



Good things
are happening at
Helping Services!

HELPING SERVICES

for Youth & Families

SPRING/SUMMER 2025

April is Child Abuse Prevention Month

During the month of April we highlight the importance of families and communities working together to prevent child abuse and neglect. We also show our thanks to the many prevention services in our area that work everyday to strengthen families and protect our children. Here at Helping Services for Youth & Families, we are committed to making a change. By providing the resources necessary to parents, care providers, and youth, we are actively working to raise awareness around the signs of child abuse, and what we can all do to do our part in preventing it.

According to the National Children's Alliance, in the United States an estimated 1 in 4 girls, and 1 in 14 boys are victims of child abuse, and more than 550,000 children are known to US authorities to be abused. Child abuse can cause children to lose their sense of safety and trust in their surroundings, no matter the environment. Children who are victims of child abuse that do not get the help they need can face long term physical, mental, and behavioral problems.

Recognizing the signs of child abuse and maltreatment is a vital part of prevention efforts. While some children may not outwardly show signs, being able to identify when something may be wrong can make a significant difference in a child's life. Helping Services is here to help individuals become more informed about the indicators of abuse and how to take appropriate action. By increasing awareness and education, we can empower communities to protect children and ensure they receive the care and support they need.



WEAR BLUE DAY

Pinwheels for
PREVENTION®

Prevent Child Abuse
Iowa

Empowering Families with Expert Support to Prevent Child Abuse

At Helping Services for Youth & Families, our Family Education Department's main mission is to prevent child abuse. The internet is riddled with false or misleading information about signs of child abuse, how to address it, and what to do. Our Family Education team educates and supports families through a curriculum that is created by evidence based information that is vetted by experts. Our credentialed team members have an ongoing education that consists of **800 hours** of training within the first year of being at Helping Services. We work with anybody and everybody. The families we work with range from new parents who need extra support to very experienced parents. We greatly believe that connecting families to their immediate community and getting them involved, through play groups and other activities, has great benefits. ■



Wear Blue Day for Child Abuse Prevention was on Friday, April 4th to show support for Child Abuse Prevention Month and to raise awareness about building safe, supportive communities for kids and families.

- **Want to see how we spread the message?**
- Check out photos and stories on our facebook page and blog to see staff, volunteers, and community members standing together for prevention and hope.

Mentoring News

The Creation of Healthy, Long-Lasting Relationships Through Mentoring

Through the mentoring program here at Helping Services for Youth & Families, we have been matching caring adults with hundreds of kids for over 20 years. Mentoring gives kids, and their parents, an opportunity to have an extra support system in their everyday lives. Establishing healthy relationships, like the ones formed in mentoring programs, can lead to things like less stress, better healing, healthier decisions, sense of purpose, and more. Let's hear from some of the past participants in our mentoring program to see what their experiences were like.

Denise and Amie

Amie: "I connected with my then mentor Denise a little over 11 years ago. When we were together for the mentoring program, we loved to do activities that we enjoyed mutually, which were things such as baking, painting our nails, watching movies, or having lunch together. We loved to do these activities while chit chatting about school and life in general. The impact that this bond that I have with Denise has been immense. I now have a lifelong friend who loves and supports my ever growing family. Denise is also one of the most positive people in my life, so I really look up to her for advice and support. For me, mentoring was an amazing experience! I always looked forward to the time I would get to spend with Denise. While involved in mentoring, Denise and I got to experience many things. The things we did, that include but are not limited to, are working within the community at events such as Holiday Lights, walking in several parades, and helping others within the community.

Amie (left) and Denise (right)



Another thing we enjoyed doing was bonding with others by attending the planned events through Helping Services, such as going to several museums and dinners. Mentoring is such an important part of shaping our community! There are children who love, and are simply in need, of others to provide a safe place for them to play and communicate with others outside of the home! ■

Cindy and Tamie

Tamie: "Cindy and I met when I was 9. As a kid I was very shy, so meeting new people was hard, but Cindy and I connected super fast. We did so many different things over our time together that we both really enjoyed, like planting a garden, doing all sorts of different crafts, and playing with her pets for hours and hours. Cindy has been a huge support for me over the years, and even after aging out of the program, we still keep in contact regularly. She helped me set my goals and made sure I had everything I needed to make that happen, always. I think this program is so fun and really helped me step out of my comfort zone! *Continued on Page 4*



Hello, my name is Will Kuelbs, and I am originally from Minneapolis, MN. I am currently a senior at Luther College, pursuing a Bachelor's degree in Social Work. This spring, I have had the privilege of interning with the **Youth Mentoring Team** at Helping Services.

Through this internship, I aimed to deepen my understanding of nonprofit programming and funding. Helping Services has provided an incredibly supportive and dynamic learning environment, where I have had the opportunity to grow both professionally and personally. The team's dedication and hard work have been truly inspiring, and I am grateful for the knowledge and experience I have gained here.

During my time at Helping Services, I have particularly enjoyed training mentors and mentees, developing the Spring/Summer newsletter, delivering presentations to high school students on *Your Life Iowa*, and engaging in various other projects. It has been an honor to contribute to this meaningful work and to serve these communities alongside such passionate individuals.

Message from the Director



Thank you for spending some time reading about recent successes, updates, and other good news from our team at Helping Services. This is a time of uncertainty for many non-profit organizations, and ours is no different. Like many other organizations, the loss of some grants has impacted our programs. For example, following the discontinuation of two federal grants, our Domestic Abuse Resource Center team has adapted to a smaller team while continuing to serve victims of domestic violence residing in seven counties.

I am proud to say we are a flexible group and will adapt to any changes that come our way. But, we could use your help. We ask a lot of our supporters, but if you are able, there are a few additional ways that you can help sustain programs at Helping Services now and into the future.

- Consider alternative ways to give through vehicles such as 401k rollover, donations of stock, or other insurance policy distributions.
- Name Helping Services as a beneficiary for a planned gift such as a will.
- Sponsor a display at Holiday Lights.
- Give a monthly, recurring gift to Helping Services.
- Support a specific project, such as a gift to support housing assistance for victims of domestic violence.

Core programs remain in place at Helping Services, but the reality is questions remain in terms of funding amounts available at both the state and federal level. Now, more than ever, we ask you consider a gift to Helping Services. We pledge our part to continue to leverage your gifts to the best of our abilities. If you would like to talk more about giving to Helping Services, please call me at 563-387-1720 or reach out at ceggland@helpingservices.org.

Thank you for your consideration, care, and support.

Carlin Eggel

Executive Director

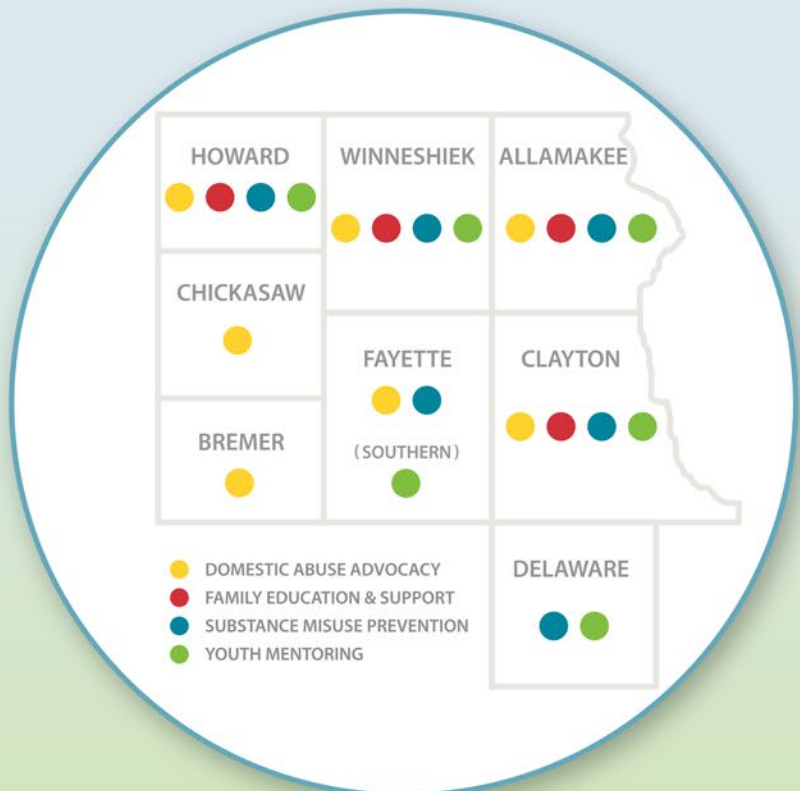
Helping Services Board of Directors

Stefanie Perkins, *President*
Andy Eastwood, *Past President*
Kim Hennessy, *Secretary*
Bill Holland
Dan Marx
Stephanie Newsom
Rena Wedeking

Board Members at Helping Services can serve up to three consecutive two year terms.



Learn more at helpingservices.org



Thanks Mentors!

Continued from page 2

I got to do so many fun things and meet so many people from all over the area through this program, and absolutely love that I got to be part of such an amazing program!"

Cindy: "Tamie and I were matched when she was 7 years old. She aged out of the program at 17. I truly believe that I accomplished my goal of wanting to make a difference in a young person's life by just being there for Tamie for the 10 years we were together. We were able to do a lot during that time period which created many memories and new experiences that neither one of us would have experienced by ourselves. We also had many great conversations. It always amazed me that Tamie enjoyed doing things with me that were as simple as being in the Nordic Fest parade dressed up in a bear costume and interacting with people lined up on the streets or coming to my house and doing craft projects. I watched her confidence level grow and develop.

I was thrilled when she did a semester of cheerleading in middle school and tried out for the track team in high school and participated in meets. During the time we were matched I got to know her family and I felt that they made me part of their family. It was a little sad to officially close the match but we agreed to continue to stay in touch. Facebook and periodically getting together keep us close. I know that Tamie has a good head on her shoulders and sense direction for the right choices she makes in her life. I am so proud of her and her accomplishments. I am so glad that in addition to making a difference in her life, Tamie made a difference in mine." ■

Tamie (left), Cindy (Right)



Amerra (current Mentee to Cindy), Cindy (current mentor to Amerra), Tamie (past mentee to Cindy)

Amanda, Marie, and Kailyn

Marie: "My family had a life changing circumstance, and I became concerned for Kailyn to have a good support system as she grew. I know from my childhood that it can be difficult to talk to your own parents, so safe adults that would be stable in her life became a critical part of her therapy and development. She had a few matches that did not last too long, and then came Amanda. She has been an amazing support for Kailyn through mentoring and becoming one of my best friends. She has been a confidant for Kailyn, as well as alerting me things that may be concerning. Amanda even stuck it out through her own family drama, where I hope that I was a support for her as well. Kailyn aged out of the program and Amanda is still in our lives. Now Kailyn has been to a mentoring event as a 'Mentor for a Day,' hoping that she can help someone else that is struggling."



Kailyn (left) Amanda (right)

Amanda: I joined mentoring because I had a mentor many years ago, and I knew what a difference it made in my life. I was nervous at first being paired with a teenager, but it turned out to be a great experience & positive for both our lives. Kailyn has taught me many things such as patience, understanding, and tolerance that I thought I had already known. Throughout the many years together, our families are now best friends and help each other through life events. I am beyond grateful for the friendships and experiences I have made in the mentoring program, even facing my fears of ziplining. ■

Savannah and Tylei

"Tylei and I met in mentoring when she first moved here. Mentoring gave us the opportunity to meet each other and have our families get closer as well. We've been friends ever since we first met. We've gotten to make so many memories because of mentoring and even after we aged out. I would not have had the chance to get as close to her as we are if it wasn't for mentoring." ■

Savannah (left) and Tylei (right): *Now and Then*



Mentoring enjoyed an awe inspiring group event to Niagara Cave in Harmony, MN.

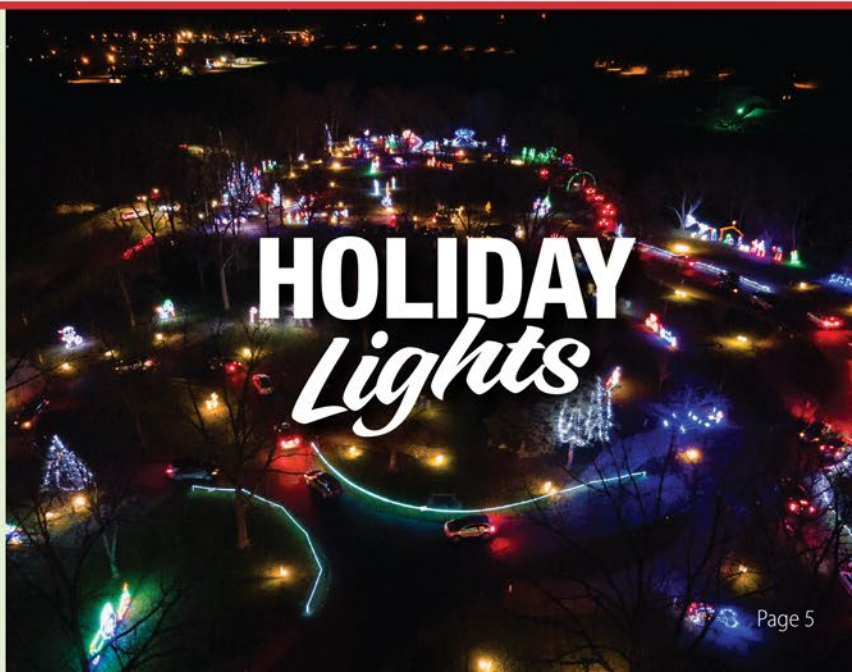
These firsthand accounts from past mentors and mentees highlight the profound and lasting impact of the mentoring program at Helping Services. Their experiences demonstrate how meaningful connections can be formed, fostering growth, confidence, and support that extend far beyond the program itself. Through guidance, encouragement, and shared experiences, these relationships not only shape the lives of the mentees but also leave a lasting impression on the mentors. The stories shared here serve as a testament to the power of mentorship in building strong, lifelong bonds that continue to make a difference long after the youth age out. ■

► Join us for Holiday Lights, a beloved community tradition!

From Thanksgiving through Christmas, drive through a dazzling display of lighted scenes sponsored by local businesses, organizations, and volunteers! Free-will donations that support Helping Services' programs are accepted at the gate. **Save the Date** for 2025 to make lasting memories with loved ones and help brighten the season for families and children assisted by programs at Helping Services.

Walk-Through Night: Wednesday November 26th, 2025

- Drive-Thru open **November 27th, 2025**
- Last night with Santa: **December 21st, 2025**
- Last night of holiday lights: **December 25th, 2025**



Prevention Spotlight

THC infused drinks have been around since 2018, but in the last year have taken the beverage industry by storm. Across the US, these companies are battling local governments over regulations that have prevented them from serving these drinks with higher amounts of THC. With all this commotion surrounding these “weed drinks”, what does the law say now? And what is important to know about the consumption of these beverages?

On July 1st, 2024, a new law was passed that prevented selling “hemp-infused” products to anyone under 21 years of age, and installed regulations that restrict the “strength” of the drinks. The regulations state you can only have 4 milligrams of THC (tetrahydrocannabinol) per serving, or 10 milligrams per container. With frustration from businesses about the “vagueness” of the term “serving”, IHHS quickly defined 12 oz. as a federal serving size for carbonated and non carbonated drinks.

Are THC drinks safe? And how do we know the best way to consume them? With quick, powerful marketing by THC drink companies, people are starting to consume these beverages at a rate health research cannot keep up with. This creates a very dangerous concept, especially for people who may be recovering from an addiction to a different substance. While different doses take effect at different times, you generally feel the effects of THC drinks 15-30 minutes after consumption. This rapid “relief” can be easily taken advantage of, and consumption of these drinks at a high rate have unknown short-term and long-term effects. It is important to do your own research surrounding THC drinks before consuming.

Here at Helping Services for Youth & Families, our prevention team stays updated on the latest trends and offer a wide variety of services, programs, and trainings with the goal of preventing substance misuse. Our team makes sure we are helping parents and the youth recognize early signs of substance use, learn about current trends and the danger they pose, have open and productive conversations with children and friends about drugs and alcohol, and access support services if intervention is needed.

Your Life Iowa focuses on preventing substance misuse, problem gambling, and suicide through education, community collaboration, and training. They partner with local agencies to deliver prevention services, provide accessible educational materials and resources, and offer webinars to build awareness and skills. The service is free to anyone and includes 24/7 access to trained professionals through chat, call, or text support. ■





TRAININGS

Mixing Risks: Alcohol, THC, and Energy Drinks Unpacked

*THC= the primary psychoactive component in marijuana

01 >>>

Tuesday, April 22
12:00-1:00 p.m.

<https://bit.ly/noonwatchMRatedu>

02 >>>

Thursday, April 24
5:30-6:30 p.m.

<https://bit.ly/eveningwatchMRatedu>

REGISTER NOW >



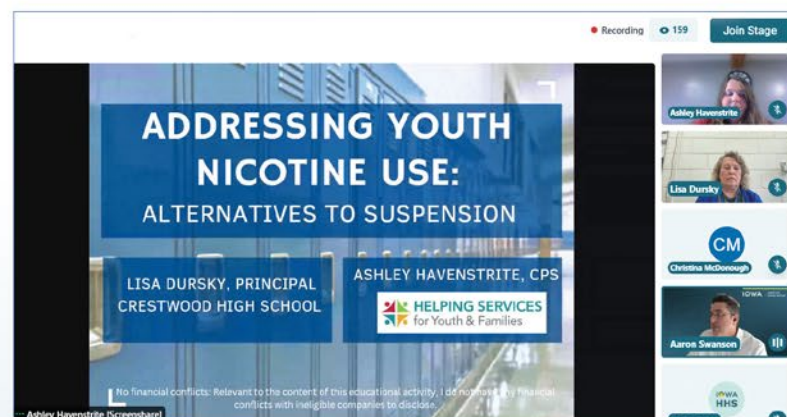


HELPING SERVICES
for Youth & Families

Contact: Colinne McCann
cmccann@helpingservices.org

Helping Services for Youth & Families does monthly trainings on a variety of topics all about prevention. In April, we did a training on the risks of mixing Alcohol, THC, and Energy Drinks. *Check out the Helping Services calendar on our website for future trainings. Everyone is welcome to attend!*

Learn more at helpingservices.org



The screenshot shows a webinar interface. The main title is "ADDRESSING YOUTH NICOTINE USE: ALTERNATIVES TO SUSPENSION". The speakers listed are Lisa Dursky, Principal at Crestwood High School, and Ashley Havenstrite, CPS, from Helping Services for Youth & Families. A disclaimer at the bottom states: "No financial conflicts: Relevant to the content of this educational activity, I do not have any financial conflicts with ineligible companies to disclose." On the right side, there is a list of participants including Ashley Havenstrite, Lisa Dursky, Christina McDonough, Aaron Swanson, and others.

Congratulations to Helping Services' staff member **Ashley Havenstrite** for being asked to present at the 48th Annual Governor's Conference on Substance Use Prevention, Treatment and Recovery.

Domestic Abuse Advocacy



What is the Domestic Abuse Resource Center?

The Domestic Abuse Resource Center (DARC) serves adults, teens and children who have experienced unhealthy relationships in Allamakee, Bremer, Chickasaw, Clayton, Fayette, Howard, and Winneshiek Counties. Darc Advocates are committed to helping survivors access the information and services they seek and provide options that fit their needs. Advocates offer counseling, community resources and referrals to area providers.

Advocates and highly trained volunteers listen without judgment and provide options that are available.

Some of the services provided include:

- Safety planning
- Individual and group advocacy
- Legal advocacy
- Housing resources
- Bi-lingual advocacy
- Child and teen advocacy
- Support Group facilitation
- Services to survivors of domestic and dating violence in seven counties of northeast Iowa
- Services are free, confidential, and client led.

How Advocates Can Help

A survivor of stalking was referred to our program from a partnering service provider. This survivor was living in another one of our counties served, but had a goal of relocating for safety reasons. After researching resources and housing options in other communities, she decided that she would like to relocate. Her advocate assisted her in the process of applying for low-income and senior living housing options, and she was fortunate to find a unit with a 1-bedroom apartment available. The client is unable to drive, so her advocate helped with transportation to view the apartment and to help her with the rental paperwork. Our program also assisted her with accessing the "Safe at Home" program, which is a program through the Secretary of State. The program provides survivors with a secondary address and mail forwarding service so that their physical address is not public record. The survivor has found a sense of community and is building positive relationships with people in her apartment building and new church.

How You Can Help

Volunteer • Answer crisis line, organize awareness events, assist with supplies from our wish list. Find the volunteer level that works for you!

Advocate • Share the Resource Line and promote the services provided by the DARC. Advocates continue to seek opportunities to train and present to new groups.

Give a Gift • Financial contributions to Holiday Giving Projects assist survivors.

► If you or someone you know could benefit from speaking with an advocate, please call the 24/7 Resource Line at (800) 383-2988 or chat with an advocate at [HelpingServices.org/chat](https://www.HelpingServices.org/chat)



Winners of our DV themed trivia event!

Register today for a fun event hosted by our friends at the Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence



THE RAD RUN WALK & STROLL

9/28/25 WATERWORKS PARK



Break out the legwarmers and cassette tapes and join us for a 5K fundraiser to honor ICADV's 40th years of work to end domestic violence.



REGISTER NOW!
[WWW.ICADV.ORG](https://www.ICADV.org)

FOOD, DRINKS, MUSIC
AND 80s VIBES - LET'S
PARTY LIKE IT'S 1985!



HELPING SERVICES for Youth & Families

PO Box 372 • Decorah, IA 52101

Update your contact info at info@helpingservices.org



Helping Services Staff and Family participating at our Mentoring Trivia Takeover! Thank you to Impact Coffee for having us and letting us teach the public a bit more about mentoring!

On Saturday, March 22, 78 bowlers bowled for Youth Mentoring and raised \$7,620. **Thank you** to all our bowlers and sponsors for making the 2025 Youth Mentoring Bowl-A-Thon such a success!

Save The Date: March 21 Youth Mentoring 2026 Bowl-A-Thon.



Youth Mentoring
Bowl-A-Thon 2025



Save
the Date!
March 21, 2026
Youth Mentoring
Bowl-A-Thon

ABOVE: Mentors and Mentees enjoying the 2025 Bowl-a-Thon!
LEFT: Fun times aiming for a strike!