

Impact Report

# EmPOWERment



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# Words from the founder: Dess Perkins



"I am honored to take this time to extend my heartfelt gratitude to each member of our emPOWERment community for the impact we've made in 2023. Together, we've brought positive change to the lives of at-risk youth and victims/survivors of human trafficking. Your dedication and compassion have truly made a difference in mine and their lives. Let's continue this journey towards emPOWERment in the coming year. When we work together, we build a strong community where all are heard and we create (P.O.W.E.R) Peace in our lives, Overcoming our past, Winning the war we face, Encouragement to keep fighting, Respecting each journey we are on.

We started this journey by taking at-risk youth to The BLVD for a day of fun without worry and ended the year with our Thanksgiving holiday shopping giveback to AB-12 individuals. None of this is possible without donors, grantors, sponsors and volunteers from the community. Thank you all, for believing in our goals, mission, and vision – where everyone will be afforded an emPOWERment filled life."



## Strategic Goals

### Awareness

- Strengthen outreach: Train youth, first responders on trafficking signs, tactics.
- Legislative advocacy: Push for California laws enhancing community protection.
- Support survivors: Offer resources, education for healing, empowerment of domestic violence and trafficking victims.
- Raise awareness: Focus on human trafficking prevention, support for affected individuals.

### Mindset

- Create daily affirmations for self-belief and motivation.
- Use mood charts or scales for emotional wellbeing monitoring.
- Provide ongoing positive encouragement to boost confidence.
- Promote continuous self-improvement and supportive growth.

### Empowerment

- Foster belonging, positive role models, and engaging activities for a healthy teen lifestyle.
- Establish effective communication and educate about risks.
- Set achievable goals: after-school programs or sports participation.
- Divert youth from alcohol, drugs, and gangs, promoting a positive trajectory.

## Our Mission

“Our mission is to restore hope and provide help to those who have been affected by human trafficking. We have created a place where at-risk youth and current victims can turn survivors through using their past to make a positive future. The ultimate goal is to inspire the country through resilience and perseverance. This is a place to speak for those who have always been told to stay quiet.”

# Problem Statement

Human trafficking is the trade of people with sexual, violent, and/or other illegal intentions. And it's no stranger to Bakersfield. The half-a-mile stretch of Union Avenue downtown is known as "The Blade," the main place for the sex trade in the city. In August 2023, 23 people were arrested for various charges of human trafficking and child exploitation from an undercover operation conducted by local, state, and federal law enforcement with the men being as young as 23 and as old as 56. Girls ages 11 and up are preyed on and "groomed" by men who are often three to five times their age. These young women are at-risk and many more are already victims in our own community.

Girls aren't the only victims of human trafficking. Young boys are also often groomed by predators providing things they may lack in these young children's lives such as money, love, food, or even something as simple as leveling up in a game. Beyond children adults can also be victims. *Anyone* can be a victim and *anyone* can be a trafficker. They don't always follow the stereotype of a young girl and old man.

To combat this problem we're working to raise awareness about the problem, educate people on it, its risks, and how to prevent it, along with creating laws to make this punishable for the serious crime it is.



# Theory of Change

## **Our Events**

are meant to inspire and emPOWER at-risk youth and individuals impacted by human trafficking through fun activities and/or educational talks

## **Our Programs**

are meant to provide at-risk youth and individuals with resources to help them in their everyday life and in their future

## **Our Trainings**

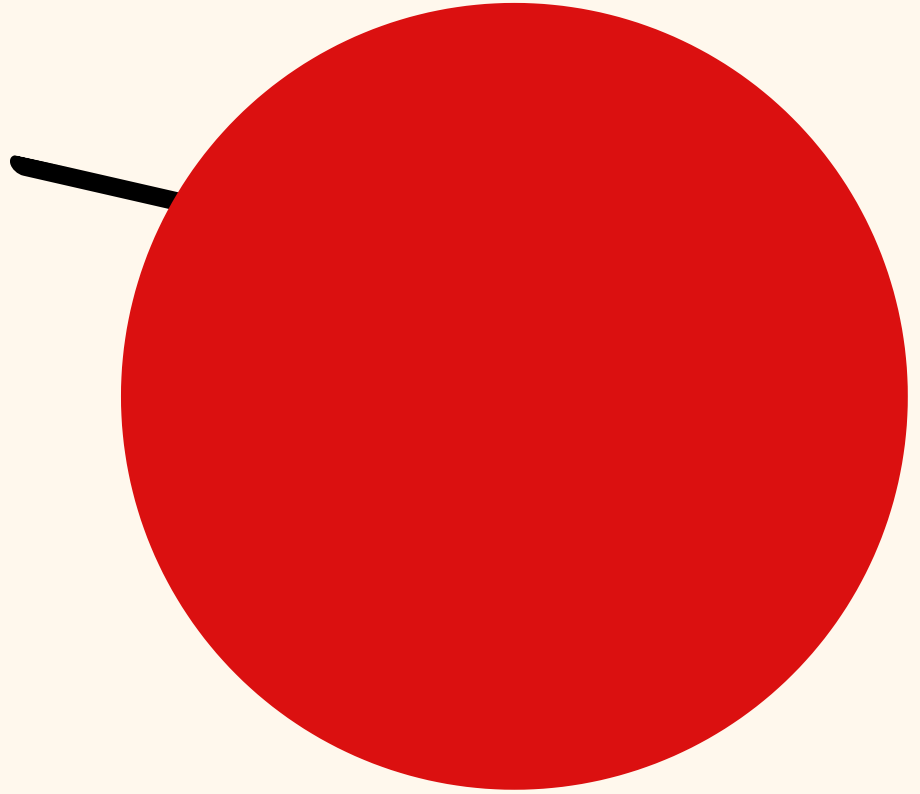
are designed to educate individuals about human trafficking, with specific emphasis on prevention strategies to safeguard potential victims

# Finances

## INCOME

**100%**

Donors

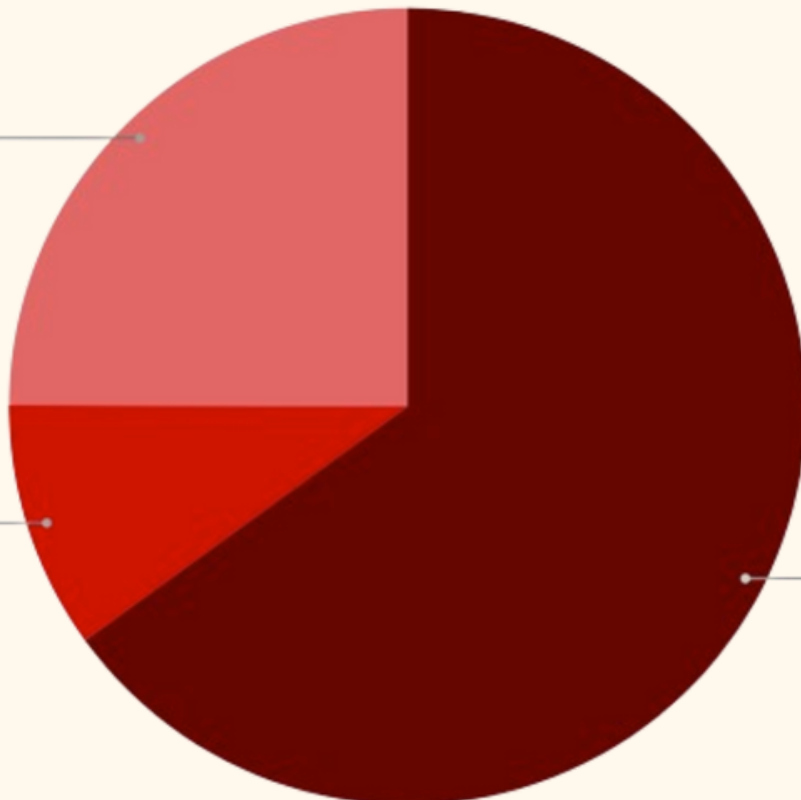


## EXPENSES

Grateful Gala  
25.0%

Admin Cost  
10.0%

Programs  
65.0%



# Accomplishments



## **Victim Services:**

We provided 77 adults with the ability to speak their truth, build self-determination, heal from past traumas, and grow. In that number there were adult victims of: domestic violence, human trafficking, and sexual assault.



## **Meals:**

We provided 93 meals to at-risk youth, less fortunate, and human trafficking victims and survivors. In that number 27 were youth under AB12 (extended foster care).



## **At-Risk Services:**

We provided 137 youth with: hygiene, clothing, extracurricular activities, and educational opportunity (ie: programs like Camp Keep). In that number there were victims of child abuse, neglect, and human trafficking.



## **Family Services:**

We empowered 180 families to continue to fight for freedom from their past traumas and understand perseverance and resilience.



## **Scholarships:**

We provided 8 youth with scholarships to further educational opportunities in life.



**Event:**

Hosted a successful Grateful Gala raising more than \$35,000 in an effort to raise awareness and educate the community on human trafficking.



**Opportunity:**

Attended the JuST Human Trafficking conference which was a critical thinking event addressing important issues in the anti-trafficking field.

**Training:**

Provided more than ten trauma informed educational speaking engagements and hosted more than three trainings workshops on the signs, risks, myths, and facts of human trafficking and how at-risk youth can become easily susceptible.



**Coast to coast:**

SB14 testimony and bill signed and officially passed on September 25 after originally being denied in April.



We are excited for what 2024 will bring as new legislation has gone into effect on January 1st, 2024. SB14, makes human trafficking a serious crime under California law and a strike under the Three Strikes law and SCR 97, declares January as Human Trafficking Prevention month.

Thank you for all you do in aiding those that are experiencing traumas to the next phase of their lives.



# Testimonials

" I first met Ms. Perkins as my teacher in my sophomore year of high school throughout the year I was quiet and kept to myself a lot but it was until she opened more about herself and how she grew that encouraged me to speak more not only for myself but for others as well giving people a voice. The non profit has done so much for me and given me opportunities I didn't have at the moment. They gifted me clothing gift cards, self hygiene essentials, food and beverages, as well as entertainment like bowling alley arcades, and movie theaters. One huge thing they had done for me was buying everything I would need for my junior prom and I'm greatly appreciative of everything they had given me the opportunity for. I've met the other kids who also had the non profit help them and each of them are great people I would hope for more kids to be allowed these opportunities." - Eliseo



Speaking at Casa Aurora

"We would like to formally thank you for dedicating time to speak with the participants at Casa Aurora- CCTRP Bakersfield. Our program is a Corrections to Community Transitional Re-entry Program providing gender – responsive and trauma informed services to offenders who are reintegrating back into society. Through your courage, shown by sharing your journey to wholeness through trial and triumph, you empowered our participants to begin rewriting their story, owning their history, and take charge of their future through resilience and persistence. You encouraged them to celebrate their small wins, which is an essential step to personal freedom. Our participants continue to talk about how relatable you were and how you've inspired them to be a better version of themselves, despite what their past looks like. We look forward to having you come back soon to continue pouring into our participants." - Casa Aurora Family, sent two months after the event

"With emPOWERment DP, there is a beacon of light amidst the darkness, offering hope, healing, and the chance for a brighter future for those affected by trafficking. emPOWERment DP understands that true recovery comes from empowerment and the development of essential life skills. Through awareness campaigns and community outreach, Dess P. has made a true impact in our community addressing a very fragile need for recovery." - NaTasha "T" Johnson, Upside Productions Management

# Board of 2022/2023

## Executive Board



**Executive Accountant -**  
Kami Paulsen



**Executive Assistant/Secretary -**  
Oreitha Perkins



**Activity Coordinator -**  
Joyette Perkins



**Educator,  
At-Risk Youth Director -**  
Paul Ogilvie

## Advisory Board



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Christine Diaz



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Business Development-**  
Michael T. Bowers



**Director of Entrepreneurship and  
Workforce Development-**  
NaTasha "T" Johnson



# Donors



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Liz Newman



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Annete Londquist

Mary Bynum



COUNTRYSIDE MARKET



Greg and Heather Frank



Domenique Buck

Wright Family FOUNDATION

Dr.Sarg & Jenny Purewal

# Partnerships

Rotary

Club of Bakersfield Breakfast



District Attorney Cynthia Zimmer



The Light House Recovery Center

# Thank you.

It's truly our donors who help us do what we do. We ask that you continue supporting us throughout this new year so we can continue providing hope, inspiring others to make a change, and go on to do many more great things.