

## AZ Giving Spotlight: Dr. Maria Garay of Sojourner Center

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Sojourner Center offers housing, childcare, emotional support, self-sufficiency programs, and more, to women and children leaving a domestic violence situation behind them.



### **AFM: What is Sojourner Center's mission?**

MG: Sojourner Center provides housing for women and children who are leaving a domestic violence environment and need somewhere to go where they are safe and have time to put their lives back together. We give food, shelter, childcare- all in all we are a crisis center that helps women and their children heal from the pain of their violent situation. We aim to help them get job skills, become self-sufficient, and become a whole, healthy family again. We also offer an extended living program for 2 years where mothers and their children can reside.

### **AFM: What is the Empowerment Philosophy that Sojourner Center focuses on?**

MG: Our programs are based off an empowerment philosophy that sees domestic violence as an imbalance of power within relationships. The abuse from such a negative relationship can be seen in physical, mental, sexual, or emotional exploitation that the women and children we help have endured. We encourage them through support to make decisions that foster healthy relationships, and the resources to achieve their dreams. We give support, resources, information and education to empower women, while also focusing on the 'silent victim' of domestic violence: the children. Our specific child programs focus overcoming trauma and building skills that allow the child to grow while also allowing them to enjoy their childhood again.

### **AFM: What do you find special about working as the Executive Director of such a supportive organization?**

MG: Domestic violence is an issue that is too prevalent in our nation. Even around the globe, one in three women will experience domestic violence in their lifetime. I am passionate about giving support to these women and their children who are making the powerful decision to leave a situation like that. To be able to give them shelter and help them rebuild their lives continues to inspire other workers and myself at Sojourner Center.

To learn more about Sojourner Center, click [here](#), visit [www.sojournercenter.org](http://www.sojournercenter.org) or email [empowerment@sojournercenter.org](mailto:empowerment@sojournercenter.org). If in crisis, the center offers a 24 hour hotline at 602.244.0089.