

HOW A WRONG TURN LED TO A POSSIBLE SAFE HAVEN FOR ABUSE SURVIVORS



What started with a wrong turn could become the right refuge for hundreds of domestic violence and human trafficking survivors from the north suburbs.

A Safe Place, a Lake County-based agency that provides shelter and other assistance to thousands of individuals and families afflicted by violence, is launching a \$20 million campaign for a new facility in Grayslake to meet a 200% surge in the need for transitional housing.

“The problem that we’ve been experiencing, which started with COVID but now has really continued, is the demand for our services far exceeds the supply that we have,” A Safe Place CEO Pat Davenport told us this week. “We have been seeing between 80 to 100 people (a week) that need emergency shelter, who are fleeing their homes because their lives are in danger, with their children, and they are the ones that we’re hoping that this new facility will be able to help.”

Leaders of A Safe Place hope to raise \$20 million to build a shelter and resource center along Rollins Road in Grayslake, to help survivors of domestic violence and human trafficking. (Paul Valade/pvalade@dailyherald.com, November 2025).

The agency currently has shelter space for 33 people, which means others in need are put up in hotels. That isn’t financially sustainable at a time when federal and state assistance is waning, Davenport said.

I took a wrong turn and ended up in this field. They had this big sign saying it was for sale. I parked my car and I looked at it, and I’m like, ‘This looks perfect.’”

The agency was able to purchase the roughly 22-acre site, and in October the Grayslake village board granted the necessary approvals to move forward with the plan.

That plan calls for a multiphase project that would begin with construction of a building with 40 private rooms. Services provided on site would include health care, behavioral health and pet-friendly accommodations. Guests could remain for up to three months, though stays are on average shorter.

The second phase calls for two buildings, including a resource center offering basic needs like food, clothes, over-the-counter medicine and other everyday items survivors often leave behind when fleeing their homes.



The second building would provide space for vocational training and other services aimed at helping clients become independent.



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A final phase would include another building with space for 40 client rooms and related support services.

‘Community always steps up’

While the plan is clear, the timeline is not. That’s going to depend on fundraising.

The effort got off to a good start when lawmakers last month secured \$1 million in state funding for the project.

The story of survivors in Lake County needs a brighter next chapter, and the first step in doing that is making sure that victims and their families who would like the opportunity to rebuild their lives are not turned away because of limited space and resources,” said state Rep. Laura Faver Dias, a Democrat from Grayslake.

With the agency’s board wanting to avoid debt, A Safe Place leaders say they plan to raise at least enough to fully fund the first phase before breaking ground.

“A Safe Place is here because of our community support,” said Damaris Lorta, the organization’s chief development officer. “We went through COVID, we’ve gone through really hard times, and the community always steps up and sees the importance of keeping individuals safe and violence free.

“So, we are very hopeful that this will not be any different, and that our community will rally around us and make this happen.”



For information about A Safe Place and ways to help, visit asafeplaceforhelp.org or email us at info@asafeplaceforhelp.org

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