



ANNUAL ²REPORT ₂₃

A MESSAGE FROM CEO ISABELLE FINNEY

Everyone involved with Finding Kids, from volunteers to investigators to donors, has one goal in common. We want to live in a society where the protection of the most defenseless individuals — our children — is seen as a moral priority and crucial for our humanity to flourish and thrive. We cannot tolerate the idea of anyone intentionally hurting a child.

Over the last two decades the internet and social media have unwittingly allowed individuals with nefarious intentions to prey on the most vulnerable. While technology has made our lives easier, the mass migration from the real world into the virtual world has changed what it means to be a child. The normal mechanisms used historically to protect children have not been able to keep up with the pace at which exploiters operate.

The world our children are living in now requires an innovative and collaborative community response to keep them safe.

In 2023, Finding Kids hired ten private investigation firms to investigate 46 cases involving missing and/or exploited children across 16 counties, mostly in the greater Bay Area. By the end of the year, all but nine had been found. Their parents did not have the resources or funds to find their children on their own. Law enforcement, especially in smaller counties, is often under-resourced. Police departments handle hundreds of crimes, sometimes with only two or three detectives to conduct investigations for their entire jurisdiction. This is where private organizations like ours, representing you the community, can make a significant difference.



In 2023 we launched our first formal Aftercare Program consisting of parent and survivor advocates who provide one-on-one support and resources to families and victims in crisis. This type of high touch support is necessary for children to gain the tools and resilience they need to overcome the past, complete their education, and become productive, healthy adults. Our 'train the trainer' approach provides direct support to the parents so that they can guide and help mentor their child. Without the support of a caring philanthropic community, the trajectory of these 46 children's lives would look very different than it does today.

To continue this important work, we need your help. We require funding to pay our contract investigators and advocates. We need parents to know where to turn to for help. We need local government and county Board of Supervisors to grant adequate resources to law enforcement agencies so that they can investigate every missing child report, or suspicion of exploitation.

And we need for legislators within the State and Federal Government to enforce laws and sentences that serve as effective deterrents so that 'buyers' think twice before harming a child.

Thank you for reviewing this report. You'll notice a change in our logo which now aligns with our website URL, findingkids.org

On behalf of the children and families that we serve, thank you for being on this journey with us. Please continue your support — we need you.

Isabelle
isabelle@findingkids.org

WE NEED YOUR HELP

THE PROBLEM

CHILDREN ARE EASY PREY FOR PREDATORS.

In the age of the Internet, children are more vulnerable than ever to being victimized.

The FBI includes the San Francisco Bay Area in its list of the top areas for child sex exploitation in the nation.¹ In 2023, 66,705 reports of missing children were made in California (55% girls, 45% boys), of which 8,636 were from the San Francisco Bay Area.

Unless there is obvious evidence of nefarious circumstances (e.g. a kidnapping), resource and jurisdictional limitations prevent even the most dedicated law enforcement agencies from being able to respond to, or proactively search for missing or victimized children.

Most parents cannot afford the cost of hiring an investigator to help find their child, and are at a loss for who to turn to for guidance during their time of crisis.



HOW WE HELP

WE WORK TO KEEP KIDS SAFE. THAT'S ALL WE DO.

We hire boots-on-the-ground contract private investigators to find children most vulnerable to exploitation. We aim to find them *before* they come to any harm.

We share evidence of any predator activity with law enforcement to support their criminal investigations.

We assign advocates to both parents and children to provide support and resources during their time of crisis, and walk alongside them on their journey to restoration.

Since 2018, Finding Kids' private investigators and aftercare advocates have provided assistance and support in over 180 cases in Northern California and Nevada.

¹ U.S. Dept. of Justice, The Federal Bureau of Investigation's Efforts to Combat Crimes Against Children, Audit Report 09-08 (2009).

LUCIA

(NOT HER REAL NAME)

In October 2023, Finding Kids became aware of 16-year-old Lucia from Vallejo, California who had already been missing for two weeks. Vallejo PD welcomed any support they could get from the community to find Lucia, especially since Lucia's parents were native Spanish speakers and spoke very little English.

Our investigator acknowledged the police department's understaffing and engaged with the detective assigned to Lucia's case to offer his support. He immediately began to scope out the neighborhoods Lucia was known to frequent. It was determined very quickly that there had been multiple sightings of Lucia in the company of two adult males and an adult female. School Administrators were eager to help and provided valuable information to our investigator who viewed surveillance video from local businesses and interviewed dozens of witnesses.

A key lead provided by a witness resulted in Lucia being found within days, disheveled, and wearing the same clothing from the day she was reported missing, weeks previously. Unfortunately she had been severely

assaulted and exploited by multiple individuals over several weeks. She was immediately transported to the Emergency Room where she was admitted.

During this time our Spanish-speaking Investigations coordinator served as a critical liaison between Lucia's mother, our investigator and Vallejo PD. Over four months, Lucia underwent medical and mental health treatments and settled back in with her family who had decided to relocate.

During her recovery Lucia was willing to share important identifying information regarding her traffickers and rapists. By triangulating her recollections, witness accounts, and local business video surveillance, the investigator was able to provide law enforcement with solid evidence that should lead to several arrests. Throughout the search our investigator remained in constant contact with law enforcement, especially important to preserve the integrity and chain of custody of evidence. The criminal investigation is still pending at this time and we will continue to follow up on behalf of Lucia and her family to ensure justice is served.

MELODY

(NOT HER REAL NAME)

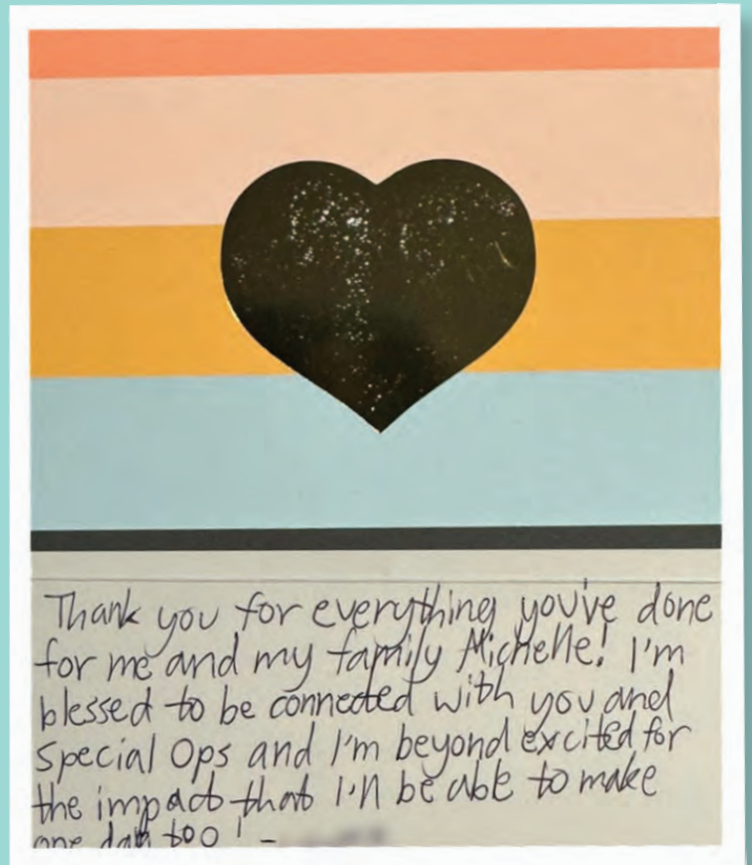
Finding Kids received a call from one of our non-profit partners about missing 15-year-old Melody. Melody's relationship with her mother, Dede, had deteriorated over the last two years and she was regularly skipping school. Whenever Dede confronted her daughter, it would end in Melody storming out of the house. This time, Melody did not come home.

The local police took a missing person's report but after a few days a friend suggested Dede call Finding Kids.

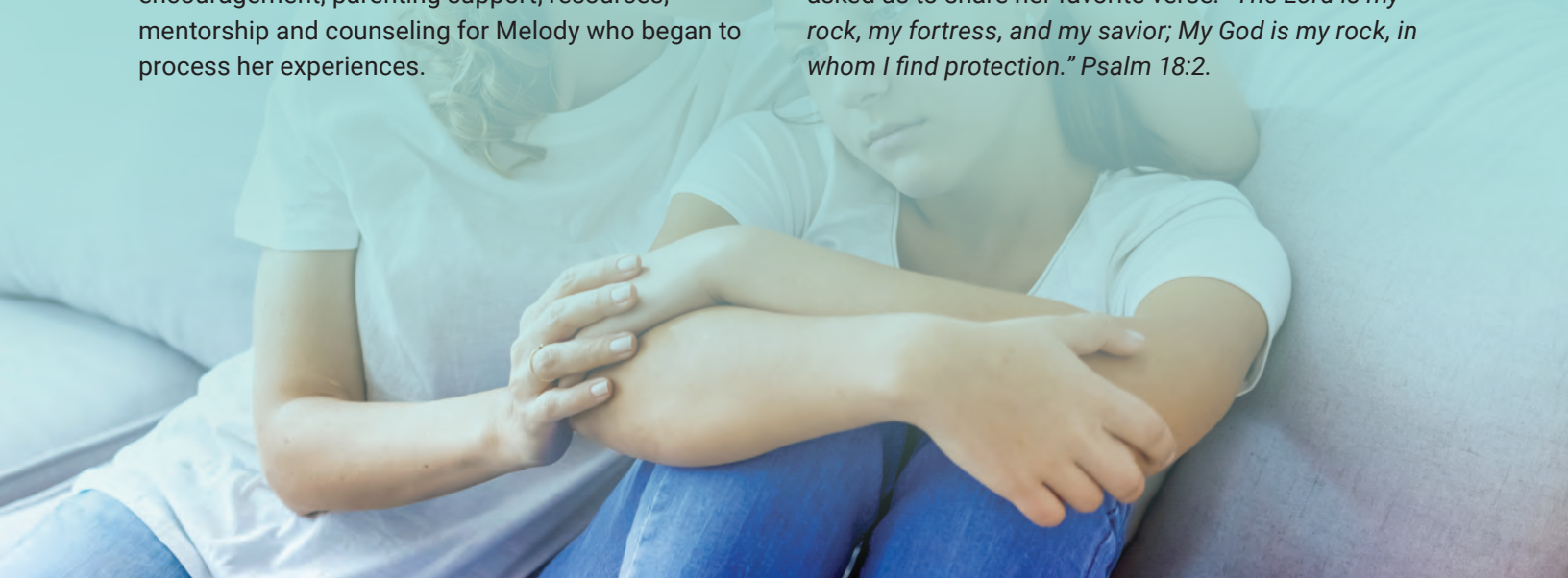
Within two days a private investigator was assigned and immediately began interviewing friends, family, the school, and scouring the internet, including social media accounts. It became clear that Melody had been trafficked for over a year before she disappeared.

Over the next three weeks, two Private Investigators were deployed undercover to conduct surveillance, develop informants and circulate flyers regarding missing Melody. While the investigation in the field was happening, our Parent Advocate had begun preparing Dede for the care Melody would need upon return.

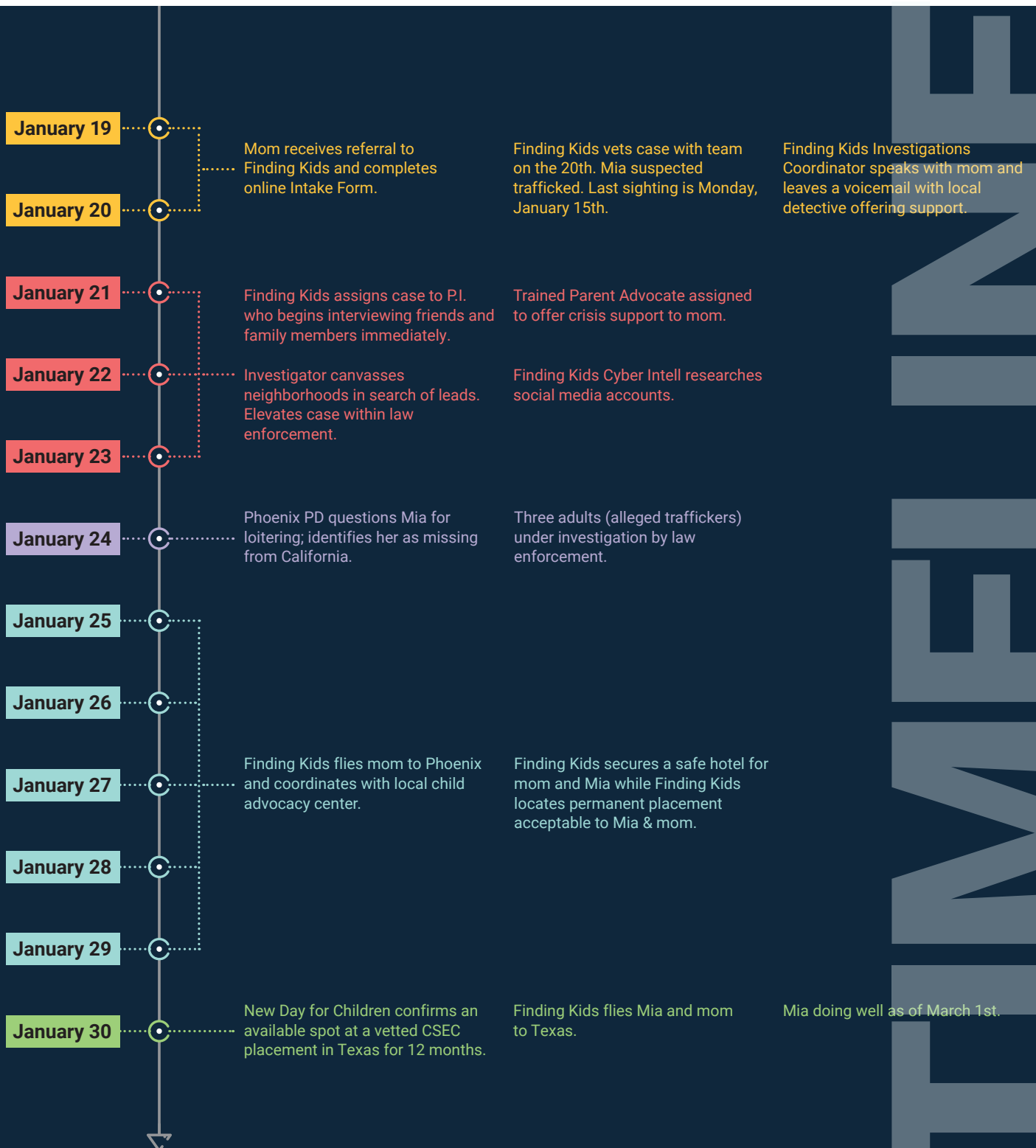
Finally, in fear and fleeing from her trafficker, Melody flagged down a patrol car and was brought to safety. While Melody was now physically safe, the restoration journey for her and her family was just beginning. Over the next 12 months, our team worked to provide encouragement, parenting support, resources, mentorship and counseling for Melody who began to process her experiences.



A few months later Melody learned she was pregnant and very much wanted to have her baby. Our team helped the family prepare for the child and joyfully attended the baby shower. In early 2024 Melody gave birth to a beautiful baby and Dede describes her daughter as "an awesome mama!" During a recent interaction Dede told our Parent Advocate that it is her new-found faith that gives her the strength to be a loving and supportive mother and grandmother. She asked us to share her favorite verse: *"The Lord is my rock, my fortress, and my savior; My God is my rock, in whom I find protection." Psalm 18:2.*



WHAT WE DO – MIA’S STORY



LAUNCHED NEW PARENT AND CHILD ADVOCACY AND AFTERCARE SUPPORT IN 2023

Recognizing the diverse needs of vulnerable youth and their caregivers, Finding Kids formally launched its Aftercare Programs in May 2023.

PARENT ADVOCACY

Parenting teenagers can be challenging, especially in the age of the internet and social media. Experiencing the crisis of a missing or exploited child and how best to provide them with support when they return can be overwhelming, especially for a single parent, which is the case for many of the families we help.

Our Parent Advocacy program provides one-on-one support to parents when their child goes missing.

Our Parent Advocates all have lived experience, having gone through the trauma themselves of having a missing child. This peer support cultivates a profound, personal connection and empathy often absent in professional or non-parental support systems. Early trauma-informed assistance diminishes feelings of stigma and isolation, addresses emotional and practical needs and fosters collaboration with authorities, ultimately benefiting both parent and child.

Sometimes the most effective way to help a child is to help the parent.

YOUTH ADVOCACY AND COACHING

Youth advocacy plays a pivotal role in promoting stability, resilience and healing among youth affected by exploitation. Through clinical interventions and strategies, our licensed advocates – many of whom have lived experience themselves – support youth in their safe recovery and aftercare journey. They help identify needs and strengths, guide decision-making processes, and impart coping skills essential for the sustained well-being of the child.

RESTORATION FUNDS AND RESOURCE COORDINATION

During a time of crisis, practical and financial burdens can add an additional level of stress for the parent. Parent Advocates coordinate with other local community-based service providers and provide financial resources to cover counseling, education, vocational and therapeutic pursuits for the child, including art, music and equine therapy. This additional cushion gives the child and family the space and time necessary to heal and reintegrate.

NEW IN 2023

LETTERS FROM PARENTS

Dear Finding Kids,

I am writing to tell you what an incredible organization you are, as well as how much of a difference your organization made during our experience when our daughter went missing in 2023. As I sit here and search for the words, it is impossible to tell you how many phone calls, contacts and communications were made by your organization on our behalf. It is also impossible to describe the depth of gratitude we feel.

When your child is missing, you think of nothing else. You do not sleep. You have a pit in your stomach that gnaws constantly, and the worry and nightmares are also indescribable.

Your organization stepped in and became the bridge between us and law enforcement. Lilly was labeled as a runaway, and it turned out she was. She was still in danger. She was still our child. Your Private Investigator, Becky, stepped in and began exhaustive

and extensive background work. Becky was beyond incredible – she listened and helped me through so many emotionally rough spots. There was no judgment. There was only kind compassion. I cried for the kindness and acknowledgement. There were so many times I thought I was going to lose my mind with worry, or thought of new things to investigate, and she was right there listening and then following up on investigating. She kept me involved, and was literally the only thing that brought me any hope. Becky continued to chase leads for months, and was the first one on the scene to verify and investigate sightings.

I firmly believe it is because of your organization's involvement, my daughter was found after 100 days. We received our miracle. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

Sincerely,
Cristy and Slim Edwards



Dear Finding Kids,

Our beautiful daughter, Madison, was only a year old when the iPhone first came on the market. While the internet and social media were in full swing, as parents we were too busy working and raising our children to be concerned about the dangers lurking behind an innocent-looking device. Were it not for a miracle, I am not sure Madison would still be with us today.

When Madison was 11 years old she started showing signs of anxiety, depression, and defiance. Within a year our sweet innocent girl was self-harming and vaping. Her self-esteem plummeted. Madison was sullen and wouldn't talk to us or a counselor. Although we were beside ourselves with worry, we were told her behavior was that of a typical tween and since her grades were good and she wasn't suicidal, we should not worry.

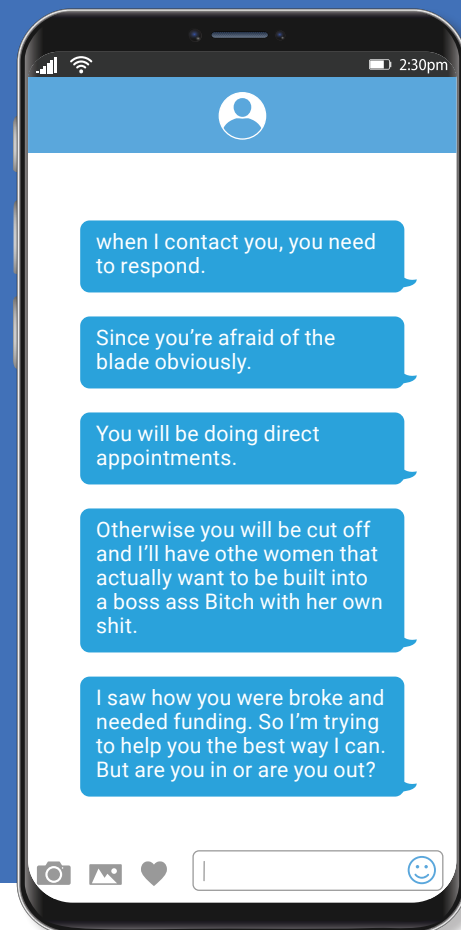
Little did we know that by the time she was 15, Madison had become heavily entrenched in a sophisticated web of sugar-daddy prostitution. **Madison was the perfect target for traffickers – an attractive young girl who lacked self-confidence and was easily manipulated.** We had no idea that behind the scenes pimps were coaching her on how to lie brilliantly to her parents and to sneak out a few nights a week without anyone noticing. She was given a burner phone and knew how not to leave a trace of evidence. Miraculously, while going through her room one day I found her burner phone and was able to access the alarming texts from her 'handlers'. Terrified, I took the phone to our local police department, expecting they would spring into action and 'rescue' her from this horrific situation.

To my dismay the well-meaning officer told me there was not a lot they could do with the texts. He said Madison would need to come down to the police station and provide them with 'real information' before they could do anything, and that even if she did, it was 'unlikely those thugs will ever get caught'. While Madison was intimidated by her traffickers, she was even more intimidated by law enforcement. I knew she would not talk to them. The clerk politely walked me out the door and into the cold air where I realized

I was utterly alone. I was distraught, frustrated and terrified. With nowhere else to turn, I began to pray.

Not long after that I experienced a miracle. **Through a friend, I learned about Special Operations – Finding Kids. Within a few days an investigator and parent advocate were assigned to provide us with professional support. Madison was sent out of state for her protection. A specialized trauma advocate spent face-to-face time with Madison who eventually began to let go of her shame and self-loathing and open up.** I am so humbled and thankful that these complete strangers not only loved on our little girl but on me as well. They helped me advocate for my child within the justice system and while the criminal investigation is still open, I am no longer alone. Madison's recovery journey will be a long one but she is well on her way and is planning on enrolling in college this fall.

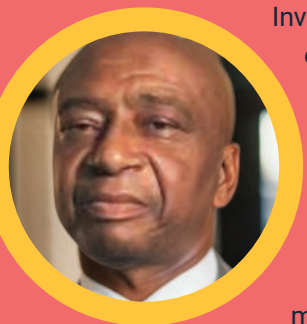
Thank you, Special Operations, for helping our family. Thank you to everyone who is a part of the organization. Our kids need you!



FEATURED INVESTIGATORS

Finding Kids has relationships with over 20 private investigators throughout Northern California and parts of Nevada. We are delighted to introduce you to two of them.

PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR LINDON LILLY



Private Investigator Lindon Lilly of Rhino Investigations has successfully worked on a number of missing child cases for our organization. Lindon serves on the Board of Directors for CALI (California Association of Licensed Investigators), having previously held two terms as governor within the organization. He is also a distinguished member of the California Association of Legal Support Professionals (CALSPRO), the National Association of Professional Process Servers (NAPPS) and has affiliations with the World Association of Detectives (WAD) and the National Council of Investigation & Security Services (NCISS). Prior to becoming a private investigator, Lindon spent 20 years in law enforcement and was commended by the California Assembly for his dedication to victims' rights groups.

A WORD FROM BECKY LARSEN, PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR

Though stressful, I can think of no other type of case I would rather work on than to help find a missing child. The four recent cases I worked on for Finding Kids involved three 15-year-old girls and one 15 year old boy, all who were lured away, leaving their parents in a state of terror.

In each of these cases, the parents were devastated by the lackadaisical attitude they perceived from their local law enforcement agencies. Often this perception comes from the fact that law enforcement is overwhelmed with other cases that take more of their attention. Coming from law enforcement myself, I took the opportunity to impress upon the local agencies

that the teens were at risk, efforts to locate them needed to increase, and that I was an asset they could partner with them to find the child. While working with Colusa County Sheriff's, West Sacramento PD and Auburn PD, each Detective thanked Finding Kids and told me they welcome future partnerships. Auburn PD has even listed Finding Kids in their database as a "resource" when kids go missing!

Thankfully I was able to successfully locate each of the children assigned to me. Three were found within a week, and one took over three months of search and investigations. While the outcomes were positive, there were many low points throughout the investigations where I would vent to the Finding Kids Investigations Coordinator. Invariably after a solid brainstorming session, we would come up with new ideas and an innovative approach. While hundreds of hours were spent canvassing neighborhoods and chasing down leads, I felt my most valuable role was to constantly reinforce to the parents that I knew their child mattered and that I was going to do the very best I could to find them.

While having good investigators on the case is very important, the work Finding Kids does with aftercare is so impressive. From the moment Finding Kids takes on a case their aftercare team is already working with the parents to determine the type of support (physical, psychological, emotional, spiritual, educational) the child and family will need. This can include family counseling, meals, and other wrap-around services at home, and if necessary, transportation to an appropriate therapeutic center to receive intensive support. I found peace in referring families to Finding Kid's after care program and am excited to see this grow.



A WORD FROM SYLVIA LACY-MILLER PARENT ADVOCATE

I know first-hand how difficult it is for parents who find themselves in a situation of having a child go missing because it happened to me. Working with Finding Kids’ clients gives me the opportunity to share our own story of restoration and create the hope that their family can be healed. I am committed to inspiring and encouraging parents as I walk alongside them on their difficult journey. We do not judge families and we provide them with love and support during every step of their difficult journey.



MEET AMBER DAVIES CHILD AND FAMILY ADVOCATE

Amber is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker, therapist, and advocate and has 20 years of clinical experience, 10 of which have been devoted to working with and training front line professionals, service providers, and resource families in the best practices of working with sexually exploited youth and their families. As a Coach for Finding Kids, Amber helps youth and families identify their needs and strengths, guides them in processing their experiences, and provides opportunities to learn skills and coping strategies as they navigate challenges in the recovery process.





A WORD FROM OUR INVESTIGATIONS COORDINATOR, LILY JIMENEZ

I am one of four siblings born to Mexican immigrant parents, raised by entrepreneurial parents who ingrained in me a strong work ethic from an early age. Much of my formative years were spent dedicating weekends and summers to the operations of our family-owned restaurant in southern California.

Upon completing my studies with a degree in Criminal Justice from Chapman University, I felt a calling to help children facing adversity and began a career in Probation for the county of Los Angeles. Over the span of 25 years, with a brief stint in the Probation Gang Unit in East LA, I dedicated myself to Juvenile Probation, with a specialized focus on aiding victims of commercial sexual exploitation during my eight-year tenure with the county's Child Trafficking Unit. In September 2023, I was privileged to assume the role of Investigations Coordinator for Finding Kids, where I apply my expertise to serve the most vulnerable — our children.

My vision for Finding Kids is to help increase its visibility in the communities we serve, ensuring that whenever community members, families, or children confront crises, they can rely on us for support. My responsibilities include establishing a robust Private Investigator portfolio, actively expanding our capacity to advocate for local communities, and fostering collaboration with governmental entities to aid those in need. At Finding Kids, we approach each case with professionalism and sensitivity, genuinely caring for every child and family that seeks our assistance.

 [/in/lily-jimenez-4a7b6a28b/](https://www.linkedin.com/in/lily-jimenez-4a7b6a28b/)



A WORD FROM OUR MANAGER OF STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS, GRANT CLARK

Working for Finding Kids feels like the culmination of a series of moments that have transformed my outlook on life, purpose, and the profound impact we can have on the world around us.

I am a California native and grew up in a loving and supportive environment that shielded me from the harsh realities faced by many. After graduating from LMU in 2022, I had a brief stint in a sales job that left me searching for something more - a calling that went beyond the pursuit of a paycheck. My search brought me to Finding Kids, an organization whose passion and dedication to a cause greater than ourselves resonated deeply with me. I realized that my privilege wasn't a license to amass wealth in isolation, but rather a platform to make a meaningful difference. The decision to join this outstanding team was fueled by a desire to invest my time and effort into something far more valuable than financial gains.

What struck me initially was the realization that human trafficking is not a distant woe confined to foreign lands. It is a cruel reality happening to American children in every zip code. This revelation lit a fire within me: a desire to share this dark truth to everyone who will listen. As someone who was once oblivious to the proximity of this issue, I recognize the power of awareness in effecting change.

As I bring my entrepreneurial spirit to this team, I am driven by a singular focus: to bring the issue of vulnerable and exploited children to the forefront of the younger generation's minds. It takes a village to fight this battle, and I am eager to contribute my energy, ideas, and passion to build a coalition of young minds dedicated to creating a world where exploitation has no place. Together, we are a force for change, a beacon of hope, and a testament to the belief that a village united can indeed overcome the darkest of challenges.

I've committed to running a half-marathon with my hands tied every month until December 2024 to raise awareness of the plight of victims. Please follow me on LinkedIn to learn more.

 [/in/grant-clark](https://www.linkedin.com/in/grant-clark)

“Working with Ms. Larsen [private investigator] was an absolute delight. Her unwavering commitment and devotion to children is unquestionable. The wealth of knowledge and experience she brings to Finding Kids is truly priceless. We extend our heartfelt gratitude for the invaluable contributions made by your organization.”

Assistant Sheriff Mike Bradwell

Colusa County Sheriff's Office

“I would like to say thank you to you and your team. You staked out the house where my daughter was being held. Your team worked with Oakland PD and Pleasant Hill PD to recover my daughter before it was too late. Thank you for all your efforts in recovering her safely. And we appreciate all of the continued support through her recovery as well. We want this to stop. I can't let other families deal with what we experienced. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts!”

Father of a 16-year-old girl

“Law Enforcement needs Special Operations.”

Steve Wagstaffe

San Mateo County District Attorney

“There are no words. I cannot thank you enough for finding my child.”

Mother of a 15-year-old victim

“We are so grateful to Special Operations and their donors for finding our son so quickly!”

Mother of a 15-year-old boy

“Finding Kids has developed an extraordinary aftercare program and has extraordinary people! In the aftermath following my granddaughter’s recovery, the aftercare program provided us with unwavering support. With their compassionate help, we began our journey to healing. There is so much that I couldn’t have done without their expertise. They have made all the difference in the resolution of our hardship, and for everything they have done for us, I am eternally grateful.”

Grandmother of a 16-year-old girl

“Our family foundation has invested in hundreds of non-profits over the years. Special Operations Finding Kids is by far one of the most well-run and impactful.”

Blair Maus

Donor

DID YOU KNOW?

While there are public funds available to provide support to kids in the system (foster children and those on probation), **there are no such funds available for non-system kids** who make up the vast majority of trafficking victims.

Any minor who exchanges sexual favors for cash, drugs or anything of value, is considered a victim of sex trafficking. In a recent three-year prevalence study in Washington DC, 7.4% of high school students said they had exchanged sexual favors for cash or drugs at least once.

2023 BY THE NUMBERS

REVENUE

Foundation and Trust Grants	\$ 234,500
General Cash Donations	\$ 403,212
In-Kind Donations	\$ 5,139
Total Donations	\$ 642,851
Interest Income	\$ 22,998
Total Revenue	\$ 665,849
Cost of Revenue	\$ 2,683
Gross Profit	\$ 663,166

EXPENDITURES

Investigations	\$ 284,309
Aftercare and Advocacy	\$ 146,164
Other Program Expenses	\$ 162,457
Total Program Expenses	\$ 592,930
Mission Support	\$ 63,887
Fundraising	\$ 91,384
Total Expenditures	\$ 748,201
Net Revenue	\$ (85,035)

ORGANIZATIONAL DATA

20+ private investigator firms	6+ parent and survivor advocates
4 full-time staff	20+ volunteers

179 CASES ACROSS 35 COUNTIES SINCE 2018

Alameda	33
Washoe	27
Contra Costa	15
Santa Clara	13
Sacramento	10
Sonoma	10
San Mateo	9
Marin	6
San Francisco	6
Mendocino	5
San Joaquin	5
Placer	4
Shasta	3
Solano	3
Tulare	3
Lake	2
Lakeport	2
Lyon	2
Napa	2
Nevada	2
Riverside	2
Allegheny	1
Calaveras	1
Camden	1
Carson City	1
Clark	1
Fresno	1
Humboldt	1
Klamath	1
Maricopa	1
Mariposa	1
Monterey	1
San Benito	1
San Diego	1
Saramento	1
Utah	1
Total Cases	179

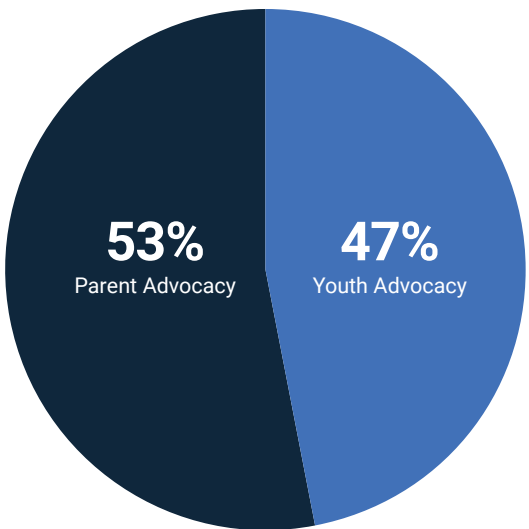
2023 TRAFFICKING CASES

100% of our cases involved children vulnerable to exploitation; 35% confirmed sex trafficked prior to recovery.



2023 ADVOCACY FOCUS

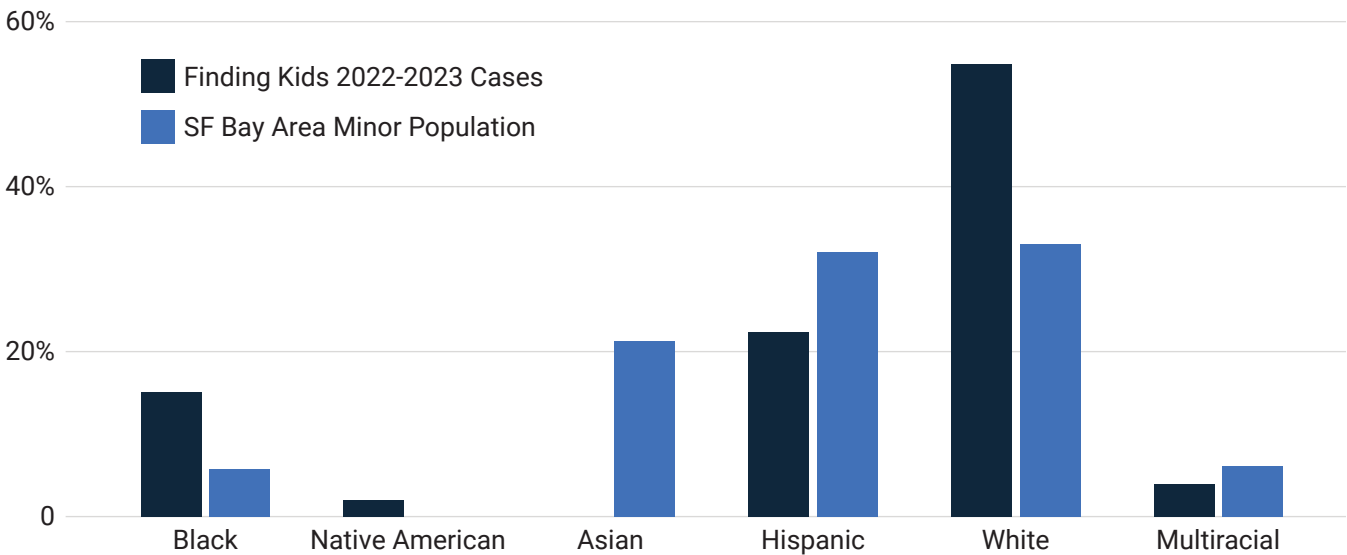
- Early intervention is critical
- Parent and survivor advocacy services offered to trafficking-confirmed and trafficking-suspected cases
- In most cases the child was able to return home.



2023 CASE BREAKDOWN BY GENDER



FINDING KIDS CASE BREAKDOWN BY RACE COMPARED TO THE BAY AREA MINOR POPULATION



OUR VISION

To live in a society where children are free to be children – free from the threat of predators.

OUR MISSION

To keep kids safe from sexual predators in the San Francisco Bay Area (and beyond).

OUR BELIEF

We believe that America's success depends on keeping our children safe,

That every child has value,

That we must proactively and with urgency find missing children,

That ridding our community of traffickers and buyers is imperative,

That law enforcement needs the community's help,

And that a safe America is everyone's responsibility.

WANT TO GET INVOLVED?

Check in with us here:

findingkids.org/get-involved







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ABOUT US

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.

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