



360 Communities®

Help in the moment. Hope for the future.

2023

## A year of growth & impact

*A message from Jeff Mortensen, President & CEO*

In 2023, 360 Communities experienced remarkable growth. Our commitment to fiscal responsibility shone through as we navigated an 18% increase in individuals seeking services. This translates to **a striking 47% rise in households served**. More than 98% of those served had household incomes below 200% of the federal poverty level.

Our programs thrived thanks to our extensive support network of dedicated volunteers, strategic community partnerships, and the generous contributions of the community. This includes support from government grants, individuals, businesses, faith communities, schools, foundations, and clubs. This diverse mix, which expanded by 5%, fortified the organization to advance our mission: 360 Communities delivers safety and stability that improves lives.

Our impact echoes stories of positive change — homelessness averted, lives saved, families stabilized, violence reduced, graduation rates increased, early childhood development improved, and hunger addressed. Explore these triumphs in this newsletter and on our website at **360Communities.org**.

I am continually humbled and inspired by 360 Communities' profound effect on those who welcome us into their lives. We create ripples that resonate throughout our broader community: dignity restored, hope rekindled, cultural bridges built, and a multi-generational legacy of impact. These are the deeper dimensions of our work.



LAST YEAR,

360 Communities®  
delivered safety  
and stability



for **18,759**

**individuals** ACROSS ALL PROGRAMS



**THIS IS AN 18% increase**



Being part of this incredible team is a significant honor. The people we serve inform our work and inspire our resolve for a brighter future for them and our community. With over five decades of experience, we will expand our resource base, enhance our efficiencies, and increase our impact.

As the need continues to escalate, the dual commitment of 360 Communities to provide both immediate support and long-term stability is more crucial now than ever.

Please join us in making a lasting difference.



## Getting help and giving hope

A **360** STORY

### Melinda M — Community Advocate

◀ Melinda supports victims of domestic violence in honor of her son Marcelino, who died at age 23 in 2021.

Melinda M is the first person in her family to graduate from college, earning her criminal justice degree with honors. She has worked as a correctional officer at Minnesota's only women's prison. Melinda is also a domestic violence survivor. These experiences have armed her with considerable interpersonal skills that support her role as a 360 Communities advocate.

For Melinda, surviving domestic violence came with a price: her young adult son, Marcelino. He witnessed his mother's abuse as a young child and the instability that came along with it. Unfortunately, in 2021, he died of a drug overdose, something Melinda attributes to him self-medicating the symptoms of trauma and not being able to access needed resources, all a part of the cycle of domestic violence. Two years later, this tragedy remains a devastating daily reminder of the ripple effect domestic violence has on families and communities. Melinda says she needed to find a positive channel for her pain.

"I can either continue to lay in the corner and cry about it — I miss my son. That's never going to change," she says. "Or I could get up and honor his memory by helping women in similar situations."

**"I take every case very, very personally. It is my passion, my new life's work."**

Melinda first connected with 360 Communities when she visited the Rosemount Resource Center for help paying a utility bill her abuser left her. She received the support she needed and much more — a connection to an organization that would support her vocational calling. 360 Communities hired her more than a year ago as a community advocate, working out of the Lakeville and Farmington police departments, providing critical support to victims of domestic and sexual violence.

Melinda finds her work incredibly gratifying because, as a survivor herself, she can serve victims with empathy.

"I don't see a survivor as 'less than' or a statistic, and I don't pity them," she says. "I try to empower them and remind them that they are not the person their abuser tells them they are. They are more than that and they can overcome this."

She tells them, 'You might feel overwhelmed right now, but you can do it.'" She always thanks them for allowing her to be a part of their journey.

Melinda's transition from a survivor to a dedicated advocate is a profound 360 Communities story. She knows the complex journey of survival and recovery and understands that some wounds will never fully heal. She is committed to making a meaningful impact in the lives of other survivors, which is a testament to her character and a tribute to her son. "Marcelino Forever 23," she says.



### IN 2023,

**3,943** survivors benefited from our sexual and domestic violence prevention and intervention programming.

Advocates served **3,064** individuals on an outreach basis, answering calls to the crisis line, following up on police reports, and much more.

THIS IS A **73%** **increase** FROM 2022

**352** were children.

- We supported **447** victims of sexual assault, including **41** children.
- We provided domestic and sexual violence awareness education for **4,303** community members.

## Stabilizing families

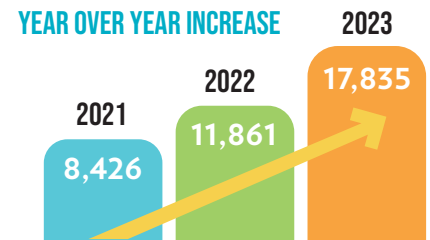
Staff like Melinda M work tirelessly to connect people with holistic support to ensure long-term safety and stability.

IN 2023,

We distributed a total of  
**1.74 MILLION**  
pounds of food to 10,170 people  
through our network of  
**5 Dakota County food shelves**  
and **2 resource centers.**



### Food Shelf Appointments



Across our network of 5 food shelves



Among those served were **2,819 children.**

*Thank you to all of the people who donate to this place that helps us all out a lot. Thanks to the people who work here and the kind hearts that they have to volunteer to make sure that we get everything we need for our home and our children. I would recommend 360 Communities a thousand percent to anyone that needs help.*



## Improving early childhood development

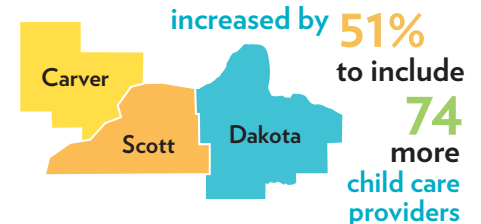
We boost opportunities for children from birth through high school graduation.



In 2023, our Child Care Aware program **expanded** to cover Scott and Carver counties.

Our coaches equipped **219** child care providers with the skills that improved early childhood development for **6,807** children.

### Our service area



## Increasing high school graduation rates

Our Partners For Success®  
Family Support Workers  
supported families



in **29** schools across  
**6** school districts  
in Dakota County

We helped **1,283**

students stay on track toward  
high school graduation,  
including **41**  
high school seniors  
who graduated  
in 2023.



**84%** of students with academic goals improved or stabilized their performance.

**87%** of students with attendance goals achieved their goals toward improved attendance.

**84%** of families with housing stability goals attained their goals toward stabilizing their housing.



## Preventing Homelessness

A safe and stable home is foundational to success in life. Last year, we expanded our impact in the homelessness prevention space, recognizing the depth of need in our communities requires the deeper, holistic response we can provide.

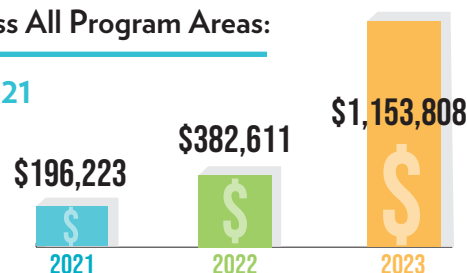
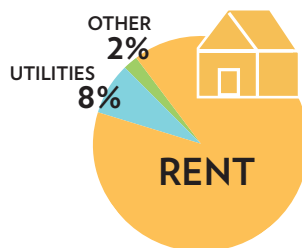
**IN 2023**, we prevented homelessness for **2,545** individuals from **1,131** households by connecting people with local, state and county resources to **avoid eviction & maintain housing stability.**



**LAST YEAR**, 360 Communities distributed the **most financial aid** in its history.

Financial Aid Across All Program Areas:

**+488% since 2021**



◀ About **90%** of funds in 2023 went to cover rent.



## Holistic support that stabilizes housing

Our **Lewis House** advocates intervene and provide safe shelter to individuals fleeing domestic and sexual violence.

In 2023, **303** individuals stayed at Lewis House. About half were children.

Our **Community Resources** team members provide emergency financial aid and food support that help people maintain stability.

Our **Housing Support Intervention Services** team is available at eviction court to connect individuals and families with financial aid, resources, and guidance to promote the most desirable outcome for tenants and landlords.

Our **Partners For Success**® family support workers are critical resources in schools for families facing hardships that impact the success of students. They connect them with stabilizing resources and support to ensure housing stability.

Read Charlene's story to see how we support housing stability after survivors leave shelter. ▶



## 360 Communities Lewis House: A safe pathway for a survivor and her family

For Charlene, the abuse was physical, mental, and emotional. Her ex-husband inflicted beatings that escalated over time and resulted in severe injuries, including a miscarriage. She knew she needed to escape, but that would not be easy. Legal constraints, financial insecurity, and societal pressure made it challenging to break free from her abusive relationship.

Her five children were the driving force behind her decision to leave. She refused to let her children grow up witnessing the horrors of an unhealthy relationship. “I don’t want my kids to think this is what you’re supposed to go through,” says Charlene. “And even times that I thought they weren’t noticing it, they were.”

Getting far away from South Carolina and starting over seemed the best option to stay safe. Her mother lived in Minnesota and could provide her with some support, but her home was not big enough to house Charlene’s family.



With her children’s support, Charlene made the decision. They packed their Toyota Highlander with only a few possessions and embarked on the 20-hour journey.

Arriving in Minnesota, Charlene reached out for help from 360 Communities

Lewis House domestic and sexual violence shelter. Initially, the shelter was full, but advocates offered her family temporary refuge in a hotel. Her younger children thought they were on vacation, but Charlene struggled mentally, often crying after her kids went to sleep. A few days later, space opened up at Lewis House, and they moved into the shelter.

The transition to life at the Lewis House was difficult for Charlene. She had reservations about exposing her children to a shelter environment. Charlene faced continued threats from her abuser, leaving her feeling trapped and unsafe.



However, the supportive staff at the Lewis House ensured their safety, well-being, and access to essential resources, including counseling and educational support. Advocates connected her with Minnesota’s Safe at Home program for protection, which would shield their location from her abuser once they left the shelter.

With their safety needs supported, Charlene began planning for post-shelter life. She had a strong work history, so she began interviewing for jobs. It took her only a short time to land a customer service role with Delta Airlines. As she and her kids transitioned out of the shelter, 360 Communities moved alongside her and connected her with stabilizing resources like rent support, food, gas cards, school clothes, and gift cards.

“I was crying when they did all that,” Charlene recalls. “I just didn’t believe I was going to get that help. The staff there, they are amazing.” She says the advocates met her where she was and did not lecture her about what she needed to do.

**“They see things from your point of view on how you want to move forward, and how they can help you on the path that you want to take. At the same time, they are protecting you and your family.”**

Charlene’s story is one of strength, resilience, and the power of a mother’s love. Her determination to create a safe and nurturing environment for her children speaks volumes about her character. Her journey serves as a reminder that it’s never too late to escape an abusive relationship and that there is hope on the other side.



## Creative ways to support the mission

Community members, young and old, supported 360 Communities with financial gifts, volunteer hours, and creativity this past year. Their contributions lie at the heart of our mission and bolster our impact in the community. Volunteers bring passion and expertise, amplifying our reach and effectiveness. Meanwhile, donations fuel our programs, providing vital resources that ensure our neighbors are safe, stable, and housed.

Earlier this year, Rosemount High School students gave us an indication of the incredible generosity the next generation has to offer.

In a heartwarming display of community spirit, eight students banded together to paint a beautiful mural at the 360 Communities Rosemount Resource Center and Food Shelf. The painting adorns the wall above the children's play area, outside the food shelf. This Rosemount High School legacy is a testament to the students' creativity and dedication to their community.

"It is inspiring and uplifting to staff, visitors, and volunteers alike," says 360 Communities Food Shelf Coordinator Tom

Halloran. He says the students spent several days meticulously bringing the mural to life, turning the blank wall into a vibrant display of inclusivity and healthy food.



In addition to brightening our resource center, these students organized a successful fundraiser with the school's "Power Tuff" charity football game, raising \$1,900 and several hundred pounds of non-perishable food for the food shelf!

"Their mural promotes the welcoming environment we wish for everyone visiting us," says Halloran. "Their fundraising efforts will help us continue our mission of assisting those in need."

Thank you to this group of student leaders who found two creative ways to give back and support our mission. When volunteers and donors find ways to plug in and help, we advance our mission of delivering safety and stability that improves lives. And that strengthens our community.



HOW WILL YOU  
PLUG IN?

In 2023, **777**  
volunteers  
provided

**42,617 hours**

to support our mission

Thank you  
to our  
volunteers!



The amount of time volunteers contributed last year is equivalent to more than **20 full-time employees!** They showed up and delivered our mission in a variety of roles across the agency.



**Advocacy**

Support for victims/  
survivors of domestic  
violence and sexual assault



**Armful of Love**

Gift cards for families to  
purchase holiday meals and  
gifts for their children



# Laniado embraces role of new Board Chair

Hannah Laniado says taking on the role of Board Chair on the 360 Communities Board of Directors was an easy decision. “360 Communities is one of the most impactful and inspiring organizations I have ever had the privilege to be connected with,” she says. “I’m deeply committed to its mission and goals.”

Laniado brings more than ten years of experience in Minnesota nonprofits, including success with board development, fundraising, executive leadership, grant writing, and management. She holds two bachelor’s degrees from the University of Minnesota, Duluth, and completed her graduate studies at Minnesota State University, Mankato. She has worked with many organizations throughout the United States as a technical assistance provider and consultant.

Laniado first connected with 360 Communities in 2015 when she worked for the Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MNCASA). Throughout her time at MNCASA, she had the opportunity to work with many anti-violence agencies in Minnesota and across the nation through MNCASA’s national program, the Sexual Violence Justice Institute.

Laniado lives in Dakota County, so 360 Communities is her local anti-violence agency. 360 Communities President & CEO Jeff Mortensen was on the MNCASA Board of Directors when she was interim executive director at MNCASA. “Through this, I learned even more about 360 Communities and hoped that one day I could put my time and talents towards such a wonderful mission. I am very honored and excited to be doing so today.”

*“My hope for anyone accessing 360 Communities is that they feel safe, seen, and valued while receiving services.”*



**Hannah Laniado**  
Board Chair & Volunteer



Laniado says she initially aligned with our mission professionally through her anti-violence work. However, her career in the field taught her that violence prevention efforts alone were insufficient to ensure people and communities could thrive.

**“Communities deeply benefit from 360 Communities’ holistic services, which, in addition to violence prevention and intervention, includes school success support and emergency resources such as food and financial assistance.”**

Laniado views her experience as an excellent fit to help the organization meet its mission of delivering safety and stability that improves lives. She hopes 360 Communities continues to evolve to meet the growing needs of Dakota County residents. “It is vital that they are supported with tangible solutions for their current situations and hope for their future.”



**Pop-Up Produce**

Fresh produce free to the community during the summer



**Rescue Food Drivers**

Pick-up and delivery of food from local grocery stores for our food shelves



**Fundraising Events**

Various events throughout the year to support our work in the community



**Internships**

Professional experience in a nonprofit setting, serving people in need



**Board of Directors**

Community leaders who promote and guide the organization with expertise and connections



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## Closing the doors of our Hastings Lewis House shelter

For over two decades, 360 Communities has operated two shelters for victims of domestic and sexual violence in Dakota County. In November, we were forced to close our Lewis House shelter in Hastings. We were unable to operate two shelters due to the stagnant nature of crime victim services funding in Minnesota. This decision was difficult for us and our community.

Hastings shelter residents were relocated to our Eagan Lewis House and other sites in Dakota County. We have consolidated our services and staff to continue serving victims at our Eagan Lewis House. To read more about this change and what it means for our violence prevention services, visit [360Communities.org](https://360Communities.org) or scan the QR code.



## Hope for the future

Our focus is on the future and our vision is a new shelter in Eagan on the site of our current shelter. The new Lewis House would more than double the current capacity, reclaiming the beds lost with the closure of the Hastings site. The trauma-informed design includes independent living spaces, adheres to best practices, and promotes healing.

Stay tuned for more details in the coming months!

Rendering of the proposed new Lewis House in Eagan (2026)



DONATE



360 Communities® delivers  
**safety and stability**  
that improves lives.



## Louise Evans delivered 25 years of life-saving advocacy during her 360 Communities career

The closing of our Hastings Lewis House coincided with the sunset of an impactful career. For more than two decades, Advocate Louise Evans has been the guiding light for those navigating the darkest of times, offering unwavering support, a compassionate ear, and a profound sense of hope.

Louise helped open the Hastings Lewis House more than 20 years ago. Fittingly, Louise was there to help close its doors in November. She supported countless survivors in between, helping them imagine and realize a healthy new life. Her tireless efforts in raising awareness, advocating for change, and providing a safe haven for survivors have transformed lives and left an indelible mark on our community.

We wish her the very best in retirement.



We honored Louise, pictured left, at our Fire & Ice Gala in November.

**"We do make a community statement: saving lives and helping families!"**

**I will forever be grateful and blessed to have worked and loved what I did in my life for 25 years!**

**Make someone smile."**

**~ Louise Evans**

