

ANNUAL 2 REPORT

Finding Kids

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 SPECIAL
OPERATIONS



From the bottom of my heart, thank you for your ongoing
belief and trust in Special Operations

A Message from the CEO

Unlike most crimes, the commercial sexual exploitation of children, also known as sex trafficking, happens in the cybersphere and behind closed doors. There are usually no witnesses, and the child will frequently not self-identify as a crime victim. Nonetheless, the damage inflicted is significant, can span generations, and justice is often not served.

While some believe this does not happen in their backyard, we know it happens in every zip code across America. According to a 2018 three-year prevalence study, up to 7.4% of high-school students have traded sex for drugs or cash. For those kids who have ever been treated for substance abuse, the prevalence doubles to 15%. Predators target vulnerable children. Some are runaways, while others are targeted while living at home. In a 2018 survey of 260 child sex trafficking victims, 55% of respondents reported attending school *while* they were being trafficked.

For over two decades, the Internet has unwittingly allowed predators to easily find victims. According to one child predator, *"...it is easier to order a child online, than to order pizza"*. The justice system has struggled to keep up.

Law enforcement do not have the resources to conduct expensive proactive investigations of vulnerable or runaway children. In California, depending on the case, solicitation of a child for sex is likely to be charged as a misdemeanor, and not a felony. Social media companies bear no legal or financial consequences for allowing predators to use their platforms to lure children, and sites that normalize adult-child sexual relationships (like NAMBLA) are allowed to operate freely in the open. Most challenging of all, resources for victim protection and aftercare are scarce.

And that is where we come in. Special Operations was founded in 2017 as a community-based response to help law enforcement identify and recover young victims and secure their predator's arrest. We hire private investigators to collect evidence so that cases are elevated from 'runaway' or 'vulnerable child' to exploited crime victim so that a law enforcement response is triggered. Our child mentors and aftercare partners work hard to offer each child the specialized services necessary for them to heal and ultimately lead fulfilling lives. Since inception, Special Operations has helped over 60 victims, and identified and targeted 26 criminals.

Special Operation has ambitious plans for 2022. As a young and growing organization, our goal is to help at least 50 more vulnerable boys and girls in the Bay Area this year, identifying and addressing gaps in the justice system along the way. Our Volunteer County Champion model will pave the way for us to work more closely with community stakeholders including law enforcement, social services, educators, and community-based organizations focused on prevention and aftercare. This year we hope to double our private investigator partnerships and develop a sustainable model for aftercare.

As a non-profit, we take our responsibility to be wise stewards of charitable dollars very seriously. While we are tactically focused on helping to solve individual cases, we are also allocating resources to tackle the business model behind this lucrative industry, now considered to be

the fastest growing criminal enterprise in the world. We want the risk to predators of being caught and held accountable to be so high that they leave our children alone. Until then, traffickers will continue to serve as brokers, and our children, and their children, will continue to be vulnerable.

There are many ways you can leverage your influence in your community – right now. Vote for local politicians who prioritize the safety of children. Attend city council meetings and find out what resources and trainings are being provided to local police departments and child welfare to better identify and serve victims. Ask your local school district what they are doing to train teachers to identify vulnerable children, and what prevention education is being provided to kids on the dangers of social media and 'Romeo pimps'.

A strong donor and volunteer support base are critical to our ability to scale our work and ultimately see the extinction of child exploitation in America. We are so grateful for your support. Whether it's financial or volunteering your unique skills to advance our mission, thank you.

You are making a difference.

With Gratitude,



Isabelle Finney
CEO



“We’ll work as hard as we can,
for as long as we can, to rescue as many as we can.”

A Message from Our Director of Investigations

It is a privilege to be serving with Special Operations at this point in my career. My experience includes 23 years in law enforcement, including 12 years in undercover investigations, which Special Operations excels in.

After retiring from police work, I spent 13 years conducting complex international human trafficking investigations in 12 countries. Even after all that time and exposure, I did not imagine that this scourge of human trafficking and child exploitation would be *right in our own backyard*. Our task is especially important as so few are doing it. This work can be dangerous — we go into places that few will enter. And it is especially demanding in the age of the internet as we now have criminals that are constantly preying upon the young and vulnerable.

Despite the challenges, the work we do is tremendously rewarding: we are able to change the lives of individuals that many people have given up on. My colleagues at Special Operations are driven to fulfill this mission. We have chosen to step out of our lives of comfort and security and into this arena of battle to find those young people who are being exploited and need help, and hope.

I cannot think of anything more worthy of my time and efforts. Thank you for your support and partnership in this endeavor.

Gratefully,

Vic

Vic Lacey
Director of Investigations

VISION

That **every child is free** to be a child.

MISSION

To **keep kids safe** from sex traffickers in the Bay Area and beyond.

PURPOSE

To **recover young victims**, to get them the help they need, and to **send traffickers to prison**.

THE PROBLEM

FBI studies indicate that the San Francisco Bay Area is one of the largest hubs for child sex trafficking in the United States. Hundreds of thousands of children go missing each year in our country — many presumed to be victims of sex trafficking. In 2021, there were 60,346 reports of missing children in California, of which 7,186 were from the San Francisco Bay Area. While most runaways eventually do return home, what happens to them **while they are missing** is often unknown. By the end of 2021, 387 kids in the nine Bay Area counties remain unaccounted for.

While 2% of missing child reports are kidnappings that trigger an immediate law enforcement response, the vast majority are considered runaways, and do not qualify for the urgent Amber Alert. Worse, studies reveal that two-thirds of runaways are **never even reported missing**. Many of these are referred to as the 'throwaway' cases. Of the children who are trafficked for sex, less than 1% are ever identified as victims, or rescued.

Here, in our community, children are being used as commodities in the fastest growing, most profitable business of organized crime in the world. Unlike drugs, a child can be sold multiples times per day, over and over again. All youth are vulnerable to sex traffickers, but those who have already endured some form of trauma become especially easy prey. Unless there is clear evidence of nefarious circumstances, a child who runs away (to a groomer; or from an unhappy home situation) is typically not something law enforcement has the resources to proactively

investigate. And on those occasions where perpetrators are caught, few victims will agree to testify for fear of retribution. Without the victim's testimony, the perpetrator often remains free to traumatize and ruin the lives of other innocent boys and girls.

THE SPECIAL OPERATIONS SOLUTION

Our organization was born from an unmet need in our community — the need for boots-on-the-ground investigators to join the fight to prevent children from being exploited. Our team of private investigators and retired law enforcement officers know how to find both victims and perpetrators. Because we are a victim-centered charitable organization — and not law enforcement — it is often easier for community members working with trauma victims to reach out to us for help. It takes a public-private partnership between law enforcement and the community to solve this hidden crime. Once a child is recovered, we work with partners to provide direct assistance to the victims — emergency housing, financial assistance, legal help — any support they need to begin healing. When victims feel safe and are empowered to testify, traffickers go to prison.

The result is a safer community for us all.



2021 BY THE

FINANCIAL RESULTS FOR CALENDAR YEAR 2021

REVENUE

Private Donations	\$558,843
Foundations and Grants.....	\$182,500

Total Revenue	\$741,343
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PROGRAM EXPENSES

Find & Recover	\$151,703
Criminal Targeting	\$77,068
Victim Support	\$41,114
Other Program Expenses	\$66,300

OTHER EXPENSES

Fundraising.....	\$36,810
Administrative	\$8,259

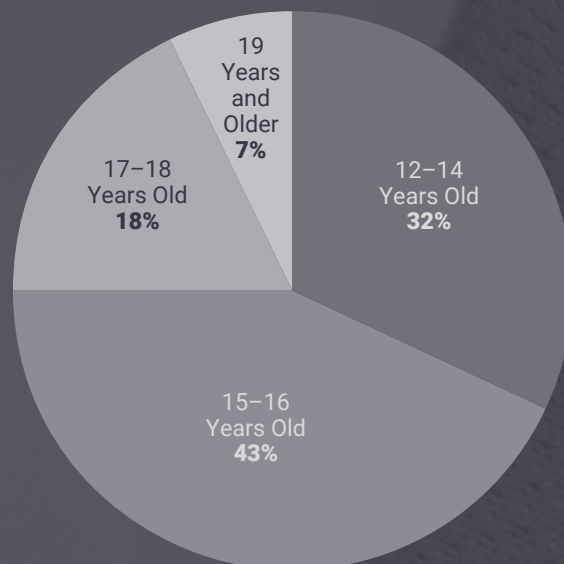
Total Expenses.....	\$381,254
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Net Reserve	\$360,089
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SPECIAL OPERATIONS USE OF FUNDS

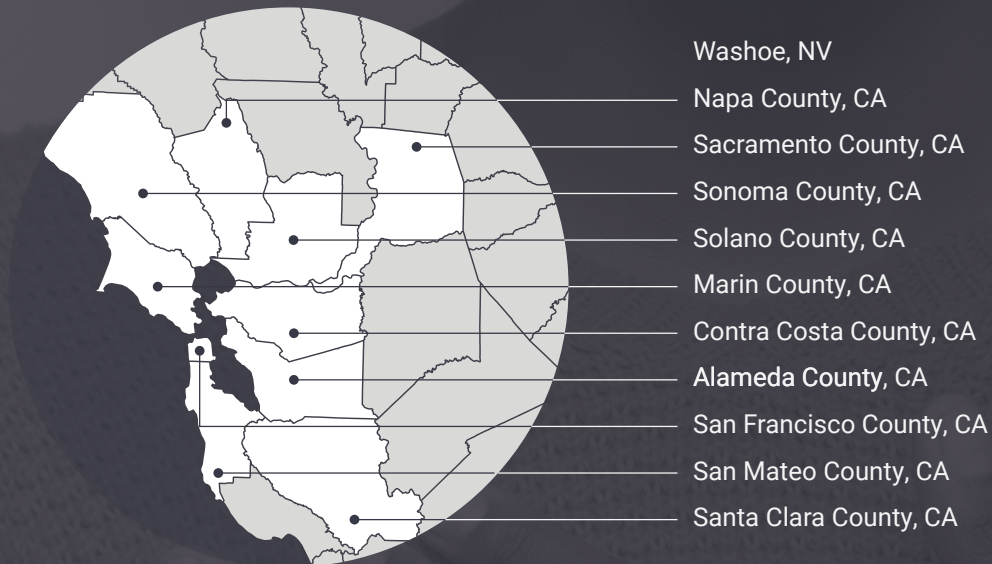


AGES OF CHILDREN SERVED



NUMBERS

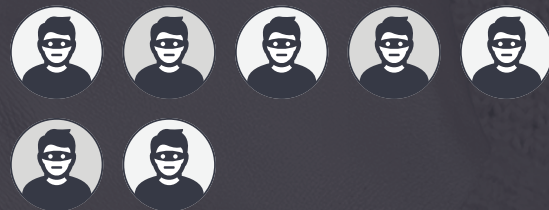
COUNTIES SERVED



26 CHILDREN RECOVERED



7 CRIMINALS TARGETED*



AVERAGE TOTAL COST PER CASE

\$11,550

* For every criminal targeted and held accountable, multiple potential victims will never be exploited.

TOGETHER WE CAN BRING CHILDHOOD BACK TO CHILDREN

Thank you to our Special Operations Family:

- Our donors, sponsors, partners, community supporters, and law enforcement
- Our committed Board of Directors
- The volunteers who give so much of their time to help further our mission
- Our survivors, who inspire us with their resilience, strength and determination

To make a gift, please visit our website at findingkids.org.

Where appropriate, please ask if your employer will match your gift.

Don't forget to add us as your favorite charitable organization and shop on Amazon Smile!

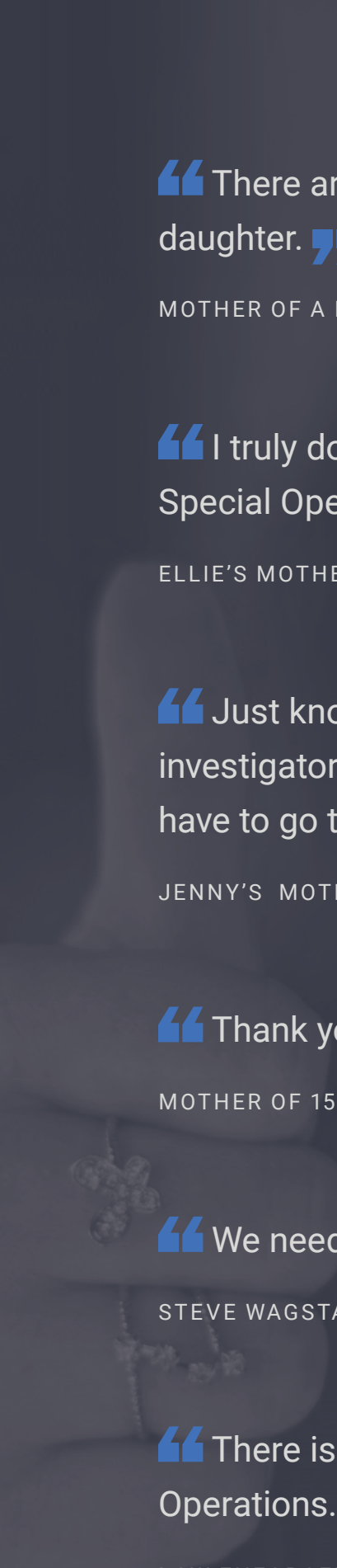
SPECIAL OPERATIONS

Founded in 2017, Special Operations is a non-profit dedicated to keeping kids safe from sex traffickers in the San Francisco Bay Area and beyond. The result is a safer community for us all.

Learn more: findingkids.org or email us directly at info@findingkids.org.

To receive timely case updates, please sign up for our newsletter at findingkids.org.





“There are no words. I can’t thank you enough for finding my daughter.”

MOTHER OF A MISSING 15-YEAR OLD

“I truly do not believe Ellie would have been found without Special Operations.”

ELLIE’S MOTHER

“Just knowing that folks cared enough to hire private investigators to find our daughter kept us going...no parent should have to go through this ...”

JENNY’S MOTHER

“Thank you. It’s like you came down from the heavens.”

MOTHER OF 15-YEAR OLD GIRL

“We need Special Operations.”

STEVE WAGSTAFFE, DISTRICT ATTORNEY, SAN MATEO COUNTY

“There is no way she’d be safe right now if it weren’t for Special Operations.”

LAW ENFORCEMENT

SAMPLE CASES

Special Operations has confidential informants throughout the Bay Area who call us when a young person needs our help. When we heard from one of our CIs that Dee was hiding in the bathroom of a café north of San Francisco, having run away from sex traffickers, we immediately told our CI that we'd send an Uber to pick her up. **DEE**, who had grown up in the foster care system, had nowhere else to turn. She had been beaten up, living under a bush, and considering suicide. Getting into the Uber saved her life. Our private investigators and mentors met her at a nice hotel in San Francisco. They took her to Target to buy her clothes and necessities. Special Operations paid for her to stay in the hotel for several weeks while we researched safe home options and helped her through the application process. Once she was accepted, we drove her to the home, bought her groceries, and helped her move in. Our mentors routinely met her for lunch and helped her study for her GED. Dee received her high school diploma and now has a good job and her own apartment.

The call came from a local Sheriff's Office. "We have a boy recovering in the hospital from sex trafficking. All he wants in the world is to go home to his family in Texas. Will you help us?" Special Operations immediately paid for his airfare to fly home. Had we not been there, he may have been all alone, vulnerable, back on the streets.

ALEXIS met a cute boy online during the pandemic, whom she assumed was her age. She ran away to be with him and told her parents, "I'm going to Santa Barbara for the weekend with a friend, don't bother to look for me." Her father was searching Santa Barbara with the help of local law enforcement. Our investigators continued to interview her mother and discovered Alexis had bought an airline ticket to Miami. We immediately called our federal agent partners who pinged Alexis' phone and rescued her. She was returned home within 48 hours of our getting involved.

MYA, 13, was being sold for sex on International Boulevard. The Oakland Police Department found Mya in a sweep and asked her her age. The predators had made Mya practice what she would say and do in this exact moment. When an officer approached her, she said, "I just turned 18," and presented him with a fake ID. She knew to put on her best act, otherwise she'd be severely beaten or killed when she returned. The officer believed her and released her back into a horrible, illicit world that no child should ever be a part of. But the community knew the truth. Private inquiries by non-law enforcement citizens led us to believe she was quite young. We knew there would be evidence on her cell phone, so one of our volunteers offered to trade a brand new white iphone for her old one, which she happily did. Because of that iphone trade, Mya has been placed with Child Protective Services.

WENDY, 14, wanted to be a boy. She changed her name to “David” and told her parents she needed a sex change operation. Her parents agreed to call her “them” and “David” but refused to pay for the operation. Wendy ran away. Her parents were very distraught and reported her as a runaway to law enforcement. Over the next few days, her parents became increasingly scared and frustrated as they did not feel that law enforcement was aggressively investigating the case. Many of their repeated calls were sent to voicemail. As soon as the parents contacted Special Operations, our team of private investigators began interviewing Wendy’s friends and family and combing social media. We arranged a search party to look in San Francisco and eventually found Wendy living in a homeless shelter.

When **KRISTY’S** grandmother went to pick her up from her friend’s house, 14-year old Kristy was not there. At the time of the initial report, Kristy was classified as a voluntary runaway juvenile. The Sheriff’s Office aggressively investigated this case. Kristy’s family requested our help as well because they were concerned that the person of interest and his family were acting suspiciously. Our investigators conducted surveillance of the person of interest’s house, contacted witnesses and eliminated other leads as the Sheriff processed warrants. The search warrants resulted in the Sheriff’s Office finding Kristy hidden

in a crawl space at the suspect’s house. The suspect and his mother were arrested on multiple felonies. We offered trauma counseling services for Kristy.

We received an emergency inquiry through our website about a 15-year old missing female named **VALERIE**. Our private investigators immediately contacted the family and the law enforcement detective assigned to this case. We discovered that Valerie had recently met a secret boyfriend through the dating app, Hoop. Valerie was found with her boyfriend and the suspect was booked into jail. Bail was set at \$120,000 charging felony child endangerment, child abduction, arranging to meet with a minor for illicit purposes, statutory rape, and sending harmful matter to a minor.

To view more of our solved cases, please visit our website at findingkids.org.



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ABOUT US

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Special Operations Finding Kids is a 501(c)(3) Organization. EIN: 81-2874951

