



Breaking Free

sisters helping sisters break free



ANNUAL REPORT

JULY 1, 2010– JUNE 30, 2011

Letter from the Executive Director

Every year, as we reflect on the previous twelve months, Breaking Free seems to accomplish a little more than we did the previous year in our work to end the sexual exploitation of women and girls. Although we may not be able to end sexual exploitation during our lifetime, it is our continued hope that drives us to do the work that we do so that our grandchildren and our great-grandchildren will never experience the horrors of being sex trafficked during their lifetime.

We can hardly believe it has been nearly fifteen years since our doors opened in 1996. We continue to be blessed by the generosity of our loyal supporters and funders throughout the local community and nation. We cannot do the work that we do without all of you.

Thank you for your prayers, time, donations, and financial support, all of which are vital to the sustainability of our programs. Thank you also for taking the time to read though the enclosed information regarding the success we have had in the past year. While we have made great progress, we realize there is still a great deal of work to be done. It is with you that we stand up against this injustice and collectively give voice to the millions of lost and voiceless victims still waiting to be rescued from their oppressors.

It is my hope that you will join us in this fight and continue to let the survivors of this horrific crime know that they are worth saving and to tell the world that no one deserves to be bought, sold or traded at any price.

Sincerely,

Vednita Carter

Founder & Executive Director



Breaking Free, Inc. was established in October 1996, by Founder and Executive Director, Vednita Carter, as a non-profit organization serving women and girls involved in systems of abuse and commercial sexual exploitation. While based in African American culture, Breaking Free is committed to working with diverse populations of sexually exploited women and girls. Its headquarters is located in Saint Paul, MN with one satellite outreach center in Minneapolis at a partner facility Resource Inc. Over the last 15 years, Breaking Free has served more than 5,000 clients and reached over 22,000 individuals via street outreach while systematically growing its programming to embrace a full continuum of care.

Mission:

To educate and provide services to women/girls who have been victims of abuse and commercial sexual exploitation and need assistance escaping violence in their lives.

Our Overall Goal:

To improve the quality of life of women and girls leaving systems of violence by assisting them to assume responsibility over their own lives and to function as actively and independently in society as possible to achieve self-sufficiency

Breaking Free strives to empower women to choose healthy, self-sufficient lifestyles. Our other fundamental goals include, but are not limited to:

- Provide education, crisis **intervention**, and advocacy to sex trafficked women and girls.
- **Prevention**- Decrease their exposure to and involvement in systems of violence (i.e. sex trafficking, domestic violence, physical/ sexual/ emotional abuse, homelessness).
- Coordinate, facilitate, and connect families with community resources and services that will assist the family with increasing and **maintaining stability and family functioning**.
- Provide and/ or coordinate **safe stable housing** for women/youth and their children.
- Provide opportunities for **education and life skills** to prepare them for the workforce to enable them to move out of poverty and become self-sustaining and improve the parenting skills of mothers.
- Operate within a **culturally appropriate**, age and gender-specific context realizing that women respond to other people who understand their specific culture, challenges, and family dynamic.
- **Educate the community** about the effects of commercial sexual exploitation on women and girls and the negative effects on the community
- Bring change to public policy regarding the treatment of victims and the prosecution of pimps and “johns” while working to educate men about their role in this in an effort to **decrease the demand for sexual services**.

Services Provided During the July 1, 2010- June 30, 2011 Fiscal Year:

398 sex trafficked women and girls participated in programs and services

46 participants were sexually exploited youth

35 participants resided in our Transitional Housing Program

18 participants and **17 of their children** resided in our Permanent Housing Program

71% of the women and girls who were referred to our program through our partnership with police are completing the Sisters of Survival curriculum and successfully graduating from the program

77 perpetrators attended the John School

75 presentations were made to the community, service providers, and law enforcement about the issue

Breaking Free provides comprehensive case management to 99% of our clients

Other Highlights:

- **Breaking Free's House of Hope at City Hill** our partnership with City Hill Fellowship has been a tremendous success and a model for similar projects we are pursuing for the upcoming year. The church has generously purposed a new beautiful home to Breaking Free that is being used as transitional housing to get our clients back on their feet. Both the financial support and welcoming community support within the church have been essential to the success of this home. The house can accommodate up to five women or girls at a time.
- **The Demand Change Project** was the first of a groundbreaking effort to work with a men's organization (MATTOO) in addressing the issue of sex trafficking from the "demand" side of the equation. Hundreds of attendees joined us in St. Paul for a two-day, six-session, international event to end sex trafficking by educating and engaging men and the general public to become part of the solution to end this horrific crime.
- **The Safe Harbor Bill** was passed during the 2011 legislative session. This new law protects minor victims of sex trafficking in MN and mandates a systems response and services for girls, as well as, increased fines and penalties for traffickers and perpetrators who purchase minors for sex. Breaking Free played an instrumental role in working with our partners to provide survivor testimony and expert input on the development of this policy change.

Client Demographics:

The **primary target population** that we work with is females in the age range of 14 to 59 years, with an average age of 34, all of whom have been exploited sexually for commercial purposes. They are predominantly African American and women of color (66%); and of low socioeconomic status, most of them are single parents with an average of one to three children, and most struggle with poor mental health, and chemical abuse issues.

Breaking Free families suffer from many complex problems related to poverty including prostitution, limited education and vocational experience, drug dependency, abuse and criminal lifestyles. Breaking Free clients are typically referred to as "hard-core clients", many of whom have been previously unsuccessful in getting their lives back on track.

Of the 398 clients served (not including their children):

48% were African American

34% were Caucasian

9% were Multiracial

3% were Native American

3% were Hispanic/Latino

1.5% were Asian

1.5% were Immigrant/Refugee

11% were exploited youth

60% were homeless

65% had at least one child under 5 years old

58% were involved with Child Protection Services within one year prior to coming to BF

37% had their children removed from their homes within one year prior to coming to BF

100% were living at or below the poverty line

73% were from the Twin Cities Urban area

18% were from the Suburbs surrounding the Twin Cities

6% were from Rural MN

3% were from out of state

From the Heart of a Survivor

I have been a part of Breaking Free for almost 18 months. Almost 18 months ago, my life began anew. Prior to this program, I wandered aimless in the streets. I had no connection to God, to family, to friends, nor to myself. There was no purpose to my life at all. No dreams or goals. No aspirations, no hopes, and no worth. No future. My philosophy was, "it's not my fault". I found my comfort in a haze of drugs and alcohol. I honestly thought that being high was normal for a person like me, because it was also my excuse, my "just in case". My cover. My addiction and chronic abuse cloaked my sadness. I felt like a lost soul beyond help. One day I took a chance and called Breaking Free. I figured that I would be turned away. I had nothing to offer, not even a smile, so why would they bother giving me the time of day? But, I entered. When I left Breaking Free that day, I felt something. Whoa, they didn't turn me away. They did ask that I not return – high. Okay. I returned sober. Whoa, is this a little hope that I am feeling? Somebody listened to me that day, with compassion, that day it wasn't just hope that I felt. I stumbled over my sick sad feelings and fell into a group of women that had been through worse things than me, but made me feel that my situation was valid and fixable. They asked that I come to their meetings and encouraged me to say prayers. They gave me the keys not only to my apartment door, but also to the door of acceptance and ownership. The keys opened the door of my God, my family, my friends, and myself. Through the guidance, encouragement, and support of Breaking Free, everyday is a good day to be alive and sober. The staff and neighbors are awesome. I have a purpose now. I have dreams, goals, and aspirations. I have respect for others and myself. Breaking Free helped me realize that this life is so worthwhile, full of meaning and purpose. From the bottom of my heart, I appreciate everything that Breaking Free has done for me and for my family. Breaking Free indulges me in a rich, full life. Breaking Free indulges me in my own realizations of how big this world is and how much work there is out there to do. Breaking Free indulges me in the taking care of my health and spirituality. Breaking Free indulges me in choices and options. Breaking Free indulges me in the freedom to be a worthwhile human being. I thank God for Breaking Free, and for setting me in the direction of their path. I feel like I've been awakened after a long sleep. I hope that this program expands and stays around for a long, long time. I hope someday to become a part of their staff. I plan to return to college and get a degree in social studies. My main purpose is to do something good for our community. God willing. - Veronica

Board of Directors, Staff and Volunteers:

Currently Breaking Free staff consists of the Executive Director, Marketing and Development Director, the Women’s Program Manager, an Operations Manager, a Permanent Housing Coordinator, a Transitional Housing Advocate and an Office Assistant.

Breaking Free has 12 highly committed and well-trained intern/volunteers who assist within the Women’s Program, many of whom are survivors. Overall, we have had over 250 volunteers contribute more than a combined 4500 hours worth of time and service to our programs.

Our Board of Directors is comprised of eight members from diverse backgrounds who work collectively to oversee the organization. During this past year, our board has successfully balanced our budget and provided strategic leadership and financial oversight that has taken our organization to a new level and place of stability and solid future sustainability

Community Education and Outreach

Breaking Free was invited to provide trainings and presentations to the community including many service providers, law enforcement, and other professionals. A total of 75 trainings and presentations were provided to 4,000 participants. Presentations and trainings were given at the following locations and many more:

Wayside Treatment	MN Women’s Foundation	Fox 9 News
Shakopee Prison	Kawanza Church	KSTP Channel 5
Ramsey Workhouse	Hosanna Church	KARE 11 News
Hamline Univeristy	Kiwannis Club	Mpls. Rotaract
City Hill Fellowship	Wooddale Church	Redeemer Church
Sexual Violence Center	KTIS Radio	Hosanna Church

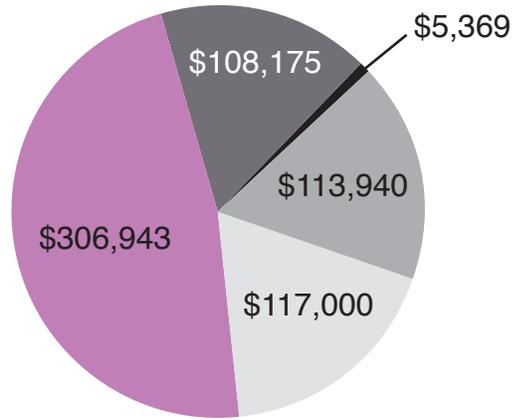
Funding Report:

Like many non-profits, Breaking Free has seen a significant reduction in funding over the past few years. While this has resulted in some tough decisions, we have remained true to our first priority...the women, girls, and the children we serve. We have been blessed by our funders, partners, and private donors who have made it possible to continue to provide desperately needed services to our clients. (Full financial reports are available upon request)

Our 2010/11 revenue was \$651,422

Thank you to our many supporters, donors and funders.

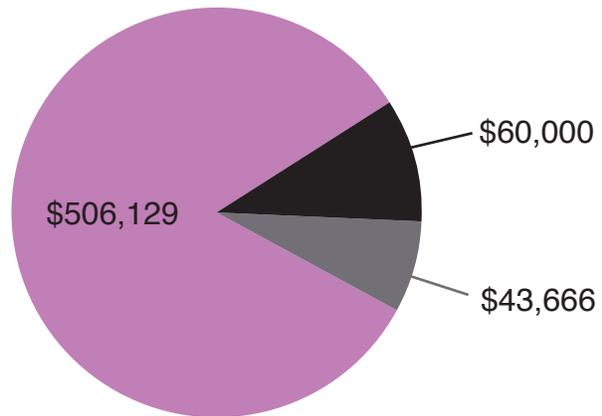
- Government Grants
- Foundations
- Earned Income
- Donations
- Other



Our 2010/11 expenses were \$609,795

83% of every dollar was invested back into programs and services

- Programs & Services
- Fundraising
- Administrative



Conclusion

Women need to be loved and cared for and they need to be heard in a non-judgmental way. Currently, there are millions of women and girls being bought and sold throughout the world. It is estimated that there are between 8,000-12,000 thousand being sold in Minnesota every year. These women and children belong to someone. They are someone's mother, daughter, sister or child. The buying and selling of women and girls has become an epidemic in our country, our state and our world. Breaking Free is committed to do all that we can do to put an end to this evil.

You Can Help Women and Girls Break Free

Sponsor-make a monetary donation (monthly or 1 time)

Donate-food, furniture, gift cards

Volunteer- your time or services

Invite-ask us to speak to your organization, school, or church

Educate-host an awareness event or goods drive

Shop- at our on-line boutique or host a party