

## YOUR SUPPORT BRINGS A NEW BEGINNING



**Meet artist MzMagik, who we know as Michelle, and hear how abuse and fear were turned around as she learned that new choices and boundaries are possible during her stay at Stepping Stone.**

I've had a life filled with adventures, or at least that is how I choose to see it. I lived like a victim and survivor for so long that it became my identity. It wasn't until I got to Stepping Stone that I started to see that I am an overcomer and a thriver.

See, most of my life, all I've really known was the many forms of abuse. Physical was my first, having had my first broken bone at two. When I was seven, I watched my mother throw a knife into my father's back; the next day my sister and I were taken from school by child services into a foster home. Funny thing is, I wasn't scared, I was relieved. I didn't see my father again for 30+ years.

Sexual abuse was next on the survival list, quickly entangled with physiological warfare from all directions. Totally did not see this coming! This is where I learned there were dire consequences for not playing along. I mean, how can you compete with waking up at 3 a.m. to your mother screaming because she's getting beaten? I was 14. Little did I know this trauma and all that went with it would be the one to rule my everything, seen and unseen.

In kindergarten, I learned that feeling safe was only in my head, it wasn't real. In grade school, I realized that it didn't matter how hard I tried, it wouldn't have been good enough anyway. I learned that life can suddenly change in a moment's notice many times over. In high school it became rock solid: nothing no longer mattered for anything. What I did didn't matter, what happens next didn't matter. . . nothing. Nothing mattered. I simply existed in this body.

***"Little did I know this trauma and all that went with it would be the one to rule my everything, seen and unseen."***

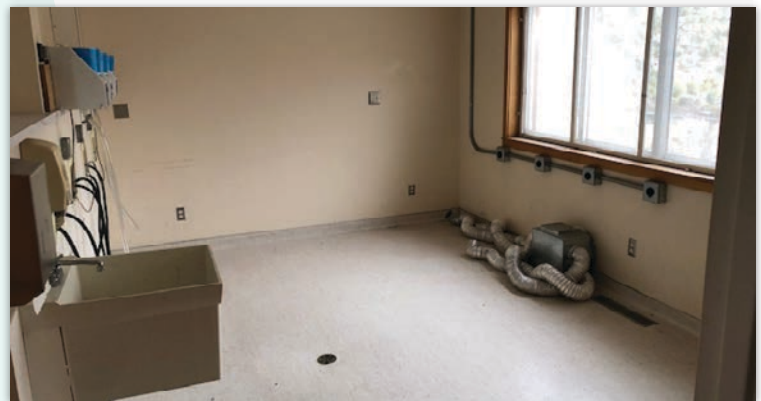
When I first got to Stepping Stone, I had to learn to walk and talk all over again. See, as a child, talking got me in trouble and walking usually hurt. I didn't have anyone to tell me how or what to do. I had to learn on my own, but this time I had the support of the staff and the residents were eager to help me along. I learned not to only pick my battles, but to fight them. Identifying boundaries was a fun little exercise. It was such a backwards and foreign concept! Since I had just recently learned that "no" was more than a possibility, what a better place than here, to practice creating those boundaries.

I left my apartment of four plus years, with the idea of traveling the country in my new van (a long awaited dream of mine). Trying to manage a job and a few unplanned mishaps, I ended up back at Stepping Stone, feeling broken with no fight left in me to start over yet again. I heard things I'd never heard before, "You're worth fighting for, it's not okay to quit, we got you", and the one that stopped me in my tracks, "If you weren't here, you'd be dead AND THAT is NOT OK." It was time to take on these traumas and the effects they had on my life.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 3)

### THANK YOU, FINANCIAL ONE, FOR CARING!

Ross Bloomquist, President/CEO of Financial One Credit Union sent the us the following note: "I just received your Pathways (Winter 2022) newsletter. Jazmin's story was heart wrenching. It also served as a good reminder of the very impactful work you and your team do and why we support it." Thank you, Ross, for this encouraging note and your generous support!



## SECOND FLOOR IS OURS!

*A word from Executive Director Julie Jeppson*

After years of asking, we finally have approval to use the second floor! As you may know, this fall we moved all our residents to a hotel in order to effectively social distance and stop the rapid spread of COVID. The hotel model has allowed us to have just two residents per room rather than the eight to a room at the shelter. The hotel has helped us with the current crisis, but a closed hotel room door, though only two inches thick, may as well be 100 feet of concrete! Interacting with residents, checking in on them, and each other supporting one another and building community does not happen as it does when residents are in a congregate setting. Since 2012, we have worked hard to acquire the second floor of our building and create more space for our 66 residents.

We are excited to announce that in February 2022, Anoka County gave their approval for us to add the second floor to our lease! We are currently in the process of submitting grants and looking forward to having all our residents back together in our building. I want you to be the first to know that we applied for and received a \$1,918,017 grant from DHS. The original ask was for \$2.3M, so we still have a little ways to go. We are continuing to apply for other grant opportunities to fund this remodel, but stay tuned. We may need to reach out to our family of supporters for help. You can see we have a lot of work to do and it's not very pretty – yet! Being under one roof again in our own space will help everyone move forward.

JUNE 18TH



## YOU CAN FUNDRAISE FOR STEPPING STONE

Our own Development Officer, Jeff Conner, is running on June 18 in this year's Grandma's Marathon to raise money for Stepping Stone! Become a fundraiser and/or a supporter and help Jeff with his goal of \$9,000.

Visit our [SteppingStoneEH.org](https://SteppingStoneEH.org), and click "Events" to find the details.

SEPTEMBER 8TH

## MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Now's the time to save the date for our annual ParTee Fore A Purpose golf tournament. This is one of two major fundraising events, which provides much needed support to continue our unique mission in the community.

- Thursday, September 8
- 11:30 a.m. shotgun start
- The Refuge Golf Club, Oak Grove
- Details at [SteppingStoneEH.org](https://SteppingStoneEH.org), click "Events"



PARTEEfore A PURPOSE

# Community Partners

## Businesses That Help Build Pathways: Keystone Sponsors

Keystone. According to Meriam-Webster, the definition of keystone is, "the wedge-shaped piece at the crown of an arch that locks the other pieces in place," and "something on which associated things depend for support." This quarter, we highlight a few of our Keystone Sponsors. ALL our Keystone Sponsors provide support and help "lock everything in place."



**MidWestOne  
Bank®**

Since its establishment, **MidWestOne Bank** has been committed to sponsoring various community enriching nonprofit organizations through financial contributions, leadership, and volunteer hours. We have been collaborating with Stepping Stone Emergency Housing since their inception to help those in need in our community. We firmly believe in the courage and faith Stepping Stone instills into their residents. We will continue to support Stepping Stone in their mission to provide emergency shelter and critical support services to individuals experiencing homelessness by opening doors that can enrich their lives.

**Hoffman Weber Construction, Inc.** is dedicated to giving back to the communities that give to us. In this spirit, one of the organizations that we support is Stepping Stone. We have worked with Stepping Stone for years now, and we have seen firsthand the incredible impact that they have on their residents and others. We know the battle against homelessness is a tough one, but we know that Stepping Stone will always do whatever it can to prevent and end it. Hoffman Weber Construction continues to commit to working with Stepping Stone on ending homelessness!



**HOFFMAN WEBER  
CONSTRUCTION**

DESIGNING YOUR FUTURE. RESTORING YOUR PAST.



The **Ramsey Lions Club** members are men and women from the local community who volunteer their time and talents to perform a variety of community service activities. All the funds raised are donated back, primarily within our community. The Ramsey Lions are proud to support Stepping Stone for the wonderful services they provide for our local community. From providing temporary shelter to assisting in determining and solving long term housing solutions for those in need, Stepping Stone is a great resource for people that may be having difficult times.

## YOU HELPED MS. PAIGE\* FIND HOPE AND KINDNESS AT STEPPING STONE

Julie received a card this Easter from a resident with the following note:



To: All the staff

I want to thank you for all your **KINDNESS** and support.  
I feel so blessed to be here. Happiness is inside.  
God is **GOOD**. Peace Hope and Joy

Sincerely Ms. Paige

\*Name changed to respect resident's privacy.

## (COVER STORY, CONTINUED)

I trusted Julie enough to share parts of my story, which took me by surprise! And that is when the deep down healing began. Terrified but more tired of being afraid of my own shadow. Triggered at every turn, but knew I was in a safe space. I plowed ahead and here I am, over the hump and discovering for myself who I am, and who or what new identities I want to create for myself. I may not know the "who", but I do know that I am many great and wonderful "whats".

My time at Stepping Stone has been all kinds of incredible and amazing. I have been shown more generosity, love and support, kindness and compassion than I had ever seen in my entire life. Because of this six plus-year journey and experience, I have a whole new set of insights. A whole new perspective. A whole new way of beginning to create. Should be fun!

**"Not everything may be rosy on the other side,  
but it is a new garden. . . ", MzMagik**



# YOUR DONATION HELPS WITH ALL TYPES OF SHELTER SUCCESSES

*Our Shelter Manager, Stephanie Plaster, gives us a glimpse into some of the "less recognized" successes at Stepping Stone.*

I know that everyone loves success stories with a happy ending of someone moving into housing. Those are super important, but I also want to highlight the "less recognized" successes as well. I call them "shelter successes," because unless you do this work, they may not sound like a big deal.

For example, I think of a youth that we sheltered who ended up having a mental breakdown and becoming hospitalized where he received support and medication to manage his mental health. While he was struggling with paranoia and auditory hallucinations, we kept him safe and out of the cold.

Another person who we are working with on anger management because he has a history of explosive behavior which leads him to exiting the shelter. His roommate literally punched him in the face and he walked away instead of punching him back-which is huge! I don't even know if I would be able to do that if I were in that circumstance. His roommate has been exited for physical violence, but he was not. He was able to maintain his shelter, because he could rationally think through what would happen if he made the decision to fight back. I think all of these small successes will also lead to bigger ones down the road.



## Keystone Sponsors

*Because of YOU, we can do more!*



**Mark. M. Welter Foundation**  
A FAMILY FOUNDATION

*We make a living by what we get,  
but we make a life by what we give.*  
Winston Churchill

