



**ANNUAL  
REPORT  
2020**

**VIRGINIA BEACH  
JUSTICE INITIATIVE**

For I know the plans I have for you declares the Lord,  
plans to prosper you and not to harm you;  
plans to give you hope and a future.

JEREMIAH 29:11



## **WE MADE IT.**

With the grace and provision of God, the steadfast commitment of our funding partners, the perseverance of our team and the passion of our volunteers, church and corporate partners, we made it. Together.

But we didn't just make it *through* 2020. Yes, we were challenged and stretched. We were frustrated and relieved. We were adapting and readapting on the regular. But because of you, we didn't merely limp to the finish line. No, we ran across the finish line of 2020 with our hands, hearts and heads held high!

Through the pages of this year's annual report, we hope you'll get a glimpse of some of the amazing things that were accomplished this year, despite all odds.

As our organization and the entire country looks ahead to 2021, we are hopeful that you will continue with us on the journey to end human trafficking in our community.

**LISA KERSEY**

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

# Human trafficking is

the social justice issue of our time.

Those trapped in human trafficking are looking for an offramp to a life of freedom. VBJI exists to give them one.



## VBJI AT A GLANCE

### MISSION

VBJI is a faith-based organization that exists to prevent human trafficking in our community and support those it impacts on their journey to freedom.

### VISION

To inspire Hampton Roads to become a community that takes a collaborative, survivor-first approach to meeting the complex needs of those who have experienced human trafficking.

### SERVICES

- Awareness outreach
- Industry-specific training
- Prevention education
- Survivor Support
  - ◆ Victim Identification
  - ◆ Court Advocacy
  - ◆ Re-entry planning
  - ◆ Trauma-informed therapy
  - ◆ Transitional support

## Despite COVID-19 and because of you...

**We served more survivors this year than ever before**, even though we taught fewer jail-based classes than usual because of necessary lockdowns. We were able to identify and serve new clients through referrals from our community partners.

**We continued to provide industry-specific training through virtual and in-person presentations**, equipping hundreds of people to better understand human trafficking and see the issue through the eyes of those who have been exploited.

**We welcomed two new schools to the Prevention Project movement**, helping to protect the next generation from being trafficked.

**We hosted our first-ever virtual 5k in the spring and our first-ever virtual gala in the fall**, helping to raise the funds needed to support the increased demand for our services.

**We offered our first-ever virtual volunteer victim advocacy training in the Fall**, increasing by 30% the number of volunteers equipped to support the needs of our community-based clients.

**Thank you for the sacrifices you made in this season to continue supporting those exploited by human trafficking in our community.**



**NEW VICTIMS IDENTIFIED**

**MATCHED TO TREATMENT PROGRAMS**



**TRAUMA-INFORMED COUNSELING/MONTH**

**INSTANCES OF COURT ADVOCACY**



**INSTANCES OF TRANSITIONAL SUPPORT**

# COMMUNITY PARTNERS

**We believe in the power of community collaboration.** No one person or organization can end human trafficking, nor provide for all the complex needs of those who have been exploited. While VBJI focuses on victim identification and re-entry services and support, we partner with others who have the resources and expertise to provide housing and economic empowerment to our clients. Below is an overview of our community partners.

HER Shelter  
Lighthouse Counseling  
Omni Psychotherapy  
Safe Harbor  
Samaritan's House  
Southeastern Family Project  
Survivor Ventures  
Transitions Family Violence Services  
20+ other treatment programs

Churches & the faith community  
City and regional jails  
Hampton Roads HT Task Force  
Hospitals & health systems  
Law Enforcement  
Public defenders & probation officers  
Schools and school systems  
Survivor Leaders  
Other non-profit organizations



# PROGRAMS

VBJI furthers its mission through three key initiatives:

1. **Awareness & Training** of key professionals and industries, and the community at large
2. **Prevention Education** of our middle and high school aged students, with a goal to protect our children from becoming victims
3. **Survivor Support** for those who have experienced human trafficking and sexual exploitation in our community

While our awareness and training initiatives include other nonprofits, churches, schools, healthcare and social service organizations and the military, it is a unique privilege to provide survivor-focused training for our community partners along the criminal justice continuum. Despite the challenges of 2020, we delivered a total of 33 presentations/trainings reaching more than 1,300 people.

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*We want to continue to push victim-centered and trauma-informed messaging to our front line. For too long this type of training has only been offered to detectives, but truly **it's the first contact with uniformed officers that most often makes or breaks the encounter [with a victim] and plants seeds of hope for the future, or reasons to never call the police again.***

-SVU Sergeant, Newport News Police Department

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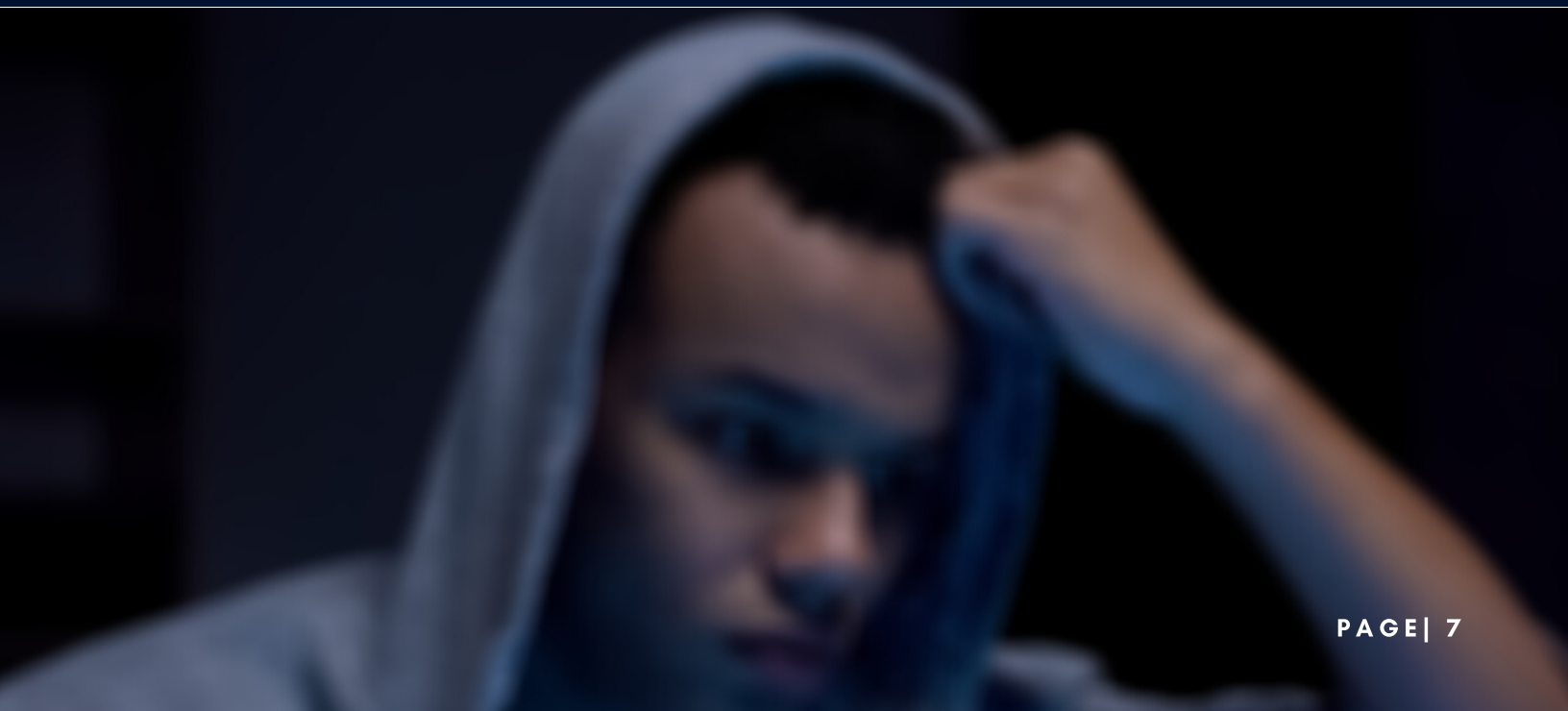


While prevention is an aspect of all of our awareness and training initiatives, we are particularly committed to protecting the next generation from being trafficked. Working with adult victims, we've seen first hand the devastation caused by those whose exploitation began in childhood. In 2020, despite the challenges faced by teachers and students, we added two new schools to the Prevention Project® movement, bringing the total number of local schools using the curriculum to ten.

“ The material provided by the Prevention Project helped the students and me realize **there's no safe demographic**, there's no safe gender, there's no safe socioeconomic background, no safe sexual orientation....every single person's at risk.

-Government Teacher, Smithfield High School

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VBJI offers two unique services for those exploited by human trafficking: 1) Jail-based programming to identify victims that would otherwise go unidentified or misidentified; and 2) Re-entry support, including court advocacy for alternative sentencing that favors treatment over incarceration. Though the jails experienced frequent lockdowns in 2020 due to the pandemic, we identified 62 new victims and supported over 135 unique clients in 2020.

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*I've never had anyone show up for me before, and just having someone to come to court with me means a lot. Thank you so much for helping me get here [treatment program]...I start a job training program next week and lots of great things are happening for me now...Thank you for working so hard and never giving up on me.*

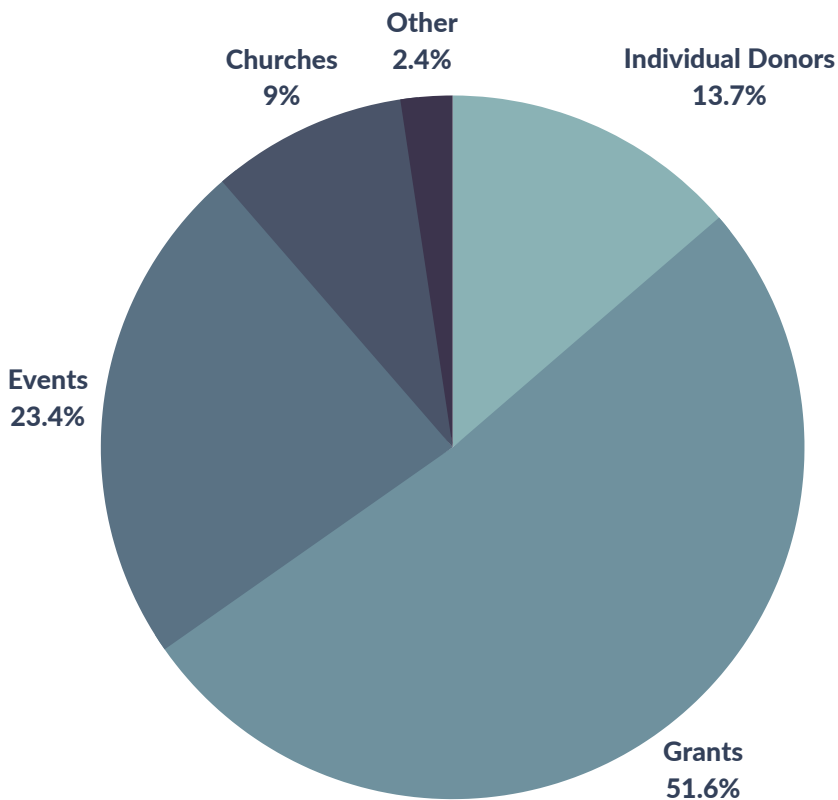
-VBJI Client, "Nicole"

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## SOURCES OF FUNDING



We are grateful to our funding partners, without whom we would not exist. Despite the pandemic, in 2020 we welcomed new donors, maintained multi-year grant partners, added new ones and were blessed by an increase in financial support from the faith community. We are humbled by your generosity.

"I have found that among its  
other benefits, giving liberates  
the soul of the giver."

MAYA ANGELOU



# **VIRGINIA BEACH JUSTICE INITIATIVE**

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