

# LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



On December 31st I received a phone call from one of our girls. We'll call her "Erica". She has been placed in a faraway residential home for several months now. She's had a tough year with being moved in and out of her home, going into various institutions, and running away. I asked her, "Hey, what do you want to leave behind in 2022?"

She thought for a moment, then said, "I want to leave behind my attitude, depression, and thoughts that I'm never going to forgive people."

My jaw dropped at how many things she was willing to leave behind her.

This is what we help children do. We are referred some of the most traumatized and behaviorally challenged youth in the state. They've been through family trauma, sexual trauma, and major life disappointments. They've tried sex, drugs, alcohol, selling their

bodies, violence, and much more. They are so accustomed to things going wrong that they self-sabotage when things begin to go right. They run away, go back to their abuser, or drop out of school.

The Adverse Childhood
Experiences study shows us that
childhood trauma is a cycle. When
a child doesn't have the tools to
break free from trauma, they
become stuck in a recurring
nightmare where trauma recurs
again and again.

# But a child cannot break free alone. They need *support*.

When a mentor steps in, they crouch down to the child's level.

They crouch down into their darkness, hopelessness, and despair.

They sacrifice their comfort and ease to lift up a child who is in a very dark place...



It reminds me how Jesus gave up His divine nature to come to earth as God made flesh. He met us in our unholy state and brought us light, love, peace, truth, hope, and salvation.

**God comes to us.** He sits with us. And in Him, we get to take off the old and become a new creation.

When Erica told me everything she wanted to leave behind, I reminded her that through Christ, the "old her" has passed away, and she is now an entirely new creation. I prayed that over her, then she smiled and said, "Thanks Miss Cara. This is exactly what I needed."

What did she need? She needed me to sit with her. To encourage her. To pray for her. And to remind her that she's not her "same-old".

She's totally new.

As we close out yet another year at Safe Passage, I look forward to the next year. I look forward to the many more youth that God will send to us. We believe they can be transformed into new creations by His love. The old has passed. The new has come.

My goodness, we serve a wonderful God.

Cara Starns

Founder and President

# PREVENTION PROGRAM

We reached more than 600 youth with our prevention program. We educate youth about the issues of sexual abuse and child trafficking, and we help youth make the courageous decision to report abuse.



students reached through



# COMMUNITY AWARENESS

We educated over 2,000 parents, professionals, and community stakeholders on how to recognize and respond to child trafficking.

## SURVIVOR MENTORSHIP

14 survivors of child trafficking or exploitation are thriving in our mentorship program! They receive weekly support from their mentors.



# SHE REACHED OUT

Ariel was 17 years old when she was referred to us. She met with me after bravely going to her school counselor and sharing that she had been selling her body for money. She explained how badly she wanted to stop, but didn't know how.

When the school counselor called us and shared what was going on. We immediately raised concerns about a predator being present somewhere in her life. We knew Ariel didn't just come up with this idea to sell her body on her own. Someone... somewhere... had groomed and exploited her.

Ariel's parents were eager for her to get help from Safe Passage and just wanted to help their daughter even though they couldn't understand why she would do such a thing.

After a year of being in our program, Kelly, Ariel's mom, has not stopped thanking us for helping her daughter and expressing how much change she has seen in Ariel.

When I first met Ariel, she just wanted to have boys enjoy her body and to make big money. Her confidence came from guys liking the way she looked and how she could please them.

Over the last year, I have seen so much change in this young girl. She is determined not to be "easy", as she puts it. She has realized her self-worth and is no longer interested in giving herself away for money. She also wants to be a nurse and is taking incredible steps to pursue her dream. She is more focused in school than ever before and has set a goal to not skip school or get kicked out this year, which happened the last three years. She also attended our retreat and grew closer to God. She's even come to church with me! Ariel is being transformed, and in one year, she is more hopeful than ever.



# WHAT IS IT LIKE HAVING A MENTOR?

Going into the first meeting with new kids, you never know what to expect. What does he/she look like? How do I start the conversation? How do I make this kid feel safe with me?

These questions were all running through my head when I met 13-year-old Taylor. I knew very little about her, just that she was adopted and was sexting a 40-year-old man in Montana. But when I met her, I knew we could really help her.

She asked great questions, like, "What is it like to have a mentor?" "What will they be like?" and, "What if I don't like them?"

We love when kids ask these questions, because they get to see that we value their opinions at Safe Passage.

Finally, I asked her what she wants in a mentor. She simply said, "I don't want someone who is fake, ya know?"

I looked at her and said, "We can definitely make that happen."



# A PERFECT MATCH

I met Abbi through one of our prevention trainings. The day we scheduled the training was the day I spent 45+ minutes talking to the maternity home director about a 17-year-old girl who was pregnant with her second child after experiencing years of abuse and trauma from family, strangers, and immigration camps. The director was excited about the girls going through our training but was equally excited to find a mentor for Abbi to help her navigate everything she is going through.

The day we met, she was quiet and mostly listened to me share about the Safe Passage mentor program. She was unsure but excited about having someone who would fight for her the way our mentors do. It was no coincidence that we already had a mentor who spoke her first language and had also been through some of the life experiences she had. That was God going before this pairing before we even knew her name.

Abbi shared her concern about being a mom of two and what her life held for her education once this second baby was born. When asked what she enjoyed doing, she said very plainly, "I don't know". It became clear the things that have been done to her have robbed her of a childhood to explore who she is. She never been able to be a kid and simply have fun.

She has shared she is choosing to be a different mom than the one she experienced in her own life. Abbi's mentor is a mother herself. It will be a beautiful thing to see that shape how Abbi views herself as a mom to both her babies as well. As we prepare to introduce Abbi to her amazing mentor, I am excited to see not only the support and growth that will take place, but also for the genuine relationship that will come from simply having fun together. We are grateful that God entrusted Abbi into our program, and prepared a perfect mentor to support her!



# THEY HEAR ONE THING AT HOME, ANOTHER IN THE SCHOOL HALLS...

One of my first Safe Passage trainings I did was "one of those" that makes you remember why you do what you do. It was held at Iroquois High School, a school I have been praying over for years. It's known for students who have a history in gang affiliation and criminal activity, a school that has immense trauma in the student body.

Each class was a little different, which is how it usually goes. But in every class, the students showed genuine interest in the tough conversation. We had students challenging the very thinking they have seen and learned from birth.

- A boy had heard that it was a girl's fault if something happened while she was wearing certain clothes or going to a party late at night. We talked through that belief and why it isn't true.
- A boy asked how to ask for consent. He had never been taught.
- A girl shared she didn't know that manipulation for any type of sexual act is abuse. She shared she had been in several abusive relationships.
- A few boys asked questions about how pornography fuels human trafficking because they thought all of those girls chose that lifestyle. One boy shared that no one had ever told him pornography was harmful. He said he wanted to stop watching it!
- Two girls shared stories of past abuse with me, and I was able to walk one of them through a safety plan if she feels unsafe in the future.

These moments plus the written questions the students handed me after class showed me that despite the cultural differences, these students were grateful to talk about this topic because no one ever does. They hear one thing at home, another in the school halls, and then are finally able to talk about these heavy questions with a stranger from Safe Passage.



# A NEW PAGE

Just last month, we had a student step out of our prevention class to speak to us. She found a discreet corner in the school hall and curled into a fetal position. I sat down next to her and commented on the drawing book in her hands. The girl lit up and began to show me her artwork. After a few minutes, I asked if she wished to share anything else. She began to explain that she didn't know if "what happened to her" was abuse. She said, "I don't even want to say what happened. How about I write it down in my journal?"

I waited as she wrote down words such as "touch", "role play", and "force" in the pages of her journal. She explained that it was a peer-on-peer abuse from a previous friend. The student was shaking from head to toe and could hardly breathe. She said, "I just don't want to think I was abused."

I said, "Sweety, *your body is telling you you've been abused*. You're shaking. You're scared. You're hurt."

We talked about making a report and taking steps toward a healing plan. Then we turned a page in her drawing book. I asked her to write down these words: "strong, beautiful, resilient, whole". She ripped out the first page, the page that described her abuse, and she threw it away in the trash. Then she gave me a huge hug before walking to the counseling office.

Without Safe Passage's prevention program, countless students would carry the burden of childhood sexual abuse in secret for the rest of their lives. Because of our program, students find the support and empowerment they need to take their first steps toward healing and freedom.



## THE UNFILTERED RETREAT

7 youth attended our first gospel retreat.

6 girls and 1 boy.

They came from Louisville, Lexington, and Southern Indiana to a camp they had never been to before. They came in nervous, guarded, and planning to leave on the first night. Each one of them stayed the entire weekend.

On Friday night, Alex Minogue, our Mentorship Coordinator, preached about the woman at the well. She told the youth about a woman who had numerous failed marriages, but when she met Jesus, there was no judgment, only an invitation. Alex told them that Jesus is good news for their lives. He changes everything. He is all we need!

On Saturday, we invited a minister named Demetrius Robertson to come and pray words of knowledge and prophetic encouragement over the youth. (1 Corinthians 12:8) The youth experienced a personal word from the Holy Spirit that spoke encouragement and healing into their lives, and they took home a very special recording like a love-letter from God. Some of the youth ended up sharing those recordings with their parents because they were so amazed that God knew them.

Saturday night, Brandon Gatson came to present the gospel. The youth were so impacted by the encounter from earlier in the day, that the kids began to interrupt his teaching and ask, "Hey, what does God say about me?" Youth were opening up about trafficking, abortions, heartbreak, and sin to a minister they had never met because they wanted to know what God thought about them. What did God think about their mistakes, about the shame in their life? Brandon began to speak into each child's life all over again. He reminded them that Christ died for us while we were still sinners, and that nothing can separate us from His love.



## THE UNFILTERED RETREAT

These youth understand the woman at the well. This woman had five marriages. We cannot count across our youth how many times they have given their bodies away, how many times they've given their hearts away. The woman at the well had five marriages, but across these youth, across the Tiktok and Tinder, across all the sexting, exchanging pornographic videos and images, giving or selling their bodies for sex acts, we cannot count how many there have been. But when the woman at the well said, "I've had many lovers, and I can tell you, nothing compares to the love of this man who knows everything that has ever happened to me. He knows everything about me." When she realized that, her life turned on a dime, because Christ knowing her convinced her of His love for her.

The youth came into the retreat planning to call their parents and go home early. They were not planning on staying. By Sunday, they were asking how they can get to church, and when the next retreat is, and to hear the recordings of their Holy Spirit prayers. Why? Because they realized Jesus knows them, and this convinced them that God loves them.

Seeds were planted, Christ was revealed, and God is moving.

Thank you for your prayers and support.

Cara Starns.

#### Founder and President















# Mentorship and Support Services

Safe Pasage provides empowering mentorship and support services to youth who've been impacted by child trafficking or exploitation. Services include weekly mentorship, advocacy, safety planning, case management, recreational outings, pastoral counseling, and interventions related to trafficking and trauma.



#### 2022 Support to Child Trafficking Cases



23 Referrals for help

31 Hours on intake and referrals





14 Youth in the mentorship program

393 Hours of support to parents





957 Hours of support to youth

## About the Survivors

90% girls



10% boys

**Referral Source** 

Ages 12 - 19



Law Enforcement



Community Partners



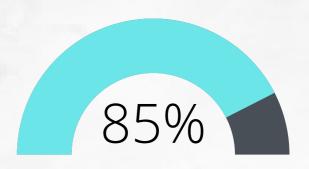
DCBS or Courts



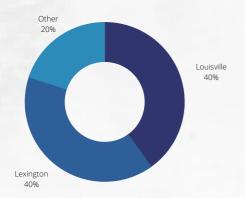
Human Trafficking Hotline

#### **Ethnicity**

58% caucasian
25% african american
17% other



#### Service Area



#### **Stage of Crisis**

85% were sexually trafficked

15% were sexually exploited or being groomed

90% of youth have a mental illness (i.e. anxiety, PTSD, depression, bipolar) 90% of youth have been raped / sexually assaulted 70% of youth have witnessed violence or murder (i.e. gang violence)

50% come from a home lacking stable employment / predictable income

50% come from a single mother home



#### FINANCIALS

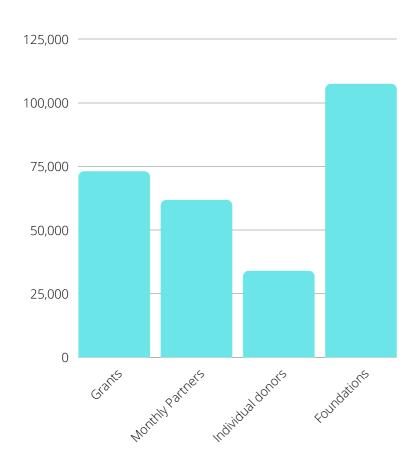
2022 OVERVIEW

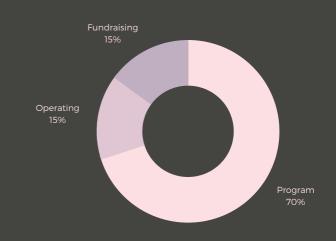
### You are supporting a BBB Accredited 501c3 Charity!

Get the report link at safepassageky.org/donate

#### SOURCES OF INCOME

In 2022 our total income was \$299,893. Our top income source came from foundation support (36%) with grants (24%) and monthly partners (21%) coming right alongside. We also received tremendous support from individuals contributing through one-time or yearly gifts (11%). We want to thank each and every supporter. By partnering with Safe Passage, you protected vulnerable youth from falling further into trafficking and exploitation.





#### **ANNUAL EXPENSES**

Our donors helped us reach nearly 700 youth through our prevention and outreach program, and we provided over 900 hours of weekly support to youth who are overcoming sexual exploitation and trafficking. We spent almost 400 hours with parents in need of emotional support, and we held our very first "Unfiltered Retreat" for youth to experience profound encouragement, growth, and healing. We have much to celebrate! Including two healthy babies and young mothers.

Our total expenses for the year concluded at \$204,092. Headed into 2023, our budget is increasing to \$219,000 in yearly expenses. 2023 will be an exciting year of expanding our outreach and prevention efforts, adding equine therapy to our services for youth, and building strategic partnerships in areas beyond Louisville, KY. This means more support for survivors, and more protection for the at-risk. We are thankful to God and to our supporters for providing what we need to say "yes" to more youth and families!