



# 2017 Annual Report

[iwantrest.com](http://iwantrest.com)  
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*“I was able to find self-love, self-awareness, self-confidence, and self-empowerment. As well as the strength to leave a very abusive and violent relationship and situation. Also, with the support of everyone, I was able to get out of the life, realize what family meant, stop using drugs, and find myself again.”*

- Stephanie, survivor

**In Fiscal Year 2017, REST  
connected with over 480  
victims and survivors  
of sexual exploitation.**

# A Note from Amanda

Friends,

The path to healing from trafficking and exploitation is like a steep, jagged, mountain climb. It's the journey of someone who is fighting to believe they are worthy of love. There are countless barriers and obstacles, and few moments of reprieve. The journey often seems endless. We've learned this by walking with survivors as they fight their way up that mountain to build a new life. Every step forward is a victory. Every pause or step backward is a moment to remember what makes the climb worthwhile.



When we considered the best way to give you a glimpse of REST and where we have been over the last year, one thing was clear—the voices of survivors and the advocates walking alongside them up the jagged mountain are the voices you should hear. So, this year, we asked them to share their words with you and invite you deeper into the heartbeat of REST—that everyone is worthy of love. Love that demonstrates unconditional care, creates a sense of belonging, and gives way to freedom, safety, and hope.

As you read these pages and get a feel for the impact that REST has in the lives of trafficking survivors, I hope you are encouraged, and feel joy knowing that you help make the climb possible.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "A. Hightower". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Amanda Hightower  
Executive Director

# REST Principles of Care

## Everyone is Worthy of Love

We believe that every person is made in the image of a beautiful Creator, is bestowed with inherent dignity and worth, and is undeniably deserving of love. Yet, harm meets all of us in different ways and plants seeds of shame that tell us we are unworthy. For exploited individuals, this shame often becomes paralyzing. However, when met with a non-judgmental, fully accepting and unconditionally caring love, the shame gets unraveled, hopes are restored, and dreams are reactivated. Effective services are essential, but a community that offers an authentic, healing love makes an incredible difference.

## Individualized

We understand that each person is different, with unique needs, strengths, and culture. We tailor our services and interactions to the individual, so that they are more invested in the relationships, the programs, and their goals.

## Relationship-Based

It is often a harmful relationship that leads to exploitation. Therefore, it often takes a trustworthy and consistent relationship to give someone the courage to walk away from their trafficker. Building trust, safety, belonging, and a supportive community are essential components to the intervention and restoration programs within REST.

## Strengths-Based

Survivors of sexual exploitation have consistently received the message that they have no value apart from selling their body. Yet, we see incredible strengths that have enabled survivors to endure the harshest of circumstances and navigate constant threats of danger. So rather than focusing on deficits, we celebrate and build off of their strengths, skills, hopes, and dreams.

# REST Principles of Care

## Trauma-Informed

Survivors of trafficking have experienced many layers of trauma, so the way we interact and care for them must start with an understanding of the effects of trauma. We know that the brain holds trauma responses for a long time and, therefore we may see trauma responses even when someone is no longer in danger. Knowing this, we craft our services in a way that accommodates for trauma responses and provides an environment that is truly conducive to healing.

## Self-Determination & Empowerment

In the world of exploitation, choices are often taken away. We seek to restore choice and build self-efficacy. Rather than choosing for someone, we help uncover their goals and work together to develop a plan that matches their unique strengths and culture. We help survivors think through options, consider possible outcomes, and identify the choices most aligned with their goals. When they believe in their own ability to make positive changes in their lives, they are more equipped to face life's challenges in the future.

## Faith Integration

We are a Christian organization that desires to offer respectful services to individuals of all faith backgrounds. Our faith shows most strongly in our values of providing unconditional care, focusing on relationships, recognizing strengths, minimizing barriers, and walking with our clients on their journey to freedom, rather than acting as “saviors,” or attempting to proselytize. We don't require faith engagement at REST. Instead, we simply offer a healing environment where survivors are free to incorporate their own spiritual beliefs or exploration in whatever way is comfortable for them.

The number of trafficked individuals in King County, WA is unknown.

What we do know is that it happens, it happens here, and it is harmful and widespread.



# King County, Washington

- Over half of exploited individuals are homeless or in unstable housing.
- There are 300–500 youth being prostituted locally.
- There are 100+ websites where commercial sex is available in the Seattle area, with over 6,000 unique phone numbers tied to potential victims.
- A 2014 Arizona State University study concluded there were 6,800 buyers soliciting sex in the Seattle area on a single site in 24 hours.

*There are twenty beds in King County reserved for survivors of commercial sexual exploitation. Thirteen of them are at REST.*



*Stephanie*



# Stephanie

When Stephanie confronted her trafficker in court, her REST Advocate, Audrey, was by her side.

They both wore shirts that read “Don’t Buy Girls.”

“I felt like I didn’t have the strength to do it. But with Audrey by my side, I spoke up in court with my victim impact statement with him in the courtroom.”

Stephanie met her trafficker when she was nineteen, and he controlled her for thirteen years through violence, forcing her to prostitute, restricting her finances and communication, drugs, and by using her two children to manipulate her. She was also forced to commit other crimes or face punishment, such as prescription forgery. “My life was not my life.” She explained. “I wasn’t who I am.”

Before finding REST, Stephanie was in prostitution, addicted to meth, living out of hotels, and rarely got to see her children. The first step in her fight to leave her situation was Googling “prostitution services in Seattle, WA”—REST was among the search results. Through email and our hotline, she promptly connected with Audrey.

“Everyone that I’ve met here genuinely wants nothing but the best for you, and they genuinely care about you... They let you be yourself. It’s warm and inviting.” She said of her first impressions of REST.

Stephanie has been clean and out of a life of prostitution for nearly a year. It’s been an arduous journey—including the process of getting clean from meth, and separating from her abuser, despite significant trauma-bonding.

*“I am no longer in prostitution. I am no longer on drugs. I no longer have any connections to my abuser, besides our son. He has no bearing over my life anymore. I learned how to love myself. I learned that I am truly a beautiful person. And intelligent. And I also learned that everything my abuser told me for years and years was so untrue and so far from the truth. And I learned from all of my strength and all the support that I’ve got here that I can do whatever I put my mind to and nothing can ever stop me.”*

We opened our low-barrier shelter and expanded drop-in services at our Emergency Receiving Center on November 3, 2016.

The shelter has operated at 90% occupancy since its opening.



## REST Emergency Receiving Center

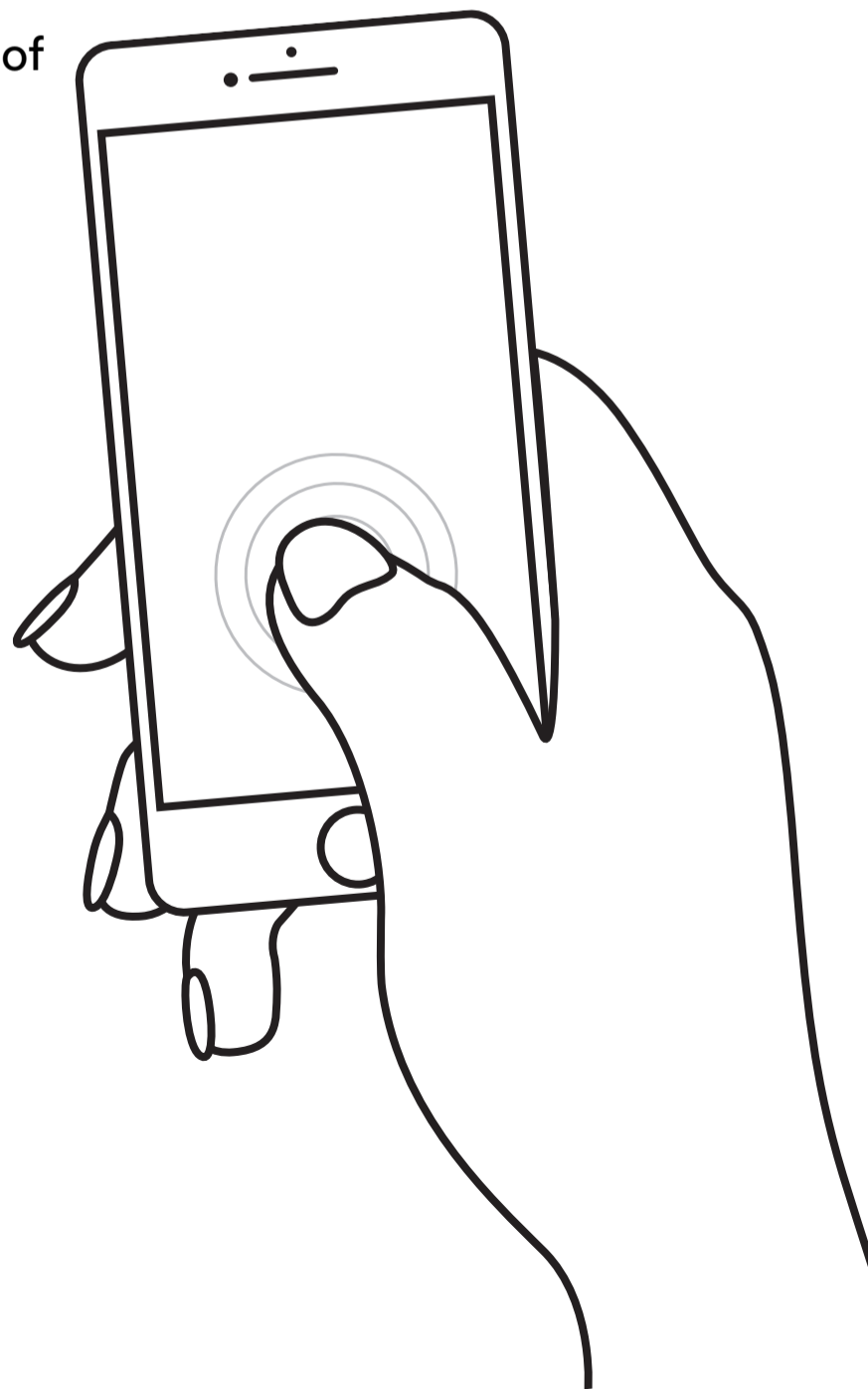
- 152 individuals visited our drop-in center 1,266 times.
- 71 drop-in guests participated in groups, classes, and workshops 368 times.
- 46 women were guests at our shelter.
- 1,457 nights of REST were provided at our shelter.
- Seven shelter guests connected to stable housing directly from the shelter.

# REST Hotline

The REST hotline is available twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. Through it, we connect with individuals who have been exploited, or are currently being exploited in the sex trade. Callers and texters often reach out in crisis and receive emotional support, information, and referrals for resources. In most cases our advocates are able to respond in person to help meet a victim's immediate needs.

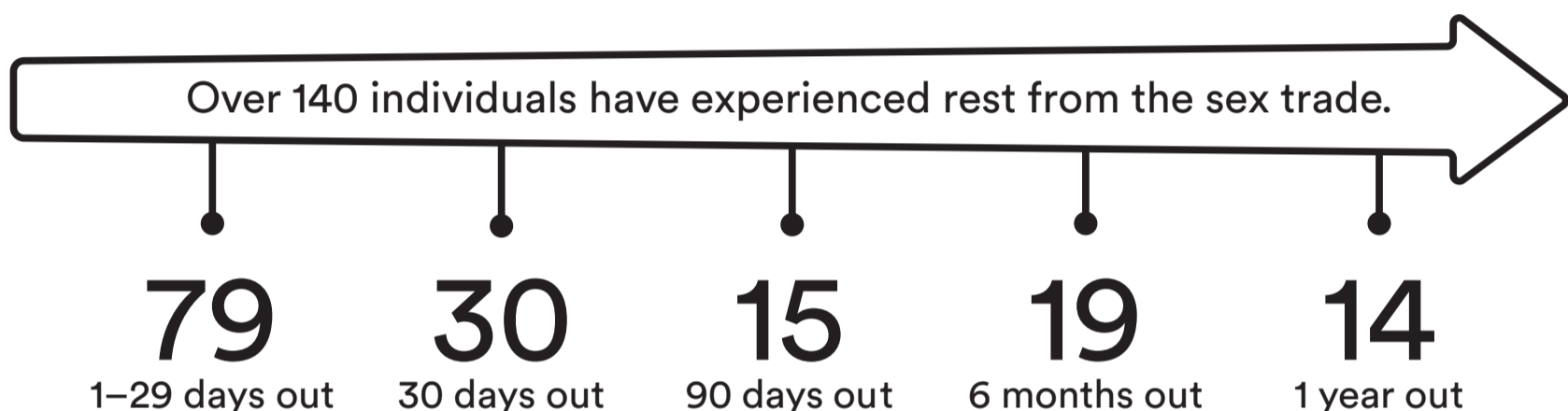
## This year through our hotline we:

- Received over 1,000 calls.
- Received over 100 texts.
- Communicated with 198 unique individuals.
- Connected with 133 first-time callers, 115 of whom are local to King County.



# Exiting the sex trade is a journey.

Exiting the sex trade often involves getting free from pimps and abusers, detoxing and recovering from years-long substance abuse issues, confronting complex trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder, and a long list of other challenges. We find it can take 7–11 attempts for a survivor to exit the sex trade.



We are excited to let you know that in Fiscal Year 2017, we walked with over 140 individuals on that journey—stood by their side, and fought next to them, as they fought for freedom, safety, and hope. 19 of them have stayed out for over six months, and 14 of them have stayed out for over one year.

*Audrey*



**Audrey** “You are not alone. You are not forgotten. I’m in this with you. I believe you. I see that you are strong. I see that you are smart. You have fought for your life, and your life is worthwhile.” These are some of the things Community Advocate Supervisor Audrey shares with the individuals she walks with at REST.

Her passion for this work started when she was exposed to sex trafficking through her work with homeless youth prior to REST—and through seeing a close friend be recruited by a pimp. “I saw trafficking happen to someone that I loved closely. And knew it could’ve been me. I was one step away.”

Audrey has a front row seat to the tangible change in the lives of the women she works with. She also acknowledges that it is heart-wrenching, but inspiring work. “You don’t get the inspiration without the tears,” she said, “and while I’ve seen God come through in my life with some miraculous provisions, the way that He meets our ladies in the most desperate of times is exciting. I love being a part of that.”

*“I think Stephanie is a phenomenal example. When I met her, she was a different woman. And in a lot of ways, a very challenging person—because she was in the midst of trafficking. To see her fight for her freedom, and just be able to encourage her along the way, and then to see her achieve that, and be able to solve it and let her guard down, and be the generous, giving, thoughtful woman that she is, is just incredible.”*

When Audrey first met Stephanie, they met in a parking lot because Stephanie wasn’t stable enough to navigate to the REST office. While Audrey focused on building confidence, Stephanie was focused on survival. As trust was built, and REST met her basic needs, they problem solved together, figuring out what escape and freedom would look like for Stephanie. “It was agonizing, seeing how few options were available, and the depth of pain and situations of desperation she had to endure before she could leave ‘the life.’”

Audrey knows how incredibly strong, intelligent, resilient, and beautiful the clients REST serves are, and she knows REST cares for them deeply. She has seen it time and time again, and knows well that every woman we have the privilege of serving survived for a reason.



**In Fiscal Year 2017,  
we provided over  
3,000 nights of REST  
through our house and  
emergency shelter.**

# What happened at the six-room REST House in Fiscal Year 2017?

- 15 residents stayed 1,544 nights.
- The house was at 70% occupancy.
- 13 women moved out of the house.
- 10 of the women who moved out have maintained stable housing.
- Six of them reached the milestone of being out of the sex trade for one year.



*Chelsea*



# Chelsea

Chelsea's journey away from a life of prostitution started with incarceration. Through the court, she was put in a Human Trafficking Diversion Program. As part of that program, immediately before coming to REST, she was in an inpatient program for concurrent mental illness and drug addiction. Needing a place to stay for two weeks before the next part of her diversion program began, she came to the REST Emergency Receiving Center shelter.

After two weeks at REST, Chelsea knew this was the place for her—and fought hard, with many staff members' help—to stay. She created a presentation to give to the court explaining why she believed REST was the best place for her recovery—and the court agreed with her request to move into the REST House.

*“Each person here has taught me something different.” She said, speaking about the diversity in experiences throughout REST. “Just seeing what women can go through, what these women, in specific, have gone through—definitely has impacted how I look at things, how I think about the world in general, and how I see myself. And in terms of staff, every single person—no matter if they're support staff, counselor, or peer support—every single person is here for me.”*

Chelsea says REST has helped her learn to “adult,” and has connected her with resources she never knew were available, especially for women with stories like hers.

*“I feel loved in so many different ways, from so many different people, and I didn't think that would be possible. I thought that I had to be loved by my family, or by my pimp, or by someone somewhere—boyfriends, tricks, whatever... but that's not true anymore. There are so many different forms of love, and I've found that here, really. I find it from the people that support me. I find that from the people that I live with. I find it from the people that come to drop-in. And it's exciting. It's nice to know that it's there. It's nice to know that I don't have to search for love in the wrong places, because I'm not getting it in the right places.”*

# Community Advocacy

The mission of our Community Advocate team is to empower survivors of commercial sexual exploitation to identify their goals and dreams for the future, and support them to achieve those goals. Advocates provide focused case management to assist REST clients with accessing housing, employment, chemical dependency services, mental health services, education, and other goals that are important to help our clients sustain a life out of the sex trade.

In Fiscal Year 2017, we've provided this intentional level of case management to 149 women as they accomplished over 550 self-identified goals for their lives.

## Our Community Advocate Team



Audrey



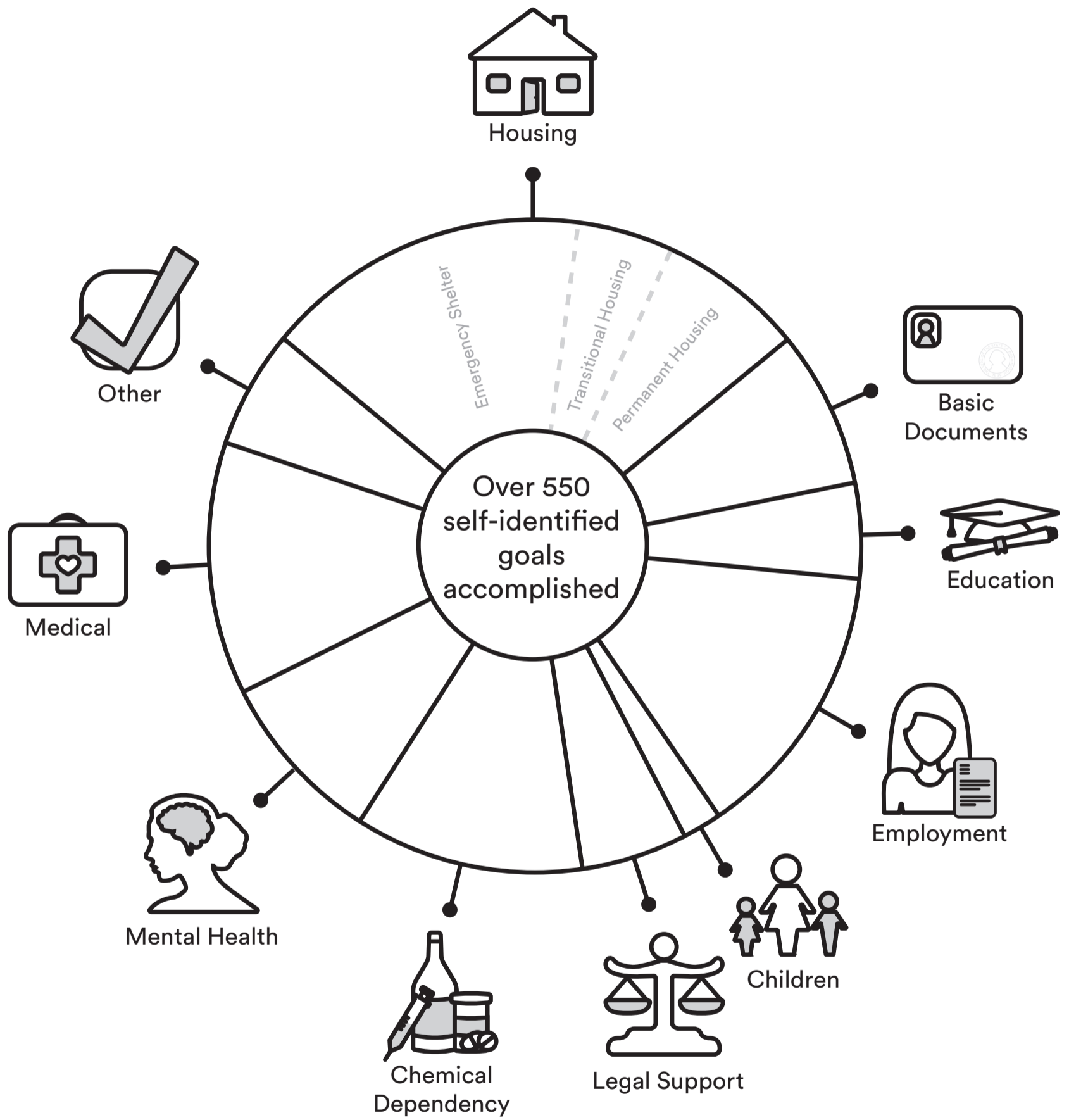
Laura



Sarah



Mariya





*Laura*

# Laura

Laura has known she wanted to work with survivors of commercial sexual exploitation since she was fourteen years old. “Survivors are some of the strongest people I know,” she said, explaining why, ten years later, she’s still committed to this work; working as a Community Advocate with REST for the last three years.

*“I think creating a way, a space for survivors to have a voice—when they haven’t been heard for so long—is something really empowering. It’s not ‘I want to help and save you.’ but ‘I would love to come alongside you and fight with you because you’ve been fighting for so long.’”*

REST has a phrase to describe our approach to coming alongside clients. “Do for. Do with. Cheer on.” It allows REST clients and advocates to work together in a progressive, encouraging way—eventually leading to self-sufficiency with a community of support.

Laura advocates for the choices of the clients she works with—whether that is finding housing, securing basic legal documents, going through legal battles, finding a job, or so many other life goals. It is a journey requiring presence and perseverance.

To be present through the journey means venturing into the hills and valleys of trauma with a survivor, being a lifeline, and consistently depositing messages to instill worth and belonging along the way. And ultimately, helping to restore a survivor’s belief that she can have a different life. Rather than forcing a particular path on her clients, Laura helps them find their way toward their dreams. “What do you want? This is your life, and no one is forcing you. This is your journey and your process.”

Consider Piper, a survivor Laura walks with. “When Piper celebrates that she’s broken her tendency of codependence or that she got a job—small or big wins—she owns her vision of her life. To see that progression from feeling awkward and uncomfortable when we talk about her strengths to seeing her ownership of these strengths has been beautiful.”

When REST clients connect with that message—that they are empowered because they are brilliant and strong, and begin to believe that they are worthy, and have the supportive relationships they need to be able to achieve their goals, major changes begin to happen.

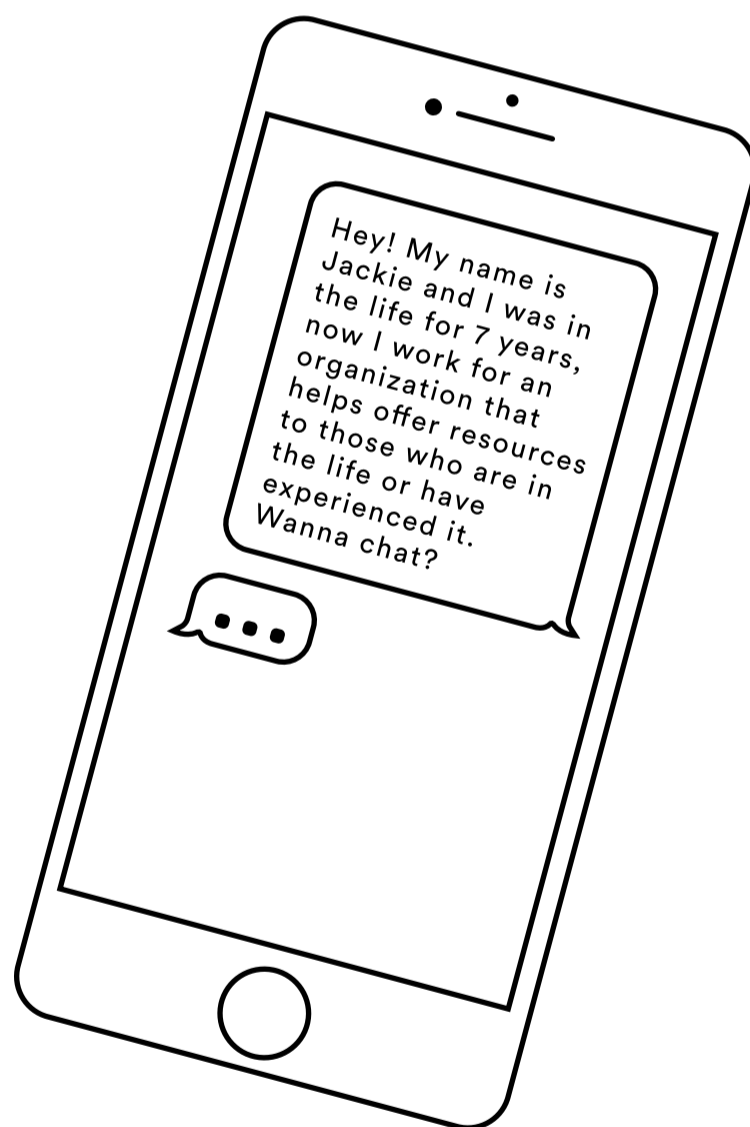


# Text Outreach

REST has always been committed to meeting sexually exploited individuals right where they're at. As the sex trade shifted away from the streets and onto the internet, we saw a need to adapt our approach for outreach, and thanks to a partnership with Seattle Against Slavery and Microsoft's Hackathon, we have.

Through this new technology, we've been able to reach more exploited individuals this year than in any previous year. The software scrapes phone numbers from sex advertisements online, and allows us to send bulk texts to the numbers through a system that enables us to connect immediately to any responders.

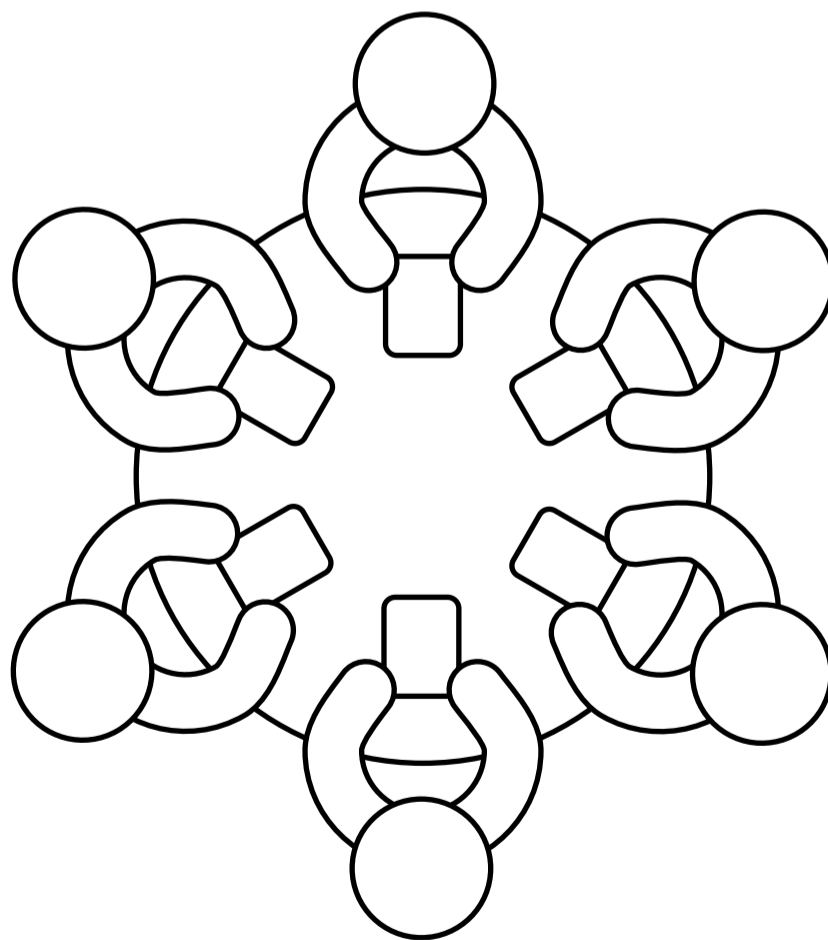
- We sent over 8,100 texts and received over 440 positive responses.
- Over 60 responders requested a meeting with an advocate.
- We met face-to-face with 39 responders.
- 21 of them enrolled with our Community Advocacy team.
- Women we connected with through our text outreach program spent 120 nights at our Emergency Receiving Center shelter.



# Prevention

Most exploited individuals are recruited as minors—usually between 13–15 years old. Our Prevention Team serves those under 18 who are at-risk for entering prostitution. Though many have already been sexually exploited, the goal is to prevent further harm and give them access to resources that will contribute to their success.

- In FY 17, we facilitated 22 workshops, with 154 youth in attendance.
- We connected with 114 new youth through chaplaincy and mentoring contacts, and met with those contacts 210 times, collectively.
- We served 324 youth through our prevention programs.
- 68% of youth showed improvement in knowledge of gender-based violence, and how to advocate against it through pre and post-course testing.



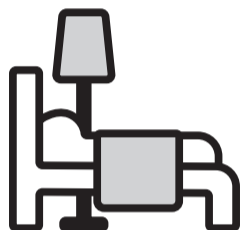
# Financial Breakdown

Every dollar entrusted to REST is crucial and enables us to provide freedom, safety, and hope to individuals exploited in the sex trade.

It costs \$2,280 to keep the REST House and Emergency Receiving Center, which includes our shelter and drop-in center, open for 24 hours.



REST House



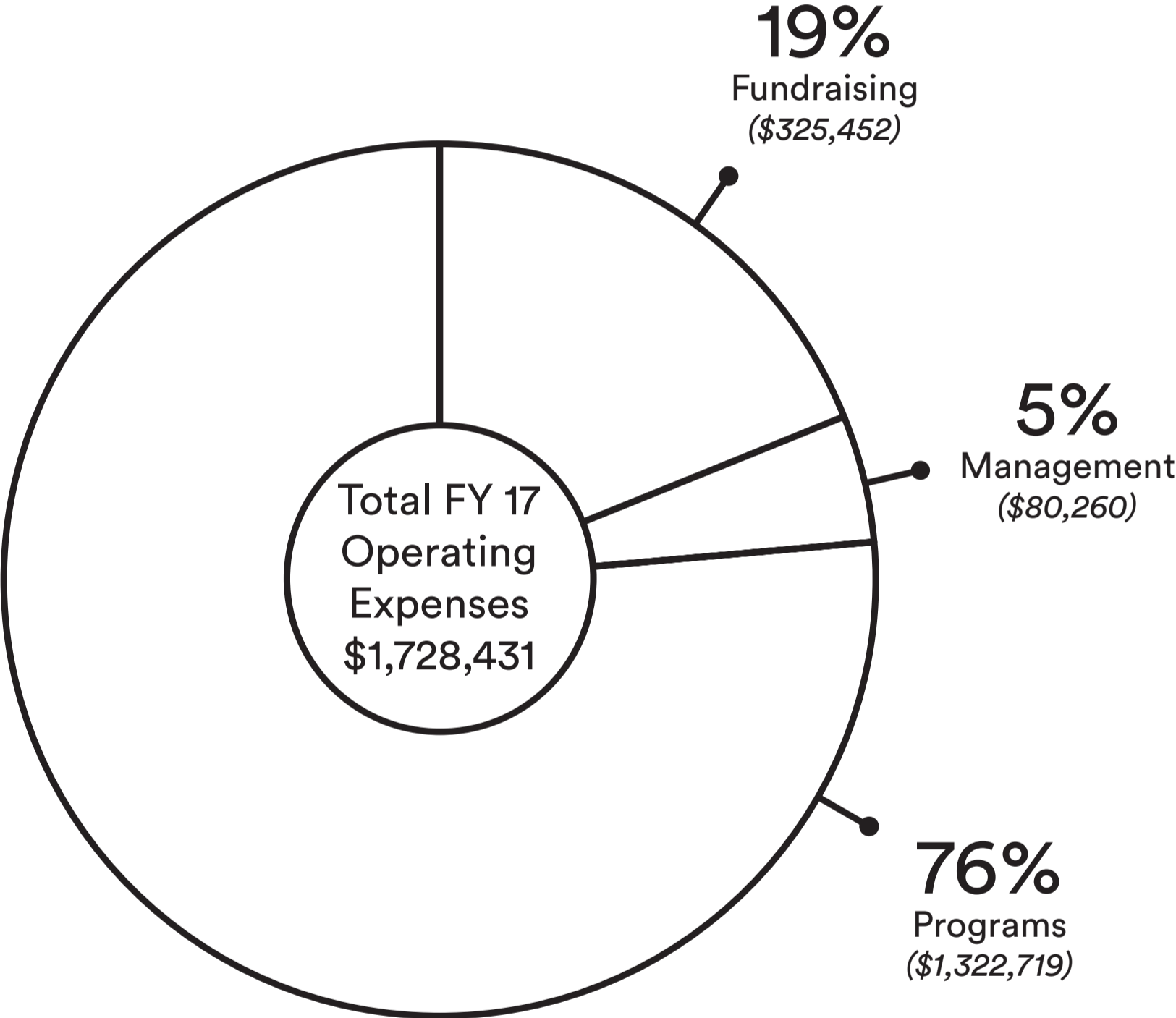
Emergency Shelter



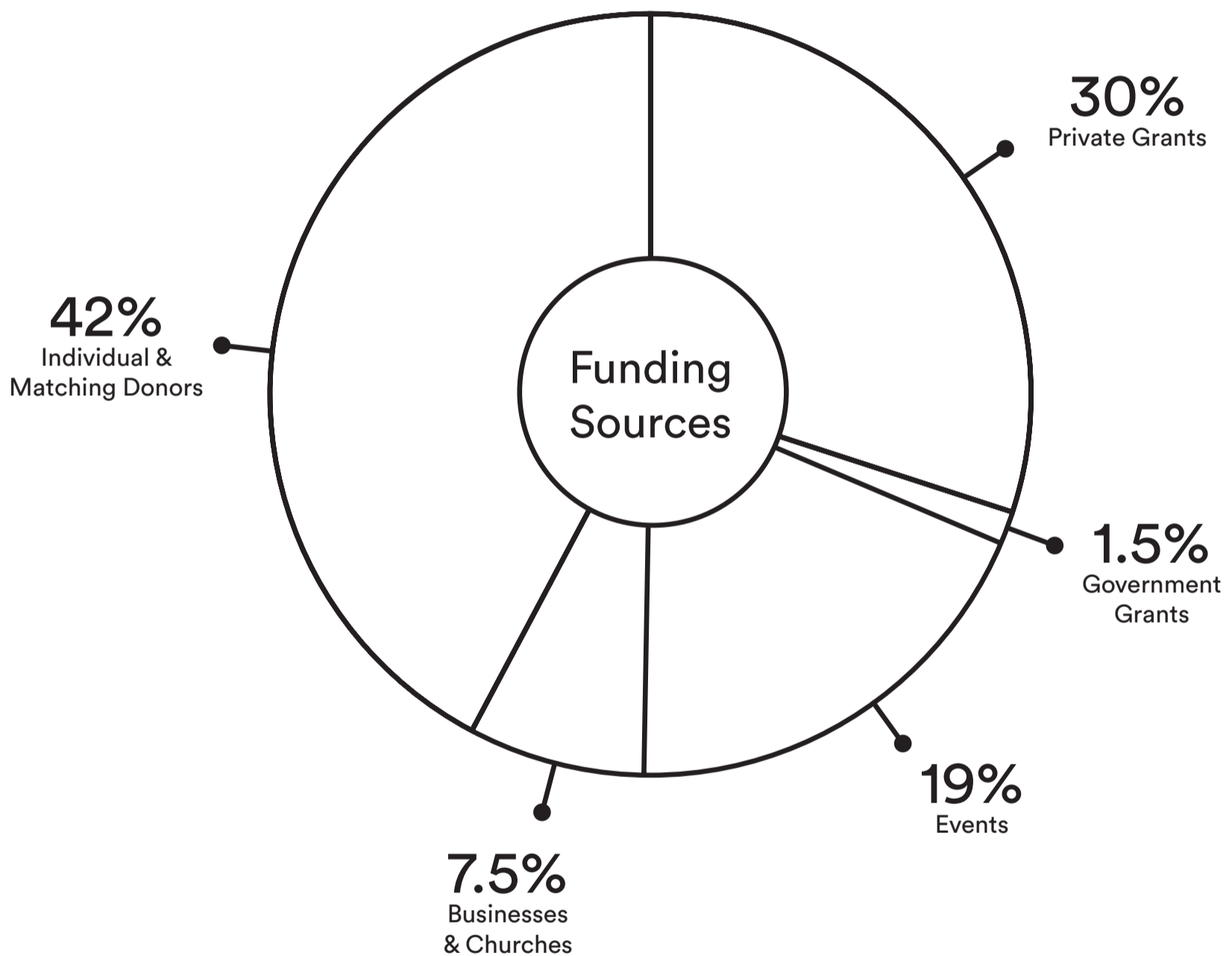
Drop-In Center



# Financial Breakdown



# Financial Breakdown



Thank you to all of our financial supporters.  
We couldn't do this work without you.

# Our Partners

We rely on partnerships within our community to connect with exploited individuals and provide the best trauma-informed care possible.

We are thankful for our partners.

*“Many of the women we contact through our work are more comfortable with and trusting of my detectives because of our work with REST during our joint operations to recover women from commercial sexual exploitation.”*

Jim Fitzgerald | Seattle Police Department

*“This supportive partnership provides seamless services for women previously underserved.”*

Debra Boyer | Organization for Prostitution Survivors

*“REST is willing to experiment and try new models to engage the issue of trafficking, and we think that is great.”*

Robert Beiser | Seattle Against Slavery

*“Our partnership serves to further our goal of accountability for offenders, justice for victims, and opportunities for safety and exit.”*

Valiant Richey | King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office

*“People trust REST. There is no one I encounter in my work who doesn't have the highest regard for what you all have accomplished. When we were considering who to ask to partner with us as we expand our Safe Jobs program, your organization was at the top of our list because of your reputation with survivors. They're the experts on their own needs for recovery and when they say your services make a difference in their lives, there is no higher praise.”*

Mar Brettmann | Business Ending Slavery & Trafficking

# Leadership Team



**Amanda Hightower**  
Founder & Executive Director



**Angie Lafave**  
Director of Development



**Rudy Vazquez**  
Business Manager



**Mandy Hewitson**  
Program Manager



**Kim Merrikin**  
Media & Communication Manager

# Board of Directors

Each of our board members are devoted to ending exploitation. We are grateful for their continued passion and expertise as they help us achieve our mission.

**Brent Turner | *Board Chairman***

Chief Operating Officer, Rover.com

**Karen Cobb | *Board Secretary***

Attorney at Law, Frey Buck, P.S.

**Will Little | *Board Member***

Co-Founder & Chief Technology Officer, Code Fellows

**Renee Wallace | *Board Member***

Health Care Access Advocate, YWCA, Survivor

**Jesse Bryan | *Board Member***

Founding Partner & Creative Director, Belief Agency

**Jonathan Lamb | *Board Member***

Managing Director, Regent Advisors Investments



*Piper*



**Piper** “I am worth love.” Piper firmly declared. She is a resident at the REST House. “[REST] has been a God-send. I feel it’s kept me alive,” she said, explaining the hard work she’s put in on her path to leaving behind commercial sexual exploitation, toward sobriety and a different life.

Prior to coming to REST, Piper was living out of a motel, using opiates heavily, and involved in prostitution. She grew up amidst abuse and chaos, and often felt abandoned by her family. “It gave me a low sense of self-worth. It’s what I knew. So I thought it was right.” Two days before taking her first date, Piper visited a man who would give her free heroin, and while she was passed out, he sexually assaulted her. “That was a key point in me going into the life—at that point I felt so broken. So undeserving of anything. So low. I blamed myself.”

She prostituted and used drugs with her sister. When her sister decided she wanted out of prostitution, she connected with REST advocate Sarah—and passed Sarah’s number along to Piper. “When I realized the type of person Sarah was, I fell in love with her. I didn’t even care what I had gotten myself into, but she did. She always held up hope.”

*“I don’t deserve to be used for sex. I don’t deserve to be on drugs. I don’t have anything to prove to anyone but myself, and REST showed me that—that I am capable, that I am strong.”*

Through Sarah, she was connected with other REST Staff members and guests and began building relationships. “It’s a really good feeling to know that I’m cared about, and there’s so much support out there. I never knew that before. And it is a good, good feeling.”

*“I feel so loved by God. I feel loved by the staff. I feel loved by the roommates. I feel loved by my family again. I feel loved by the prayers that are said for me. I know God put Sarah in my life for a reason because I was supposed to meet all these people. I was supposed to be sitting here doing this to get better. I feel loved.”*

**Thank you.**  
**You deserve to be loved.**

REST Fiscal Year: July 1, 2016–June 30, 2017

King County trafficking data can be found at [endingexploitation.com](http://endingexploitation.com).

Photography information:

REST Staff headshots: Kara Wallace Photography | REST House: Jeremy Beasley

Emergency Receiving Center: Oscar Melendez | Stephanie: Kim Merrikin

All other photos are stock photography, and feature models used for illustrative purposes only.