



# OCTOBER IS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS MONTH

Stepping Stones Agencies Newsletter

Fall 2025

## TABATHA'S REFLECTION: WHAT I LEARNED AS A RESIDENT AT STEPPING STONES' DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SHELTER

*A note from Stepping Stones: This is a special reflection from Tabatha after she completed her time in safe shelter and transitional housing. Her lessons feature what happens when families do the hard work needed to change their lives and live free from abuse.*



*Stepping Stones' first safe shelter in 1980 in the Granite Dells.*

### CELEBRATING 45 YEARS OF SAFETY, HEALING, AND HOPE

Since 1980, Stepping Stones Agencies has provided 24/7/365 advocacy services and safe shelter for adults and children in West Yavapai County. That's 45 years of 2 am phone calls on our helpline, over 10,000 educational support groups, and thousands of families who have received safety and support with our advocates.

While our advocates provide daily support to families, we couldn't be here without the amazing support of our community. There is not room to list every person, business, organization, and group in this newsletter who has volunteered and donated, but know that each of you who support Stepping Stones are making a difference for the lives of local families. Whether it is \$5 or \$5,000, a bottle or a case of shampoo, families are able to find safety and begin to take steps toward lives free from abuse.

Shopping and donating at our thrift store in Prescott Valley also provides significant and meaningful support for the adults and children who come to us to start a new life. Thank you for supporting families, for making a difference in our community, and ensuring that our doors are open and phones answered 24 hours a day, every single day of the year! We couldn't do it without you and look forward to another 45 years of serving the community.

We are GRATEFUL and THANKFUL!

My time at Stepping Stones has been a journey of deep healing, uncomfortable truths, and powerful self-discovery. The lessons I've learned here didn't come easily—but they've shaped me in ways that will last a lifetime. Here are just a few of them.

#### 1. Communication Instead of Defensive Arguments

One of the first and most difficult lessons was learning to communicate rather than react defensively. In a life filled with trauma, it's easy to fall into the habit of protecting yourself with anger or silence. But I've learned that true communication means listening to understand, not just to respond. It means sharing my truth without attacking or shutting down. And through that, real connection and resolution are possible.

#### 2. Victim Mentality Only Destructs Any Effort You Make to Heal

Acknowledging my pain was necessary—but clinging to the identity of a victim kept me stuck. I learned that while I wasn't responsible for what happened to me, I am responsible for my healing. Healing required courage, ownership, and the willingness to stop blaming others and start doing the hard internal work. Letting go of the victim mentality opened the door to real empowerment.



*Above: Stepping Stones' safe emergency shelter houses adults and children experiencing domestic violence in West Yavapai County, AZ. Top right: Stepping Stones Advocates work with adults and children in need of safety, support, and hope 24/7/365.*



#### 3. Communal Living Isn't Easy, but It Teaches You Everything

Living closely with others who are also hurting is not easy. It challenges your patience, your empathy, and your boundaries. But it also teaches you teamwork, mutual respect, and emotional resilience. Within the community, I learned how to coexist, to support others without losing myself, and to receive help when I needed it most. These are life skills I will carry with me always.

#### 4. Trust Is a Gift That Can Never Be Earned, Only Given

I used to believe people had to earn my trust—but I've come to realize that trust isn't transactional. It's a choice, a gift we offer because we choose to believe in someone. That doesn't mean ignoring red flags or abandoning boundaries, but it does mean allowing others the chance to show up, just as I hoped to be given that same chance. Trust starts with the courage to be vulnerable.

#### 5. If You Keep Doing What You've Always Done, You'll Keep Getting What You've Always Gotten

This simple truth broke open everything for me. Patterns don't change unless I do. No amount of wishing or hoping could fix my life without action. I had to challenge my habits, my thoughts, and my coping mechanisms. Growth came when I stepped outside my comfort zone and tried new ways of thinking, reacting, and living.

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If you have questions or want to learn more about our advocacy services and agency, please contact us at:

**STEPPING STONES AGENCIES**  
**2651 N. INDUSTRIAL WAY, SUITE A**  
**PRESCOTT VALLEY, AZ 86314 | 928.772.4184**  
**INFO@STEPPINGSTONESAZ.ORG**

24/7/365 Advocacy, Emergency Shelter, and Support Programs  
[www.SteppingStonesAZ.org](http://www.SteppingStonesAZ.org)

**24/7/365 HELPLINE:**  
**928.445.HOPE**



# TABATHA’S REFLECTION CONTINUED

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## 6. I Am Stronger Than I Ever Realized

I’ve survived things I never thought I could. But beyond surviving, I’ve learned that I am capable of thriving. My strength isn’t just in what I’ve endured—it’s in my ability to feel deeply, love fully, and keep going even when the road is hard. I don’t need anyone else to tell me I’m strong. I know I am.

## 7. I Don’t Rely on Anyone’s Opinion About Me—Only That of God

Learning to disconnect my worth from others’ opinions was a game changer. People may judge, misunderstand, or walk away. But God sees me fully. My identity is rooted in something greater

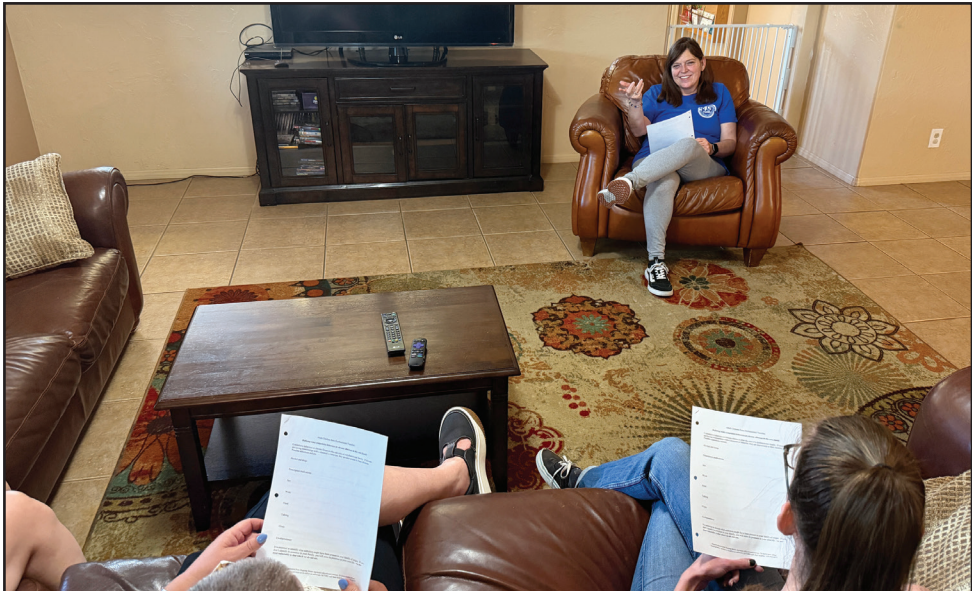
than fleeting approval. That has given me peace, confidence, and clarity in who I am.

## 8. I Am a Great Mom

Despite my past, my mistakes, and my doubts—I am a good mother. I love my kids, I show up, and I keep learning how to do better for them. That’s what matters. I’ve learned to forgive myself and focus on the present. My children don’t need perfection; they need me, healthy and whole.

## 9. I Am a Great Friend

I don’t allow just anyone into my circle anymore; access to my heart, my time, and my energy is earned through mutual respect, not given out of obligation or guilt. I’ve also learned how to set boundaries, speak the truth



in love, and hold space for others without losing myself. I bring value to the lives of those I care about and surround myself with—and that’s something I’m proud of.

## 10. I Have Value That Supersedes My Ability to Please Others

For a long time, I thought my worth came from how giving, useful, agreeable, or “nice” I was to others. Now, I know I have value simply because I exist. I don’t need to shrink, overextend, or exhaust myself to be enough. I am enough—just as I am.

## 11. I Am in Charge of My Future and Responsible for My Life Choices

This is the most freeing and

terrifying truth of all. My future is mine to shape. No one else is responsible for my healing, my happiness, or my growth. And while that responsibility can be heavy, it is also sacred. I get to choose how I live, how I love, and how I rise.

These lessons are not just reflections—they are my truth. They are the foundation I now stand on as I step forward into my life, one choice at a time. I am not the same person who walked into Stepping Stones. I am wiser, stronger, and more grounded in who I am, what I’m capable of, and what I am worth.

*If you or someone you know needs support because of domestic violence or other forms of abuse, call our 24/7/365 Helpline at 928-445-HOPE (445-4673).*



Above: Children receive age-appropriate advocacy support while living in shelter including safety planning and activities. Top right: Advocates lead daily educational support groups to help adults learn about topics such as family dynamics, childhood trauma, and boundaries.

# STORIES FROM 45 YEARS: THE RESCUE

Written by Shae, former resident

I can’t tell you the details of how God led me to call the Stepping Stones Helpline that day. I can’t remember. When you live in fear, the mind betrays and memory has holes. I can tell you... that call was the first step of my family’s rescue.

The abuse and violence from this man trapped in sickness was crushing me. I could not decipher truth from reality. I have a master’s degree, shouldn’t I be able to figure this out? My brain and body were constantly flooded with anxiety, in perpetual fight or flight, not knowing if we would be safe one day to the next.

After another night of oppressing darkness, I managed to get out of bed and take a step toward the phone. A kind, strong voice engaged me on the line. Kathy [advocate] put words to the behaviors I was experiencing, she validated what others had minimized. It wasn’t OK. I learned the vows I made did not erase my right to safety. I learned about the cycle of abuse. I learned my part, that enabling was not helping. Freedom from abuse was the legacy I must leave my children. Their wellbeing and future was non-negotiable.

I continue to take steps in forgiveness and healing seven years later. I am standing and I know who I am. I have

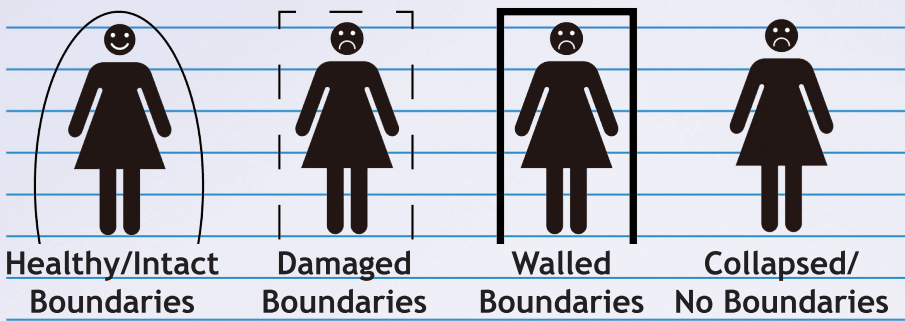
a voice. I can laugh and sing and travel again. I am disorganized and forgetful, but constantly praying and praising. I have a lovely little home, forever friends, and a good job. My three adult children are thriving in their education and work as they take steps toward their promises. I am repeatedly thankful for many empowering resources that divinely intersected, each playing a part in the rescue. God put angels and truth-tellers in my life, dear friends holding me and my children along the way. My children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren will live free from abuse, violence, and addiction. It was never the plan for my life, and it is not for theirs.

Read Shae’s full story online at: [www.SteppingStonesAZ.org/storiesfrom45](http://www.SteppingStonesAZ.org/storiesfrom45)



# EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT GROUP TOPIC: BOUNDARIES

How healthy are your boundaries? Take a look at this snippet of one of our support groups led by our advocates:



**Healthy Boundaries** are like a zipper on the inside that you control. You can decide who you open it for, what comes in, and what does not. You make the decisions that are best for you by choosing when it’s open or closed.

**Damaged Boundaries** are like if the zipper was on the outside and other people have control. They have the power to come and go as they please, leaving you with their problems to solve and emotions to repair. You are not choosing what is happening and are always focusing on the needs of others.

**Walled Boundaries** are like if the zipper was replaced with cement blocks. No one can come in and you cannot leave. Past hurts are isolating you from everyone and from true connections.

**Collapsed/No Boundaries** are like if you are outside with no protection at all. Anyone can have access to you at any time, and you risk being abused, hurt, and overwhelmed by others taking advantage of you and your emotions.

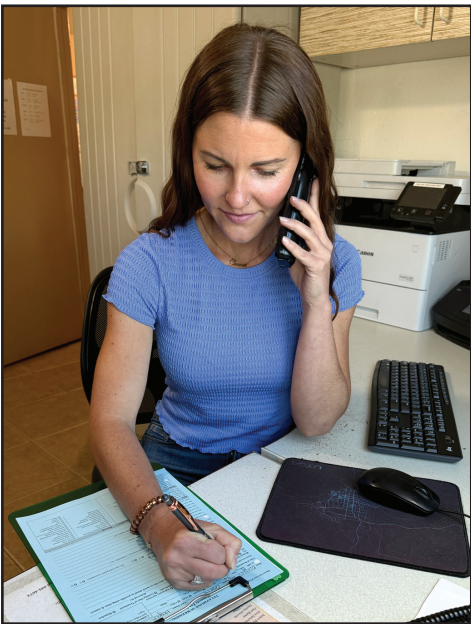
*Want to learn more about our boundaries support group? Contact our advocates at 928-445-4673.*



# MORE THAN SAFE SHELTER: COMMUNITY-BASED ADVOCACY

Written by April,  
Stepping Stones Advocate

For 45 years, Stepping Stones has been an essential part of the community in providing emergency shelter for victims of domestic violence. While our shelter is a huge part of our mission, many don't know that our services extend to the community beyond the shelter as well. Our Community-Based Advocacy (or CBA) program covers a wide range of domestic violence related services. Over the past 12 months, we have assisted 123 people with shelter and 63 people with CBA services. Domestic violence can affect anyone; it does not discriminate by age, race, gender, financial status, religion, or level of support in one's life. While many victims of domestic violence are in need of emergency shelter for safety purposes, many others do have support from family and friends when it comes to shelter. They may simply need assistance in navigating the process of getting out of that relationship. Our advocates are available for support throughout that journey. Sometimes we get calls from local victims of domestic violence who have family in another area. After verifying that the person has a safe place to go, we can help them get there by providing shuttle, bus, or train tickets. A person's partner may have just been incarcerated and left them without food, formula, or diapers for their babies. We are able to provide some of these items and limited financial assistance. Other times, the caller just needs to spend time debriefing with an advocate to talk through



Day and night, advocates answer our 24/7 helpline to provide safety and support for local families.

their experience and create an action plan for next steps. This can involve Safety Planning, providing resources for therapy and support groups, and providing resources for housing in the area. One of the biggest pieces of our CBA program is legal advocacy. A caller may need an Order of Protection but is unsure of the process. We will meet with them, fill out the petition together, and attend court together. We also assist with filling out paperwork for Emergency Temporary Orders, Dissolution, Parenting Time, and Legal Decision Making when the courts need to become involved to untangle the situation. We continue to provide support through the process by attending hearings and meeting to discuss next steps. If you or someone you care about is experiencing domestic violence, don't hesitate to reach out to Stepping Stones. We are here in a variety of ways to support victims and we're just a phone call away.

## What is Community-Based Advocacy? ☆ | 🏠

Community-Based Advocacy (CBA) includes all the same services we provide for families in our shelter, but you don't have to live with us! These services include:

- One-on-one crisis support
- Safety planning
- Danger assessments
- Educational support groups
- Police reports and orders of protection
- Divorce (related to domestic violence)
- Referrals for other community resources

Call our advocates to learn more:  
928-445-4673



# SERVING FAMILIES AROUND THE CLOCK



When people come to Stepping Stones and begin to do the hard work of healing, they see amazing changes in their lives. It doesn't happen overnight, but with consistent work and determination, they build their confidence, self-worth, and begin to live a life free from abuse. Take a look at a few statistics and outcomes we've seen over the last 12 months:

## 24/7/365 HELPLINE

Over 2,300  
Helpline Crisis  
and Referral  
calls answered  
by trained  
advocates.



## NUMBER OF FAMILIES SERVED

Advocates served 186  
adults and children  
through face-to-face  
advocacy services.

**OF THE ADULTS WE  
SERVED IN SAFE SHELTER:**  
75% experienced some type  
of abuse as a child (physical,  
sexual, or emotional).

## 7,560 HOURS



of face-to-face advocacy services  
including educational support groups.  
THAT'S OVER 20 HOURS PER DAY!

## STEPPING STONES SERVICE OUTCOMES

Upon completing services with our advocates, adults anonymously reported these outcomes about their lives:



- Said they have an increased knowledge of domestic violence and its effect on their life.
- Said they are completing their goals.
- Felt they are (re)gaining control of their life.
- Said their child demonstrates improved emotional/behavioral status during their time at SSA .



- Said their safety has improved, even after leaving the program.



Upon program completion, only 23% of families had permanent housing established (their own apartment, etc.). Most moved in with supportive family or friends, left the area, or found additional supportive services because they are unable to secure affordable housing in our community.



In order to help more families, we continue to focus on identifying and acquiring affordable housing units for families to live free from abuse.



SHOP LOCAL • DONATE LOCAL • SERVE LOCAL



Stepping Stones Thrift Store is waiting for you! Every day, our awesome team is sorting, pricing, and stocking items on the shelves for you to browse and find the perfect treasure. Stepping Stones Thrift is more than a great place to shop, it offers paid on-the-job training for families in our advocacy services or others in our community who need a second chance. This means that people can learn job skills in a safe environment, and upon

completion, they can use those skills to find other jobs in our community. Finally, because of our amazing community, Stepping Stones Thrift Store has been recognized for the EIGHTH year in a row as Best Thrift Store in The Daily Courier’s Readers’ Choice Awards! We are honored to be recognized by our customers year after year. Thank you for shopping, donating, and making a difference in our community!

**STEPPING STONES THRIFT STORE**  
2651 N. Industrial Way, Prescott Valley 928.499.3206

**STORE HOURS:** Tues–Sat 9 am–5 pm

**DONATION DROP OFF HOURS:**  
Tues–Sat 9 am–4 pm

**CLOSED SUNDAYS & MONDAYS**



**WE PICK UP FURNITURE  
IN THE QUAD-CITIES!**

**CALL OUR DONATION CENTER:  
928.759.0225**

Call to learn more about our current schedule and what we can pick up. Schedule can be up to two weeks out during busy seasons.



Stepping Stones Thrift Store associates accept donations, sort and price items, and fill the shelves for you to shop.

SUPPORT LOCAL FAMILIES WITH A TAX CREDIT DONATION



*“Being at Stepping Stones has been so helpful. There’s so much support and encouragement when you feel down, and the classes and information open your eyes. The safety I feel is extremely refreshing to know that I can come home and sleep soundly and never have to wonder about anything happening.” - Melissa (name changed)*

Because of you and the Arizona Qualifying Charitable Tax Credit program, Melissa has discovered the support she needed to find freedom from abuse, and she was

able to rest again. Thank you for helping Stepping Stones provide that safe place for her and other local families in West Yavapai County. Arizona offers a dollar-for-dollar tax credit on your AZ state return by making a monetary donation to a qualified charitable organization of any amount (new for 2025—up to \$495 filing single or \$987 filing joint). When you claim the credit, you will reduce your tax liability or increase the amount you receive in a refund. To take advantage of the tax credit, make your donation by April 15, 2026.

**DONATE ONLINE AT: [STEPPINGSTONESAZ.ORG/DONATE](https://steppingstonesaz.org/donate)  
OR FILL OUT & MAIL WITH DONATION TO:**

**STEPPING STONES AGENCIES  
2651 N. INDUSTRIAL WAY, STE A  
PRESCOTT VALLEY, AZ 86314**

**I AM EXCITED TO SUPPORT FAMILIES BY DONATING:**

<input type="checkbox"/> \$495 tax credit (filing single)	<input type="checkbox"/> \$100
<input type="checkbox"/> \$987 tax credit (filing joint)	<input type="checkbox"/> \$50
<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____	
<input type="checkbox"/> Please send me information on how I can help local families for years to come through a Charitable Legacy Gift.	

*Please send acknowledgment & tax receipt to:*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

*Please check with your tax professional for information regarding donations and your specific tax situation.*

*Stepping Stones’ official Qualifying Charitable Tax Credit code from the State of Arizona is: 20034.*

**TO LEARN MORE ABOUT DONATIONS  
OR OTHER WAYS TO HELP,  
CALL ALEXIS AT 928.772.4184.  
READY TO GIVE? SCAN QR CODE!**



Under Titles VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI and VII) and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, Stepping Stones Agencies prohibits discrimination in admissions, programs, services, activities or employment based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, genetic information, gender identity, sexual orientation, and disability. Stepping Stones must make a reasonable accommodation to allow a person with a disability to take part in a program, service, or activity. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities. For example, this means that if necessary, Stepping Stones Agencies must provide sign language interpreters for people who are deaf, a wheelchair accessible location, or enlarged print materials. It also means that Stepping Stones Agencies will take any other reasonable action that allows you to take part in and understand a program or activity, including making reasonable changes to an activity. If you believe that you will not be able to understand or take part in a program or activity because of your disability, please let us know of your disability needs in advance if at all possible. To request this document in alternative format or for further information about this policy please contact: Cori Burke at 928.772.4184. Para obtener este documento en otro formato o obtener información adicional sobre esta política, por favor llama a Cori Burke, 928.772.4184.