accepted our offer and we closed on the purchase of this new home at the end of October. We are very excited for this opportunity and we feel it was the best decision we could have made for WISE clients, staff, and the community as a whole.

WISE purchased the new property for \$850,000, which needs very minimal modifications for ADA compliance and to add office space and security. We expect the entire project to cost approximately \$1 million, including the purchase price. We were extremely fortunate to be awarded \$500,000 from Mecosta County to help us purchase the new shelter. WISE has also set aside funds in the amount of \$101,000 to help fund the purchase of the home and the construction needed. We are actively seeking other federal, state and local funding to help us fund this project, but we will need the support of the community to raise the remaining funds. WISE truly appreciates your support in our annual fundraising efforts and hope to have your support to help fund this capital project.

# Shelter Project Fundraising Thermometer

**GOAL: \$1,000,000**



WISE Board

Carla Erlewine, Lisa Woods, Sandra Braden, Mary Loesch, Angie Thomas, Connie Hopkins, Judy Cook, Bill Sell, Sarah DeWitt Lucas, Melissa Scheible, Deb Newman, Janae Davison

## **New Moms in Shelter**

We thought it may be of interest to share with you some of the things that happen behind the scenes at the WISE shelter. So many times we focus on women leaving an abuser and needing shelter for safety. Although this is so true and it remains very important, are you aware many times that woman is pregnant? We have had numerous women staying in our shelter who are about to give birth or who have recently given birth. It is heart wrenching to see these moms coming into shelter with their shattered dreams of starting a new family who realized the person she thought loved her is abusive and her and her child's life are in danger.

Having a baby should be a joyous time in anyone's life, but for someone in an abusive relationship, this can be a reason for an abuser to become more abusive. The abuser may feel jealous about sharing the attention with the new baby. They might be angry about the cost of starting a family, or they might be angry about the potential loss of income due to maternity leave. These are just a few of the reasons an abuser might become more abusive.

We at WISE see every day how hard it is to leave an abuser, but being a new mom or one who is pregnant adds a whole added layer of grief, fear and sadness. We work closely to make sure their needs and the baby's needs are met. We have become very adept at setting up a baby nursery with mom. We help her acquire services through DHHS, such as food assistance, cash assistance, or childcare assistance. We also help connect her to other resources that help not only in the moment, but to provide for them moving forward. We are especially proactive in helping these women and their children live violent free by helping them find safe, affordable housing.

Many times, WISE will have baby showers for these clients and will provide them with some of the wonderful gently used donations we are given through this community. If the new mom needs something, we do our best to supply that need. Diapers, play pens and baby clothes are just a few examples of how we help clients in their time of greatest need. This is just one way we utilize some of the generous donations we receive from the community.

## **Who do we serve?**

WISE provides advocacy and support for all individuals who experience intimate partner domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking or sex trafficking, not just women. We support and advocate for survivors regardless of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, or disability.



PO Box 1249  
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**WINTER NEWSLETTER**

Volume 13, Page 4

# 2024 FUNDRAISING EVENTS

5K Fun Run & Walk  
Annual Golf Outing  
Giving Tuesday

Thank you to our Community Sponsors

