

Impact Report

EmPOWERment



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Words from the founder: Dess Perkins

"I feel blessed to be able to share with you my immense gratitude towards each and every person who played a roll in the powerful impact emPOWERment made in 2024 and halfway through 2025.

Together, we've brought positivity 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) **p**peace in our lives, **o**vercoming our past, **w**inning the war we face, **e**ncouragement to keep fighting, **r**especting each journey we are on.

We started this year with the Eyes Wide Shut Human Trafficking Symposium held at Bakersfield College & will end this year with our annual Thanksgiving Holiday Shopping Spree, giving AB12, survivors, and at-risk youth/families the opportunity to celebrate with an amazing meal. None of this is possible without donors, grantors, sponsors and volunteers from the community. Thank you all, for sharing the vision of our mission and believing in our goals – 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

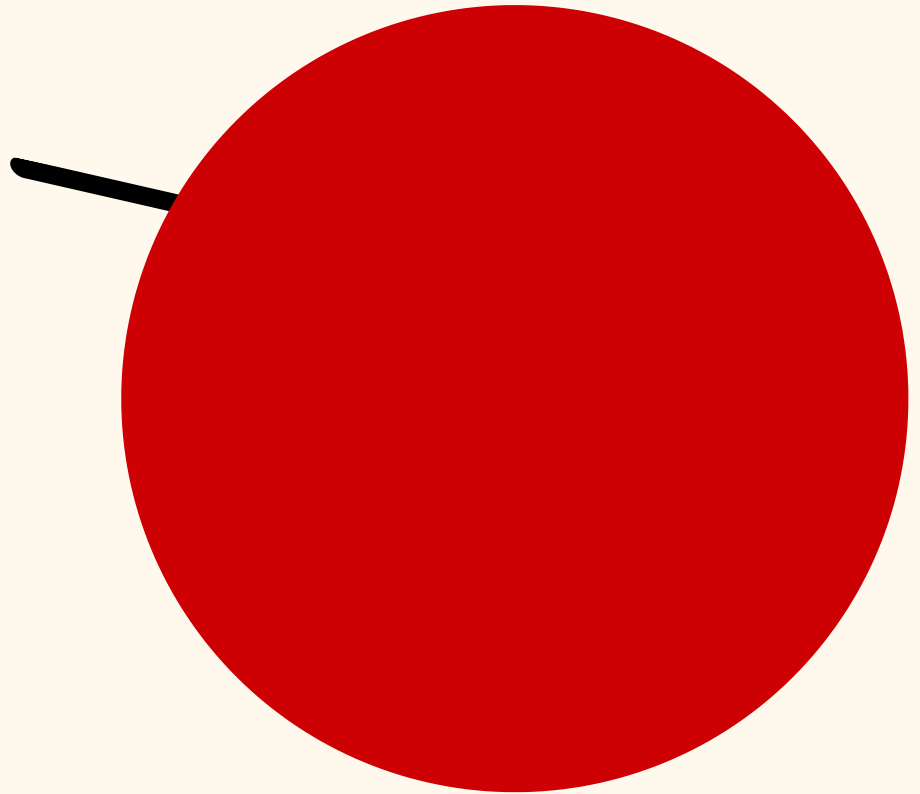
are designed to educate individuals about human trafficking, with specific emphasis on prevention strategies to safeguard potential victims

Finances

INCOME

100%

Donors

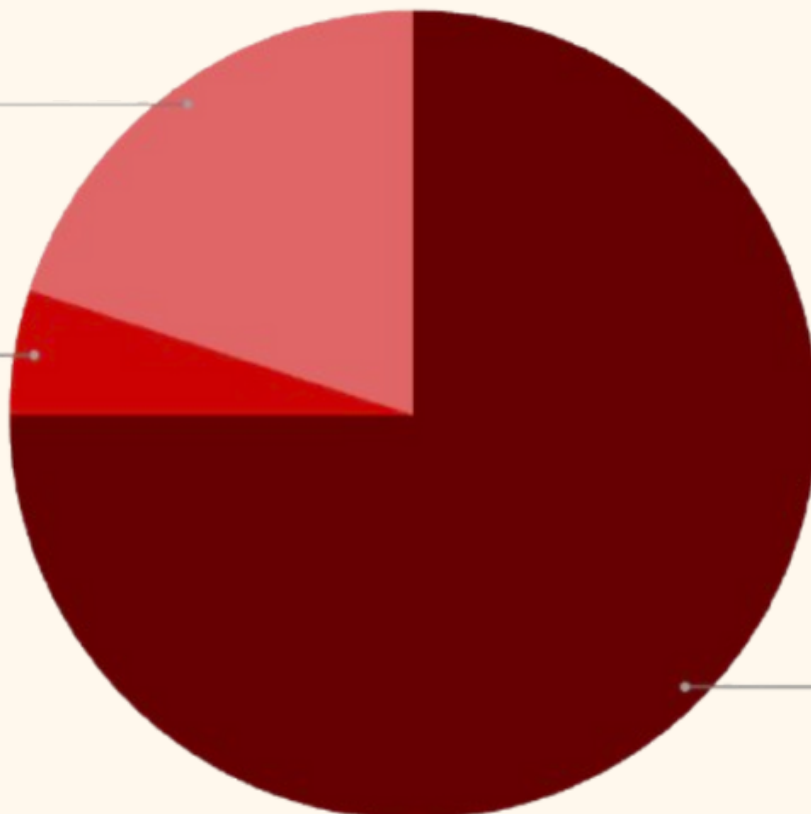


EXPENSES

Grateful Gala
20.0%

Admin Cost
5.0%

Programs
75.0%



Accomplishments



Victim Services:

We provided 235 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 who we also provided restorative beach & spa days.



Meals:

We provided more than 400 meals with food drives & giveaways 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 287 youth and 175 adults with: hygiene, clothing, at-risk youth field trips, 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 437 families to continue to fight for freedom from their past traumas and understand perseverance and resilience.



Scholarships:

We provided 47 youth with scholarships and hygiene/school item giveaways to further educational opportunities in life.



Event:

Hosted a successful 2024 Grateful Gala raising around \$42,000 in an effort to raise awareness and educate the community on human trafficking. We also hosted a few successful human trafficking awareness symposiums to keep people aware of the risks.



Academy:

We had 19 participants of young and adult women who were the first to attend our brand new EmpowerHER Academy. They got to learn more about their scholastic opportunities, learning how to build healthier habits, and more.

Training:

Provided more than 150 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:

In addition to SB14, we gave SB1414 and AB379 testimonies and the bills were signed and officially passed on September 26 (2024) and July 30 (2025) respectively.



We are excited for what the rest of 2025 will bring as new legislation has gone into effect on January 1st, 2025. SB1414, which aims to combat child sex trafficking, reclassifies the act of soliciting or buying sex from a minor under 16 from a misdemeanor to a felony. SB14 went after the sellers and SB1414 went after the buyers and AB379 reinstates a misdemeanor charge for loitering with the intent to buy sex, businesses turning a blind eye of human trafficking will be held accountable, and more.

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

Testimonials

"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



Speaking at Casa Aurora

I went to the academy feeling low in confidence, a bit shy, quiet, and anxious. Over my time at the academy, me and my family noticed that there was a change in my day to day life and mindset. I had met so many wonderful people and heard about their careers and of their backgrounds. Hearing so many people's stories and how they ended up where they are now was honestly inspiring to me. I enjoyed listening to the speakers talk about themselves. It made me feel like "Wow these women are incredible and I wanna be just like them." I noticed I had started thinking "I'ma do what I want as long as it makes me happy and I won't let anyone tell me otherwise." I went about my days feeling a lot more confident in myself and I wasn't afraid to speak up to others. I don't feel as anxious and nervous and jittery when I talk or meet new people and I feel happy to be within others' presence. I know for sure that I'll be joining next year's EmpowerHer Academy and I will be telling my friends and family of it and what it has to offer. I really want other young ladies and women to get this experience to help empower them and change their life in some way as it did for me."

- Mariah (EmpowerHER Participant)

"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

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Donors



Partnerships



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.