

The Love Is Action Community Initiative Creates Safer More Productive Communities

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ABSTRACT

Love Is Action Community Initiative was launched in 2018 as a national effort of the Successful Survivors Foundation (an IRS designated 501 c 3 educational organization) to give community stakeholders an opportunity to serve others in safe ways for the purpose of eradicating social isolation and the societal ills that emanate from it.

Community stakeholders include the faith community, business, government services, non-profit social service organizations, justice and law enforcement, education, mental health, civic groups and clubs, and concerned individuals. Help for those in distress is always offered under the guidance and oversight of social services professionals in safe ways for the purpose of diminishing social isolation, promoting measurable and sustainable responses, and encouraging thriving community conditions that positively impact everyone involved.

The purpose of Love Is Action Community Initiative is to prevent the tragic individual and community outcomes that can result from or be exacerbated by social isolation. These tragedies include substance abuse disorder, domestic violence, child abuse, human trafficking, homeless, suicide, and so on.

LIACI works when participants give of their strengths, talents and resources to provide loving and supportive responses to at-risk crisis events and for the prevention of same. This collaborative community approach empowers all parties. As noted in *The Connected Child*, research supports utilizing the strengths of one person to strengthen another. For the community contributor *“once you see yourself in this role of mentor, encourager, and protector, days become filled with opportunities.”* For the at-risk receiver, *“repetitive muscle movement and moderately strenuous activities have the*

benefit of bring down excitatory and stress neurochemicals in the brain and boosting calming neurochemicals.” Thus, protective factors create a layer of resilience for a safer community.

“All of these focuses of prevention are intertwined and vital to limiting cases of abuse and neglect in our communities. Since resiliency, which is prevention and healing, is not a one-for-all thing, it is vital that multiple aspects of resources and connection are utilized simultaneously.”

—Frederic Flack, MD Resilience—How We Find New Strength At Times of Stress, page 202. Flack also noted that *“a sense of community is a vital part of sustaining our self-esteem.”*

Through LIACI, stakeholders are encouraged to come together to identify the greatest needs in the community and to identify those who can help to meet those needs within the culture and character of their community. The shared efforts and collaborative services are what fuel the productivity of the initiative. This is vital in community outreach aspects and prevention.

Safe and Sound in California provides data and research on the effectiveness of collaborative and community outreaches across their state. They noted that every community has community protective factors that are linked to lower rates of child maltreatment. The services of LIACI, including a framework within which collaboration, communication, strength-based organization, resources, education, mental health, and more, can take place, exponentially increase those protective factors.

Love Is Action Community Initiative can be launched in any community across the United States where *at least one person* is willing to champion the cause of improving the community by helping its most vulnerable. LIACI provides a robust list of vetted successful partners, programs and

resources which are ready to help in participating communities by offering their services or helping to replicate their programs.

Love Is Action Community Initiative creates change at all systemic levels because it empowers prevention programs and resources from the bottom up and from the top down. There is a place for everyone to safely participate.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Across the country communities are engulfed with staggering numbers of societal ills that impair all factors of healthy functioning societies. Too often those in the community refrain from attempting to help because there isn't a clear path to do so. Child and family programs and other non profit organizations and ministries often offer only limited opportunities to help, including financial giving and fostering and/or adopting children. Limited opportunities to help leave willing people and organizations on the sidelines when even the smallest opportunities to put love into action can create a large level of preventative influence.

BACKGROUND

Love Is Action Community Initiative is a national program to encourage engagement services in communities across the nation. It is a public/private, faith-based community initiative that gives everyone safe and effective ways to help prevent child abuse, suicide homelessness, and another societal ills that harm us all.

David Bercile, PHD said "*Trauma is being called the "Invisible Epidemic."* LIACI puts light on this epidemic and provides guidelines and suggests

proven programs and resources to address the problems head on. The Love Is Action Community Initiative was modeled after the Faith in Motion initiative in Orange County California. That initiative has been successfully serving their most vulnerable since 2004.

Rhonda Sciortino, founder of Successful Survivors Foundation, national child advocate, former foster youth, and child welfare risk management specialist observed that the numbers of child abuse and neglect, family crime and conflict, and community stressors continued to show a missing link in early interventions. As the number of crisis continued grow across the states, so did her awareness of the ripple effect of positive influence that services like “Faith in Motion” have on children and families when love was put into action. Among all of the many needs noted, three primary factors began to trend the most in relation to community stressors: familial-functioning challenges, self-worth and trauma-influenced challenges, and social isolation challenges. Thus, they became the overlapping focal points of the Love Is Action Community Initiative.

Familial Functioning:

Among many other aspects of family functioning this data stood out the most. Data showed in 2020 alone that 1 in 7 children experienced child abuse and neglect in the last year. (Chart 1A) That leads to significant community cost and social-emotional needs. This does not include the influence of the estimated 1,000,000 children in the U.S. who are at risk of being trafficked in the next 3 years (Safe & Sound, 2021). Former U.S. Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, stated, “*neighborhoods are the first line of defense against trafficking.*” Thus, Love Is Action Community Initiative is a virtual tool for preventing human trafficking, especially child sex trafficking, in every community.



Chart 1A: CDC 2002

The other aspect of family functioning that consistently identified the need for preventive factor support related to the community resource availability. In 2017 Ellis Dietz created the idea that Adverse Community Environments (ACEs), such as lack of affordable and safe housing, community violence, systemic discrimination and limited access to social and economic mobility, was the primary, and rooted aspect of increased Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) that impact children’s health and well-bring, thus, leading to community challenges then and later. They were called the “Pair of ACES.” (Chart 1B)

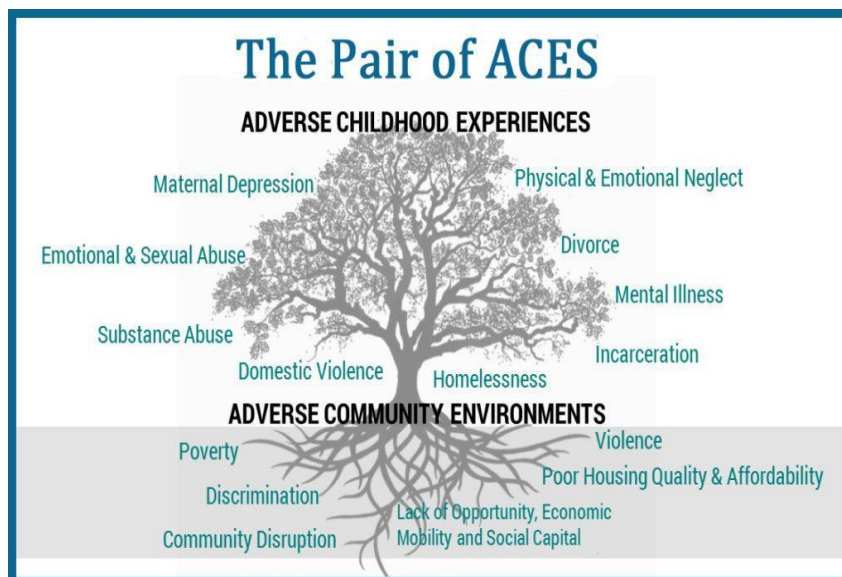


Chart 1B: Ellis Dietz, 2017

Self-Worth & Trauma:

Beginning in 1994, the "adverse childhood experiences" (ACE) Study, a partnership between the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Kaiser Permanente assessed the relationship between adult health risk behaviors and childhood abuse and household dysfunction. It was reported in the Adverse Childhood Experiences study that about 61% of adults surveyed across 25 states reported they had experienced at least one type of ACE before age 18, and nearly 1 in 6 reported they had experienced four or more types of ACEs. That is a significant number of the lives of influence within our communities. It also shows that trauma, particularly childhood trauma, is more of a norm than an abnormality.

According to the CDC in 2020, 1750 children died of abuse and neglect in the United States. Though noted as an underestimate based on reporting, they also noted that at least 1 in 7 children have experienced child abuse or neglect in the past year in the United States. There are also many cases that are never tracked. Notable to that is chronic abuse. Chronic abuse, as well as trauma from experiences of abuse, have shown time and time again long-term mental and physical effects in adulthood. Toxic stress from the experiences can change brain development. It can "increase the risk for problems like post traumatic stress disorder and learning, attention, and memory difficulties.

Outside the interpersonal effects are the interpersonal effects of trauma and abuse well into adulthood. According to the CDC, "*children who are abused or neglected are also at increased risk for experiencing future violence victimization and perpetration, substance abuse, sexually transmitted infections, delayed brain development, lower educational attainment, and limited employment opportunities.*"

All of these factors together identify many predetermined risks relating to trauma experiences and self-worth. These components play a role in all aspects of wholeness for individuals and communities. The knowledge of these risk factors and common component within families at risk of societal ills, helped Love is Action Community Initiative put emphasis on a trauma-centered approach, language, and bridge for prevention.

Social Isolation:

“The human brain is a powerful machine-it can physically forge new neural connection over our entire lifespan.” (The Connected Child. page 19)

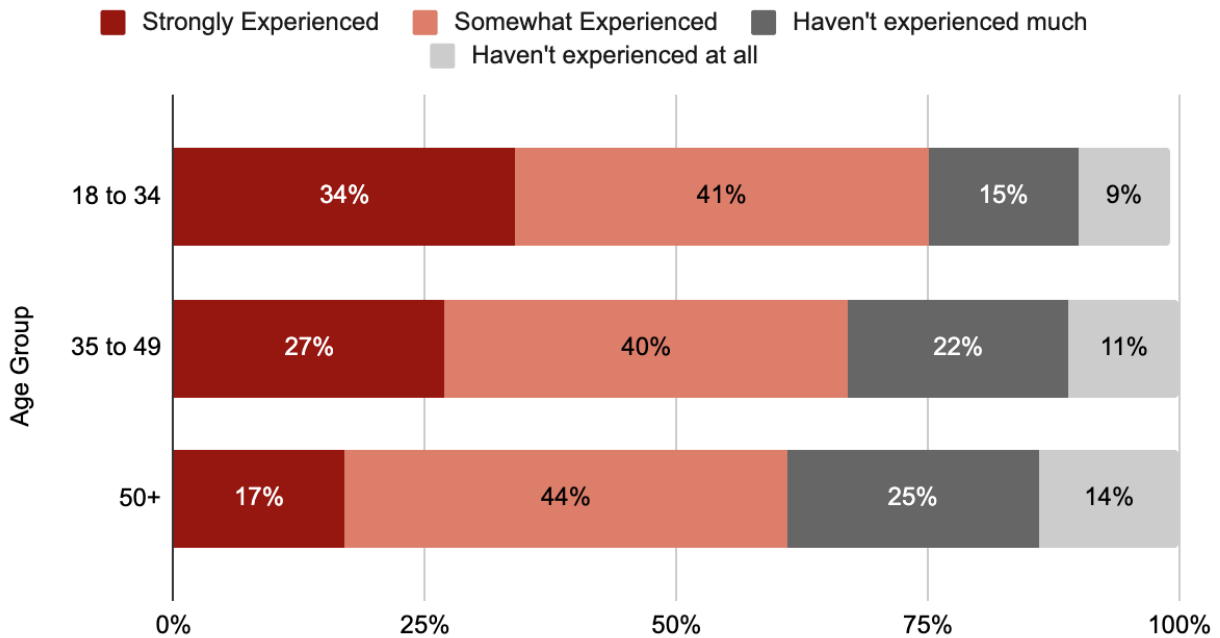
“Encouragement keeps your child’s stress and cortisol levels low and creates an environment of felt safety and healing.” (The Connected Child page 19)

“The brain is a social organ, made to be in relationships.” “What happens between brains has a great deal to do with what happens within each individual brain” (The Whole Brain Child: 12 revolutionary strategies to nurturing your child’s developing mind by Daniel J Siegel and Tina Payne Bryson page 122.)

“Studies of happiness and wisdom reveal that a key factor in well-being is devoting one’s attention and passions to the benefit of others instead of just focusing on the individual.” (122). *“The kinds of relationships they experience will lay the groundwork for how they relate to others for the rest of their lives.”* (124)

The National Child Trauma Stress Network said that by age sixteen, two-thirds of children in the US have experienced a traumatic event. An addition to that estimate was in 2020 when the COVID epidemic uprooted the educational structure, family functioning, and social-emotional support.

Experience of Social Isolation among US Adults, August 2020



CDC: 2020

The methodology of this initiative allows for cross-cultural awareness and collaborative efforts at community levels. It also allows participants to modify programs and outreaches to meet their local needs. As noted by the American Psychological Association, “*research demonstrates that the resource and skills associated with more positive adaptation can be cultivated and practiced.*” The creativity aspect of this initiative allows for modifications that use the strengths of the community to meet the needs of those within it.

SOLUTION

LIACI has produced parenting videos that help prevent the top six causes of conflict that can lead to tragedy. These videos have reached over 17,000 people.

We have delivered the Your Real Success program to pregnant and parenting teens, transition aged foster youth, and to adult victims of childhood trauma.

We convened national human trafficking thought leaders in collaboration with Vanguard University's Global Center for Women and Justice to create and share knowledge of sex trafficking risk factors.

We developed monthly Equipping The Community Ted-talk style events to provide up-to-date information and practical tips for fighting the things that harm us. Information is delivered by Subject matter experts on societal ills like depression, suicide, addiction, domestic violence, child abuse, human trafficking, and more talk about how to fight the issues that harm us all.

We facilitated a collaboration between GAMECHANGERS Opioid Avoidance program and the Drug Enforcement Administration.

We have provided laptops to foster youth.

Through our collaborations, LIACI has directly and indirectly impacted over 750,000 lives.

The leaders of the organization are experts in trauma-centered interventions, education, mental health, community outreach, faith-based services, and ethical communication.

As noted in Chart D below, we have taught skills for early prevention. Additionally, we have provided online training for suicide prevention, mentoring, management of risk in community programs, and much more.

Chart D

Skills taught	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Social-emotional learning• Safe dating and healthy relationship skill programs• Parenting skills and family relationship approaches
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The purpose of Love Is Action Community Initiative is to prevent tragic individual and community outcomes, including:

- child neglect and abuse
- commercial sexual exploitation of children
- substance abuse
- crime
- poverty & homelessness
- mental illness
- education deficits
- unemployment
- separation of children from families through foster care

Since a key to the effectiveness of this initiative is collaboration, the funding raised at LIACI events remain in the community to the local programs which facilitate the safe connection of neighbors. Community financial

support is used to support function of the initiative programs at community levels. LIACI does not compete with other initiatives for funds, but invites collaboration for the unified purpose of helping others.

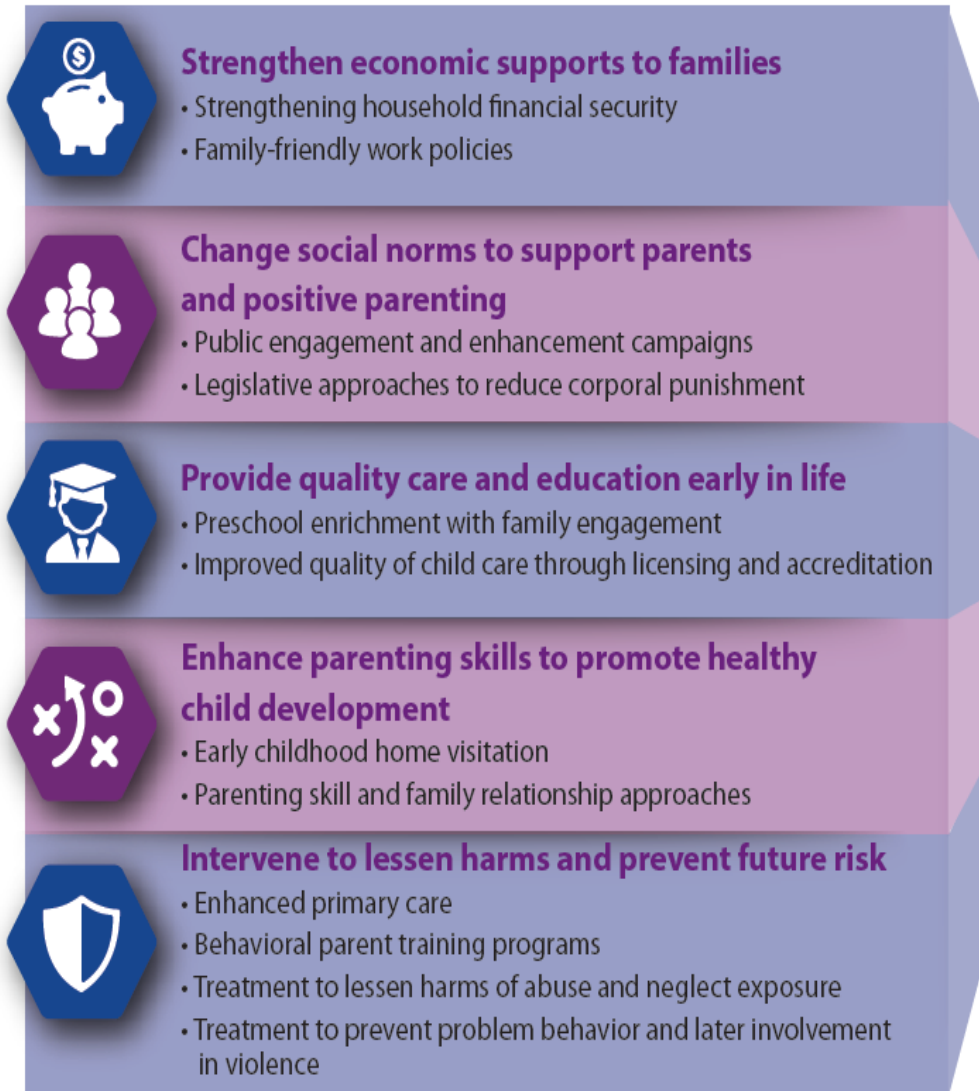
With a safe, supportive, collaborative focus, LIACI focuses on having participation in one of three categories:






- Level 1 is meeting physical needs like donating goods or services.
- Level 2 is relational, which requires appropriate vetting.
- Level 3 is “all in,” meaning meeting a persons physical, relational, and emotional needs, such as in fostering, adopting, or becoming a Safe Family. Level 3 participants receive the highest level of scrutiny but also influence more at larger and systemic levels of influence.

The Love Is Action Community Initiative has grown significantly since its origination. It is currently supported by Association of Christian Child Care Administrators, Global Center for Women and Justice, National Foster Parent Association, CarePortal, GAMECHANGERS and many more on a growing list.

LIAC national participants include [National Foster Parent Association](#) and [Association of Christian Childcare Administrators](#); non profit Programs like [Safe Families for Children](#), [Woodson Center](#), [The Foster Haven](#), [Foster Care Closet](#), [Teen Leadership Foundation](#), [Handle With Care](#), [Fristers](#), and many more; and non profit Resources like [Malachi Global Foundation](#), [CarePortal](#), [Doing Good Works](#), [Kits of Hope](#), [Successful Survivors Solutions](#), [Your Real Success](#), [Vanguard University's Global Center for Women and Justice](#), and more, all of which exist to directly or indirectly help children and families. And of course, it wouldn't be a community initiative without caring individuals, places of worship, businesses, groups and clubs in the community.

The monthly Love Is Action Community Initiative virtual connection events include participants from all across the country at many individual and system levels of influences within their communities. LIACI is a vital liaison tool for engaging healthy connections and resources across areas in need.



- **Strengthen economic supports to families**
 - Strengthening household financial security
 - Family-friendly work policies
- **Change social norms to support parents and positive parenting**
 - Public engagement and enhancement campaigns
 - Legislative approaches to reduce corporal punishment
- **Provide quality care and education early in life**
 - Preschool enrichment with family engagement
 - Improved quality of child care through licensing and accreditation
- **Enhance parenting skills to promote healthy child development**
 - Early childhood home visitation
 - Parenting skill and family relationship approaches
- **Intervene to lessen harms and prevent future risk**
 - Enhanced primary care
 - Behavioral parent training programs
 - Treatment to lessen harms of abuse and neglect exposure
 - Treatment to prevent problem behavior and later involvement in violence

Over the years of services, Love is Action has impacted many communities through the Successful Survivors Program hand-in-hand with the overall organizational goals. The following chart on the following page outlines the historical services within the organization.

SUCCESSFUL SURVIVORS FOUNDATION SERVICES						
Activity	Population	Numerical Impact	Outcome (Immediate)	Outcome (Longitudinal)	Intention	Considerations
What did we do? (Verb)	Who did we serve? (Audience)	Who & #	What was the immediate result? (Noun)	What was the long-term impact?	What was the intent/Goal?	Notes of Consideration
Provide laptop to youth through "Computers for Kids" program	Foster youth without laptop	50 Teens	Academic Improvement Independence Resource Knowledge of tool	Increase in Self-Sustainability of adults with childhood trauma Decrease in childhood trauma cases	Independent & Educational Success	Raised Private Funds
Create & Provide Parenting Videos of Family Conflict	Foster & Adoptive Parents Biological/Primary Caregivers	Estimated number who watched 17,000	Knowledge/Skills Resource Crisis Intervention, Tragedy Prevention, Relationship Strengthening, Foster Parent Retention	Decrease in injury or death in foster care; better behavior of foster kids, which leads to better choices, and ultimately better results	Trauma Prevention Placement Retention, Foster Parent Retention, Reduction in Foster Care Injuries & Deaths	Raised over \$100,000 in Private Funds
Business Liaison for NFPA & ACCA	Affiliate Businesses, NFPA, ACCA, and all of their member child welfare organizations and foster parents	2 National Non Profit Membership Based Organizations and their thousands of members	Connection Resources	Increase of resources and collaborative actions relating to prevention of childhood trauma	Collaboration Efforts for child welfare services	SSF acts as a force multiplier when introducing vetted organizations and businesses so that each is better positioned to fulfill their missions together
Provide "Your Real Success" at USC School of Social Work	Rescued Traffic Victims and Other Victims Of Abuse	150	Relationships Resources Personal Long & Short term goals	Increase in Self-Sustainability of adults with childhood trauma Decrease in childhood trauma cases	Healthy, Self-sufficiency for at-risk populations	The curriculum was donated and facilitation of the entire program was done via SSF volunteers
Provide "Your Real Success" --Mary's Path	Pregnant & Parenting Youth 12-21 in foster care	32	Relationships Resources Personal Long & Short term goals	Increase in Self-Sustainability of adults with childhood trauma Decrease in childhood trauma cases	Healthy, Self-sufficiency for youth & young adults impacted by trauma	Paid by Mary's Path from Title IV-E funds
Provide "Your Real Success" --Frister's	Teen Moms And Their Mentors	53	Relationships Resources Personal Long & Short term goals	Increase in Self-Sustainability of young adults with children Decrease in childhood trauma cases	Healthy, Self-sufficiency for teen moms	The curriculum was donated and facilitation of the entire 6-week program was done via SSF volunteers
Provide Online Trainings to Foster Families and in Collaboration with other organization:	Foster & Adoptive Parents, Related Caregivers, Bio Parents Trying To Get Their Children Out Of Foster Care	9,500+ foster care parents	Crisis Prevention Knowledge Retention Emotional Support	Retention of Foster/Adoptive Parents Decrease in complex childhood trauma cases	Education, Encouragement and Retention of Healthy foster and adoptive parents	SSF secured vetted trainers to provide these online trainings pro bono
Create sharable videos, graphics and materials for use in small home meetings to educate community influence to stop child sex trafficking	Foster & Adoptive Parents, Faith-Based Organizations, Community Influencers, and Concerned Individuals	2500	Awareness & Knowledge Collaboration for interventions	Increase of services and awareness of sex trafficking Decrease in childhood trauma cases relating to sex trafficking	Education and awareness of child sex trafficking	SSF secured vetted thought leaders to participate in the creation of these materials. Participants include Director of Vanguard University's Global Center For Women & Justice, USC School of Social Work, representatives of the faith community, child welfare, national lobbying, and more.
Develop monthly "Equipping the Community" live-stream Ted-type talk events	Community Leaders in Law Enforcement, Education, Child Welfare, Faith-Based Organizations, Community Influencers, and Concerned Individuals	7500	Knowledge Connection Community Support	Increase communication connections Increase healthy support systems for at-risk families Decrease cases involving childhood trauma	Education Community awareness of community action for trauma prevention	Monthly 1 Hour broken into 15 minute segments presented by subject matter experts on the theme of the evening. Themes include preventing domestic violence, child abuse, human trafficking, suicide, substance abuse, depression, and raising good kids in a broken world.
Provide articles monthly to national magazines to help prevent abuse/sex trafficking	Foster Youth, Foster Families, Child Welfare Influencers, Affiliates of SSF's Love Is Action Community Initiative	Estimated 70,000 total subscribers	Awareness & Knowledge Prevention	Increase knowledge of Risk Factors of and resources for trafficking and/or abuse Decrease cases of sex trafficking, particularly child related	Educate and Support populations influenced by sex trafficking	All articles are provided to child caring publications pro bono
Implementation & Management of Successful Survivors Speaker's Bureau	Non-Profits, Child Welfare, At-risk Youth, Faith-Based Organizations, Corporations, Community Stakeholders	Estimated 190,000 total audience members of all speaking engagements	Knowledge Motivation Crisis Prevention Harm Reduction Empowerment	Accurate and quick prevention services. Increase retention of professionals Increase skillset and focus of professionals	Educate, Encourage, & Empower influencers childhood trauma factors	Pre-covid business model was to fund SSF through speaker fees of vetted trained Speaker Bureau members
Develop, implement, & Support Love Is Action Community Initiative Faith-Based Public-Private Collective Impact Initiative	Non-Profits Child Welfare At-risk Youth Faith-Based Organizations Corporations Community Stakeholders	Estimated 750000 affiliates of all Love Is Action Community Initiative partners, programs, and resource organizations	Collaboration Prevention Community Support	Increase communication connections Increase healthy support systems for at-risk families Decrease cases involving childhood trauma	Create and support community initiatives aimed at prevention of childhood trauma	No fees are charged to any partners, programs, or resource organizations
Serve as liaison and coordinator of services for child welfare and faith based affiliates	Child Welfare Affiliates Faith-Based Organizations Foster Youth	Estimated 750000 affiliates of all Love Is Action Community Initiative partners, programs, and resource organizations	Collaboration Connections Resources	Increase communication connections Increase healthy support systems for at-risk families Decrease cases involving childhood trauma	Support collaboration of providers for wrap-around services and prevention	Sharing Knowledge of collaborative resources across the nation.

Consultation with clients	At-risk youth/Alumni Foster Youth/Alumni Professional Human Service Influencers	Several thousand over ten years	Safety Connections	Intergenerational decrease of trauma; Professional retention	Equip clients influenced by childhood trauma with personal skills for healthy, self-sustainability.	Confidentiality; Liasion services
Create & Maintain websites sucessfulsurvivors.org and loveisaction.com	At-risk youth/Alumni Foster Youth/Alumni Foster/Adoptive Parents Faith-Based Organizations Child Welfare Stakeholders Community Stakeholders	Estimated 14,000 annually	Marketing Awareness/Knowledge Resources Collaboration Crisis Reduction	Sustain connections of and for all parties Increase usage of crisis resources Decrease childhood trauma cases	Provide open, on-going support and resources for education, encouragement and empowerment	
Host Sales of Love is Action merchandise and donated books	Community Stakeholders Faith Based Organizations At risk youth/adults Foster Youth/Adults Foster/Adoptive Parents	300	Marketing Awareness Affiliation	Increase awareness of program services Create collaborative effort and approach in related services	Expand and support awareness of program(s)	We've donated more products than we've sold.
Successful Survivor of the Year Award	Trauma and/or Foster Care Alumni	5 direct 450,000 indirect	Recognition Motivation	Increase trauma survivors to identify success Increase positive assumption of trauma-influenced interventions	Recognize accomplishment(s) of lives influenced by childhood trauma	Social Influence
Provide trainings & professional interviews/support for self-care	Social Workers	Estimated 600	Awareness Organization Crisis reduction	Retention of social workers	Increase retention of staff in services	Orange County, CA Department of Child & Family Services paid for these trainings
Educate, Encourage, & Empower Stakeholders through speaking endeavors	Non-Profits Child Welfare At-risk Youth Faith-Based Organizations Cooperations Community Stakeholders	Unknown: Estimated 50 Collaborates	Motivation Inspiration Reflection	Increase knowledge of related services and build connections Increase staff retention Increase supportive, professional, relationships for at risk clients	Increase the atmosphere and productivity services related to reducing cases of childhood trauma	
Collaboration with Global Centurion and Woodson Center to contribute to Presidential Executive Order to Strengthen Our Nation's Child Welfare System	Child Welfare Affiliates Faith-Based Organizations At-risk/Foster Youth Advocacy Groups	Unknown	We provided suggested language provided by non profit Christian child welfare providers	Increase competency and knowledge of child welfare, inclusive language to meet needs	To amplify the voice of Christian child welfare providers	
Educate Insurance Compaines on The Risks and Realities of Child Welfare	Insurance Companies, Private Non Profit Child Welfare Organizations and their Staff and Foster Families, Foster Youth, At-Risk Youth, and Fragile Families	unknown	Better understanding of risk management for child welfare organizations	Increase life-saving risk management, Increase quality of protection, Lower cost of insurance rates for child caring organizations that operation at levels of excellence in professional practice	Significant reduction in injuries, fatalities, and allegations of wrongdoing	This work is done by Rhonda Sciortino, a nationally recognized subject matter expert in management of risk in child welfare organizations
Collaborate with Safe Families for Children as a national spokesperson, business liasion, and risk management resource	Churches and families serving as Safe Families, which keeps kids out of foster care and reunites 96% of families served	Estimated 15,000	Collaboration Awareness	Provide voice and advocacy to enhance services for at-risk youth and families	Enhance communities with proven effective community based volunteer service that strengthens families and keeps children out of foster care	
Consulted with Foster Care Closet & The Foster Haven to provide guidance and support in national expansion of programs	Foster Families and Foster Youth	Estimated 3,000	Collaboration Awareness Connections	Prepare and equip affiliated agencies and people for success Increase resources for at-risk or trauma-influenced lives	To help this vetted excellent program to expand or replicate throughout the US by helping to prepare the CEO to tell her story and cast her vision for what's possible for foster children throughout the US	
Consulted with GAMECHANGER Opioid Awareness Initiative to provide event speakers and guidance and support in national expansion	Youth affected by parental drug use and at-risk youth	300,000	Provided speakers for two events with total audience of over 300,000	Leading young people to make healthy life choices	To connect GAMECHANGER with DEA, national child welfare advocates, national educational advocates, and other private, non profit organizations that want to keep kids off drugs	GAMECHANGER pays speaker fees and consulting fees

Preventing ACEs could potentially reduce many health conditions. For example, by preventing ACEs, up to 1.9 million heart disease cases and 21 million depression cases could have been potentially avoided.

CONCLUSION

Resilience is not a genetic trait that only a few “superkids” possess, as some journalistic accounts (and even several researchers) would have us believe. Rather, it is our inborn capacity for self-righting (Werner and Smith, 1992) and for transformation and change (Lifton, 1993). **The Love Is Action Community Initiative helps participants develop individual and organizational resilience.**

CDC reports that a primary way to intervene and lessen harms and prevent future risk to children and families is to “*enhance primary care; behavioral parent training programs; treatment to lessen harm of abuse and neglect exposure; treatment to prevent problem behavior and later involvement in violence.*” It also notes the importance of enhancing parenting skills to promote healthy child development through “*parenting skill and family relationship approaches.*” **Love Is Action Community Initiative provides partners, programs, and resources that address all of these areas of need.**

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