

# 2021

ANNUAL REPORT





“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free.”

LUKE 4:18





## WELCOME

### FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

While many have referred to 2020 as a “lost” year, 2021 has been a trifecta for Freekind. As we continued to navigate the pandemic and support an average of 145 survivors each month, we achieved three significant milestones in the life of our organization.

**At the end of July, we officially launched our new brand and revealed our new name!** We have received such positive feedback and have no regrets about the way our new brand allows us to emphasize our heart for freedom, and our desire for all humankind to experience hope and belonging. As a faith-based organization, we believe this aligns with the heart of God and the reason that Jesus came. His death bought our freedom. His resurrection gives us hope. And his invitation to be in relationship with him is an invitation for belonging. For survivors of human trafficking, who have had their freedom stolen away, their hopes crushed and their sense of belonging betrayed by their traffickers, there can be no better news.

**In September, we announced our merger with Richmond Justice Initiative,** a long-time ally in the fight to end human trafficking. Together, we can help prevent the next generation from being trafficked even as we support those who have experienced sexual exploitation on their journey to freedom. Because of our amazing partners, and the strength of the merger, we have now licensed the Prevention Project curriculum in 19 states and reached more than 40,000 youth. At the same time, we have identified 69 new victims, helped a record 51 survivors begin long-term restorative programming, and successfully advocated for clients in court with a 95% rate of success.

**Then, in November, we gathered (in person!) for our 5th annual Celebrate Justice gala.** For the first time ever, we raised more than \$110 thousand dollars to support our mission! We are so grateful for corporate partners like Langley Federal Credit Union, and long-term funding partners like Bernardine Franciscan Sisters, church partners from the Oceanfront to Richmond, and generous individuals like you who empower us to continue the fight.

We hope you are as excited as we are to see what we will accomplish together in 2022. You’ve set a high bar for yourselves! We look forward to strengthening our existing relationships, building new ones, impacting more students with the lifesaving message of prevention, and creating offramps to freedom for as many survivors as possible.

With gratitude,

**LISA KERSEY**  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

## FROM VBJI TO FREEKIND

Our name change was a long time in coming, but COVID did one good thing—it created the space for us to partner with brand experts, pro bono, to create a name free of geographic limitation and one that better represents who we are and why we exist.

More than a name change, our rebrand was a celebration of our donors, volunteers and community partners, who have fueled our mission since we were established in 2012, helping us to grow from an organization of \$25,000 and a focus on raising awareness to a \$500,000 organization serving more than 150 survivors of sexual exploitation each year; licensing the Prevention Project curricula in 19 states; and providing awareness and training to thousands of community members and professionals across the Commonwealth.

Freekind exists to restore freedom to those who have had it stolen away. To reignite hope for a new future. And to create a sense of belonging for those who feel marred by shame. To teach students that their freedom matters. That they have the power to disrupt human trafficking in their generation and the next. To make more people aware of what sexual exploitation really looks like, so they understand that its victims share a common desire- to be free; to hope for themselves and for their children; and to experience true belonging. That's what YOU make possible with every dollar you invest, every event you support, every person you educate, and every time you partner with us.



Freekind is dedicated to providing the survivors of human trafficking the support they need to recover from the horrors they've suffered.

## MERGER

The timing of our rebrand was nothing short of divine intervention. When VBJI began the process of a name change in 2020, we couldn't have known that we'd have the opportunity to join forces with RJJ in 2021. Yet our new name, Freekind, was a perfect fit for the work of our two organizations.

Both RJJ and Freekind began as organizations focused on raising awareness and assessing the greatest anti-trafficking needs in our communities. As RJJ evolved, they began focusing resources on preventing human trafficking, resulting in the creation of the Prevention Project,™ a nationally recognized, award-winning program with curricula designed for both middle and high school students and training for youth service providers. Meanwhile, Freekind began focusing its efforts on restorative services for victims, which led to the creation of Offramps, a program that includes jail-based classes to help identify victims, court support to advocate for alternative sentencing, re-entry planning to create a path to freedom, and transitional support as survivors reintegrate into the community.

By combining forces under the banner of Freekind, the Prevention Project and Offramps programs will continue to flourish. As the Prevention Project celebrates its 10th year in classrooms and Freekind celebrates its 10th year of creating offramps to freedom to survivors, we have a strong foundation for the future.

Whether you are a historical supporter of RJJ or VBJI, or you have only known us as the merged organization of Freekind, you have made an incredible impact on the lives of students and survivors in Virginia and beyond. As two Virginia-founded, faith-based organizations dedicated to anti-trafficking work, joining together will allow us to grow our impact exponentially, and we are honored to have you with us in the fight.

Together, we can protect our children and restore freedom to those who have had it stolen away. You are a freedom bringer - a hope igniter - a relationship restorer. Thank you.



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BY THE NUMBERS

## SURVIVOR ADVOCACY



**69** new survivors identified

**95%** favorable court outcomes

**51** clients began restorative programs

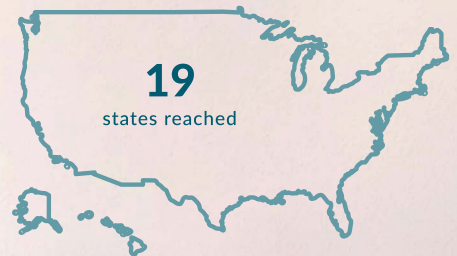
**23** clients graduated programs

## THE PREVENTION PROJECT STATS

**62** schools/programs licensed

**330** classrooms reached

**40,726** students empowered







## VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

“Human traffickers seek to isolate the vulnerable, stealing their freedom and hope. I believe God is using Freekind to restore His beloved children, created in His image, to his original plan- an abundant life filled with peace and love. I volunteer with Freekind because I want to be part of that work.”

### LISA WENSCHLAG

Volunteer Partner



## VICTIM ADVOCACY

### ADVOCATE OF THE YEAR

“Survivors need hope, love, stability and Jesus! As a long-term advocate, walking alongside survivors and showing constant support helps these things to become a part of their lives.”

### JEN BROWN

Volunteer Victim Advocate



For many years now, God has instilled in us a passion to support the fight against human trafficking locally and abroad. Humbling ourselves to serve others, especially the defenseless, points directly to the heart of Christ. We give to Freekind because we have seen in action how they serve our community wholeheartedly. We are so grateful for the amazing team of men and women who work tirelessly to bring hope and create new beginnings for victims.”

—KIRK AND CAROLINE KALMBACHER, FUNDING PARTNERS.



# Celebrate Justice

This year marked our 5th annual Celebrate Justice gala, and it exceeded our expectations! We hosted more than 250 guests who had the opportunity to bid on more than 70 packages in our silent auction. Langley Federal Credit Union served as our Presenting Sponsor, along with many new and returning business partners. We were thrilled to be in person with many returning guests and welcomed over 100 first-time attendees! Our emcee was the iconic Barbara Hamm Lee and our keynote speaker, Kate Mogulescu, had everyone on the edge of their seat as she shared the stories of criminalized victims of human trafficking. When the night ended, we had surpassed our goal, raising \$115 thousand to expand prevention education and restore freedom to those who have had it stolen away.



# Freedom Maker Award



## JESSICA WILLIS

Former CEO of Richmond Justice Initiative

Each year, Freekind presents an award to an individual or organization that has gone above and beyond in the fight to end human trafficking. Since 2017, we have been honored to celebrate some amazing people, from high school students to jail personnel, from public defenders to residential treatment programs.

This year, we had the unique opportunity to celebrate Jessica Willis, former CEO of Richmond Justice Initiative, who invested more than a decade of her career developing, launching and expanding the Prevention Project™ program. Because of her leadership, the program has now reached more than 100 organizations across 19 states and impacted more than 40,000 students nationwide. Her work has not only helped to prevent the next generation from being trafficked but raised up future leaders to create new strategies and solutions to combat human trafficking.

And as her final act of service in the field of human trafficking prevention, she was instrumental in the successful merger of our two organizations. We are beyond grateful for her vision and leadership, and we are humbled that she would entrust Freekind with her legacy in prevention education. Congratulations and Godspeed, Jessica!



“

When I was at the program, I remembered you telling me you believed in me, and I could tell you really meant it. I started thinking to myself, if you believe in me, why can't I believe in me? So, each day I told myself I could do it. And I did! I started believing in me because you took a chance and believed in me, it changed how I viewed myself.”

—Trafficking Survivor/Freekind Client

## SURVIVOR STORY

“Winter” grew up in a home that was chaotic, and she often experienced abuse. When she met an older “boy” online who promised to “save” her, she was easily persuaded to run away with him. She found herself having to do things in order to keep her new boyfriend happy and soon she found herself locked in a hotel room performing sex acts for money. Winter became pregnant and ultimately, more dependent on her trafficker. Once she had her baby, the trafficker took the child away and gave it to a family member, using the child to manipulate and control her.

We met Winter while she was incarcerated for crimes her trafficker forced her to commit, and she was expecting another child. Working in coordination with her defense attorney and Freekind’s case manager, Winter was able to enter a program that works with pregnant woman and allows them to keep their children. She worked hard to prove to the courts that she was using this opportunity to change her life. She took parenting classes, vowed to break unhealthy cycles and completed on-line training courses offered by a local college, enabling her to get a job.

Winter worked with the program, her Freekind case manager, and local organizations to create the support system she needed to move forward after she graduated. Just recently, she went back to court and gave heartfelt testimony of how much her life had changed for the better. As a result of her hard work and significant progress, the court agreed that she would not serve any additional time. She and her baby moved into transitional housing, and she was able to file for legal custody of her first child. Winter and both her children are now thriving. She recently commented that even when she imagined what her life could be like, she didn’t dare dream that her current life was even possible for her.

*Pseudonym used to protect the privacy of our client, story used with permission*



“In a small rural community such as ours, human trafficking is not freely spoken about or believed to be occurring here because we are not “The Big City.” In fact, with several hotels and truck stops, our community is a prime spot for human trafficking to occur. Freekind has been instrumental in bringing human trafficking awareness to our community and training for law enforcement professionals.”

**STEVE PATTERSON**  
City of Franklin Police Chief



## HUMAN TRAFFICKING PREVENTION EDUCATION

Fall 2021 marked the 10th year of the Prevention Project™ program in classrooms across the country, which has now reached more than 1,000 classrooms and 40,000 middle and high school students.

Because most of the adult survivors we serve experienced some form of abuse when they were children, Freekind is committed to equipping the next generation with the tools they need to avoid becoming victims. More than 80% of identified human trafficking victims in the United States were younger than 23 years-old when their trafficking began. Our youth are one of the most vulnerable populations and children of color are four times more likely to be trafficked. Children who are struggling with their gender identity and children who have experienced the foster care system are also at greater risk. Many kids are exploited in their own homes and most often by people known to them.

## STUDENT FEEDBACK

After completing the Prevention Project program, students express how vital the information is for them:

“ I think that it’s important to give to this organization and help the Prevention Project because it provides other people, other students, and anyone else with the resources and the knowledge that they’ll need to keep themselves safe, to keep others safe, and to never have to find themselves in a dangerous situation.”

—Prevention Project student

“I think the Prevention Project program is very important because human trafficking is a huge problem that can be prevented. It is vital to educate as many people as possible so that we can help end such a horrific thing from happening.”

—Prevention Project student



# Thank you

## COMMUNITY PARTNERS

No one person or organization can meet all the complex needs of survivors or dismantle a multi-billion-dollar criminal industry alone.

Human trafficking is a community problem that requires a community response. And Freekind is proud to say that our community is responding! Here are just some of the many organizations we partner with:

- Bernardine Franciscan Sisters Foundation
- Chesterfield County
- Christopher Newport University
- Denbigh High School
- Ferguson Cares
- Franklin Police
- Franklin Public Schools
- Godwin High School
- Guest House
- Hampton Roads Regional Jail
- Henrico County
- HER Shelter
- Hermitage High School
- Langley Foundation for Families
- Latisha's House
- Lighthouse Counseling
- New Kent Schools
- Newport News City Jail
- Newport News Police
- Newport News Public Defender's Office
- Newport News Public Schools
- Newport News/Williamsburg International Airport
- Norfolk Jail
- Orphan's Promise
- Overton Family Foundation
- Portsmouth Public Schools
- Richard Bennett Trust
- Safe Harbor
- Sentara Cares
- Smithfield High School
- Southeastern Family Project
- Towne Bank
- Transitions Family Violence Services
- Virginia Beach Jail
- Virginia Law Foundation
- Virginia Port Authority

Together, we are disrupting a multi-billion-dollar criminal industry. Together, we are preventing our youth from becoming victims. And together, we are restoring freedom, hope and belonging to those who have experienced sexual exploitation.

“Freekind has provided some of our most vulnerable clients the opportunity to escape their dangerous situations and move beyond their involvement with the criminal legal system. Our partnership with Freekind is an invaluable asset to our clients and our community”

**JESSICA E.B. CROSSETT**

Chief Deputy Public Defender, Newport News Office of the Public Defender





## TO OUR CORPORATE PARTNERS:

We continue to be so very grateful for the many business partners that have stepped forward to make a difference in the lives of survivors or who have pledged their support for prevention education in our middle and high schools. We are blown away by your generosity and recognize that we could not do what we do without your support. We want to celebrate both those who have recently joined on as partners and those who have been with us from the beginning. You are heroes in our book, and you are making freedom, hope and belonging possible for the survivors we meet and those who we have yet to meet.

## TO OUR COMMUNITY PARTNERS:

As they say, it takes a village, and nowhere is that more true than when it comes to serving survivors of human trafficking and preventing the exploitation of our children. Thanks to our partners in law enforcement, restorative programming, churches, schools, workforce development and housing, we are not alone. Every day we partner with you to bring freedom, hope and belonging to survivors of human trafficking by creating safety and a path to a better future. Every day we partner with you to protect our youth from predators and equip them to be leaders for the next generation. Together, we are making Virginia a safer place for children and survivors, and the last place that traffickers want to be.

## TO OUR CHURCH PARTNERS:

We are so thankful for the partnerships that we have with churches in our community. This year has been an exciting year for us, rebranding to Freekind and merging with Richmond Justice Initiative. We are so thankful for all the churches who have continued to support us through this transition and who continue to show up and ask ‘How else can we help?’

Throughout this year we have been blessed to be able to provide for the needs of our clients as well as increase education and awareness in our communities because of your financial, relational, and prayerful support. Together with our church partners, we have been able to provide our clients with so much, including journey bags, baby showers, Christmas stockings, paid medical expenses, and more. In Christ we find freedom, hope, and belonging; through your partnerships we can extend these same gifts to our clients. Thank you for being the hands and feet of Jesus and extending God’s love to the most vulnerable in our community. —Emily Dotson, Church Engagement Coordinator.

## CHURCH PARTNERS

Alexander Baptist	Greater Disciple-ship Center	Olivet Christian Church
Atlee Community	Greek Orthodox Philo-tochos Chapter 1097	Portsmouth First Friends
Believers Church	Hope Church	Redeemer Presbyterian
Calvary Assembly of God	Journey Christian	Redemption Hill
Christ Fellowship	Life Church	St. Mary’s Cath-olic Church
City Church of Richmond	Manna Church	The Rock Church
City Hill	Mechanicsville Christian Center	Trinity Church
City Life	Mount Pleasant Baptist Church	Trinity Church
Coastal Community Virginia Beach	New Life Church	Trinity Evangel-ical Lutheran
Coastal Commu-nity Yorktown	Next Level Church	West End Assem-bly of God
Community Church International	Northside Chris-tian Church	World Outreach Worship Center
Crown & Joy Presbyterian		
Freedom Life		

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### TO OUR BOARD MEMBERS

We cannot look at the victories of the past year without celebrating our incredible Board of Directors. From cultivating new grant funding opportunities to playing key roles in our signature events to strategizing program development, these men and women lead with passion and commitment. Their sacrifice and contributions of time, talent, connections, and financial resources have fueled our mission. Through our merger, we were fortunate to add two board members from Richmond Justice Initiative, and they too have hit the ground running. I am honored to serve as the Chair of such a talented and passionate Board. —Faye Antezana, Board Chair.

### BOARD MEMBERS

Faye Antezana, Board Chair  
Albert “Buck” Tuminello, Vice Chair  
Colleen Dudley, Treasurer  
Jordan R. N. Brown, Secretary  
Nate Carl, Director  
Angela Russell, Director  
Jose Iregui, Director  
Mike Lico, Director  
Marjorie Blanton-Youssef, Director

### TEAM

Lisa Kersey, Executive Director  
Joy Dudley, Victim Services Director  
Elizabeth Lumsden, Operations Director  
Kathy Confer, Senior Case Manager  
Deanna Longjohn, Preven-tion Education Manager

### VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR LEADS

Medy Cook, Victim Advocacy  
Emily Dotson, Church Engagement  
Sarah Faircloth, Social Media  
Susan Richard, Community Outreach  
Lydia Weller, Volunteer Engagement  
Debbie Lewis, Volunteer Engagement



## VISION FOR THE COMING YEAR

In 2022, we will be celebrating our 10th anniversary as an organization! Founded as Virginia Beach Justice Initiative in 2012, our primary mission was awareness building and legislative advocacy. In 2015, our mission began to expand into victim advocacy, with the launch of our volunteer victim advocacy training program. Then, in 2016, we began offering jail-based classes to educate and identify criminalized victims. And between 2015 and 2019, we went from being a \$25,000 nonprofit serving less than 20 clients per year to a \$350,000 nonprofit serving more than 120 clients each month!

Fast forward to 2021. We adopted a new strategic plan, revised our mission and vision statements and became laser focused on three programs: Awareness & Training; Prevention Education; and Survivor Restoration. We also rebranded as Freekind to better reflect the freedom, hope and belonging that we desire for every survivor of exploitation we serve, and every student we reach through our prevention education program. Then, in September, we merged with Richmond Justice Initiative, giving us the opportunity to accelerate program growth and double our impact.

What an amazing foundation on which to launch into our 10th year!

As we look ahead to 2022, we are planning for a year of stewarding all the change and excitement of this past year. We will continue building on our industry-specific training, ensuring that law enforcement, criminal legal, healthcare, financial and hospitality professionals have the knowledge and tools they need to help disrupt human trafficking in our communities. We will be updating and adapting our Prevention Project curriculum to reach more people: college-aged students, including those aging out of the foster care system; homeschool students, and church youth groups. And we will continue to collaborate with our multi-state network of restorative treatment programs, employment services and housing partners to provide comprehensive care for survivors. We look forward to sharing all that you have made possible, when we gather in November 2022 to Celebrate Freedom!

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