



DEAR NEIGHBOR
MINISTRIES

StepStone & Dear Neighbor Ministries Donor Newsletter Spring 2026

More Than One Kind of Safety

When Gloria moved into housing at StepStone, safety meant something very specific: a locked door and a place where no one could hurt her. That kind of safety mattered deeply after everything she had endured.

But as time went on, Gloria discovered that safety isn't just about where you live. It's also about knowing who to call, how to advocate for yourself, and trusting that you have what it takes to face whatever comes next.

From the beginning, Gloria worked closely with her StepStone advocate, Michelle. Their relationship wasn't about being told what to do—it was about learning how to think through options, ask questions, and use available resources. Michelle encouraged Gloria to pause, consider her choices, and not give up when the first solution didn't work.

One day, Gloria found herself in a crisis. She reached out for help, but Michelle was unavailable. In that moment, Gloria didn't freeze. She didn't give up. She navigated the situation on her own.

Later, she told Michelle, "I could hear your voice in my head telling me to get up and call this agency and don't accept the first no."

Michelle cried when she heard that. Not because Gloria needed her, but because she didn't.

Safe Housing

Safe housing was the foundation that made everything else possible for Gloria. Having a stable place to live meant she could sleep through the night, think clearly, and begin to plan beyond survival. When a survivor arrives at StepStone to a furnished apartment stocked with the basics, they receive a



An apartment at StepStone's Bluffview Place complex.

quiet but powerful message: *you are safe, and you are home.* Safe housing creates the conditions necessary for healing, growth, and long-term stability.

Safe Access to Food

During her time at StepStone, Gloria also utilized Dear Neighbor Ministries' Community Food Pantry, as nearly all StepStone participants do. Having reliable access to food removed a daily stressor that so often keeps people in crisis mode. That same sense of relief was shared by the 10,171 individuals who accessed the Community Food Pantry in 2025.

When basic needs are met consistently, people can shift their focus from mere survival to taking the next step forward.

Safe Relationships

Perhaps the most transformative part of Gloria's journey has been the relationships she's built at StepStone. Through advocacy, support groups, and community, Gloria found herself surrounded by people who believed in her ability to grow, not by doing things for her, but by walking alongside her as she learned to do them for herself.

That kind of safety—the emotional safety of being seen and supported—is just as critical as physical protection.

Stability That Lasts

Gloria's story is a reminder that safety is layered. It's physical, emotional, and practical. It's a locked door, a stocked pantry, and relationships you can trust.

At StepStone and Dear Neighbor Ministries, we see that when people have access to more than one kind of safety, real change is possible. When support is holistic, consistent, and grounded in dignity, people grow stronger.

Gloria is still on her journey. But today, she carries something she didn't always have: confidence in her own voice and belief in her own resilience.



Beyond SNAP: Community Response to Hunger

Last Fall's government shutdown threatened SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) benefits, and fear spread quickly through Sedgwick County. At our Community Food Pantry, families arrived worried that a pause in assistance could mean empty cupboards and impossible choices. At that moment, the Wichita community stepped up. We were blown away by the generosity of our community as we welcomed new donors to our mission, received thousands of pounds of donated food, and saw an influx of volunteer applications. Our community recognized the need, and we were honored you trusted us to fill it.

The valid concerns of our neighbors and the incredible community response during this time of crisis caused us to reflect on a deeper reality. In Sedgwick County, 13.4% of households live in poverty, yet only 9.7% receive SNAP benefits. That gap represents thousands of families who struggle to afford food but do not qualify for federal assistance. And even for those who do receive SNAP, benefits often don't last the full month.

Food insecurity also extends far beyond the poverty line. More than one-fourth of Sedgwick County residents are ALICE households—**A**sset **L**imited, **I**ncome **C**onstrained, and **E**mployed. These are working families earning above the federal poverty level but far below what it actually costs to live, often just one unexpected expense away from crisis.

Kim, whose family represents one of many ALICE households in our region, recently received food from our pantry and left this message for you:

"Thank you for your kindness. Your donations have been a Godsend during my family's time of struggle. My husband was laid off, I'm disabled, and we have kids. He's back to work but we are still getting back on our feet."



Associates at Ascension Via Christi St. Joseph were one of the many groups in our community who generously hosted food drives for the Community Food Pantry in November.

SNAP is a vital program, but it was never meant to be a complete solution. Eligibility limits, benefit gaps, and disruptions leave many families vulnerable. Food pantries fill those gaps with a local, reliable response that meets people where they are.

At our Community Food Pantry, neighbors come together every day to make sure families don't face uncertainty alone and that stability remains within reach. Thank you for your generous response during a time of crisis and for your continued generosity as we renew our commitment to ensuring no family in Wichita falls through the cracks.



Stability Changes Everything

At StepStone & Dear Neighbor Ministries, safe housing, meeting basic needs, and supportive relationships give families the foundation to heal, grow, and thrive.

Your support helps us provide a future filled with possibilities.



Join us in giving our neighbors the security and dignity they deserve.

Moving Forward Together:

A Note from our Executive Director

Now that StepStone and Dear Neighbor Ministries have officially come together, we want to share an update on how we're bringing our shared story to life.

Over the past several months, we've been listening closely to the neighbors we serve, our community partners, donors, staff, and board members. Through surveys and conversations, we've worked to thoughtfully define the values and promises that have always guided both organizations. What we found confirmed what we already knew: StepStone and Dear Neighbor Ministries share the same heart. Both are places where people can find help, hope, and a path forward.

Together, we've named the values that guide our work: Generosity. Hospitality. Service. We've defined our shared promise: Whatever challenges someone faces, when they walk through our doors, they will be met with respect, compassion, and a clear path forward. From immediate needs to long-term goals, we are here to walk alongside those who need us. At our core, we are a neighbor. We believe in simple, people-first support. No complicated systems, no one-size-fits-all solutions. Just a welcoming hand, an open heart, and care that honors each person's unique journey.

In the coming months, you may notice a refreshed look that reflects our shared mission and heart. This includes thoughtful updates to our name, logo, colors, and overall style. We want to be very clear and reassuring: our mission is not changing. The people we serve, the values that guide us, and the work you know and trust remain exactly the same.

These updates are simply a new way of showing what has always been true about Dear Neighbor Ministries and

StepStone—we are deeply committed to walking alongside neighbors in times of need and helping families move toward stability and hope. As our work has grown and become more connected, this refreshed identity will help tell that story more clearly and consistently.

Change can feel unsettling, and we understand that. Please know this work has been approached with great care, prayer, and discernment. Everything that matters most—our heart, our purpose, and our impact—remains steady.

We're grateful to continue this journey with you, and we look forward to sharing more exciting updates in the weeks ahead.



Jason West
Executive Director



Save the date

TONIGHT FOR TOMORROW

A BENEFIT FOR STEPSTONE + DEAR NEIGHBOR MINISTRIES

JUNE 26, 2026 | MARK ARTS

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**Your Spring
Newsletter
is Inside!**

A Neighbor In Every Number

Our 2025 Impact By the Numbers

37,714

Times We Served
a Neighbor



10,171

Neighbors
Received Food



162

Moms & Children
Safely Housed at
StepStone



146

Families Avoided
Eviction or Utilities
Termination



1,631

Survivors Received Assistance
Filing Protection Orders



4,300

Volunteer Hours
Contributed