



Amirah

From exploitation to liberation.

2019
Annual Report



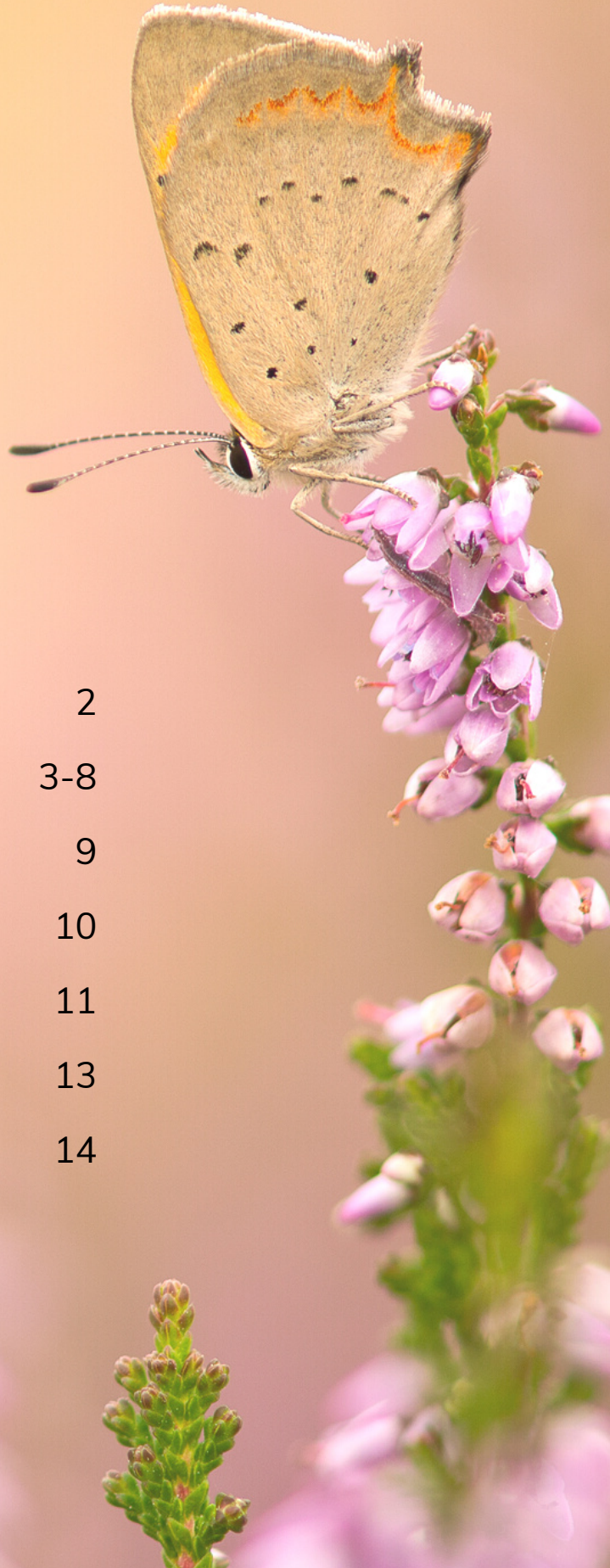
About Amirah

Amirah is a multifaceted aftercare organization for women who have survived the sex trade, providing residential, outreach, and educational services. Our mission is to provide refuge for those seeking to break free from exploitation and heal in community on their journey toward lasting hope.

Our goal is to give each survivor we serve the time and space she needs to reach liberation.

Contents

Letter from the Board Chair & CEO	2
Stories of Hope	3-8
Outreach Program	9
Education Program	10
Volunteers	11
Financials	13
Community	14



Dear Amirah Community:

As we look back at 2019, we cannot begin to express how grateful we are for the Amirah community as we worked on expanding our efforts.

We saw the effectiveness of meeting victims where they are through our survivor-led Outreach Groups. With over 200 women served this year, we saw anywhere from 60-80% of these women identifying that they have been sexually exploited in their lives. The power of these groups is that a survivor-sister is sitting there with them in that safe space. She is listening to them and identifying with them. She is supporting them and speaking words of healing into their lives. They might enter a group feeling like a victim, but they leave the group feeling empowered and ready to get the help and support that only a survivor needs as they move forward in life.

Our flagship safe home program on the North Shore of Boston flourished this past year. The program produced a measurable outcomes assessment where we are able to track and see the progress of each woman. It has been amazing to see what whole person care recovery actually can do in a life. We have seen women going from a state of utter fear and anxiety to walking with confidence in who they are. In 2019, three women pursued college degrees and more than 80%

of the women in the program held down a steady job. Even more than this, we saw tangible growth in their emotional and psychological trauma recovery. We take each day as it comes, and we are always grateful to see miracles unfold each day.

We look forward to witnessing even more miracles unfold with our expansion to Connecticut, which launched in 2019. We were able to find and secure a safe home location and work with our partners, the Underground CT, to restore and renovate this large home into a beautiful welcoming space. We hired our Regional Impact Manager late in the year to secure the funding necessary to open the home. There has been much progress and growth in Connecticut, and we are grateful for this chance to expand.

2019 was truly marked by community—a community of support in Connecticut, a community of victims who became survivors through our outreach efforts, and a community that continues to faithfully give to see the work we started completed with each woman who graduates from an Amirah program. Thank you for believing in this work, and thank you for making the Amirah community the most amazing support we could ever ask for!



Greg Smith

Chair, Board of Directors



Stephanie Clark

Chief Executive Officer



The Interview

I enter the tiny apartment and meet my client – she is visibly nervous as I introduce myself with a smile, trying to put her at ease. I am reminded of how difficult it is for these women to tell the most traumatic story of their lives to a total stranger. I try to connect with them as human beings, and I acknowledge how difficult it is to go through an Amirah admission interview.

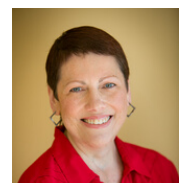
I start off with the basics: name, birthdate, phone number, etc. Then I ask the million dollar questions: why Amirah? Why now? Her answer is a variation of many answers I have received – I need to get my life on track, I want to find meaning, I want to accomplish something.

No matter how these answers are phrased, they always represent the whole person care we hope to offer every woman who walks in our door. The experience of these women demands that we offer whole person, trauma-informed care and opportunity, no matter how difficult or time-consuming that care is.

I see that this woman seated in front of me, who is so obviously nervous, is trying to be honest with me – she wants my help, and asking for it makes her vulnerable. She deserves my honesty and kindness in return, which I try to convey.



I leave the interview wanting to give her the best Amirah has to offer. Over the next few days, I work hard to build her trust, and soon we are on our way to Dunkin' Donuts for a coffee to fortify her before she meets her new roommates at the Amirah house. As hard as the interview was, it pales in comparison to how hard the transition into the home and her program will be. But she meets it head-on, with courage and wit. We are glad to share this stage of her journey as she works to rebuild family relationships, addresses her abuser in court, begins a college prep class. Whole person care takes a lot of time, effort, and resources – but it works! Just ask this woman who has already gained so much, whose face frequently glows with gratitude, if her choice to come to Amirah was worth the work.



Heather Thornburg
Chief Program Officer

In Her Words



I will tell you a little about myself. I just turned 40 years old and I have two beautiful, amazing, daughters: a preteen and a teenager. Amirah has helped me be able to be in their lives again, after not seeing them for about four years (they're with my family). I have been living at the house (Amirah) for close to two years. There are so many good things that I have been blessed with since I've been here. I want to tell you how I am doing now.

I have two years and two months clean. I have a job that I like and am good at. I spend time with my family regularly. And now I actually look forward to the future. The Amirah staff and volunteers are like my second family. They have given me grace, love, and support when others wouldn't.

I am really proud of myself and so very grateful for Amirah and everyone who keeps it going. Thank you.



“

The Amirah staff and volunteers are like my

**SECOND
FAMILY.**

They have given me grace, love, and support when others wouldn't.

- Survivor, Residential Program

An Army of Love & Support

One cold winter morning, Stacey and I sat in the upstairs office, enjoying the sunshine pouring in through the window. We discussed her recent trip home: how good it had been to see her children, how precious to have time with her family. She had only been with us at Amirah for a short time, but this woman was working hard. From day one, she put her all into recovery physically, emotionally, spiritually, and vocationally. When I pointed out that her hard work was paving the way for beautiful moments like the ones she had with her family, she commented that she never thought it would be possible.

“What changed?” I asked, taking a sip of my coffee. She paused and thought for a moment, playing with the string on her sweatshirt.

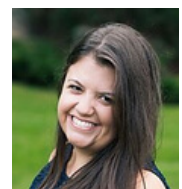
“I’m not alone in my recovery anymore,” she explained, “to be sober, to work on myself, to reconnect with my family and work through everything that’s happened. It never seemed possible because I was on my own. But now, it feels like I have a whole army behind me, ready to cheer me on and fight for me as I do this work.”

What a profound image that was, and one we have revisited in our work together. Stacey has now been at Amirah for over a year, and has made incredible strides. She is clean, sober, and employed. More than that, she is safe, she is loved, and she is free.



At an upcoming celebration, we will present her with a piece of art to celebrate her year at Amirah, a tradition we keep with each of the survivors in our care. The painting we have for her depicts a young woman who is strong, joyful, and at peace, surrounded by an army of support and love. Using her own imagery, we will affirm that she is far from alone in the hard work of recovery.

I feel so privileged to be a part of this army of support with all of you: our staff, our board, our volunteers, our interns, and our supporters. Thank you for making a space where her dreams of recovery and healing could become reality. Thank you for being a part of the army that helps prove to her daily that she is worthy of love, respect, and belonging. May she never lose sight of that truth.



Sarah Broughton
Program Clinician

In Her Words



Amirah saved my life. I was so broken and beaten down when I came here, but today I can honestly say my life is great. I wake up happy, I go to bed grateful. I have done so many amazing things since coming, but a few big ones are getting my GED, buying a car, being an active member in my family and, especially, my relationship with my kids. Today I have a healthy relationship with them and am engaged with them. I cherish our time together. I am building a community around me.

Since Amirah does whole person care every aspect of my life has gotten so much better: from finances to eating healthier to working through my trauma, my spirituality and so much more.

I would not be doing any of these things if I didn't have such a safe place. All the staff are always right beside me, cheering me along. The unconditional love I have received from them is so pure, and without that love I would not be in the place that I am in today. It is so important to have love and support in this journey. I speak for myself when I say the kind of the "love" I have known my whole life was not really love. It is a weird feeling to receive unconditional love but I am so so grateful for it. My hope is for everyone in my situation to get an opportunity like I did because Amirah is special and there is no other place like it, it changed my life so it can change someone else's. Today I have hope and so so much more, thanks to Amirah.



Since Amirah does

WHOLE PERSON CARE

every aspect of my life has
gotten so much better.

- Survivor, Residential Program



Sundays

I love Sundays with Amirah. The hustle and bustle of the week is over, and the home lies in stillness and warmth. We are intentional to create spaces of rest amidst the work of recovery, and Sunday is often set aside to create moments of stillness and healing in community. As community life coordinator, I often find myself spearheading activities and events which challenge the women as part of their programming at Amirah. The appointments or events themselves are not necessarily hard, but complex trauma has a way of making the smallest communal moment feel like a tremendous mountain to climb. Practicing community is hard. Learning to trust is hard. Meeting new people is hard.

What I love about Sunday is that the women, should they emerge from their safe spaces in this big old house, they do so because they want and choose to. I often position myself somewhere central and busy myself with planning events, or writing spiritual mentoring notes. One by one, I am met by our women. Each conversation is different, each issue we walk through carries its unique challenges.

Skye sits with me at the table and tells me about her first week of work. She is exhausted, but intensely proud of herself. I ask what she is doing for selfcare while she adjusts to this new schedule. She proudly lists the ways she is caring for herself.



She confesses that she is worried about her son, and we talk through a list of ways she can support him from afar. I remind her that we will have Grace Circle later, and she groans affectionately as she walks away.

Molly and Joanna begin to do their chores. They are talking about their kids. Joanna's daughter just had a birthday party and she was able to attend. Molly was genuinely happy for Joanna to be there. This party felt like something only possible in dreams and Joanna just loved it. They chat as they clean and tease me from the other room. Why wasn't I joining them as they clean? Where are all the cleaning supplies? Couldn't I make myself useful?

Molly has been wrestling with the idea of community for some time. When I asked her how her week went, she told me about being stuck in a nearby city between appointments, and instead of sitting alone – she reached out to a friend she met through church. She expressed how good it felt to drop by someone's house and to be welcomed. She talked about how, for the first time in a very long time she believed she was wanted. We celebrated this win. This was a huge growth moment and we both knew so.

I head into the office to grab something and am met with a very sad and upset Cassidy. She just had a difficult conversation with a family member and needs to process. We sit in the office and talk through what it means to understand one's circle of control, and where to draw healthy boundaries. We walk through some deep breathing exercises. She resets and calms her body. I encourage her to write some of her feelings down and draw. She loves to draw.

Healing is woven into the ordinary moments of doing life alongside one another. Presence-centered care and communal healing create change in the lives of the women who call Amirah home.

Sundays often end when we gather for Grace Circle. Grace Circle is a group run as part of our programming, but as you can see – healing is not confined to scheduled programming. I have dimmed the lights in our program room, and the women have gathered in a circle. I lean over to the candle in the center of our circle, and while lighting it pray: "As we light this candle, we remember the women who are still out there. May they find hope in this light and the courage to one day join us in our circle." Sundays are sweet. This old home wraps its arms around us, and we learn to do life knowing we are safe.

Sarah Rutherford

Community Life Coordinator



This place gives me hope for the first time in my life. I'm allowed the space to hope for a better future.

**I HAVE A
FUTURE.**

- Survivor, Residential Program

Outreach

In 2019, the Outreach Program brought resiliency-building curricula into two correctional facilities, where we were able to ascertain that more than 60% of incarcerated women have experienced trafficking and exploitation. Inspired by insights gained from her own experiences in “the life,” Cheri Crider, our Outreach Survivor Leader, adapted a nationally recognized, survivor-written program called Ending the Game (ETG) to fit maximum security prison requirements. Additionally, she expanded her use of Seeking Safety, a dual-diagnosis curriculum to assist women in their recovery from addiction and trauma. The

outcome was more than we could have expected.

By creating an upbeat, empowering environment, we watched the popularity of our groups grow month after month. Many women even chose to attend the groups multiple times to take advantage of 27 different topics. Using a federal grant awarded to Massachusetts, full-time social workers were hired to oversee MAT (medically assisted treatment) programs in correctional facilities. To improve their understanding of trafficking, we invited them to our groups too. Soon the women were receiving mental health support that reinforced the principles of our resiliency programs. This collaboration between correctional staff and survivors, resulted in 215 women and 5 staff members receiving trafficking education in 2019.

215

Women Served through
Outreach Groups

“It is great to

'FEEL' FEELINGS

*again. I'm taking back what was
always mine in the beginning.*

- Survivor, Outreach Program



Education

We recognize that there is only so much we can do within the programs of Amirah and that there are thousands of victims out in the community that need support and care. It is our hope that through our educational trainings and awareness events, more would come to know about this issue and understand that a trauma-informed approach is not only a best practice, but an evidenced-based practice.

We have reached more people than ever in 2019 through our awareness events, expanding the community that knows about sex trafficking and helping them to understand the best ways to support a victim in her journey to liberation. We have trained law enforcement, health care professionals, and social workers on this issue.

We are grateful for those entering into this space of healing with us.

7,802

Awareness Training
Participants

307

Trauma-Informed Care
Training Participants

Volunteers

We are so grateful for all of our volunteers who give their time and talent every day to help these women restore their lives. You are the reason that Hope Lives Here.

4,213

Total Volunteer Hours



2019's Volunteers of the Year, Joe and Laurie Miranti with CPO Heather Thornburg.

Expansion

In 2019, we identified and contracted a home for our expansion into Connecticut, and 18 volunteer groups committed their time and talents to helping us renovate the eight-bedroom home. This new space is beautiful, welcoming, and everything needed to help survivors find hope and healing in Connecticut. We look forward to opening this home officially in 2021.

Renovation Teams

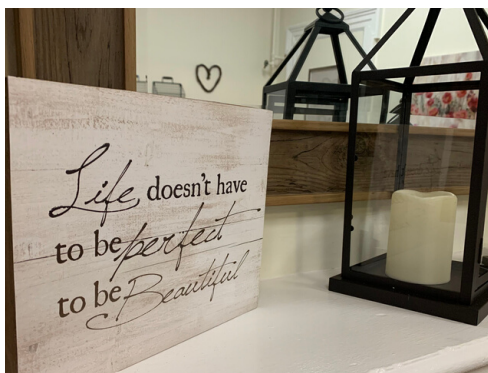
Wellspring Church, Kensington, CT
Emmanuel Baptist Church of Norfolk, MA
Dan & Janet Cushman and Friends
Walnut Hill Community Church, Bethel, CT
St. Patricks Church, Farmington, CT
Tim & Nancy Strini & Friends, known as the "Freedom Posse"
Diane Dunn and Friends
Brookfield First Assembly of God Church, Brookfield, CT
New River Church, Manchester, CT
Courtney Spencer and Friends
Wintonbury Baptist Church, Bloomfield, CT
Wreaths with a Reason, Agawam, MA
Our Savior Lutheran Church, South Windsor, CT
St. Edmund Campion Parish, East Hartford, CT
St. Peter Claver Church, West Hartford, CT
Joann DeRaffaele and Friends
Matt & Carina Duffy and Friends
St. Paul's Church, Willington, CT



This space is a dedicated area for group programs in the home - Grace Circle, Ending the Game, and Monday Night Group programs that provide community recovery.




Each bedroom has a different design theme, each unique, beautiful, and welcoming.



The mantelpiece in the updated living room provides a reminder that will be cherished by future residents.



Having a kitchen to cook in or learn to cook in has been a favorite aspect of the MA safe home for survivors who participated in our program. We are looking forward to the many meals and memories to be made in this space.



“The model that Amirah follows, of showing unconditional love, means that if someone truly wants to learn to love themselves it will happen. I have a lot of work to do in that area, I still have many insecurities and I doubt myself often, but I have begun the work. Amirah shows patience and care in a way that no other place I've experienced has.

I FELT RESPECTED

as soon as I arrived. This environment has made all the difference in showing me that I always deserve to be treated this way by myself and others.

- Survivor Graduate, Residential Program

Thank You

We are only able to do this incredible work because of the support of our donors, church partners, volunteers and community. Thank you for making the stories written in these pages possible with your gifts, talents, and support.



Financials

Revenue

Contributions Unrestricted	\$397,033
Special Events	\$80,526
Contributions Temp Restricted	\$74,403
Other Types of Revenue	\$1,813

Total Revenue	\$553,775
Additional 2019 Revenue Deposited in 2020	\$82,301

Expenses

Program Costs	\$360,774
Administrative Costs	\$78,128
Development Costs	\$154,667
Depreciation	\$6,365

Total Expenses*	\$599,934
-----------------	-----------

Decrease in Net Assets	\$46,159
------------------------	----------

Total Amount in In-Kind Donations	\$51,422
-----------------------------------	----------



Celebrating a birthday in the safe home.



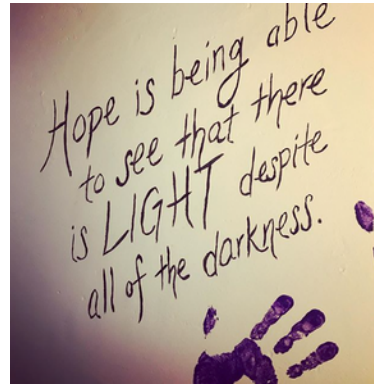
2019's Voices of Hope Honoree, Anita Coco.



Students adding a fresh coat of paint to the safe home.



We began renovations on our new safe home in Connecticut with 18 volunteer groups.



Adding a new graduate's handprint to the celebration wall in the safe home.



Church partners help clean up the yard at the safe home.



CEO Stephanie Clark's book, *Letters to an Activist*, was published.



More than 30 people, kids and adults, hiked Mount Washington for Hike for Hope.



Colleagues reach the summit of Mount Washington for Hike for Hope.



The women of Amirah celebrate completing the End the Game program designed to reduce recidivism back into exploitation.



Survivors and volunteers carve pumpkins to decorate.



Celebrating a full home with survivors and volunteers at Christmas.

“

The connection between love and transformation makes me think of this quote: “Just when the caterpillar thought the world was over, it became a butterfly.”
The caterpillar needs the love and protection of the cocoon to become its true self - and so do I.

AMIRAH IS MY COCOON.

- Survivor, Residential Program

