



Annual Report
July 2023 – June 2024

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Thank you to all our supporters, including funding from the following grants & foundations:

Catholic Financial Life, Family Violence Prevention and Assistance Grant, Greensboro Association, Norman J. Fisher and Doris Fisher Foundation, Green Mountain Fund, Green Mountain United Way, Hill Farmstead Brewery, The Lucy Downing Nisbet Charitable Fund, the State of Vermont, Prevot Family Foundation, STOP Formula Grant Program, Surfing Veggie Farm Foundation, The Wisdom Connection, Victims of Crime Act Assistance Grant

“As we come to my one year anniversary, just want to give you a little update, the kids and I are in an apartment, I am working part time, I got my permit then my license and a car. Kids are thriving at school. We are living our best lives! Thank you so much for helping us get to this place!” —*quote from client*

“Dear AWARE: Thank you for helping me in a time of day/night/need when I thought it would never get better... It got Better. 😊
Sun Came Back Up.
You make this Community Whole.
With ❤️ Respect, Client”



Naomi Ranz-Schleifer, Co-Chair of the Greensboro Association presents a check to AWARE’s Co-Directors, Ashley Gravel and Miranda Elkins.



I'm Miranda Elkins, and I'm thrilled to step into the role of Co-Director at AWARE. Like many in this field, my path to this position has been deeply personal, shaped by my experiences and a desire to support survivors of domestic and sexual violence. I've lived in rural Vermont all of my life and care deeply about this community. As a proud

mother of two school-aged children, I find great joy in balancing family life with my commitment to AWARE. I also celebrated my marriage in 2023, which has brought new happiness to our lives. Our home is shared with two energetic dogs who keep things entertaining! When I'm not at work, you can find me with my family at home or at the lake, reading, painting, gardening, or cheering on my kids at school sporting events.

My involvement with AWARE began when I answered the hotline during a critical time, allowing me to connect directly with clients. Witnessing their resilience inspired me to become more involved with AWARE. I found purpose in helping individuals navigate the challenges of domestic and sexual violence, which solidified my calling to this work. As AWARE evolved and transitioned, I embraced the role of Co-Director, collaborating with our team to create a strong foundation for the future. We remain committed to providing a safe environment where survivors feel heard and empowered.

I believe in the power of hope and resilience—values that guide me both personally and professionally. I hope that with these values, we can enhance the support services we offer and engage our community in meaningful ways. I also look forward to introducing new ideas into our fundraising efforts, building community connections, and raising awareness about our mission.

Thank you for your ongoing support for AWARE. I am excited to embark on this journey with all of you and appreciate the warm welcome into the AWARE family. I look forward to working alongside each of you as we strive to make a positive impact in the lives of survivors and our community as a whole.

Best,
Miranda Elkins, Co-Director/Support Specialist



My name is Ashley Gravel, and I grew up in Eden, Vermont, where I developed a deep appreciation for the beauty and simplicity of rural life. For the past 19 years, I've lived in Wolcott with my family, cherishing the strong sense of community. I have three wonderful children who are now adults—my two sons proudly serving in the military and my daughter attending

college diligently pursuing a career in the medical field. I admire their determination and passion for helping others.

In our downtime, my husband Richard and I love spending time with our four French Bulldogs, who fill our lives with joy and laughter. Together, we enjoy exploring our beautiful rural surroundings, creating lasting memories by traveling to quiet Airbnbs around Vermont.

My journey led me to AWARE, first as the Youth Advocate, a role that resonates deeply with me. As a survivor myself, I felt a strong desire to give back to my community and support others facing similar challenges. This personal connection fueled my passion for advocacy and motivated me to empower youth.

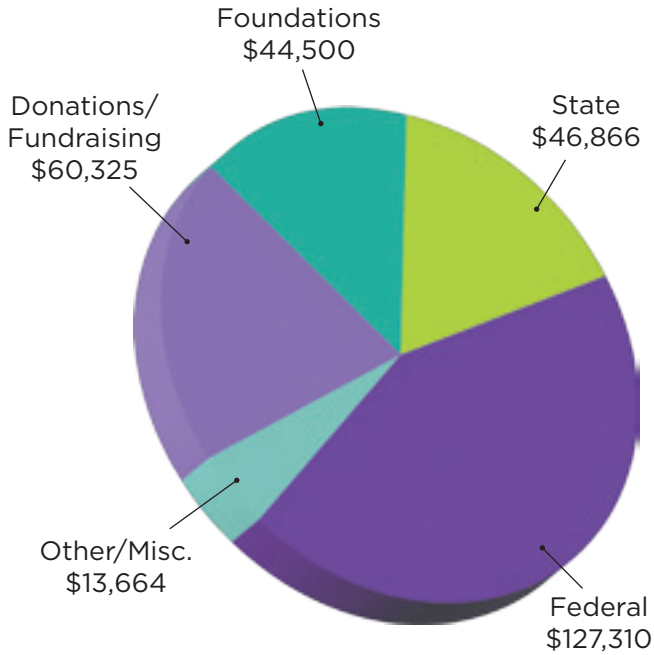
Recognizing the potential for greater impact, when the opportunity presented itself, I took on the role of Co-Director. In this position, I work collaboratively with our dedicated team to expand our outreach and resources, creating a safe and supportive environment where young people and our community can thrive, share their stories, and find the help they need. My experiences have shaped my perspective and drive, and I am grateful for the opportunity to contribute positively to the lives of others.

Thank you for your generous support of AWARE. Your commitment is deeply appreciated and enables us to carry out our essential work in the community. I look forward to partnering with you as we empower and uplift the community we serve. Together, we can make a meaningful difference by fostering a safe space where everyone can thrive, share their stories, and access the resources they need. Your involvement is vital, and I am excited about the opportunities that lie ahead as we work towards our common goals.

Be Well
Ashley Gravel, Co-Director/Youth Advocate

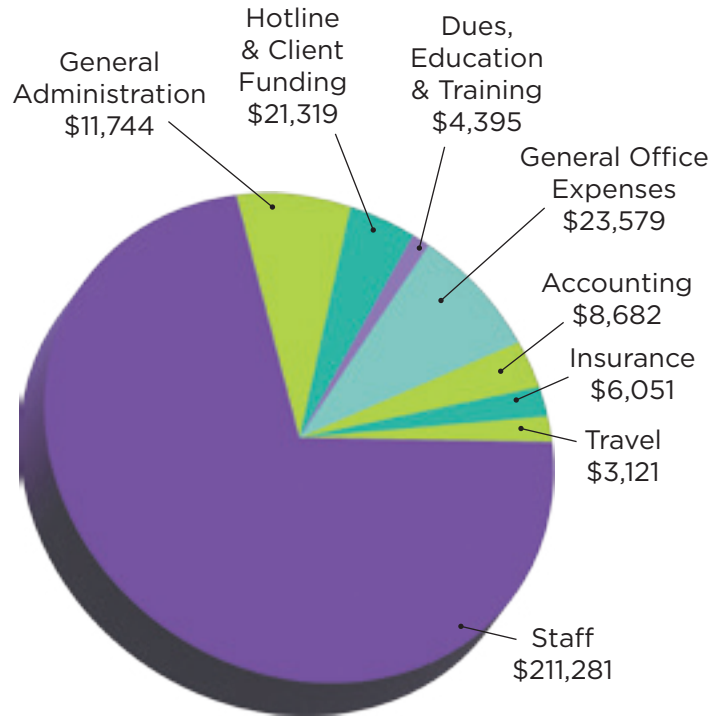
Funding Sources FY'24

Total Funding: \$292,665



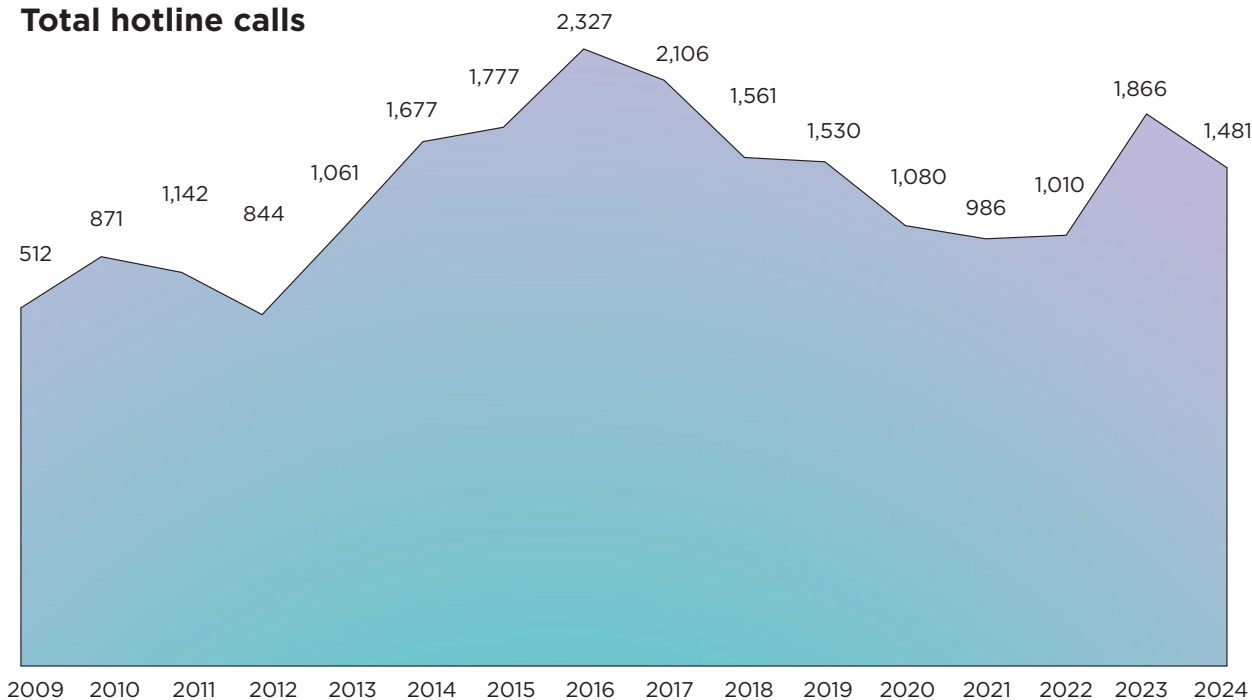
Expenditures FY'24

Total Expenses: \$290,172

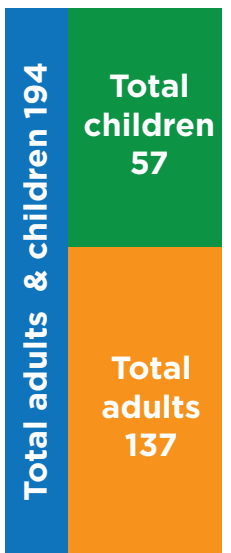


Services & Programs

Total hotline calls



People served



Advocacy Program

All services at AWARE are completely free and confidential, ensuring accessibility for all victims and survivors of domestic and sexual violence to share their stories and seek assistance. Isolation is a common tactic used by abusers to create disconnection with support systems, making it crucial for survivors to re-establish those connections. AWARE advocates are committed to helping survivors and their families access a comprehensive range of resources and services. Advocacy includes help with housing, legal and mental health support, transportation, emergency shelter, clothing, toiletries, food supplies, and assistance with personal finances and credit issues. Our advocates provide essential emotional support and a safe environment, guiding survivors in understanding their rights and empowering them to manage their futures. AWARE's advocacy programs are designed to support survivors as they navigate the challenging journey of rebuilding their lives.

A core element of AWARE's services is our Legal Advocacy Program, which plays a crucial role in assisting survivors with various legal matters. The court system—whether civil, criminal, or family—can be daunting and confusing. Last year, AWARE assisted 170 individuals with their legal concerns, representing 88% of those who sought help. Survivors often require guidance on issues such as emergency relief from abuse orders, stalking and sexual assault protection orders, divorce, separation, parental

rights and responsibilities, and child support. Some individuals also need support with criminal cases, if they choose to report the incident to law enforcement. Our advocates connect survivors with attorneys and provide essential information, support, referrals, and assistance as they navigate their legal challenges.

Access to legal information, advice, and representation is essential for survivors, empowering them to make informed decisions and facilitating their healing process. Since the onset of COVID-19, we have adapted, offering remote access to hearings via phone or computer, making it easier for survivors to participate in legal proceedings. Documents can be conveniently sent via email, reducing the need for in-person deliveries. Many survivors visit the AWARE office, where we offer office space and equipment to support remote hearings, as well as assistance with filing and printing important documents, all while providing emotional support.

Collaboration is essential to our advocacy efforts. AWARE advocates actively participate in various agencies and collaborative teams, including the Caledonia Domestic and Sexual Violence Task Force, the Lamoille Valley Coordinated Community Response Team, the Court Advocacy Task Force, the Vermont Network Leadership Coalition, the Caledonia Sexual Investigative Unit, and the Children's Advocacy Center.



Youth Services & Programs

Ashley Gravel, AWARE's Youth Advocate, plays a vital role in supporting parents, children, and youth. She engages with families one-on-one, mentoring youth and providing essential education. Having a Youth Advocate is crucial for addressing the effects of domestic and sexual violence, whether children have experienced abuse directly or have witnessed it. Building trust and offering a reliable point of contact is key to breaking the cycle of violence.

AWARE's Youth Advocate assists numerous families in our community, responding to a significant need for support within the family, as well connecting families to resources and services they may not have been able to find otherwise. To facilitate direct support, Ashley has a dedicated Google phone number for youth to text her for help. AWARE also maintains the AWARE Youth 802 Facebook and Instagram pages to reach young people in a safe manner, sharing resources, graphics, and information, as well as offering a platform for inquiries and assistance. It's essential for children and youth to connect with AWARE securely, as all services are free and confidential.

Additionally, Ashley provides support and information to school personnel, Ashley is trained and certified to provide classes and training on topics such as consent and healthy relationships. She actively participates in school events, including wellness days and open houses.

AWARE's continued efforts with local youth are bolstered by our Rural Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault, Stalking, and Child Abuse Enforcement grant, along with generous community donations. This grant not only aids youth and families, but also emphasizes mental health and substance use disorders. We are eager to educate providers and deepen our understanding of how these issues intersect with domestic and sexual violence.



LOVE SAFETY SELF-WORTH RESPECT JOY
CONFIDENCE BOUNDARIES HEAL SUPPORT
HAPPINESS COURAGE RESILIENCE PEACE



AWARE Releases Diversity Statement, Hires New Social Change Advocate

by Lucia McCallum

HARDWICK – Hard conversations are part of Ashley Gravel’s job as co-director of AWARE, the Hardwick group helping survivors of domestic and sexual violence. That didn’t make the disapproval of one of her family members any less difficult.

The relative was upset her organization serves transgender people, the 38-year-old said.

“The way that I approached him was nobody deserves violence, everybody deserves love, like it doesn’t matter who identifies as what, or who they love, or what the color of their skin is or any of it — nobody deserves violence,” said Gravel.

She said, conversations like that help define the motives behind two moves she and her co-director, Miranda Elkins, have put into motion since the pair began leading the organization in January.

On June 1, AWARE released an updated diversity statement and

posted it to its [Facebook page](#).

Next month a new hire is set to focus entirely on diversity, equity and social change.

The statement was a page long and positioned the organization as working “toward building a community that fosters equity for all, regardless of race, creed, sexual orientation or any marginalized identity.”

AWARE, like many other social service organizations in recent years, has undergone updates to trainings on inclusivity, diversity and equity, said Elkins. Those trainings are often required because AWARE receives two-thirds of its budget through government grants, she said.

Inclusivity has been a core value of the organization since she began working for them in September of 2021, Elkins said, but she and Gravel wanted to make a clear statement.

Elkins and Gravel became co-executive directors in January.



courtesy photo

Miranda Elkins and Ashley Gravel of Hardwick’s AWARE release an updated diversity statement six months into their positions as co-executive directors at the organization.

Putting the statement into writing, said Elkins, was a way for AWARE to take a concrete step toward committing to diversity.

“We need to be inclusive and not just say that we’re inclusive, but actually be inclusive,” said Elkins.

That sentiment carried into the creation of a new position at AWARE: the social change advocate.

The advocate is meant “to broaden the reach of awareness, prevention, advocacy and support for all people of all genders, lifestyles, ethnicities, who have experienced domestic or or dating violence and stalking and to pursue social change opportunities to promote a violence-free community,” according to the job description put out by AWARE.

Gravel said the advocate will serve on Hardwick’s Equity Committee and explore getting involved with the Hazen Union School’s gender and sexuality club, better known as HUGS.

The two co-directors said having the role filled will make more time in their schedules for the work

they’re best at—working cases. According to the group’s annual report for last year, Gravel and Elkins responded to 1,866 calls, emails, messages and in-person assistance requests and personally worked with nearly 340 individuals affected by domestic or sexual violence.

Gravel said the position has been two years in the making and was previously filled by someone for about four months. The group is looking at grants to help fund the position.

The new hire plans to introduce themselves to the public in the near future, said Elkins and Gravel.

Going forward, Elkins said she hopes the diversity statement sparks dialogue about equity and inclusion in the community and that people know AWARE is “accessible to anybody and everybody.”

“I think bringing it out in the open and talking about it is one of the most important things to do, because especially surrounding what we do, things tend to be more hush-hush,” she said. “But these conversations need to be had.”



AWARE
Domestic & Sexual Violence Services

Diversity Statement


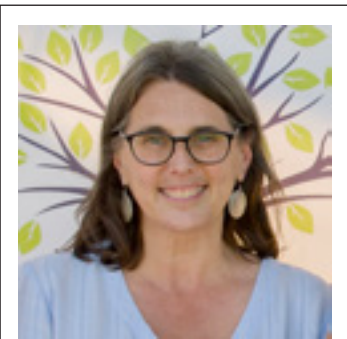
AWARE deeply values and prioritizes diversity. We are committed to creating an inclusive and welcoming environment that respects and celebrates the unique identities, perspectives, and needs of all. AWARE fosters a community of healing and empowerment for everyone we support.

AWARE recognizes that the individuals we serve as survivors of domestic and sexual violence come from a wide range of backgrounds and experiences, and may have experienced isolation within their communities.

AWARE works toward building a community that fosters equity for all regardless of race, creed, sexual orientation, or any marginalized identity. Equity is not the same as equality. Historically unsupported groups have experienced exploitation and systematic oppression. Recognizing this, AWARE works to ensure that all people are respected and have the opportunity to fully participate in our community and access its resources. AWARE uses an equity lens when developing and reexamining policies, programs, and services to better serve the community. AWARE is committed to ongoing training and education to recognize the uniqueness of every individual we serve.

AWARE is committed to promoting an accessible workplace that provides equitable opportunities to employees. We are committed to building a multicultural and diverse work environment which reflects the diversity that exists among the people of Vermont.

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AWARE’s Social Change Advocate position has been filled by Hardwick resident, Abrah Griggs. “I’m looking forward to talking with people in the communities we serve — to better understand where there are gaps in reaching those who need our services.”

Community Awareness & Education

AWARE advocates actively plan and engage in community events. During Domestic and Sexual Violence Awareness Month, we display flags and informational posters in Memorial Park. At our annual coin drop, we gave each vehicle our rack card describing our services, diversity statement, and contact details. AWARE also takes part in public events such as the Hardwick Spring Festival and the Funky Fourth in Greensboro. Our advocates are available to educate the community at local events and workplaces. This year AWARE participated in various trainings focused on domestic and sexual violence to better serve our community. These sessions enhance our understanding and equip our team with the knowledge and skills necessary to support those affected. Each year we continue to learn how to better assist all members of the communities we serve.



10th Annual Candlelight Vigil

In the fall, AWARE honors and remembers the victims of domestic and sexual violence through a poignant Candlelight Vigil. This solemn event features 16 silent witnesses—life-sized silhouettes representing individuals who have tragically lost their lives to these acts of violence. Each witness is accompanied by a plaque that shares their story, giving voice to their experiences and reminding us of the profound impact of such violence on families and communities.

During the vigil, attendees come together to share poems and personal reflections, creating a space for collective mourning and healing. The evening concludes with a song, symbolizing hope and solidarity, as we remember those we've lost and renew our commitment to raising awareness and preventing future violence. This powerful gathering not only honors the victims, but also fosters a sense of community and support among survivors, allies, and advocates.



4th Annual Walk

The 2023 Walk for AWARE marked our 4th annual event, and despite the brisk weather, the spirit of community and support was truly heartwarming! This year, we had 13 dedicated walkers participating, along with one adorable baby, making the day even more special.

Together, our walkers not only braved the chill but also raised pledges totaling \$5,000 to support AWARE's vital programs and services. Their commitment to our cause was inspiring, as each step taken contributed to raising awareness about domestic and sexual violence in our community.

Throughout the walk, participants shared stories, fostered connections, and encouraged one another, reinforcing the strong sense of solidarity among those dedicated to making a difference. The day culminated in a celebration of our collective efforts, where we recognized the importance of each participant's contribution in helping to create a safer and more supportive environment for everyone.

Thanks to the enthusiasm and generosity of our walkers and their supporters, we successfully raised funds that will go directly toward our mission of providing advocacy, education, and resources for those affected by violence. We look forward to continuing this meaningful tradition in the coming years!



10th Annual Kayak Raffle

The 2023 Kayak Raffle was a resounding success, raising an impressive amount of \$2,400 and selling an incredible number of tickets, totaling 2,900. Congratulations to Diane Cornish on winning her new kayak! This event not only generated vital funds for AWARE but also fostered a sense of community and excitement around our mission.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all the organizations and partners who helped sell tickets. Their unwavering support and enthusiasm throughout the years plays a crucial role in reaching

our fundraising goals. By promoting the raffle, they helped us raise awareness about domestic and sexual violence and the resources available through AWARE.

The success of the Kayak Raffle demonstrates the power of collaboration and community engagement. Each ticket sold brought us one step closer to providing essential services and support to those in need—we are truly thankful for the generosity of those that participated in our raffle! We look forward to building on this success in future fundraising efforts.



2nd Fall Foliage Craft Fair

AWARE's Fall Foliage Craft Fair is a vibrant and community-oriented event that showcases the creativity and talent of local artisans. Held annually, this fair attracts visitors from near and far, celebrating the beauty of autumn while supporting local craftspeople and AWARE's mission.

AWARE also provides educational resources and information about domestic and sexual violence, fostering awareness and

understanding within the community. The Fall Foliage Craft Fair not only supports local artists but also raises crucial funds for AWARE's programs and services with our pie sale, 50/50 raffle and well known lantern auction. This year we raised \$6,000. By attending, community members contribute to a meaningful cause while enjoying a day filled with creativity, connection, and celebration of the season.



THE Hardwick Gazette

INDEPENDENT LOCAL NEWS SINCE 1889

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Fall Craft Fair Returns on Saturday

by Gazette Staff

HARDWICK – The long fall craft fair tradition continues on Saturday at Hardwick Elementary School with AWARE's Fall Foliage Craft Fair.

In addition to the jewelry, candles, pottery, soaps and other crafts being offered, the event features a 50-50 raffle, door prizes and a pie sale with breakfast and lunch available from Friends of Hardwick Elementary School PTO.

One of the crafters showing their creations is Danielle Tinker of "Tink's Treasures." She and her eight-year-old daughter, "Little Tink," sell personalized tumblers,

coffee mugs and wine glasses, tooth fairy bags, glitter pens, car coasters and cozies. She offers a mix of her own designs as well as designs she buys from other crafters. Tinker permanently applies her designs to mugs and tumblers using the sublimation method.

Tinker, who is from Hyde Park, says she began crafting to keep busy after losing her sister to brain cancer, and started her business in 2020. She says crafting is therapeutic and calming for her. Josh Bull, her husband, lends a helping hand for her craft show set-up. She says she also loves the craft fair for "lots of crafting connections and got to pick up some

See FAIR, 2



courtesy photo

Danielle Tinker and her daughter, known as "Little Tink," will sell their creations at AWARE's Fall Foliage Craft Fair on Saturday, Oct. 7, at Hardwick Elementary School. Tinker and her daughter are shown here at last year's craft fair.



Services Available in the Hardwick Area

- 24-hour hotline
- Crisis assistance and support
- Information and referrals
- On-going emotional support
- Information and support for family members and friends
- Assistance with filing civil protection orders
- Assistance with divorce, parentage, and other court forms
- Court advocacy, information, and support
- Assistance in finding legal help and representation
- Advocacy with other system providers
- Transportation to court, safe housing, and appointments
- Financial empowerment and education
- Support groups for teens, parents, and children
- Housing referrals and assistance
- Assistance with emergency provisions
- Workshops, community and special events
- Consultation and training for community professionals
- Prevention programs for schools and community organizations
- Lending library of books and resources

AWARE's mission is grounded in non-violence and strives to prevent and heal the trauma of domestic and sexual violence in such a way that all people are empowered to act towards themselves and others with awareness, empathy, respect and personal responsibility. Honesty, compassion and transparency are vital elements in meeting the needs of our community. Those seeking our services are our priority. We also focus on prevention and educational leadership.

AWARE, a non-profit organization established in 1984, is dedicated to resolving the causes and effects of domestic violence and sexual assault in the greater Hardwick area. AWARE provides services year-round, 24 hours a day, governed by a volunteer board of directors, utilizing paid employees and numerous volunteers. AWARE serves the towns of Cabot, Craftsbury, Greensboro, Hardwick, Stannard, Walden, and Woodbury.