

Business & Real Estate

Special Operations' first CEO aims to expand nonprofit and save more missing children from sex trafficking

By Kate Armanini

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While the Bay Area has gained worldwide acclaim for its innovation, the region has become notorious for something else. According to the FBI, it's a hot spot for sex trafficking.

That's why nonprofit organizations like Special Operations have sprouted up in the area to save missing children who may be victims of such crimes. Based in Los Altos, Special Operations is expanding and recently announced its first CEO – Isabelle Finney.

“For us, it's not just about finding kids and getting them safe, it's about stopping the crime,” Finney said. “We just don't want criminals hurting kids anymore.”

Founded in 2017 by a Los Altos resident (who wishes to remain anonymous for safety reasons), Special Operations aims to bolster police investigations into missing children. Since then, officials with the organization said they have found 40 children by deploying units of private investigators and retired



COURTESY OF SPECIAL OPERATIONS

Isabelle Finney, Special Operations' first CEO, had a career in finance before working in the nonprofit world.

law enforcement officials.

Finney hasn't always been involved in service work. Originally from South Af-

rica, she had a career in finance that led her to Silicon Valley.

From finance to nonprofits

By chance, Finney said she attended a 2010 San Francisco event for International Justice Mission – a nonprofit fighting forms of modern-day slavery – that made her more aware of how prevalent child sex trafficking is in the Bay Area.

“I was just crushed, totally devastated, and just felt I had to do something,” the San Rafael resident said.

After the event, she quit her finance job and began working with nonprofits. Over the summer, she was offered the job as CEO of Special Operations.

“With Isabelle's passion for justice and her decades of experience in both the private and philanthropic sectors, we believe she will dramatically grow our organization and private investigative team, so we can find and rescue many more children from horrific abuse,” said Melissa Rick, Special Operations board member.

As CEO, Finney said she hopes to expand the organization and its impact. Through increased networking and fund-

raising, she noted that Special Operations can employ more people to search for missing children. According to its website, the nonprofit relies entirely on donations.

“My role is to really build the infrastructure of the organization – I'm treating it like a startup,” she said. “My job is to hire more investigators, find more supporters and support more victims so that they have hope.”

Working at Special Operations has its challenges, according to Finney. Sometimes searches for missing children come up empty – or are too late – and many of the victims they do find don't have loving homes to return to, she added.

Yet none of that deters Finney.

“All of us on the team are motivated from the conviction that good always wins over evil,” she said. “We're taking our skills, with no fear, and just giving people hope. Regardless of their circumstances, we want to give every child an opportunity for a successful, happy life.”

To donate and for more information on Special Operations, visit wesavegirls.org.