

ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT

2025



THE LIFEGUARD GROUP

The LifeGuard Group exists for one purpose: to end human trafficking and walk alongside survivors rebuild their lives through community, accountability, and meaningful work. We are a Montana-based nonprofit with a straightforward approach: **Protect dignity. Tell the truth. Do the work.** *Because freedom is never passive.*

Too often, freedom is treated as an idea. Rarely as work. Human trafficking persists largely because it is uncomfortable to acknowledge. Confronting it requires the same mindset found in all necessary but unseen labor: showing up, telling the truth, and doing the hard work—especially when it isn't glamorous. That is why **RESPOND** remains our first directive. Over the years, survivors have said to us, "I can't believe you showed up." Let me make this promise to you and to them: **We will always show up.**

The LifeGuard Group is made up of individuals who understand that freedom demands action. I continue to be humbled by our team—men and women who embrace the mission fully and are willing to do whatever it takes to see lives restored.

Strength Through Partnership

As a privately funded nonprofit, our work depends entirely on relationships—with individuals, businesses, and faith communities who believe freedom is worth fighting for.

In 2025, Baer Concrete and Excavation launched a \$50,000 matching campaign on our behalf. In less than one month, more than 100 donors helped us not only meet that match—but exceed it.

That kind of generosity is not transactional. It is transformational.

Because of you, survivors receive safe housing.

Because of you, they receive mentoring, accountability, job training, and community.

Because of you, restoration becomes reality.

We are committed to stewarding your investment with the highest level of integrity. In 2025, we maintained high-level certifications through GuideStar/Candid and the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability, ensuring transparency and responsible financial oversight in every area of our work.

Restoration in Motion

We have the privilege of a front-row seat to transformation.

One of our strategic goals in Year 9 was to see 50% of our residents graduate into independent living. We are on track to meet that milestone. Watching women move from crisis to stability, from fear to confidence, from survival to independence—it is the greatest confirmation that this work matters.

Late this spring, the newly renovated SunShine Chalet will open its doors. This transitional housing space will accommodate four women stepping into their next phase of independence. The Chalet is the result of countless volunteers, contractors, businesses, and community partners who gave their time, talent, and resources. The building is beautiful—but the collaboration behind it is even more powerful.

Looking Ahead: 2026 – A Year of Promotion

The coming year will be one of momentum and promotion.

We anticipate celebrating graduations, expanding transitional support, and strengthening community partnerships. We will continue raising awareness across Montana and beyond—because ending exploitation requires both prevention and restoration.

Ending human trafficking will not happen overnight. But the movement is growing. The passion is deepening. The resolve is strengthening.

And we are not slowing down.

An Invitation

If you are looking for a place to invest your time, your talent, your influence, or your finances, we would be honored to introduce you to The LifeGuard Group.

We are more determined than ever to stay in the fight—to protect the exploited, restore the broken, and confront the systems that allow trafficking to persist.

Because unless all are free, none of us are free



In the fight

LOWELL HOCHHALTER,
PRESIDENT/CEO
THE LIFEGUARD GROUP

CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

Here in western Montana, even in a light winter, we are reminded of something simple but powerful about snowflakes. On their own, a single snowflake is fragile. You can catch one on your thumb, pinch it between your fingers, and it's gone. No weight. No strength. No staying power. But when snowflakes come together, they carry real force. They shut down roads, delay flights, close schools, and reshape entire days. There is a quiet power in unity. I see that same truth at work in The LifeGuard Group. No single staff member, board member, volunteer, donor, or partner can carry this mission alone. But together, aligned around a shared purpose, we are strong enough to push back darkness and create real change.

When I was first invited to join the board last spring, I didn't come in as an expert in this space. I came in because something about this mission would not let me look away. The stories of rescued survivors, the reality of human trafficking in our own communities, and the courage required to step into that brokenness stirred something in me. I felt a clear nudge to join my small "snowflake" with others already committed to this work. Stepping into the role of Board Chair this fall has only deepened that sense of calling.

Over the last nine months, I've had a front-row seat to the heart of this organization. The staff show up with courage and consistency. The board leads with care and conviction. Our volunteers give generously of their time and energy. Together, I've seen the real and tangible impact The LifeGuard Group is making in the lives of survivors of human trafficking. This work is not abstract. It is personal. It is human.

What stands out most to me is the culture of The LifeGuard Group. There is a shared belief that rescued survivors deserve more than safety. They deserve dignity, healing, and a future filled with hope. Collaboration between our team, partners, and community is what makes that possible. We are not perfect, but we are united. We listen, we learn, and we keep moving forward together. That unity is our strength. As we look ahead, I am genuinely excited about where The LifeGuard Group is headed. The foundation is strong, the mission is clear, and the momentum is real. Thank you for trusting me with the role of Board Chair. I'm grateful to serve alongside you, and I'm energized by what we will build together.



Brandon Smith
Chairman of the Board

Statement of Purpose and VALUES

THE LIFEGUARD GROUP is a non-profit, mission-focused organization of people who will strive to aggressively RESPOND to those hurting, lost, broken, and exploited. RESCUE those buried in life's injustices, longing for support. RESTORE them to a place of wholeness and REVIVE hope in our world by encouraging and educating others to find their place in the fight.

We will LEAD with kindness and RESPECT to bring peace and healing to our world through the power of prayer, love, and actions with respect for one another and those we serve. We will GROW, in faith and integrity, until all victims are restored and those who hurt understand that LIFE is our gift and LOVE is our power.

We will stand firm and never waiver in our commitment to OFFER LIFE to those in need and to STAND UP for those who are oppressed, hurt, and victimized.

MISSION STATEMENT:

THE LIFEGUARD GROUP is a faith-centered, action-oriented non-profit leading the charge against human trafficking. Through rapid response operations, survivor restoration programs, and community mobilization, we protect the vulnerable, empower the rescued, and revive hope - one life at a time.

THE LIFEGUARD GROUP is dependent on the generosity and passion of its donors, supporters, and volunteers. We will work to partner with the community, churches and individuals who are able to provide the resources and skills necessary to make the difference in people's lives

Our Core Values

FAITH-LED ACTION Every operation is grounded in Christian compassion and moral clarity.

RESCUE & RESTORATION Immediate intervention followed by long-term healing, housing and empowerment

COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT Mobilizing churches, volunteers, and families to become first responders

SURVIVOR CENTERED Programs are designed with and for survivors to support lasting transformation

URGENCY & INTEGRITY Acting swiftly and transparently with donor trust and survivor safety at the core

By embracing responsibility in these multiple facets, THE LIFEGUARD GROUP establishes a culture of reliability and trustworthiness, consistently delivering on our commitments and building strong partnerships with stakeholders.



THE LIFEGUARD GROUP



THE LIFEGUARD GROUP TEAM

Lowell Hochhalter

Co-Founder/CEO

Carson Hochhalter

Director of Operations

Joe Danzer

Search Coordinator

Heidi Stockbauer

Case Manager

Holly Steele

LifeHouse Manager

Hannah Scholl

Direct Service Coordinator

Lacey Porcaro

Social Media

Justyce Fenlason

Resource Liason/LifeLine Administrator

Athena Cole

Prayer Team Coordinator

Tami Hochhalter

Co-founder, Development Director

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Brandon Smith- Chairman

Lowell Hochhalter- President/CEO

LaDean Edam- Treasurer

Liz Manley- Director

Shaun Six- Director

Jordan Stivala- Director

Dr Mike Windauer - Director

Carson Hochhalter- Vice President

Tami Hochhalter- Director (Non-Voting)

Christina Jesko - Secretary

Brad Tschida - Director

Lisa Marek - Director



At The LifeGuard Group, **our strength is our team**. Freedom and safety are built through disciplined investigative work, survivor advocacy, and strong partnerships that disrupt trafficking while walking alongside survivors in restoration. Each member is committed to truth, accountability, and long-term healing—turning awareness into action and creating real pathways to lasting freedom.



THE LIFELINE PROJECT



The LifeLine Project continues to be an essential element in combatting human trafficking and exploitation. By empowering, equipping, and enabling students to be The LifeLine for those around them. In 2025, we had the opportunity to visit Kenmare High School in North Dakota, a town of about 900 people. They invited surrounding schools, giving us the opportunity to present to approximately 500 students during an assembly, along with a teacher training in the afternoon and a community rally in the evening. The engagement with students, teachers, parents, and community members was amazing, and the feedback received was so positive and encouraging. The next morning, pulling out of town at 5 am with 14 hours of driving ahead of us, it's the less glamorous side of the process that no one sees. As we headed west over the rolling hills of Eastern Montana, we were exhausted and sitting in our "poor me's" with no cell service, realizing we still had 10 hours to go, we reached the top of a hill and with a moment of service, my phone dinged signaling a new text message. In that quiet, tired moment with no signal, I looked down to see this message: "Just wanted to let you all know that your work was not without effect. A trafficking effort in one of our local communities was exposed because multiple students who saw yesterday's presentation went back to school and were a LifeLine. I share Jesus' words with you, "Well done good and faithful servants." I can tell you the mood in that vehicle changed in an instant and we were energized and reminded of why this work is so important. I don't share this story to pat ourselves on the back but rather to convey that your support is truly making a difference in the lives of those looking for a hand up. I want to thank you for being that LifeLine.

Carson Hochhalter



The LifeLine made our students feel significantly more prepared to handle difficult situations and encouraged them to show empathy and connect with the speakers' messages. The teacher training was excellent and provided practical tools that staff could use right away. We also received strong positive feedback from the community. Most importantly, after LifeLine's visit, one or more students who attended were saved, a powerful reminder of the importance of this program. As a result, we are all better prepared to support our students and each other."

Kenmare Superintendent of Schools

CASE MANAGEMENT



In 2025, LifeHouse successfully reached and maintained maximum capacity, reflecting both the growing need for services and the strength of our young program. This year marked significant progress in addressing residents' physical health needs. Many women were able to resolve long-standing medical concerns, including a couple who underwent major corrective surgeries. Access to consistent care and advocacy resulted in measurable improvements in overall wellness and quality of life.

Therapeutic services expanded and proved highly effective in supporting emotional regulation and healthy communication. Residents participated in a variety of evidence-based therapies, gaining a broad skill set to support long-term stability and relational health. Neurofeedback was one of the innovative, non-invasive therapies offered this year, helping residents improve self-regulation, cognitive function, and emotional stability by reinforcing healthier brainwave patterns. This modality supported treatment for ADHD, anxiety, depression, PTSD, and insomnia, while also improving focus, memory, and overall cognitive functioning.

Our program therapist provided ongoing group sessions in Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), ensuring continuity of care and reinforcing daily skill application. As a result, residents demonstrated profound personal growth and resilience, progressing into women who are often unrecognizable from the individuals who first entered the program.

LifeHouse also proudly supported residents in achieving major life milestones, including pursuing education, learning to drive, and integrating into the community through employment. Looking ahead, 2026 will bring meaningful expansion with the opening of the SunShine Chalet. This next phase will allow women to transition into independent living while remaining under the safety and support of The LifeGuard Group. With the extension of the SunShine Chalet, LifeHouse will be able to provide four additional survivors with a safe home and opportunities they may never have believed possible.

The progress made in 2025 stands as a testament to what is possible when safety, dignity, and long-term restoration are placed at the center of care. LifeHouse is not only responding to the immediate needs of survivors but actively building pathways toward wholeness, purpose, and independence. As we move into 2026, our vision expands beyond capacity to transformation and step confidently into their futures. With the opening of the Sunshine Chalet and continued program growth, LifeHouse is poised to extend hope to more survivors, strengthen community integration, and redefine what sustainable restoration can look like for generations to come.



HEIDI STOCKBAUER,
CASE MANAGER
CROOKED TREE RANCH



COMMUNITY WORK TEAMS 2025

Working with the LifeGuard Group was one of the most meaningful and eye-opening experiences I've had. A group of about 15-30 of my colleagues and I spent time at the safe house this past fall, helping however we could. We helped clean up areas of the renovation site, moved equipment, prepared the garden for the seasonal transition, hauled hay for the on-site horses, and refreshed the art room, which provides a creative outlet for survivors. The work itself was simple, but knowing it contributed to a place designed for safety, healing, and new beginnings made it incredibly powerful. What impacted me most was seeing firsthand the heart behind the organization. Multiple other Engel & Völkers shops also rallied around the cause by hosting fundraisers, organizing toiletry drives, and helping spread awareness, which really showed how much community support surrounds this mission. The "LifeGuard Group" is truly an amazing organization, and having the chance to speak with some of the survivors and hear some of their stories was so impactful. We got to hear how deeply healing the safe house is and about the programs that have helped them. It was both humbling and inspiring. It reinforced just how important this work is and how transformative compassion, support, and a safe space can truly be.

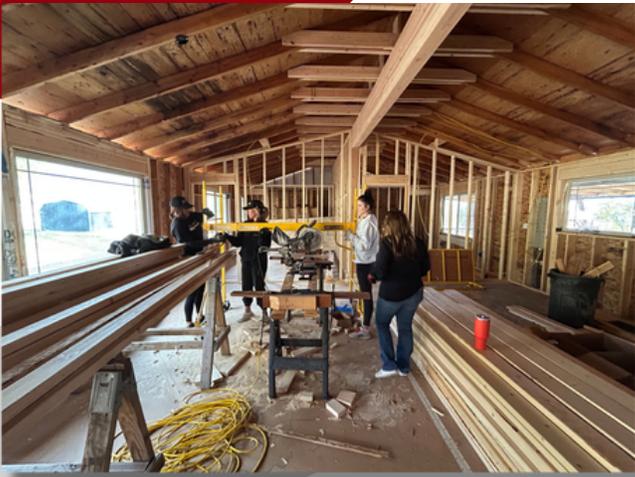
DARBY HENTHORN ~ ENGEL&VÖLKERS



THE LIFEGUARD GROUP



THE LIFEGUARD GROUP



Fargo, North Dakota
Buffalo, Minnesota
Hermantown, Minnesota
Ellendale, Minnesota
Hutchinson, Minnesota
Hibbing, Minnesota

SUMMER WORK TEAMS

Special Thanks to Minnesota AIM



RESCUE AND RESTORE

In early September, I received a call from Tami with an urgent request. Free America had reached out for assistance in the rescue of a woman and her children. For her safety, we will refer to her as Sara. She had fled from the east coast after years of being trafficked by her husband—a lower-level shot caller in a violent, well-structured criminal organization involved in narcotics, weapons, embezzlement, murder for hire, and human trafficking. The group operated across multiple states and beyond U.S. borders, known for their experience and brutality.

Sara had escaped and made her way to a larger Montana city, where she and her children found temporary refuge in a shelter for battered women. But her sense of safety was shattered when her husband sent her photos of their children playing at their school. He had found them again. Whether he was in town himself or had sent someone from his organization, the threat was immediate and credible. Sara contacted Free America, who in turn coordinated with Gideon Force to arrange an emergency private flight out of Montana.

Gideon Force dispatched a plane with two pilots and one security specialist from the Midwest. Free America then contacted The LifeGuard Group asking them to serve as the boots on the ground—responsible for extracting Sara and her children from the shelter and transporting them to an undisclosed airport for evacuation.

The call gave us less than 20 hours to plan and execute the operation. With the strong likelihood that the shelter was under surveillance, this could not be a simple transport. It required a precise, time-sensitive extraction with multiple layers of security. I immediately contacted a close friend who had recently retired from the local Sheriff's Office, and together we began building the plan. Three additional individuals with security experience joined the effort. We spent several hours conducting counter-surveillance around the shelter and mapping primary and contingency routes to the airport.

That evening, the Gideon Force team arrived, and we met with the pilots to finalize the operational plan.

At **3:00 a.m.**, the team moved into position along the route to provide rolling surveillance. At **4:00 a.m.**, Tami and I arrived at the shelter. Staff had been briefed and were ready. Sara and her children were waiting with their bags packed. Before departure, we used a scanning device to check their belongings and bodies for tracking devices—a common tactic used by traffickers. As Tami conducted the scan, Sara nervously shared that she had received another message from her husband that night. He claimed he knew where she was and that he and his crew were in town to retrieve her. We relayed this immediately to the team. One of the children's toys triggered a positive scan for a tracking device. With our departure window closing, we had no time for further analysis. The toy was removed, and we prepared to move.

At **4:20 a.m.**, after a final bathroom break and instructions to the children to remain quiet, we loaded into the vehicle. At **4:32 a.m.**, we rolled out. The counter-surveillance team quickly confirmed that we had exited clean with no tail. Sara was anxious—she had been found before and understood exactly what her husband and his organization were capable of. Tami stayed close, reassuring her throughout the drive.

5:30 a.m., we arrived safely at the airport. Sara and her children boarded the plane, and once they were secured inside, our team stood together on the tarmac and watched the aircraft lift into the early morning sky. It was a quiet moment—no celebration, just a shared sense of purpose and relief. After a long pause, Tami said softly, *“Well, we did something good today.”*

She was right. We had.

THE KRONICLES OF KEVIN

I view my role with the LifeGuard Group as more than a job; it is a mission that is close to my heart. This past year, I got to witness what healing and growth look like in real time among the residents at Crooked Tree Ranch. In our society, it can be easy to give up on another person's healing and change, almost putting them in a box, saying they are too far gone, have gone through too much pain, or are too broken to experience true, lasting healing. I want to share the story of Kevin the chicken with you. A story of hope, healing, and restoration. Kevin the chicken touched the hearts of staff and residents alike. It was a beautiful fall day when we found Kevin outside the chicken coop. She (yes, Kevin is a girl) was found lying in the dirt, not able to move. Kevin was driven to the vet and was diagnosed with a dislocated hip. The vet said Kevin would need much love, nurture, and care to fully walk again. At first, when we would put Kevin on the ground, she would just flop over and could not even support herself to sit. All the residents and staff worked together as "Team Kevin". Everyone took turns feeding Kevin, showering Kevin with love, and even creating a "jumper" for Kevin to stand up in to start putting weight on her legs and hip again. During a three-month healing journey of restoration, Kevin's bond with residents and staff grew stronger, rooted in hope and love. Kevin started sitting up on her own and eventually took steps on her own! Each step of her journey was celebrated. As winter drew closer, we had to sit with the hard decision to find a new home for Kevin so she could be fully nurtured and loved as she continued to heal. We were able to find a new home for her, and I am happy to report that she is thriving and walking independently! She is even back to laying an egg a day! We are very thankful for our amazing volunteer, who continues to be a nurturing presence for Kevin as she continues her journey of healing. Kevin's restoration and healing journey mirrors the lives of each woman who walks through the gates of Crooked Tree Ranch. It takes an army of people surrounding each woman, affirming their value and worth, and giving them restoration and hope for their future. Healing is never easy, but it is always worth it. When you have people surrounding you and loving you, it makes going through the hard things a whole lot easier.

HANNAH SCHOLL

DIRECT SERVICE
COORDINATOR



SURVIVOR SERVICES



Provided...

Safe Night Sleep for
victim/survivors

1606 ~ 2025
2695~ SINCE OPENING

Meals provided for
victim/survivors

4818 ~ 2025
8085 ~ SINCE OPENING

Miles flown through
Wings of Freedom

5794 ~2025
9794 ~ SINCE OPENING

Direct Service requests

94 ~ 2025

Intake Interviews

27 ~ 2025

Fundraisers are more than events—they are lifelines. For a nonprofit like The LifeGuard Group, fundraising fuels the urgent work of showing up in moments of crisis, sustaining long-term restoration, and responding when help cannot wait. Every gift represents belief in the value of a life, trust in the mission, and partnership in hope. Fundraisers unite communities around a shared purpose, transforming compassion into action and generosity into impact. Because of faithful supporters, we are able to search for the missing, stand with families in their darkest hours, and walk survivors toward healing and freedom. Fundraising ensures that when the call comes, we are ready—and that no one we serve is ever forgotten.



HOPE Dinner - Billings, Montana





128
GOLFERS

32
TEAMS



25
VOLUNTEERS

80
BBQ
CHICKEN



\$35,000
RAISED



9TH ANNUAL LIFEGUARD SCRAMBLE

RECOGNIZE AND RESPOND



“The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.”

Edmund Burke

289

Medical and First Responders

1162

Schools, Administrators, and Community Members

485

Hospitality Industry

2875

Civic and Church Groups

Total Individuals Trained

4811

Total Trainings Provided

39

Businesses are often on the front lines of daily public activity—hotels, transportation services, healthcare providers, banks, and retailers may encounter trafficking situations without realizing it. Training equips employees to recognize red flags, respond safely, and report appropriately without escalating danger to victims. When businesses understand the indicators and proper response protocols, they become powerful partners in prevention—disrupting exploitation, protecting vulnerable individuals, and strengthening the safety and integrity of the communities they serve.

OUR CERTIFICATIONS



OUR 2025 VOLUNTEERS

My experiences as a Vócóme Volunteer serving the women of The LifeHouse could fill a book. One of my tender favorites was sitting at the bedside of a precious woman who was convalescing from a recent surgery to repair damage inflicted upon her while being trafficked. I had to be careful not to jar her little body in her delicate condition, but I could hold her hand! As she talked of her sufferings and the difficulty of the surgery and aftermath, I felt pain for her. But then, her face lit up as she spoke of the tender nursing care she received and the selfless, constant attendance of the staff. She was amazed at the outpouring of love and concern she was shown. She became emotional as she said, "Mollie I know God sent me here so I could be healed" and then she paused and said, "And it has brought me back to Him". I am so grateful for the opportunity to witness the loving hand of a Father who is always reaching to lift His children. I stand amazed!

Molli Verrue, Vócómé



OUR 2025 VOLUNTEERS HOURS

7181

Vócóme
Volunteers

9308

Community
Volunteers

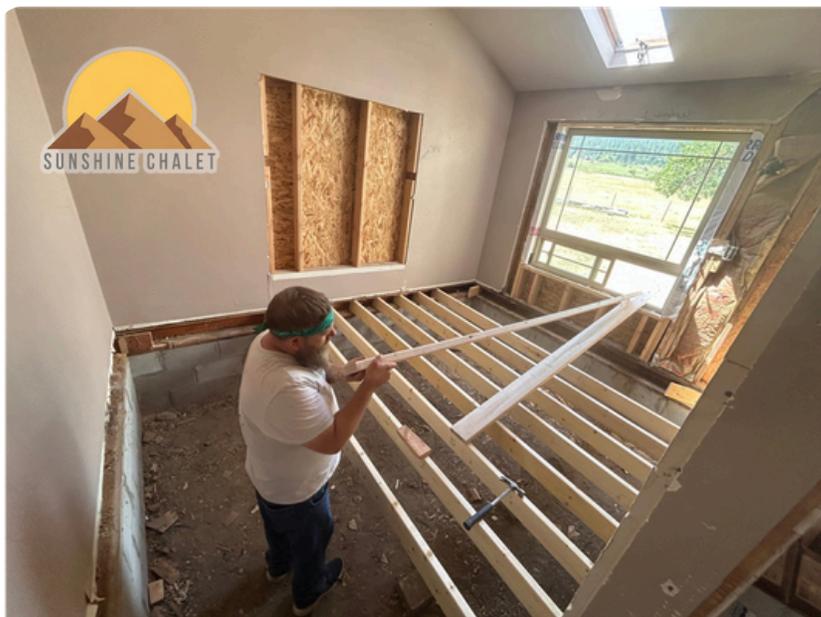
8,760

Montana Human
Trafficking Hotline

25,249

**Total volunteer
hours**

THE SUNSHINE CHALET



empower-and-shine.com

We are deeply grateful to our partners at **EMPOWER AND SHINE** for their generous support of the SunShine Chalet expansion at The LifeHouse. Their investment is increasing our capacity to provide safe, restorative housing for women on their path to healing and independence. This expansion represents more than added space—it reflects a shared commitment to dignity, stability, and hope, ensuring that more lives can be sheltered and restored.



FINANCIAL IMPACT AT A GLANCE

The LifeGuard Group is proud to have retained the Candid Platinum Seal of Transparency on Guidestar. Below, you will find an overview of our 2025 financials. As is our practice, our 990s will be posted to our website when they become available.

FULL REPORT



Platinum
Transparency
2026

Candid.

How Resources Were Generated

Our work is sustained through a diversified mix of community and philanthropic support, ensuring stability and long-term:

Individual Giving	\$169,190
Corporate and Religious donations	\$140,197
Foundation & Government Grants	\$176,960
Fundraising Events	\$122,568
In-Kind Contributions(goods, services, and professional support)	\$108,866
Total Income	\$757,998.85

How Resources Were Used

Program Services:	\$412,803.00
Administration:	\$157,708.84
Fundraising Events:	\$18,073.98
Total Expenses:	\$588,585.82



2025

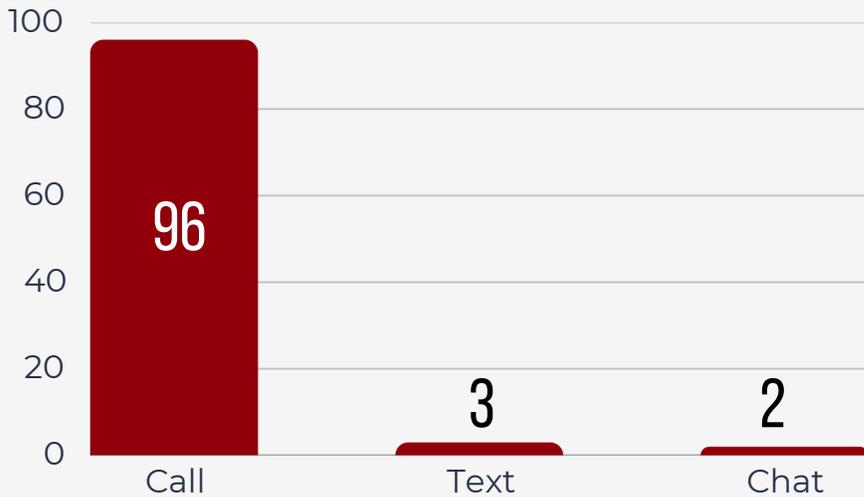
MONTANA

HUMAN TRAFFICKING HOTLINE

ANNUAL REPORT

PLATA

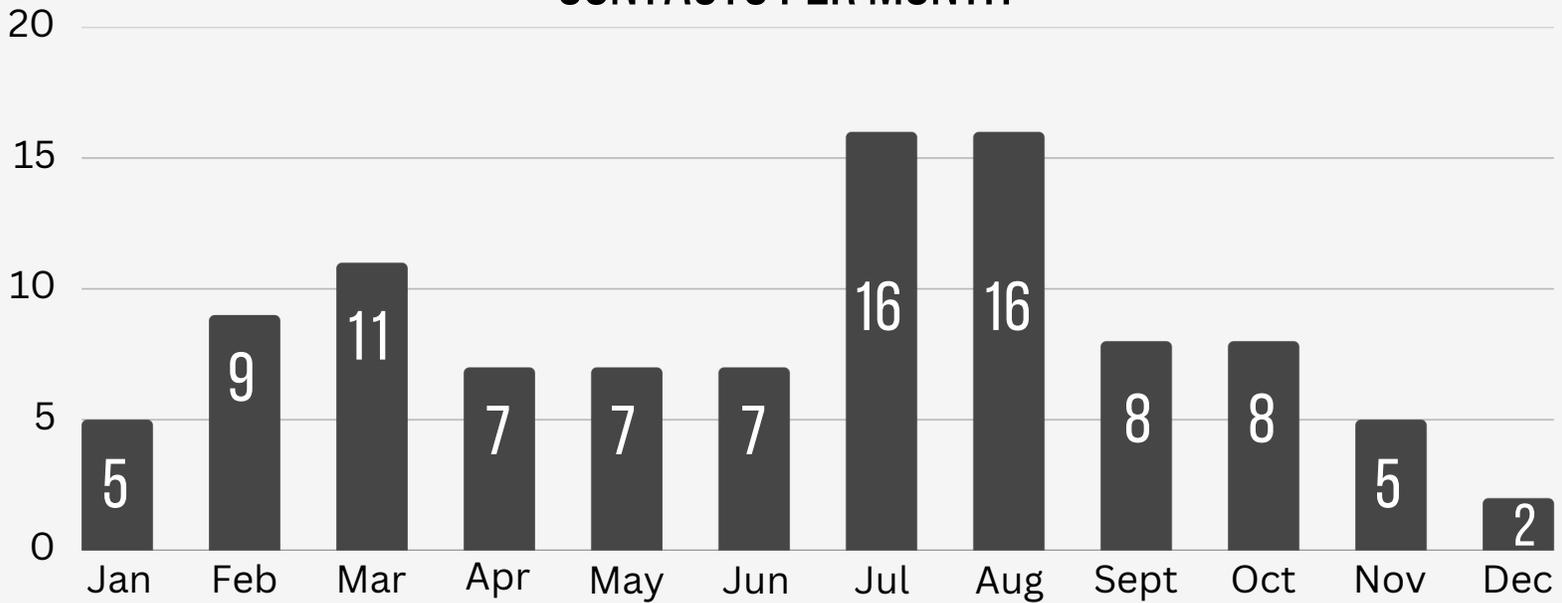
2025 Overview



TOTAL CONTACTS

101

CONTACTS PER MONTH



127

Contacts in 2024

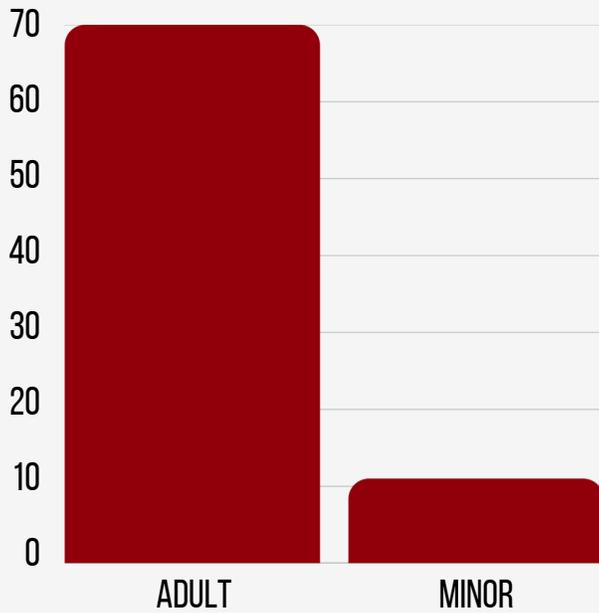


610

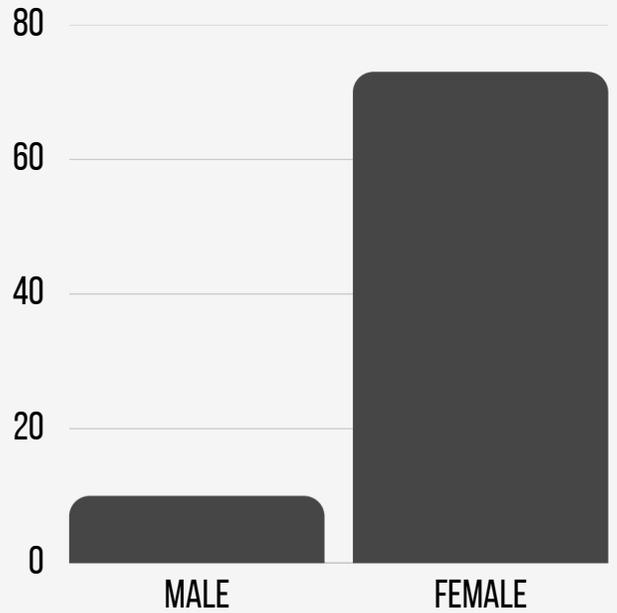
Contacts since launch
(Nov. 2020)

The Victim

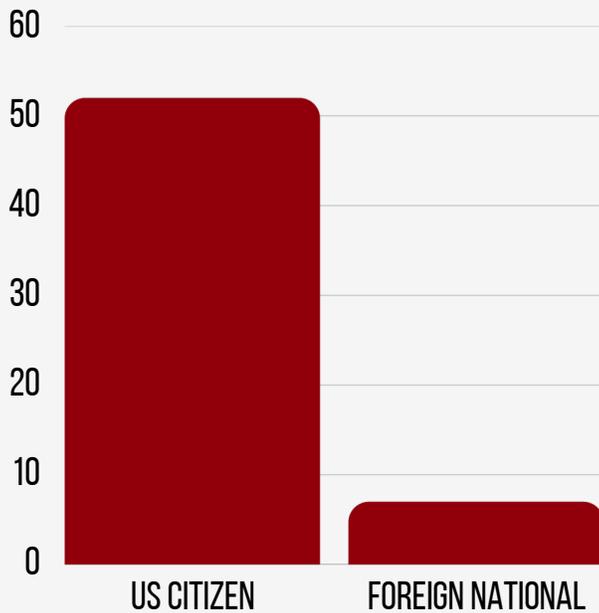
AGE



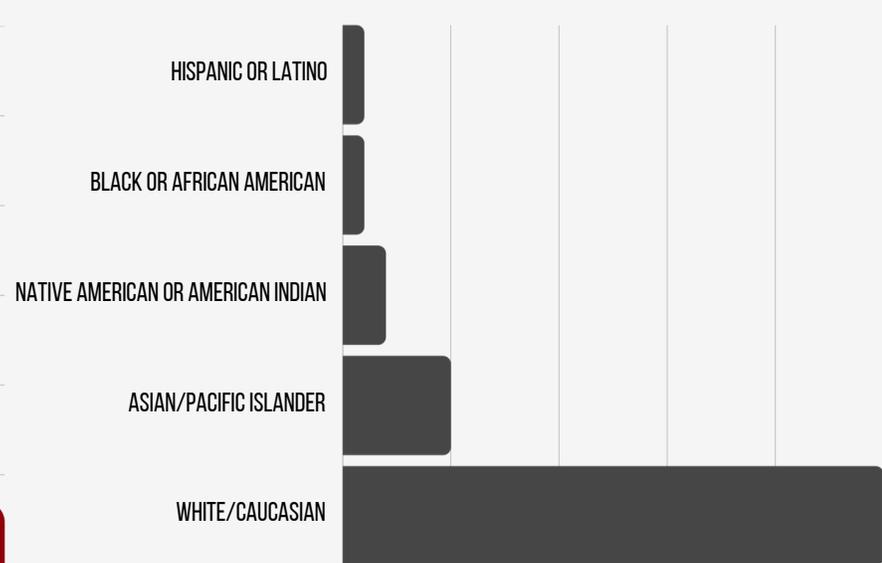
GENDER



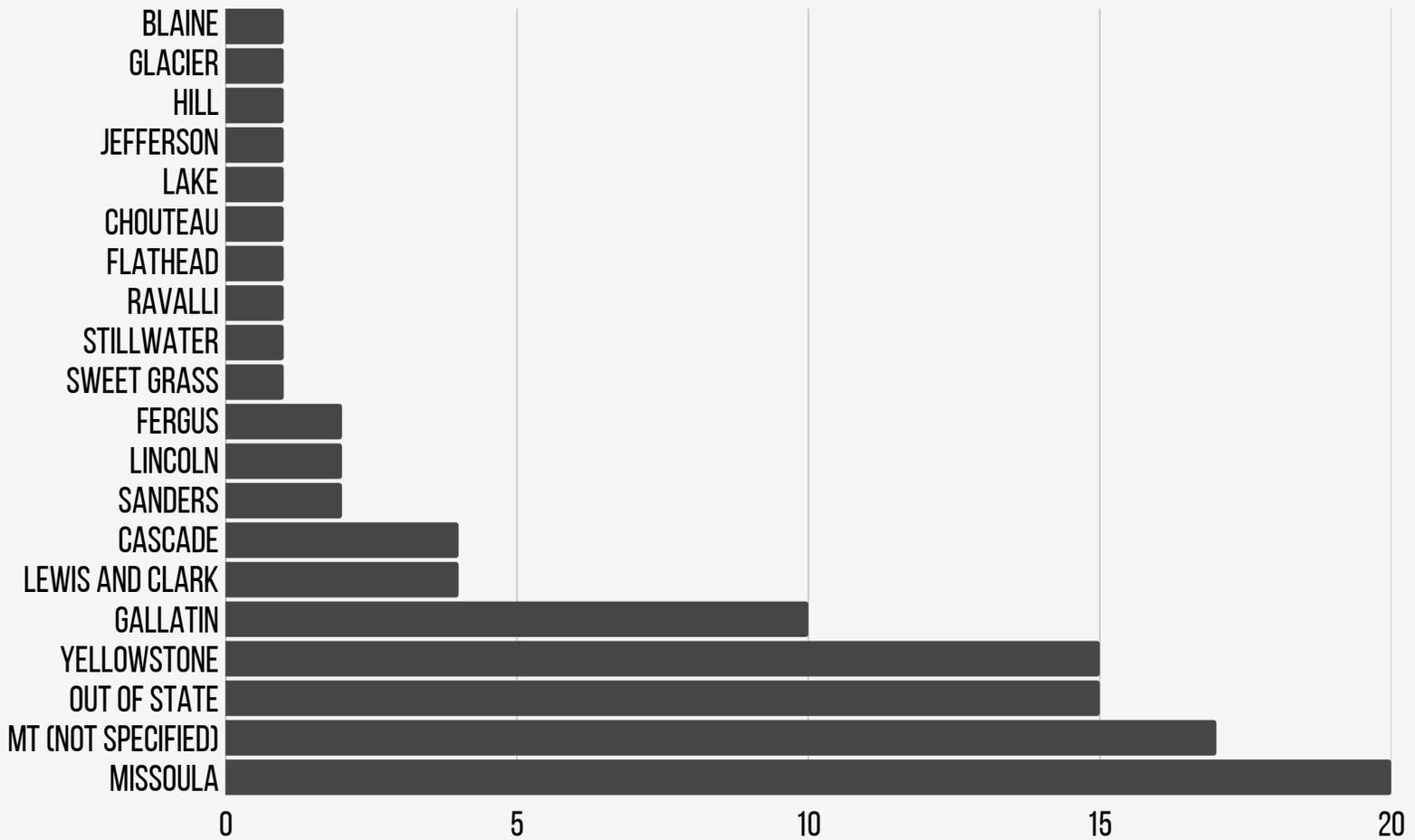
CITIZENSHIP



ETHNICITY



CONTACTS PER COUNTY



OUR PARTNERS

ATTORNEY GENERAL



AUSTIN KNUDSEN



THE LIFEGUARD GROUP



GOVERNOR
GREG GIANFORTE



MONTANA
Department of Transportation



SENTINEL PROJECT



A special thank you to all those who volunteered in 2025 as a Montana Human Trafficking Hotline Advocate.

*for the full report please visit 406stop.com

HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED

VOLUNTEER - Bring your gifts and talents and join the fight against human trafficking. Become a: Search Team Member, A mentor to the survivors at The LifeHouse, An advocate on the Montana Human Trafficking Hotline, A guest instructor for our Art, Equine, and Dance therapies...the possibilities are endless. Use the QR code below and reach out today and find your place in the fight.

FOLLOW - Follow us on social media, repost and tag us whenever you can. We have a social media presence on *Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, SnapChat*, and make sure you check out our *YouTube* channel.

CONNECT - Most of our donors and volunteers come through mutual relationships. Many people still do not know that human trafficking is a real threat to our society. One way is to host a dinner or dessert event and invite those that you know. One of the LifeGuard Team can be available to attend and give a brief presentation on how to get involved in this fight.

GIVE - The LifeGuard Group is funded entirely by individual donors and private foundations. We strive to be good stewards of every dollar that is given and we know that transparency is important

VOLUNTEER



GIVE



WE HAVE MOVED

THE LIFEGUARD GROUP
1515 FAIRVIEW AVE STE 210
MISSOULA, MT 59801