

2020

Impact Report

Grow Free Tennessee





grow FREE TENNESSEE

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Your support makes it possible for young men, women, and children to break free and move forward after years of trauma and abuse. Whether you spread awareness in our community by wearing our swag, share our social media posts, talk about it with your friends, or financially invest in the lives of those we serve...

Your impact reaches so much farther than you realize.

The year 2020 has been a weird, hard, and exhausting year, but friends like you are the secret special fire that keeps this mission going. Thank you for supporting us. Thank you for standing with survivors, and thank you for speaking out against human trafficking in your community.

You are a powerful force of change.

We love you, we appreciate you, and we're so glad you're a part of this movement.

A Year of Growth, Resiliency, & Hope

-Natalie Ivey, Executive Director

How do you reflect back on a year like 2020? I think it's easy to focus on the stress, pain, and worry of the last year. But 2020 was also a gift. Adversity is the test of character, and 2020 taught us so much about our agency and our partners like you.

As we entered into a world of pandemic and quarantine, there was understandably a lot of fear. The concern I heard most from the team focused on our ability to serve our clients. How could we continue our work while keeping ourselves and the clients safe? This was a challenge that had never been faced before—there was no playbook or example we could look to. But the enormity and gravity of this challenge did not dissuade this team.

In fact, we faced the challenge head on—delivering vital supplies and food to clients quarantined in hotels and homes; sending out care packages filled with coloring books and fuzzy socks and fancy lotions to make sure kids still felt seen and loved; traveling with two camping chairs in the trunk so services like therapy could still be provided in the safety of the outdoors; taking extra precautions and safety measures to create a safe and clean space for the most vulnerable of those we serve; braving the post office every week because clients were waiting on vital documents; shifting our entire course catalog onto a virtual platform so that we didn't miss a single opportunity to educate our community partners. In short, when the world stopped turning, our team kicked it into high gear.

But it was not just the tenacity and passion of our team that was tested last year. We knew that this pandemic affected everyone, including our community partners and supporters. We also knew that priorities and focus might justifiably shift during a period of so much chaos and uncertainty. But just like the test of our client care, last year showed us the incredible character of our supporters and community partners.

Time and time again, our partners showed up and walked along beside us as we navigated this new world. Whether it was sponsoring our new transitional housing program, helping us create a therapy garden for clients, providing dinner for clients in our shelter, or making our first ever virtual fundraiser the most successful in our agency's history, our community made the last year possible. Letters of support and encouragement sent throughout the year bolstered our spirits and our efforts. We were able to face last year because of you.

While it may be easy to write off 2020 as a horrible, no-good, very bad year, you can see why it was also a year that brought us so much. It brought us growth, resiliency, and hope. And it brought us these things because of your support and dedication to our agency and our mission. Thank you feels insufficient, but we hope you know how grateful we are for all that you do to make this work possible.

We can't wait to see what we accomplish together next!



Natalie Ivey


Your Partnership Sparks Change

Ariana is a 35-year-old female with a college education who, through a series of unfortunate events, found herself homeless and battling a substance addiction. What hurt Ariana the most was losing custody of her children. After spending some time in jail, Ariana was referred to Grow Free through her probation officer to help separate her from her traffickers and facilitate the necessary support for getting herself back on her feet.

Ariana acknowledged that her vulnerability to victimization was influenced by inconsistency in maintaining housing and having her basic needs met. From day one, Ariana was determined to use this opportunity to maximize the potential she knew she had. Our safe house allowed Ariana the solid foundation she needed to begin to organize her goals and determine the steps she needed to take to achieve them. Immediately, the CCAHT staff recognized her potential and praised the diligence and dedication shown by Ariana. Ariana acknowledges Grow Free's empowerment approach, as evidenced by her statement: "I appreciate the opportunity y'all have given me to show that I'm a responsible adult." Grow Free staff have worked around the clock to provide encouragement and support toward Ariana's success, but the hard work and passion Ariana has shown is admirable, to say the least.

Ariana is working diligently toward earning a job and housing of her own. She is able to see her children almost daily while still maintaining sobriety and compliance with her terms of probation. Ariana works with our therapist and her personal care coordinator as she forges a new path of opportunity for herself. Ariana recently expressed her gratitude and said, "There are not even words to express how happy I am to be where I'm at right now in life and a lot of that has to do with the people I've met being in this house... it makes me so happy that you all are so proud of me and in my corner."

At Grow Free, we are committed to upholding and protecting client safety and confidentiality. To this end, names and some details have been changed or omitted.



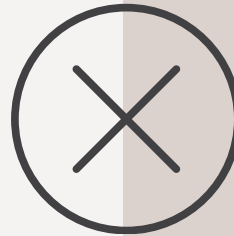
“There are not even words to express how happy I am to be where I’m at right now in life and a lot of that has to do with the people I’ve met being in this house...it makes me so happy that you all are so proud of me and in my corner.”

-Ariana, 36

Mission & Work



“ Thank you for helping me. When I got here, **your voice helped me push harder.** ”
-Jessica, 48



PREVENTION

This year, we trained 4,682 community members to recognize and respond to potential trafficking cases,

Grow Free TN unites and equips our community - Knoxville and the 33 counties of East Tennessee - to end human trafficking through prevention and intervention, while providing survivors with trauma-informed, comprehensive aftercare services.



INTERVENTION




Through FREE Knox Kids, we fostered community collaboration to fill gaps in HT response and services for kids.

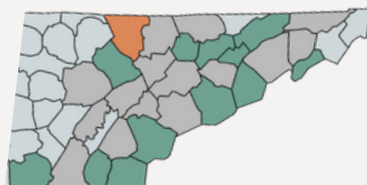
Take a look at our East Tennessee Map to see counties Grow Free served in 2020.



AFTERCARE

In 2020, we received 226 referrals for survivors in need of help and actively served 157 survivors of all ages and genders.

-  Provided Direct Services
-  Provided Both
-  Provided Live Training



Hero Bash 2020

Every year in February, Grow Free TN nominates local superheroes who have gone above and beyond in the fight against human trafficking. In recognition of their contribution and dedication to our mission, these individuals were nominated by staff members as the 2020 Coalition Crusaders.

JASON PACK

Special Agent, FBI

"Even though he is a cop, he made me feel important and like I wasn't in trouble, but that he was there to help me."

Superpowers include hiding undercover to reveal bad guys, using technology to locate fiends; fighting injustice.

PILOT FLYING J

World Changers, Pilot Flying J

"Their support has provided care and a safe home for survivors. Their advocacy has created a lasting impact for our community."

Superpowers include providing safe shelter; advocating across the land; and bringing community awareness.

LEIGH GARRETT & ZANDER THE WONDER DOG

Calming Companions, Habit

"Zander is the goodest boy! He brought a little bit of peace to my chaos."

Beth's Superpowers include advocating for survivors of trafficking; going the distance to help coordinate services; and stopping at nothing until justice is served.

JAMA WALKER

Special Agent, TBI

"The day we met she told me that there is more to life than what I was enduring. She made me believe that I can make it through anything."

Superpowers include using the force to take down creeps, and ensuring survivors are safe.

BETH APPLETON

Victim advocate, FBI

"Beth has always gone above and beyond what I thought someone would do for me! I'm so happy to know she is in my corner."

Superpowers include advocating for survivors of trafficking; going the distance to help coordinate services; and stopping at nothing until justice is served.

MARTHA WIKE

Psychiatrist, DCS

"Dr. Wike is a boss lady! She won't accept anything less than the best for our kiddos. She always has effective assessments and services on hand."

Superpowers include healing minds of survivors; advocating for young survivors; and gathering community resources.

MARY HICKMAN

Transportation Volunteer

"Mary always reminded me that I had the power. She reminded me that I am stronger than I think. She is an amazing role model."

Superpowers include traveling through time and space for survivors; and ensuring that survivors arrive safely.

NATE OGLE

Seeking Justice, Office District Attorney General

"Nate won't stop until justice is served."

Superpowers include being a zealous advocate who works hard to put the bad guys in jail and find justice for our clients.



ONE HUNDRED MEN STRONG

WHAT IS 100 MEN STRONG?

I feel many in our community do not know or understand what human trafficking encompasses. I would like to help educate others so that the victims of this crime are treated with compassion, helped to rehabilitate, and given proper legal representation.

-2020 100 Men Strong Graduate

100 Men Strong is a movement honoring world-changing men in Knoxville and East Tennessee. 100 Men Strong mobilizes community leaders to fuel the anti-trafficking movement in East Tennessee in a tangible way by offering resources about human trafficking, strategies for involving friends and family in the counter-trafficking movement, and fun opportunities to connect with other mission-minded men in Knoxville.



- Aaron White
- Adam Fritts
- Adam Woldt
- Agneesh Bangaree
- Alan Miramontes
- Antonio Mays
- Bill Kistner
- Brad Anders
- Brian Clay
- Chad Campbell
- Chad Frost
- Charles Lomax
- Chris Letsos
- Clarence Swearngen
- Cleveland Hilton
- Clint Crawford
- Craig Bevier
- Daron Long
- David Colquitt
- Donovan Coates
- Gene Thomas
- Hank Peck
- Houston Smelcer
- Jack Little
- James Akin
- James Ivey
- Jered Croom
- Jesse Jones
- Jim Winningham
- Jimmy Carter
- Joe Butler
- Joe Childs
- Jonathan Scoonover
- Josh Ezell
- Justin Biggs
- Justin Long
- Keith Thomas
- Kristopher Swanson
- Marcus Walker
- Matt Dobbins
- Matt Kelley
- Michael Twardy
- Mike Rodgers
- Olivier Muhire
- Patrick Card
- Paul Duncan
- Paul Shore
- Rob Jones
- Rob Winningham
- Sam Edmon
- Shannon Johnson
- Sterling Henton
- Stuart Down
- Tim Wroblewski
- Tony Johnson



Serving Survivors

YOUR SUPPORT MAKES A DIFFERENCE

Because of your help, Grow Free TN managed to serve more survivors, provide more services, and receive more referrals in 2020 than any year before.

Grow Free saved my life and gave me a new start in life and also believed in me when no one else did! When my life was full of storms they took me in and almost in an instant I saw the sunshine again. I felt like giving up and there was no hope, but their program, encouragement, compassion, commitment, drove me harder every day to push forward through all the pain, guilt, shame, sadness, anger, and embarrassment. I will forever be grateful and take what I've learned with me.

-Monique, 30

In-person interaction with the clients we serve is truly invaluable. This pandemic has really revealed to us the true value of face to face, human interaction. While it's been an incredibly frustrating season, it's also forced growth upon us in being creative with staying connected to clients. While working a program through a screen is not preferred, it's sometimes all we can do. Staying consistent with our clients has been the most critical and impactful component of adapting to so many unexpected changes. Many have shared that logging on with us is the best part of their week.

Because of your support, we have been able to deliver materials, meals, and clothes to kid's homes with little fun surprises. Even something as small as a new notebook or some candy has been quite impactful in lifting spirits when we can't meet in person. It's making small gestures of effort that show others you care and you're still here, no matter what.

This year has changed what we thought possible for client care. We will carry these new lessons with us moving forward for the duration of our time working with survivors, and we will never be the same because of it, in the very best way. When you operate with the same established patterns for so long, you almost forget the power of raw creativity. I think the pandemic was a real "drawing board" moment for us all. You're not sure what to do or how you'll move forward, you just know that you will.

-Rachel Baker, Youth Care Coordinator

SERVICES PROVIDED TO SURVIVORS | **2,659** | SERVICES PROVIDED TO SURVIVORS

services include
safe housing,
transportation,
food and clothing,
and more.

in total for 2020
compared to 90
in all of 2019

SURVIVORS ACTIVELY SERVED | **157** | SURVIVORS ACTIVELY SERVED

REFERRALS RECEIVED | **226** | REFERRALS RECEIVED

compared to
196 total in 2019
and 81 total
in 2018

Phoenix House

Phoenix House is best described as a Transitional Housing intensive outpatient program (IOP). Phoenix House offers apartment-style independent living, with the safety net and support system of Grow Free TN staff, and a dynamic therapeutic IOP program that promotes healing and recovery through individual, group, physical, and creative therapies.



Residents participate in group-based therapies 3 days per week, with an additional hour of individual therapy. During the 5-month program, residents receive intensive support to ensure they are ready to smoothly transition into independent housing upon their graduation.

Phoenix House provides Grow Free TN with the opportunity to work with an individual beyond the limitations of crisis-response and acute needs to enhance the impact we are able to have on the lives of those we serve.

“
From the very first day, Grow Free surrounded me with love and care. Not only have they gone high and low trying to help me work through my case, legal status and gaining my independence, but through all of that, they were my greatest emotional support! They have been there for me through good and bad for almost a year now, I'm so thankful and blessed to have them in my life.

”
-Caroline, 27

phoenix house

*"The Phoenix is the ultimate symbol of strength & renewal...
of rising above."*

Educating our Community



Our trainings include specialized sessions specific to medical providers, legal professionals, DCS, educators, parents, youth, dentists, hospitality workers, and more.



11

Curricula
Offered



87

Trainings
Facilitated



4,682

Individuals
Trained

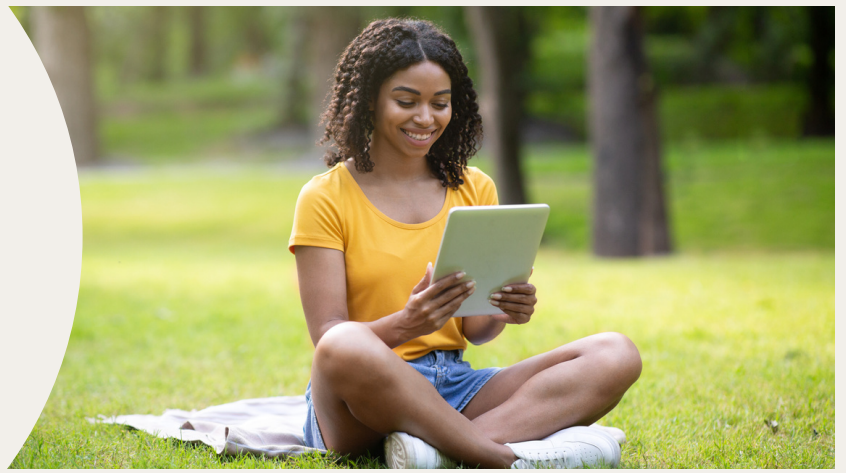


All the information was needed and beneficial.

This is the first human trafficking training I have heard about and I've worked with justice involved individuals within the criminal justice field and community service settings for almost 8 years now.

Thank you so much for this training!

-Community Member



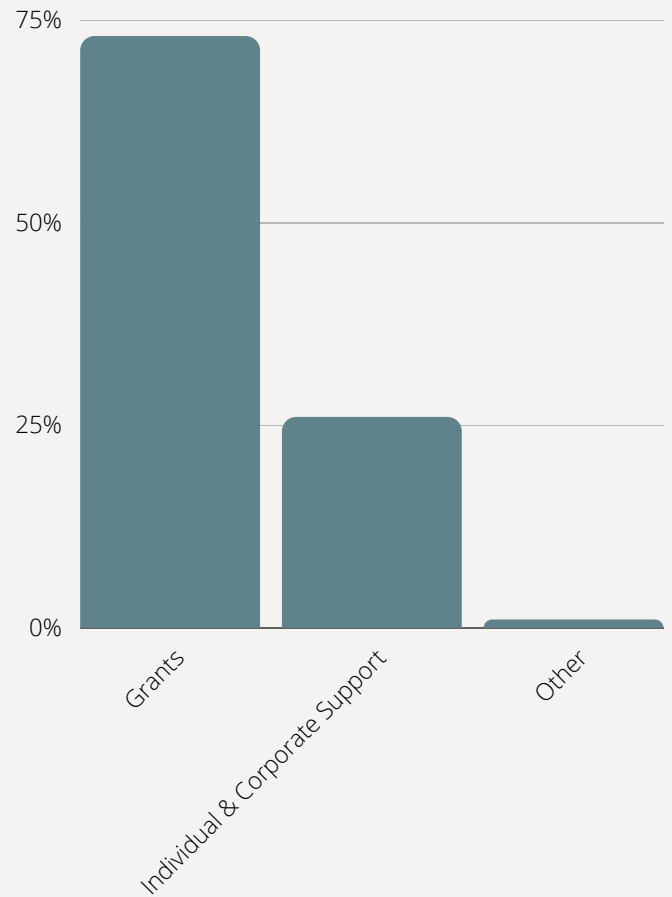
A New Normal

In March 2020, Grow Free TN trained more individuals compared to March 2019. COVID-19 prompted our Community Educator, Rana Zakaria, to create virtual training opportunities, which proved popular and successful throughout the remainder of the year.

Financial Impact

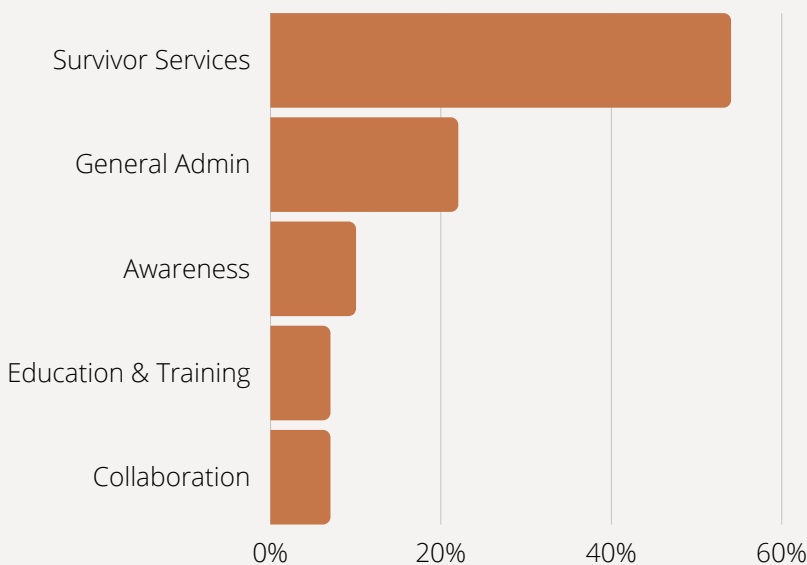
Because of your generous donations, you have provided new opportunities for Grow Free TN to serve our community in 2020.

Your partnership enabled Grow Free TN to provide vital services to more survivors of human trafficking in East Tennessee than ever before, even in the middle of a global pandemic.



“ — — — — —
 Grow Free has completely changed my entire life. I've been trafficked twice. I'm 43 and I'm just learning what a real hug feels like.
This is the first time I've experienced inner happiness.

I have a great therapist who has taught me to laugh. I've maintained 6 months worth of sobriety. I'm not homeless. I learn and grow everyday. This program and women empower us. They care about us until we love ourselves. When I think of words to describe this program I think of: empower, love, light, healing, spiritual, trust, future, hope, safety, pushing to do better, health, communication, bonds. Thank you for your help and for all the hope you've given us. Saving one life at a time.
 — Jasmine, 43



Fitness for Giving

In early December of 2020, CrossFit East10 in Johnson City, TN partnered with Grow Free TN for a CrossFit competition. All of the proceeds from registration fees were donated to Grow Free, which provided survivors holiday care packages.

**“
I am grateful for the help for my daughter's Christmas, the clothing was much needed. I am able to apply to colleges now that I have my GED transcripts Grow Free obtained for me. I truly feel that I can reach out for support and you will be there. I am grateful for all you do for all of us women!
”**

-Emma, 21



Some of our community partners, including the Washington County Family Justice Center and the Johnson City Fire Department, were in attendance. Even during a year of uncertainty, we were able to send a holiday care package to every client we serve because of the support received through this event.

share your STRIDES

Our first-ever Share Your Strides campaign has been a great success thanks to friends, donors, and community partners of Grow Free TN. While we weren't able to host an in-person event this year, the mission was successful as we raised awareness, funds, and our heart rates to help fight trafficking and support survivors here in Knoxville and across East Tennessee.

Every dollar raised went to fight human trafficking and support survivors like Ariana, as she makes strides towards recovery and freedom.



Love Grows Here

We were so excited to have a green space for our clients, as we knew it would be a huge step in creating a place of peace and comfort. We were not expecting that this garden would come to represent so much more about our agency.

This simple idea quickly turned into a big project over this past summer. Members of our community, Grow Free staff and volunteers came together (while practicing social distancing of course.) In between their personal daily lives, caring for hurting kids, writing grants, and training professionals, our team and community came out and devoted their sweat (lots and lots of sweat), muscles, time, and love to make this beautiful garden come together. It has been amazing to witness what we could create when working side by side.

This beautiful new garden is a lovely testament to our power as a community. This garden is a place of healing and love, and it's because of you and your dedication to this agency and our mission.



“
May seeds of hope be planted. May paths of peace be walked. May those seeds of hope grow with love and care. And may this be a place for healing for all who enter.
”

-Pastor Adam



Community Partners

Our Counter-Trafficking Task Force is comprised of multi-disciplinary teams, including FREE Knox Kids and 423 Unsilenced - through which we bring service providers and community agencies together to address the needs of trafficked individuals in our community by collaborating on active cases, sharing intelligence and resources, and ensuring that victims are connected to services. Below are just a few of our community partners.

- CASA of East Tennessee
- Central Baptist Church-Bearden
- Change Center
- Cherokee Health Systems
- Child Protective Services
- Childhelp Children's Center of East TN
- Department of Child Services
- Department of Homeland Security
- Federal Bureau of Investigation
- Florence Crittenton Agency
- Great Schools Partnership
- Johnson City/Washington County Family Justice Center
- Lonsdale & West View
- Gateway Center Adolescent Residential Center
- Greater Knoxville Hospitality Association
- Katie Miller Residential Center
- Helen Ross McNabb Center
- Hope Resource Center
- Knox County Health Department
- Knox County Sheriff's Office
- Knox Family Justice Center
- KnoxHMIS
- Knoxville Police Department
- Office of District Attorney General
- Project Transition
- SafeSpace
- Street Hope TN
- Tennessee Advocacy Talk
- Tennessee Bureau of Investigation
- The Point
- US Attorney's Office
- UT College of Nursing
- UT College of Social Work
- Vanderbilt Center of Excellence
- Volunteer Ministry Center
- Youth Villages
- YWCA Knoxville



Thank you

Grow Free TN would like to thank all our community partners, volunteers, and community members who have provided support this year while navigating the world of a global pandemic. Your support, donations and contributions helped provide service and support to men, women, and children who experienced trafficking in East Tennessee. We know your support will continue to help us change lives and make East Tennessee a safer, better place for us all.

“

You guys are doing it different. I actually feel like my life matters to somebody. You all didn't give up on me.

-Daisy, 34

”

“

Thank you so much. I've noticed a difference in myself these last couple of weeks and it feels amazing. I want to keep going forward and not look back.

I'm so proud of myself and how far I've come. I feel like a different person and I'm loving the person I'm finding.

I truly truly appreciate everything Grow Free has done for me since we met.

-Brittney, 29

”



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