



NEWSLETTER

October 2025



A Message From Willow Rising

We are thankful for a community that keeps showing up in awareness, action, and love as the purple lights go out and October's **Domestic Violence Awareness Month** draws to a close.

In October, Willow Rising collaborated with neighborhood libraries, stores, and groups that spread hope via imaginative DVAM displays, thought-provoking Central City Empower Hour discussions, and our delightful community appreciation event, "DoNut Let Love Hurt." Every instance exemplified our values of empowerment, healing, and hope.

We also had the privilege of attending the **2025 Empowerment Ally Awards** to honor the amazing people, volunteers, and partners who enable our mission. Your kindness, commitment, and teamwork keep Central Nebraska safe and transformative.

We continue to empower survivors, fortify partnerships, and create a future free from violence as we enter November with the same sense of gratitude. We are grateful for your support, faith in survivors, and daily contributions to Willow Rising's growth.

With gratitude,

*The Willow
Rising Team!*

In this edition you can find:

DVA Month	P. 2
Empowerment Card	P. 2
Empower Hour	P. 3
Donut Let Love Hurt	P. 3
Empowerment Awards	P. 4
Sponsors	P. 6



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2251 N. Webb Rd.
Grand Island, NE 68803

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Rising News ✨

Community Partners Illuminate Hope During DVAM



As Domestic Violence Awareness Month comes to an end, Willow Rising wants to thank all of the community partners who helped bring attention to this important issue.

Through the month of October, businesses and groups in the area worked together to bring attention to the issue in unique and important ways. With their lovely displays of books, resources, and survivor stories, the **St. Paul Library, Grand Island Public Library, Rooted Books & Gifts, and The Tattered Book** inspired visitors to learn more about the effects of domestic abuse and the strength of community support.



While **CHI Health St. Francis** and **A Higher Plane** displayed purple to commemorate Domestic Violence, **The Chocolate Bar** served their renowned **Almond Butter Cake** with a purple twist, providing a delicious way to show support for survivors.

We are reminded by these deeds of kindness that visibility is the first step towards awareness. By turning our community purple, we spark conversations, inspire action, and remind survivors that they are seen, supported, and never alone.

Cont.

Thank you to everyone who joined us in creating safety, hope, and change this October!



Empowerment Never Looked So Good 💰

Do you love saving money AND supporting local? Now you can do both while empowering survivors with Willow Rising's brand-new Empowerment Card!

For just \$20, this exclusive discount card gives you special deals at amazing local businesses — all while helping raise awareness for domestic and sexual violence and strengthening our mission to support survivors.



Each purchase helps Willow Rising continue providing essential services to those in need, while our partner businesses give back through exclusive discounts and promotions just for cardholders.

Get yours today by contacting a Willow Rising staff or board member!



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Celebrating Empowerment in Action: 2025 Empowerment Ally Awards

On October 15th, Willow Rising proudly celebrated empowerment in action — honoring the incredible individuals, volunteers, and partners who make our mission possible every single day.

From cleaning our spaces to supporting survivors through trauma-informed care, from educating youth to building stronger community partnerships — every one of you plays a vital role in creating safety, hope, and healing in Central Nebraska.



✨ Congratulations to our 2025 Empowerment Ally Award Recipients and Nominees! ✨

🏆 **Volunteer Group of the Year: Hands of Heartland** — for their unwavering commitment and compassion in keeping our space welcoming and safe.

🏆 **Volunteer Individual of the Year: Dee Johnson** — for transforming our clothing room into Dee's New Beginnings Boutique, a true symbol of care and dignity.

🏆 **Safety Partner of the Year: CHI St. Francis SANE Program** — for their trauma-informed collaboration that ensures survivors receive compassionate, comprehensive care.

🏆 **Support Partner of the Year: Third City Christian Church** — for their generosity, volunteerism, and dedication to supporting survivors.



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🏆 **Education Partner of the Year: Aly Alexander & Brian Whitecalf (Grand Island Senior High)** — for empowering youth through education and compassion.

🏆 **Empowerment Ally of the Year: Fred Graves** — for his selfless dedication to survivor support groups and community involvement.

🏆 **Board Member of the Year: Alyssa Heagy** — for her exceptional leadership, insight, and commitment to Willow Rising's growth and mission.

🏆 **Community Partnership Award: Copy Cat Printing** — for their ongoing creative collaboration and generous support that amplify our message.



♥ Thank you to our allies, volunteers, staff, and board — your belief in survivors and dedication keep our mission alive.

A special thank-you to our 2025 Empowerment Allies for their continued partnership and generosity:

Levander Automotive • The Grand Island Independent • Union Bank & Trust • Copy Cat Printing • Paul Davis Restoration • Regional Hospital • Lutz • CHI • WoodmenLife • Midwest Express • All Faiths Funeral Home • Amur • Hamilton Telecommunications

✨ Each of you reminds us that empowerment doesn't happen in isolation — it's built through kindness, partnership, and action. ✨



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Empower Hour in Central City!

We are grateful that Central City attended last night's Empower Hour, which was hosted by **Jannica Boutique**, with open hearts and strong voices!



We all had deep, purposeful discussions about raising awareness of domestic abuse, Willow Rising's services for survivors, and how compassion and teamwork can build stronger communities.

In spaces like these, where the truth is expressed, hope is exchanged, and change starts, community is forged.



Thanks from the bottom of our hearts to Jannica Boutique for hosting and to everyone who came to help make the space safe, aware, and connected. We're so grateful — and we'll see you again soon!

Spreading Sweetness and Gratitude: "DoNot Let Love Hurt"

As part of Domestic Violence Awareness Month, the Willow Rising team celebrated our "DoNot Let Love Hurt" Appreciation Day by taking to the streets to give some of our amazing community partners a little sweetness and a ton of gratitude.

Our staff visited organizations and businesses that consistently demonstrate exceptional support for survivors and reinforce our mission, accompanied by donuts and a joyful disposition. In order to build a more secure and caring community where love doesn't hurt and healing can start, these partners are essential.



A big thank you to the following partners for all their help and hard work:

CHI Health (ER), Regional Medical Center (ER), Summit Real Estate, Third City Clinic, HUD, Mid-Plains Center, Alfrey & Pruitt Counseling, Hope Harbor, Goodwill Behavioral Health, CASA, St. Leo's Catholic Church, First Light, GI Physical Therapy, Hall County Attorney's Office, Melissa Reed - State Farm Insurance, Deliboards, Hall County Probation Office, United Way, Greater Grand Island Community Foundation, and Grand Island Public Library.

Your empathy, commitment, and collaboration are crucial. More survivors can now find safety, healing, and hope thanks to you. 

Together, we are demonstrating that kindness always makes the world a little sweeter and that love should never hurt.



October 2025

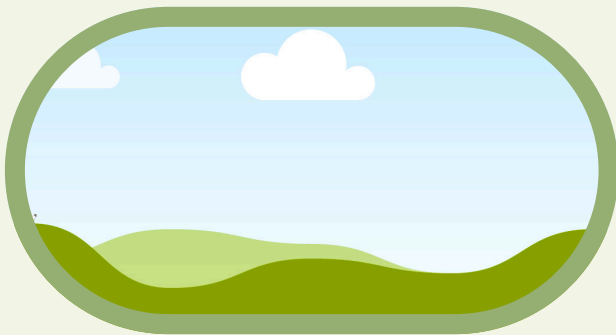
First Responders Lunch Brings Communities Together

On October 28, 2025, Willow Rising joined forces with **Heartland CASA**, **First Light**, and several community partners to host the annual First Responders Lunch—a heartfelt gesture of gratitude toward the brave men and women who serve and protect our communities every day.

This year's appreciation lunches were held simultaneously across four communities:

- **First Presbyterian Church** in Grand Island
- **St. Paul Civic Center** in St. Paul
- **Aurora Fire Department** in Aurora
- **Central City Fire Department** in Central City

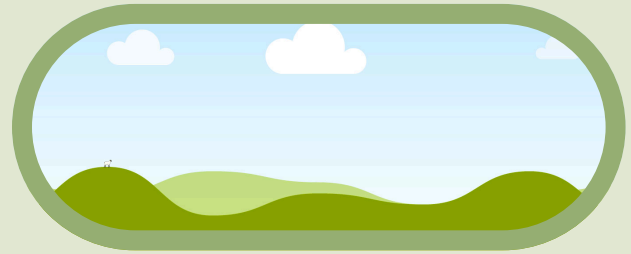
Each site opened its doors from 11:00 AM to 2:00 PM, offering complimentary sack lunches to first responders and their families. For those unable to attend in person, volunteers coordinated local meal deliveries, ensuring every responder felt the community's appreciation.



The event took place during Domestic Violence Awareness Month (DVAM)—a time when collaboration between advocacy organizations and law enforcement is especially significant. “We know how dangerous these calls can be,” Willow Rising shared in their message to first responders. “We appreciate all you do for our community.”

By recognizing first responders' courage and compassion, the lunch served as both a thank-you and a reminder of the vital partnership between emergency personnel and victim advocacy services in ensuring safety and hope for survivors.

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This initiative highlighted the power of community collaboration. Local churches and civic centers provided space, while staff and volunteers from Willow Rising, Heartland CASA, and First Light organized logistics, prepared meals, and coordinated deliveries. Families of first responders were also warmly welcomed—making the event not only a show of gratitude but a true community gathering.



The First Responders Lunch reflects Willow Rising's ongoing commitment to building strong community relationships grounded in respect, partnership, and appreciation. As Domestic Violence Awareness Month came to a close, the message remained clear: our community is stronger when we stand together in support, compassion, and gratitude.



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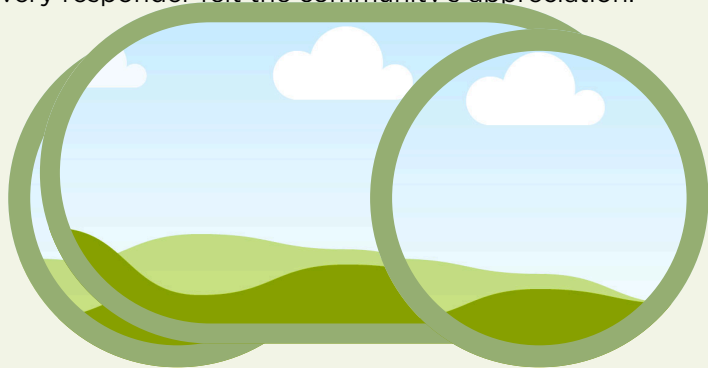
The Hayes Foundation

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Strokes of Empowerment

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The Hayes Foundation Painting Nights

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Special Thanks To Our Empowerment Allies

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