



Living in Freedom Together

Empowering and Elevating Survivors

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Living In Freedom Together, Inc.

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Worcester, Massachusetts 01609

www.liftworchester.org

Annual Report | 2019

Letter from the CEO

Since the founding of LIFT in 2014, we have had the privilege of supporting the most incredibly resilient, kind, compassionate, and strong survivors. Survivors who inspire us every day to continue to push forward and advocate for systemic change and services that are accessible and designed to support the unique needs of survivors of systems of prostitution. We have advocated for legislative change to stop the criminalization of this marginalized and disenfranchised group of people, to expand quality exit services, and to hold pimps and buyers accountable through penalties for those who choose to buy and harm victims of systems of prostitution. As we move into this new year, we look forward to continuing to work alongside our incredible team of survivors and allies as we work to end prostitution and take hold of the opportunities that await us.

In 2020, LIFT will continue to create, provide, and expand services and supports for prostituted people in our community. Too often survivors are labeled as difficult, and are stigmatized, and providers push them away rather than engage and empathize with them. Survivors deserve programs and providers that understand they are more than the trauma they have experienced or the violence they have survived. LIFT will work to continue to expand our community-based programs and educate community partners so no matter where our participants seek services, they are treated like human beings, not someone's inconvenience.

We will continue to build coalitions to ensure that survivors have access to survivor mentors and services that are survivor informed. We will continue to push back on programs and policies that cause harm to survivors. We believe providing survivors access to quality services is not only the right thing to do, but it is the urgent thing to do. Survivors in our community are experiencing horrific abuse and are dying at record numbers from overdose, violence, and system failures.

Despite this being a time where women's rights and marginalized people are under attack, we will continue to work with our city government, our partners in the state legislature, and our allies in congress to fight for implementation of the Equality Model. We will continue to advocate for meaningful legislative changes that will protect survivors, increase funding and opportunities for survivor-led exit programs, hold pimps and buyers accountable, and other key elements of the Equality Model.

Legislative change is essential to ending systems of prostitution and providing viable exit opportunities and pathways to sustainable recovery, but there can be no real solution to ending systems of prostitution without the cooperation of the community. Survivors of prostitution need the opportunity to build a life outside of *the life*. This cannot happen in a vacuum. We are calling on our community members, state and local officials, and business leaders to step up and stand with us in implementing real change.

Sex work is not work. It is the exploitation of our most vulnerable community members. LIFT will continue to fight until all systems of prostitution are recognized for what they truly are - systems of gender-based violence and oppression, and mechanisms of gender inequality. Our vision includes a community where survivors are embraced with choices, dignity, and inclusion; where vulnerable people are no longer bought and sold for sex. We know our supporters share this vision, and we are thankful to all those working alongside us to make this a reality and not a far-fetched dream.

We look forward to your support in 2020.

In solidarity,
Nicole Bell and the leadership of LIFT

“People that end up in prostitution are the people with the least amount of choices... If people can better understand the process of entry, and the vulnerabilities these women have, it’s much easier to look at the person standing in front of you with compassion and empathy.”

The Organization | Mission & Focus

Living In Freedom Together (LIFT) is a survivor-led organization comprised of those who have overcome commercial sexual exploitation (CSE), and professionals sensitive to the needs of this vulnerable and marginalized population. To support individuals who are victims or survivors of systems of prostitution and the sex trade, LIFT, Inc. envisions a community wherein victims, who were for so long shunned, are now embraced with choices, dignity, and inclusion.

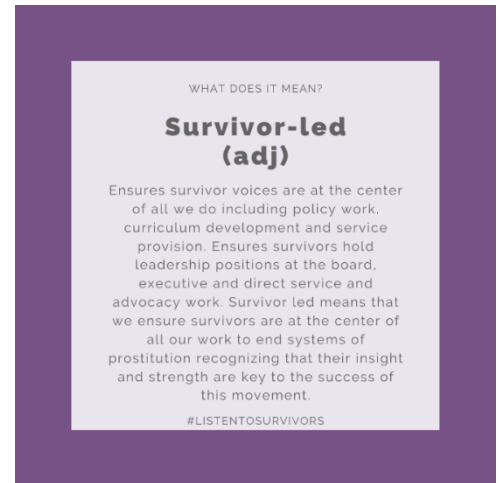
Our mission is to provide resources, advocacy, and support to empower individuals to exit and recover from the impacts of being prostituted, and to end the sex trade.

In 2014, founder and CEO of LIFT, Nicole Bell, set out on a mission to provide critical resources and services to women actively engaged in systems of prostitution. Her lived experience in systems of prostitution led her to realize that the survivors were not going to leave the block to engage in services, so she created an organization that provides resources that are accessible and tailored to the needs of survivors.

We work to **end** systems of prostitution through the implementation of the Equality Model. The key components of the Equality Model include:

1. Full decriminalization of those who are prostituted
2. High-quality services for those in prostitution
3. The act of buying sex is criminalized
4. Anti-sex-trafficking legislation be strengthened
5. Addressing/decreasing on-ramps to prostitution and strengthening/increasing exit ramps
6. Coordination of a holistic approach incorporating public information campaigns, education and training, and coordination of laws, legislation, and services.

This approach has now been adopted in Sweden, Norway, Iceland, Northern Ireland, Canada, France, Ireland and most recently, Israel.



Living In Freedom Together | Leadership



Nicole Bell
CEO



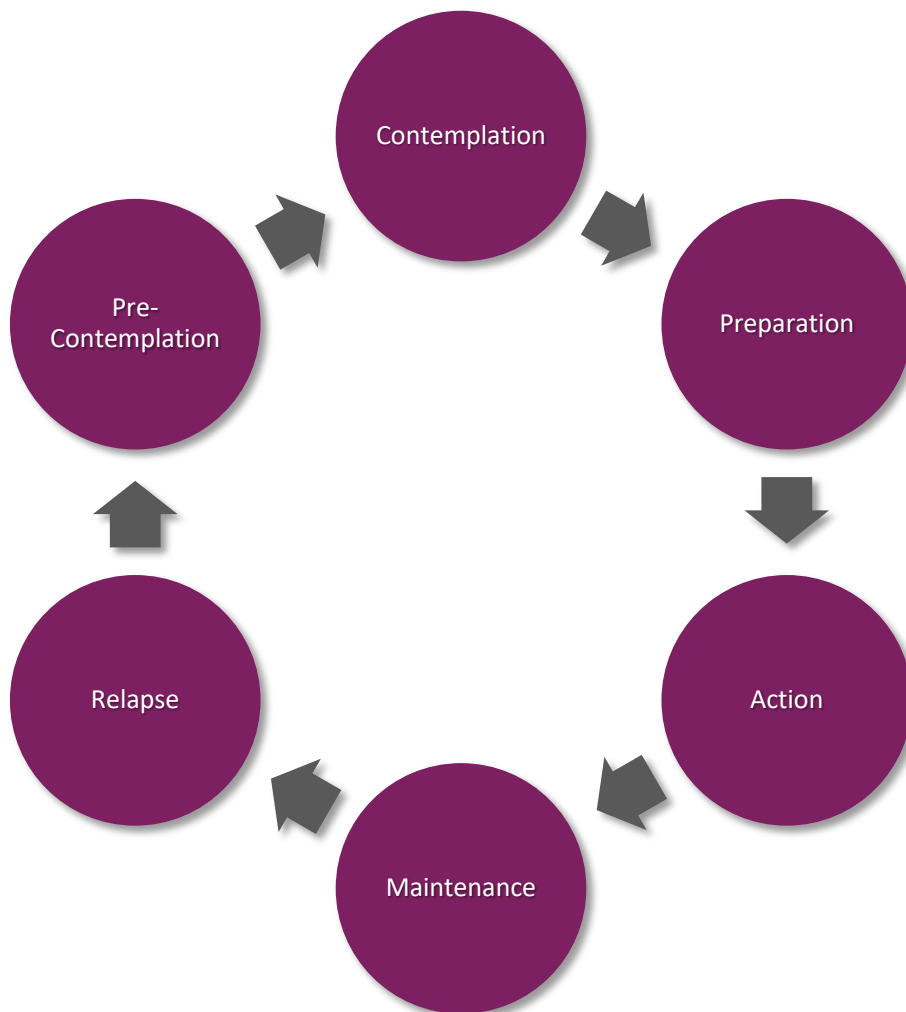
Courtney Ross Escobar
COO



Karen Riley-McNary
VP, Outreach & Advocacy

Our Model

The Transtheoretical Model uses the Stages of Change to integrate the principles and processes of change. This model recognizes that people move through the stages of change on a continuum and that a person who experiences relapse may not go back to a pre-contemplative stage but may move back into a preparation or action stage.



2019 Programs & Fundraising Summary

Drop-In Center

The Drop-In began over five years ago with a pot of coffee and extra clothes from our CEO's closet. Since that time, our Drop-In Center has grown tremendously, and has served over 340 individuals in systems of prostitution. The Drop-In Center works to remove barriers by effectively providing access to survivor-mentors, healthcare, harm reduction resources, advocacy, and other services, and supplies. The Drop-In functions as a support center to begin contemplating what relevant community resources are necessary for participants to create their own pathways to exiting the life and entering recovery.

The Drop-In Center is the first step to recovery, which is also often the longest step and begins with establishing trusting relationships. LIFT recognizes that recovery is a process and not an event. Our programming uses the Transtheoretical Model which recognizes that behavior change happens on a continuum.

Creating Alternatives to Incarceration (CATI) Program

LIFT developed the CATI program in partnership with the Worcester County District Attorney's office. This program works to create pathways to recovery for prostituted individuals instead of incarceration by providing support and services needed to begin thinking about exiting prostitution.

Support in the System to Exit and Recover (SISTER) Program

The SISTER Program works with incarcerated survivors at the Western Massachusetts Regional Women's Correctional Center. This program consists of a 4-week group curriculum with the opportunity for incarcerated survivors to meet one on one with a LIFT Outreach and Advocacy Specialist to create safety plans for after their release from jail.

Jana's Place

Jana's Place is a 16-bed residential treatment program for female survivors of systems of prostitution who have co-occurring mental health and substance use disorders. LIFT has designed an innovative recovery model that focuses on individualized treatment plans, building resiliency and healing from trauma, and incorporates module-based programming to develop participants' selfcare, job-training and professional development, and life-management skills.

Annual Fundraiser

On June 8, 2019 hosted its first annual fundraiser as a staffed organization. We were able to raise over \$54,000 dollars through donations, ticket sales, and corporate sponsors. All funds raised went to support the renovations at Jana's Place.

Drop-In Dinner Drives

1 Facebook ask turned into 10 people participating in the Drop-In Dinner Drive, providing 10 hot, homemade meals over the course of a 10-week period for participants at the Drop-In Center. It is so meaningful to us and survivors to have the community supporting our Drop-In participants so compassionately. Something as simple as a homecooked meal can be a deeply meaningful gesture and show of support to the women we serve.

1st Annual Self-Care Fair

LIFT believes selfcare is beneficial to everyone and is an essential part of sustainable recovery. Recently, selfcare messaging has become more about brunch and spa days and less about mental health care. This event was our first with the hope that it will grow into a larger message to consider selfcare part of healthcare.



Jana's Place – A Recovery Home – Est. 2019

Jana's Place is a **first-of-its-kind recovery home** for women exiting prostitution and recovering from substance use disorder (SUD) with co-occurring mental health disorders. Our recovery model will focus on holistic, sustainable recovery emphasizing self-care, life skills development, and job training opportunities.

Jana's Place Leadership



Liz Johnstone
Program Director



Maria Mendoza
Lead Residential Counselor



Serena Neslusan
Clinical Director

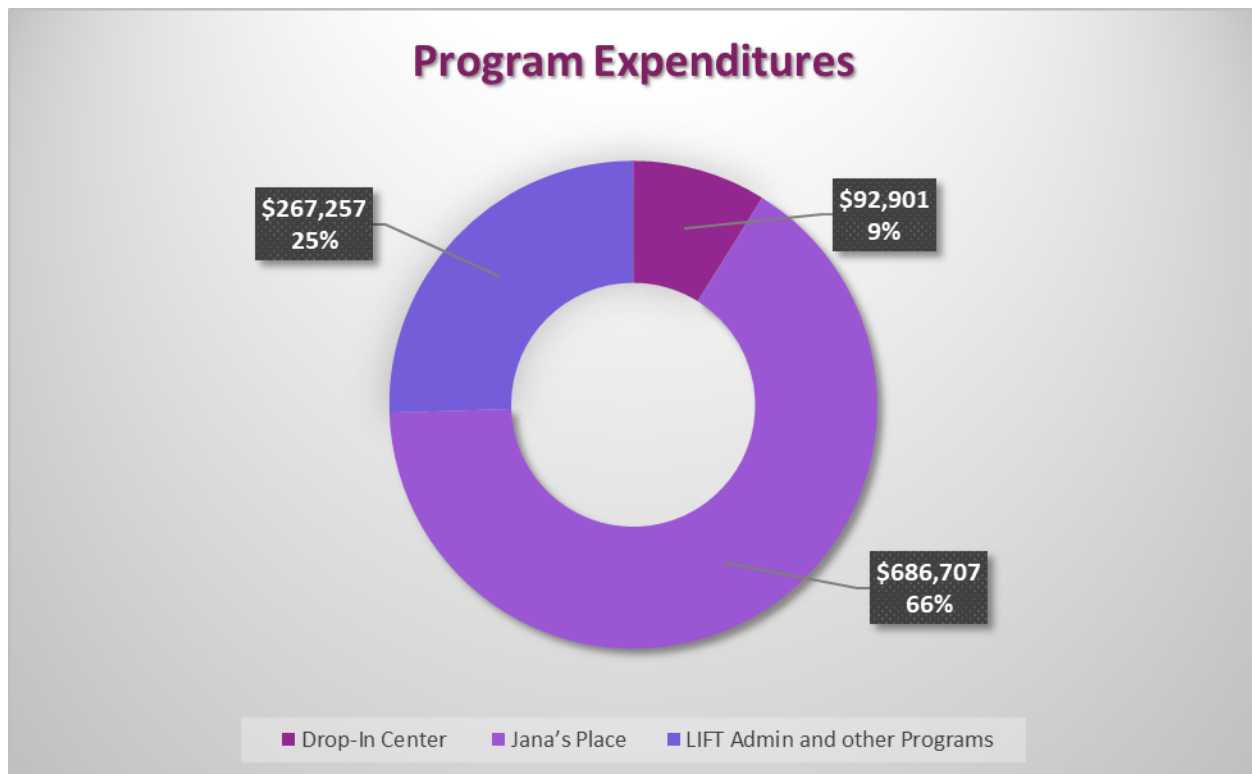
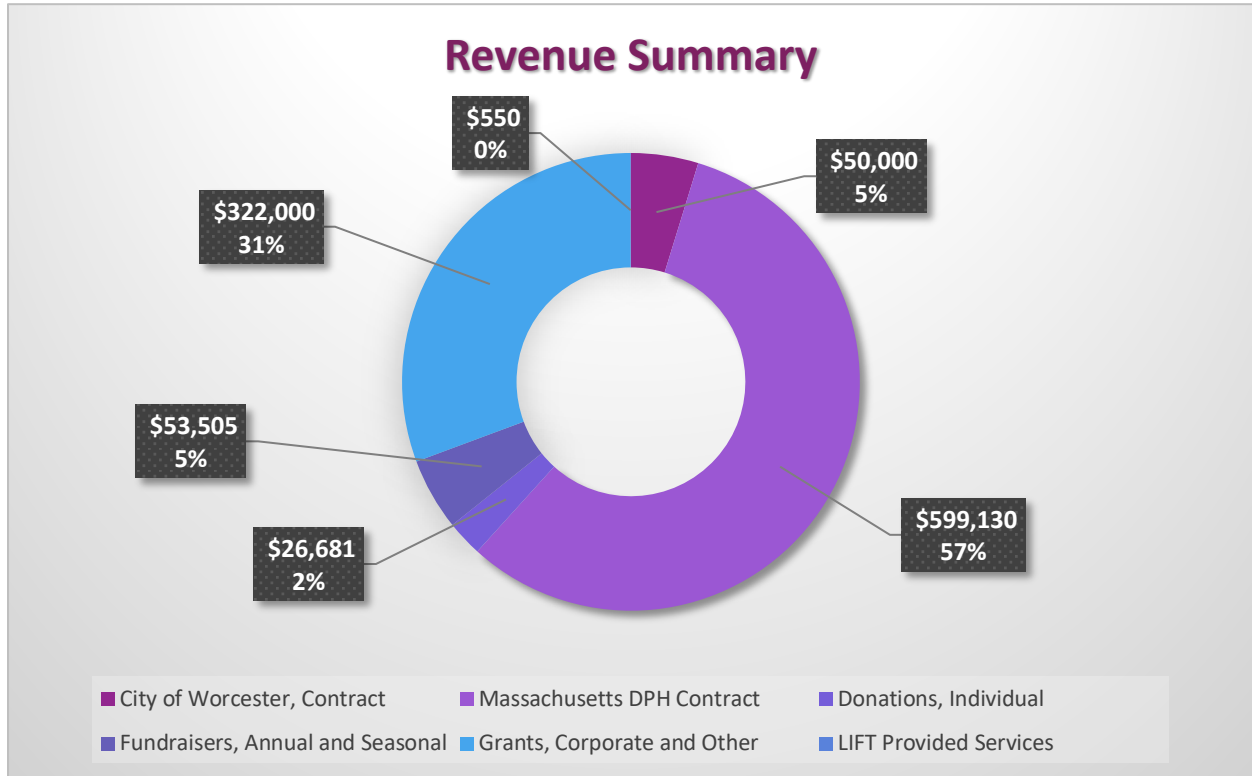


Brianna Petrides
Lead Recovery Specialist

*"We're not like a clinic. It's a home.
Most of the participants that we see have never had that.
We want to offer a space that's comforting and inviting
and that they want to be in and know that we want them in."*

– Nicole Bell

Our Financial Highlights



Our 2019 Supporter Recognition Spotlights



Donor Spotlight: John & Susan Haffty

The mission that Nikki described was inspiring. We were amazed that she could take the challenges from her life and channel them into something that would make a difference in the lives of others. LIFT is delivering results! The program is working and turning around the lives of many young women.



Volunteer Profile: Lynne Burns

I volunteer at LIFT to give the women in my community the love and support that they need to exit prostitution and begin their recovery. I believe it is our responsibility as a women to support other women. I remember donating makeup one night and one of our women looked me in the eyes and said, "I feel so alive." The realization that I can help make another woman feel alive with a small act of kindness has changed my life.



Partner Excellence: Monica Thomas-Bonnick

LIFT fits in with the funding priorities of Webster Five as it is a local nonprofit, helping local citizens. The mission of the organization is holistic in its approach to care, recovery and life skills training. LIFT's mission is aligned with Webster Five' belief in the importance of giving back to the community that has supported us for over a century, and our commitment to being different and better in all that we do. My involvement with LIFT helps me feel like me as an individual and the bank I work for are "being the change that we want to see" in our community. Additionally, our involvement helps to bring this epidemic to light.



Employee Leader: Audra Doody

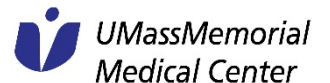
My favorite part of working for LIFT is the women. The sisterhood of survivors. Gaining the trust of the women, showing them that there is a way out of the life. Giving them a safe place to rest and a hot meal. Being a beacon of hope when most have lost all hope. We are making an impact every day in these women's lives whether it's big or small. The women we serve are comfortable to come in and talk to us about anything and everything with no judgement. We support women that a lot of people have forgotten about, or just don't want to deal with them. We try to guide them in whichever direction they want to go. Support and love them. We don't ask for a anything in return just for them to come back. It doesn't matter where you are at in your life, we will welcome you in and treat you with respect. A lot of women feel very comfortable with LIFT because we are survivor lead, knowing that we have been in similar situations and don't have to say anything we just have that common bond.

Our Amazing Supporters and Donors – Highlights & Gratitude

While LIFT is lucky to have so many wonderful supporters, donors, volunteers, and partners, we wanted to highlight a small number of our amazing support organizations. We are grateful for each and every donation – from financial to time spent helping, regardless of size and scope.



**NoVo
Foundation**



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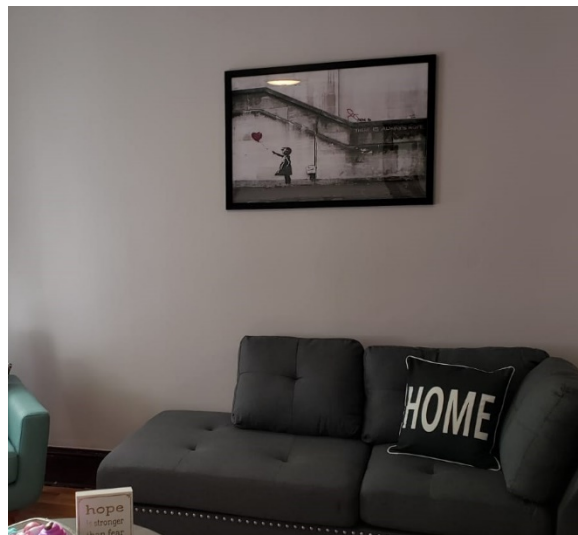
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