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Helping Captives Secures Former Spokane Valley Strip Club to Help Survivors of Sex Trafficking

(Spokane Valley, WA) - According to the Polaris Project, supported by the U.S. Government, the United States has 16,554 individuals who are likely victims of trafficking.¹ The UN has noted that only 1 in 100 captives will ever escape,² making it probable that exponentially more than we know are trafficked every year.

The Northwest is often known for its coffee and outdoor appeal, such as rivers, lakes, and mountains. What is less known is that in the Northwest, since 2007, over 6000 victims of trafficking have been locally identified.³ And, according to the Fulcrum Institute “...Washington State has the 6th largest concentration of past and current sex trafficking victims in the United States.”⁴

Helping Captives exists to honor God by providing opportunities for freedom and safety to those exploited by sex trafficking. Originally, Helping Captives provided a local long-term care program for survivors from all over the United States in partnership with other trafficking agencies.

However, over the last two years, our organization has seen an uptick in local calls and walk-ins from women in our city seeking emergency and stabilization care. After talking with some of our community leaders, board members, and first responders, we decided in 2023 to do our best to answer that call.

We've been looking for a new permanent facility to provide needed services for our community. We knew that the location not only needed to be in town, but also on a bus line, easy to find, and it needed to provide enough square footage for current and future office employees, counselors, case managers, and outpatient staff.

Shortly after announcing our expansion to emergency care at last year's Annual Gala, a facility presented itself. The facility had been known for the exploitation of women in our area for decades —the Déjà Vu Strip Club.

Once a vibrant movie theater for families in our community, the building declined from a place of mainstream movies into adult films in the 70's, and eventually into a strip club, which it remained until it closed.

At first, we were unsure about the building due to its past use. But the more we prayed about it, it was apparent that not only did this building check all the practical needs on our list, but we ultimately felt that we could honor God by turning this building from a place of exploitation into a place of healing in His name. Ultimately, our objective for the building is to turn it into our future headquarters and outpatient facility.

As we were looking for funding options, the City of Spokane Valley contacted us with an opportunity to apply for a grant. The grant would have provided the total financing of the building. However, after looking into the grant request in more depth the grant required us to use all funds for secular use only and would include a restriction on the deed of the building.

Although we were very grateful to the Spokane Valley City Council for the opportunity, we decided to withdraw our request for a proposal as we are an unashamedly Christian ministry and have religious aspects to many of our services.

Through this process our Board of Directors realized that we needed to trust God and reach out to our community to help make this happen through private donations.

The success of this project means that more women in our community will have the opportunity to safely heal, grow, and enter into a whole new life.

“God is a God of redemption and healing. This project isn't just about redeeming an old building. It is a symbol and opportunity to redeem lives and set captives free.” —Caleb Altmeyer

Due to the generosity of a private partner, we have secured the Déjà Vu Strip Club building on E. Sprague Ave. in Spokane Valley for the next six months to launch a capital campaign for this incredible project.

To donate to this campaign, please visit www.helpingcaptives.org/stripclub

Additionally, Caleb Altmeyer, our Founder and CEO will be releasing a video with more details to the community on Monday, February 5th, and will then begin taking interviews.

FOR INQUIRIES

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ABOUT HELPING CAPTIVES

Helping Captives is a Christian anti-trafficking and support organization serving the Spokane Washington and Northern Idaho regions. We exist to honor God by providing opportunities for freedom and safety to those exploited by sex trafficking through prevention, intervention, and recovery services.

At Helping Captives we provide residential, trauma-informed, therapeutic stabilization services to adult female victims of human trafficking by offering medical, spiritual, mental, and emotional care as well as 24-hour housing and food. We welcome all women regardless of age, race, color, creed, or religion. Survivors in pain can be assured they will find love, acceptance, and a calm place to breathe at Helping Captives.

Helping Captives also offers education and resources to individuals, families, churches, schools, first responders, businesses, bikers, and anyone potentially coming into contact with survivors. Without our community of support, many sexually exploited women end up in lifelong abuse and addiction, some even die in the trafficking life. Our organization empowers people to fight trafficking and help survivors in our community.

REFERENCES

1. <https://polarisproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Polaris-Analysis-of-2021-Data-from-the-National-Human-Trafficking-Hotline.pdf>
2. <https://humantraffickinghotline.org/en/statistics> (included states: Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana)
3. [https://news.un.org/en/audio/2016/07/615462#:~:text=Only%20one%20out%20of%20100%20people%20are%20rescued%20from%20human,\(UNODC\)%20in%20New%20York](https://news.un.org/en/audio/2016/07/615462#:~:text=Only%20one%20out%20of%20100%20people%20are%20rescued%20from%20human,(UNODC)%20in%20New%20York)
4. <https://www.fox28spokane.com/sex-trafficking-prevention-curriculum-to-be-made-mandatory-in-washington-state/>

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