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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **A Safe Place Celebrates Ten Years of Safe, Affordable Housing for Families of Domestic Violence**

**LAKE COUNTY, IL** – What started as a dream to provide safe, affordable housing for victims and children of domestic violence is now on its tenth successful year. On August 22, A Safe Place celebrated the tenth anniversary of its Housing Program, that includes 40 apartments, a playground, healing garden, life skills training center, and a state-of-the-art training room.

Knowing that one of the biggest barriers for families of domestic violence to leave their abusers was affordable housing, A Safe Place opened its housing facility in March 2006 with 20 safe, affordable apartments as an alternative to either staying in an abusive situation or becoming homeless. In 2012, the program expanded, and now has a total of 40 one, two, and three-bedroom apartments.

“It gives me great joy to stand next to the many happy families living without violence in their own permanent apartments here in Zion and I am pleased to honor our generous partners, the Chicago Bears, [Bob’s Discount Furniture](#), Gene Minsky, Frank Mohr, the Ray Family, and the Toser Family, who have gone above and beyond to make this dream a reality,” said Davenport. During the program, one of the residents spoke briefly about how the counseling, life skills training, and supportive resources at A Safe Place helped her gain employment, become self-sufficient, and live independently again.

Among those honored at the celebration were the donors who were integral to improvements at the housing facility over the last ten years. One of the largest supporters, the Chicago Bears, has partnered with A Safe Place since 1998, generously providing volunteers, financial support, and moral support

every year. In 2016, the Bears helped construct the playground at the apartment facility so children would not have to walk over a mile to get to the nearest park.

“This is a vexing social issue that needs to be addressed, people need to be educated about it. And, most importantly, women need to know that they have a place to go to, that they do have an alternative to staying in an abusive situation. Anything that we can do to get the word out, to help, to cooperate, to support, we want to do that,” said George H. McCaskey, Chairman of the Chicago Bears, after the ribbon cutting of the “Chicago Bears and ‘Mr. Gene’ Minsky Playground” with Staley Da Bear and fellow donors Bonnie and Gene Minsky.

The newest supporter of A Safe Place, [Bob’s Discount Furniture](#), was recognized for recently donating more than \$60,000 worth of furniture for families in need. “We count it as a blessing to be able to help A Safe Place. The best part of our jobs at Bob’s is to give back to the community,” said Gabe Castillo, [Bob’s Discount Furniture](#) Director of Operations.

The Toser Family and Frank Mohr were honored for their dedication and support of A Safe Place and for their donation of the healing garden in honor of their mother, Betty Toser, a founding board member of A Safe Place. The state-of-the-art training room was dedicated to the generosity of Russell V. Ray and Mary Rose Ray.

The evening included two ribbon cuttings, face painting, balloon animals, dinner, and an appearance by former Chicago Bears Wide Receiver Johnny Knox and Chicago Bears mascot, Staley Da Bear. Caring Women’s Connection donated and gave away school backpacks full of school supplies for students starting their 2017-18 school year.

“This housing program allows victims of domestic violence to live independently and safely while continuing their education, finding employment, attending counseling sessions, and rebuilding their lives. We couldn’t have done it without the dedication and generosity of the Chicago Bears, [Bob’s Discount Furniture](#), Gene Minsky, Frank Mohr, the Ray Family, the Toser Family and countless compassionate donors and volunteers over the last ten years,” said Davenport.

“We have come a long way since breaking ground for this facility in 2005, and I am excited to think of what is to come in the future as we continue to work hard to eliminate domestic violence in our communities.”

Photo 1:

From left to right: Staley Da Bear, A Safe Place Executive Director Pat Davenport, and Chairman of the Chicago Bears George H. McCaskey. Photo by Carol Levin, GLMV Chamber.





Photo 2:

From left to right: Former Chicago Bears Wide Receiver Johnny Knox, Bonnie Minsky, Gene Minsky, Chairman of the Chicago Bears George H. McCaskey, and Staley Da Bear. Photo by Carol Levin, GLMV Chamber.



Photo 3:

Caring Women's Connection donated school backpacks to give away to students starting the 2017-18 school year. Photo by Carol Levin, GLMV Chamber.



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*Founded in 1978, A Safe Place is the leading advocate for eliminating domestic violence in northern Illinois, and is Lake County, Illinois' only provider of services exclusively for victims of domestic violence. A Safe Place provides emergency shelter, permanent housing, a 24-hour crisis line (847-249-4450), court and non-legal advocacy, individual, group, and children's counseling, art therapy, family visitation services, batterer intervention services; and community outreach, prevention education, and professional training. Our service area includes Lake, McHenry, and northern Cook counties in Illinois; however, our clients come to us from across the state, region, and country.*

*For more information about A Safe Place, visit [www.asafeplaceforhelp.org](http://www.asafeplaceforhelp.org), [Facebook](#), and [Twitter](#).*