



October 2026 enCourage Newsletter

Every November, the same statistics start circulating online: domestic violence spikes over the holidays, rates jump on Thanksgiving, December is the most dangerous month of the year. Most of these numbers trace back to nowhere. The real research is far more mixed, and here at enCourage, we see something different.

Over the holidays, our crisis line gets quieter. Fewer people come into shelter.

Then January comes. Calls climb and shelter stays rise with them, and that pace keeps up through February. When our advocates sit down with the people who reach out, we hear the same story again and again: *I didn't want my kids to be homeless at Christmas. I didn't want to be the reason Thanksgiving was ruined. I just needed to get through the holidays.*

The quiet in December isn't safety. It's people holding on.

I want to be clear about what that choice is. A parent who stays through the holidays isn't in denial, and they aren't weak. They're making a painful calculation with terrible options: endure the abuse a little longer, or take their children out of their home in the one season everyone is supposed to spend together. Most of us, in that position, would be tempted to make the same call.

To survivors reading this: you don't have to choose between your safety and your children's holidays. Our shelter is in local hotels, not a group facility. We can help with pets. Our advocates plan around your kids, your schedule, and what matters to you. You can call us now just to talk through options, even if you aren't ready to leave, even if you never leave. Our crisis line is answered 24 hours a day, including Thanksgiving and Christmas: [\(402\) 463-5810](tel:4024635810).

To everyone else: this season, you'll probably be in a room with someone who is living this. Maybe a sister who checks her husband's face before she answers a question. Maybe a friend who leaves early every time, right on schedule. You don't need to confront anyone or fix anything. Find a quiet moment and let them know you've noticed, you're on their side, and you'll be there whenever they're ready. That door you open in November may be the one they walk through in January.

And if you're able, help us get ready for the flood. Every January we need more hotel nights, more groceries, and more advocate hours, all at once. A gift this December, including to our Winter Campaign, goes straight to the families who held on through the holidays and are finally ready to reach out.

With hope grounded in evidence,

Jo Bair, MSW

Executive Director



Supporting Survivors

If someone chooses to share an experience of violence or abuse, your response matters.

You don't need perfect words. Start by listening. Believe them. Avoid blaming questions. Ask

what support they need. Help connect them with resources if they would like assistance.

Green Dots include creating spaces where survivors feel heard, respected, and empowered to make their own decisions.

Support isn't about taking control. It's about reminding someone they don't have to face difficult experiences alone.

For questions or to schedule a Green Dot Training at your business or organization, email greendot@encouragecenter.org



Awareness of What?

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month. And every year I find myself asking: awareness of what, exactly?

Many of the people experiencing domestic violence are acutely aware of the problem. They live in it. And many of the people perpetrating it would like to pretend it's not a problem, or at least not *their* problem — and you have to know something is there in order to pretend it isn't. So neither group really needs awareness of the problem. They need awareness of the solution.

That's where Rebuild comes in. Rebuild is enCourage's domestic violence intervention program, approved through the Nebraska Coalition to End Sexual and Domestic Violence. It's a place where a man who has been abusive to his partner can stop pretending and start changing. A lot of people around here don't know it exists. Now you do.

If you want to know more about Rebuild, for yourself or for somebody you know, call enCourage at [\(402\) 463-5810](tel:4024635810).



- Wanting to volunteer at enCourage? If interested in volunteering, please call 402-463-5810 and ask for Shawna.
- We also always accept donations of clothing, household items, gently used toys, kitchen items, toiletries, size 4 and up diapers and pull-ups, and unlocked, working cellphones.
- We are currently looking for individuals who would be available to foster pets for survivors fleeing violence. If interested, please call 402-463-5810 and ask for Shawna.



Each Tuesday from 4-5 pm (new time) enCourage hosts a peer support group. This group gives attendees time to connect with other survivors and discuss and practice new skills that help attendees recover and thrive after violence. We discuss what healthy relationships look and feel like. Learn healthy ways to manage obstacles and overcome the insecurities that develop from trauma and end the cycle of violence. Email shawna@encouragecenter.org for questions.



- Every Tuesday from 4:30 - 6 pm, we offer a Support Group at enCourage Advocacy Center and a Healthy Healing Educational Group from 5 - 6 pm.
- Each month on the 3rd Wednesday of the month from 1 - 3 pm, the Nebraska Aids Project will be at enCourage Advocacy Center providing Free and Confidential HIV and STI Testing. Contact Heather for an appointment by emailing HeatherB@nap.org. Walk-ins are also welcome.
- If you are looking for a volunteer opportunity that is flexible and allows you to use your time and talents to support local survivors of violence, then look no further than the enCourage Auxiliary Group. As an Auxiliary member, you'll be an active force for good in our community. Your involvement will include:

- Organizing and supporting fundraising events that generate critical operating revenue
- Leading or participating in community drives (hygiene kits, clothing, household goods, gift cards) that directly benefit survivors
- Engaging your personal and professional networks to grow our donor and volunteer base
- Collaborating with enCourage staff on strategic initiatives and special projects
- Attending regular Auxiliary meetings to share ideas, celebrate wins, and plan what's next

You don't need to be an expert in domestic violence or trauma. You just need a willing heart, a generous spirit, and a desire to do something that truly matters. Contact Shawna at 402-463-5810 or shawna@encouragecenter.org to find out more about how to join the enCourage Auxiliary.

Join enCourage Auxiliary

Giving Time, Sharing Talents, Building Hope



- Big G Ace Hardware in Hastings will be offering round up your purchase the entire month of October in honor of Domestic Violence Awareness and Prevention Month.
- 10/5-10/11, Allen's & Russ's in Hastings will be offering a round-up of your purchase in honor of Domestic Violence Awareness and Prevention Month. They will also be offering awareness ribbon dedications for a suggested donation of \$5 per ribbon.
- 10/10, there will be a Candle Making Fundraiser at enCourage Advocacy Center. Find details on the enCourage Facebook page.
- 10/15, is Purple Thursday. Wear Purple to honor victims and support survivors of domestic violence. Purple symbolizes Survival, Courage, and Peace. Post pictures of yourself wearing purple on this day.
- 10/16, What the Dickens? in Downtown Hastings will be hosting a Cookie Decorating Fundraiser with a portion of the event proceeds going to enCourage in honor of DVAPM. More details coming soon!
- 10/17, Hastings Public Library will be holding a teen/young adult book club on the young adult romance novel Eleanor & Park. More details can be found on the Hastings Public Library Facebook page.
- 10/19, Coach's Corner will be hosting a Make a Difference Monday Gas Fundraiser for enCourage. \$0.05 per gallon of gas pumped all day long comes back to enCourage.
- 10/20, Texas Roadhouse is hosting a fundraising night for enCourage in honor of DVAPM from 3 - 10 pm on this day. Must mention that you are dining or picking up food for the fundraiser for purchase to qualify.
- 10/25, The Hearts Desire will be holding a Paint and Sip Fundraising Event at Steeple Brewing Co. More details about how to register for this event can be found on our Facebook page. \$10 per registration will be donated to enCourage.
- 10/30, Both Scooter's Coffee locations in Hastings will be holding a Sip & Support Day for enCourage in honor of Domestic Violence Awareness and Prevention Month.

- 11/1, enCourage has partnered with the Hastings College Women's Wrestling Team for their opening dual of the wrestling season. We will have limited quantities of an awareness t-shirt available for purchase at the dual.