



ria

Celebrating the
Strength of

One

& the Power of Many

Annual Report 2021

Our vision

is a world where people's bodies are not victimized, exploited, bought or sold for the sexual gratification of another person.

Our mission

is to stand with and support women with experience in the commercial sex trade, and its associated exploitation, trafficking and prostitution, by providing a range of community-based services.

Letter from *Heather*

As I look back on 2021, I'm struck by how difficult a year it has been. It started in the whirlwind of the pandemic with COVID cases back on the rise and the rollout of vaccines just getting out into the public (first responders and other healthcare workers first). RIA was just beginning to plan for our 2nd Annual Virtual Storytelling Event. I remember we were having a really difficult time deciding on the tone for the event. We asked, should we take the serious route or instead use laughter to try to ease the pain of the situation?

With a rollercoaster of emotions, virtual overload was real and we all yearned to be together. So, what did we do?

We decided to predict the future and made a decision to not only host an in-person event, but to make it a GALA. You say, what?!? I still cannot believe we did this, but by far, this was one of the best decisions we made in 2021!

In six short months to plan a major event for the first time, plan we did! Our event committee kicked into high gear to host a spectacular evening of celebration. After outreaching across our networks, we secured a gorgeous venue. Generous corporate and individual sponsors, esteemed keynote speakers and supremely talented musicians, all joined forces to make our gala possible. Saturday October 2nd at the Museum of Fine Arts, we celebrated! The courage, strength, resiliency of the human spirit that we witness every day at RIA working alongside hundreds of survivors since our founding in 2014.

We celebrated! We laughed! We cried!

Amidst the pandemic, RIAs founding team made exceptional moves. At 180 guests and dozens more virtually, we were overwhelmed with the outpour of love.

This year of growth and love has also been a year filled with transition. While we were planning for our most exceptional event, our founding staff team was shifting in the background as new opportunities, personal and professional, opened up. The birth of any organization comes with two assurances: a founding team and the moment when that team splits. I liken it to parenting, when your now adult child is getting ready to leave home. Although we are not working side-by-side in the day-to-day together, we all continue to work passionately across communities, states, and institutions to serve people in need. It has been difficult to say goodbye to such kind, knowledgeable, and fearless founding women of RIA. Thank you for always believing and contributing in mission and vision to more deeply serve survivors of trafficking, prostitution, and exploitation in the commercial sex trade.

This annual report is written in heart, for each of you.

The RIA family is growing as we make room for others to join the movement - work that is ever present, profound, and with great potential to effect positive change in the world.

In Solidarity,



Heather Wightman
Founder & Executive Director
RIA, Inc.



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Change Starts with One

One conversation,
One cup of coffee,
One person who cares and gives.

The RIA team offers the powerful change agent of presence. We believe in the strength of one, because we have experienced it and know the impact personally. 2021 has proven to be a year of such impact. We have seen our **Peer Mentorship** program grow, we hosted our first Inaugural **Gala**, and we continue to **hire new staff** to support the ever changing and growing work of RIA.

Meet our Team

We are a team of survivors, advocates, clinicians, allies and dynamic leaders who are committed to standing alongside women with lived experience in the commercial sex trade as they grow and heal. We offer a range of services including emotional and safety support, information and referrals, personal advocacy, peer mentorship, clinical therapy, and case management. RIA also provides peer support groups that offer access to a caring and informed community.



Amy
Clinician



Beth
Director of
Operations



Chantha
Development &
Strategy Associate



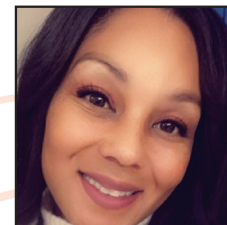
Danielle
Supervisor of
Clinical Training



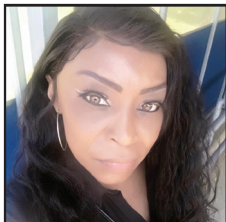
Heather H (Nov)
Director of
Operations



Heather W
Founder &
Executive Director



Jessica
Peer Fellow



Malika
Peer Fellow



Margo
Grant Writer



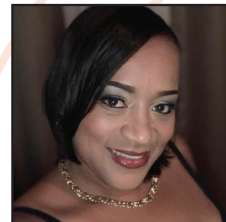
Nicole (Oct)
Peer Mentor



Paola
Acting Clinical
Director



Rosemary
Peer Mentor



Stacy
Supervisor of
Peer Mentorship
Services

What we do

Peer Advocacy & Mentorship Clinical Care & Case Management



We connect people with others who have had similar experiences and want to share their journeys of healing and recovery. Our goal is to increase resiliency, self-worth, and self-reliance in the people we serve.

Virtual Groups

We aim to create connections that encourage community and self-care.

Workshops/Training

We offer a variety of workshops and presentations to help your organization understand the risks and impact of human trafficking on our community and how to get involved.

RIA offers services that provide personal connection and a space to be seen. This is the power of RIA, and the cornerstone of beginning the healing work of trauma recovery.

Survivors of sexual exploitation arrive at RIA with their own unique experiences, needs, and strengths. RIA staff meet each person where they are in their journey, and it is the individualized process of care and attention that builds the trust and space for healing.

What does it mean to be “trauma informed”

It means making space to listen and with patience. It means following the participant’s lead while acknowledging her pain, her joy, her courage. It means showing up even when it’s difficult. It means believing what people share as truth and real and relevant to their healing.

How services are used



Encounter numbers breakdown

	Total Unduplicated	Total encounters
Participants	118	4298
Peer mentorship	65	3029
Therapy	51	899
Case Management	43	231
Groups	53	365

Total number of people seen in **2021:118**

The change in our group numbers is due to the pandemic preventing us from providing in-person groups at the women's prison and in recovery homes.

A letter written by a RIA participant

What Groups Mean to Me

It is not an exaggeration to say that the services I receive through RIA House have changed my life dramatically for the better. When I came in several years ago I had no ability to describe or understand the trafficking I had been through, and was struggling on my own. I worked with RIA's outreach worker to explore my past and present through therapeutic conversations, and we were able to process a lot. However, I still had this overwhelming loneliness, the isolating feeling that no one truly knew what I had lived through. Of course, I knew that this violence is unfortunately all around us in our society, but I had no one I could relate to personally.

Early this year, I was introduced to RIA's support group program. I felt like I was transformed overnight. Here were strong women in all stages of recovery with the same type of trauma as me. While we all have different experiences of it, we are able to bond over our shared pain, hope, recovery, and occasional setbacks. These women continue to inspire me three nights a week. The conversations we have in the groups are brutally honest. Our pain is raw, and our passion for recovery is palpable. Everyone is vulnerable here, yet the space is so safe I feel like I can share anything, from my traumatic experiences to my renewed interest in life. I've found it's also a good place to get feedback as I form new, safe relationships in life outside of the group. The women of RIA help me identify red flags, help me choose

where I want to set boundaries in relationships, new and old, and also give me a great deal of encouragement. Meeting these fierce women has been so validating. I am not alone anymore. Recognizing my new reality as a supported survivor has dramatically improved my self esteem in all aspects of my life. Through the groups, I have learned that I did not fail at life in some way that brought on my trauma, rather, trafficking is a systemic societal issue that left me exploited through no fault of my own. People had told me that throughout my recovery, but it didn't feel real until I could relate by meeting and hearing others in the same situations. I feel less broken.

One of the factors that makes these groups so special is that they are led by peer mentors. While clinical support has been very helpful to me, groups led by fellow survivors have a different kind of feel. I get to watch women with histories like mine stand up for themselves and all of us participants, both on the streets and at galas and national conferences. I see them pursue education, start their own businesses, get jobs, stay sober, and have families and loving relationships, all while continuing to work with those of us in the early stages. My peer mentors who run the groups are truly inspiring in every sense of the word. Their journeys show me that I still have a lot to live for, a lot left to achieve, a lot of ways to stand up for my peer survivors in the future, and best of all a lot of love and encouragement along my way.



READY INSPIRE ACT
Celebrates

Inaugural Gala



\$114K

Total raised

180

Total attended

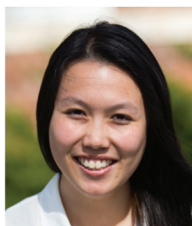


Photos by Benjamin Esakof/Halo Creative Group, LLC





What it means to volunteer with RIA



There are many layers to being a volunteer at RIA. For one, it is incredible to be able to work alongside a team of dedicated women, getting to see how we can support survivors in their journey of healing and building

resilience. Working behind the scenes with data management, I also get to see a glimpse of the numerous encounters that providers (staff and volunteers alike) are interacting with the participants, and it brought me joy knowing members of the team are able to connect with the RIA team.

As a community-based researcher, it is important for me to partner with local organizations in order to examine the research questions that they are interested in. Through this process, we can collaboratively identify the needs of the community, provide the appropriate services, and evaluate the current program practices, if any. I am honored to have been invited on this journey with RIA, and I am excited to continue working with the team to

celebrate the strengths for RIA's work, as well as identify areas for improvement.

- *Cyanea*
PhD candidate in Clinical Psychology



To all of the kind, committed and knowledgeable women that I've met through volunteering at RIA, I say thank you. Your actions have inspired me, your opinions have influenced me and your

wisdom has incited me.

As a member of the first advisory team in 2012, I was introduced to a diverse group of women, the common thread being our desire to learn about ways that we could best support women who were victims of commercial sexual exploitation. We attended workshops and trainings, we conducted a community readiness assessment and we delved deep within ourselves to be sure that our values and attitudes were in alignment

with the work that RIA would soon be doing. The time spent with this group was enlightening and inspiring. Since the early days of discovery and brainstorming with the advisory team, there have been additional opportunities to support the work and the women of RIA through volunteering, advocacy and financial support. Bringing dinner to support groups in Worcester, helping to plan and execute fundraising events, supporting staff on a volunteer certification project are examples.

Today, it is still the combination of women with diverse experiences working together, walking together and loving each other that makes RIA so special. Knowing that there is a need for the services that RIA provides is difficult. But knowing that RIA is there for those that reach out eases my heart and keeps me hopeful – because I believe in the power of kind, committed and knowledgeable women that come together in support of each other.

- *Diane*
Retired Human Services Manager

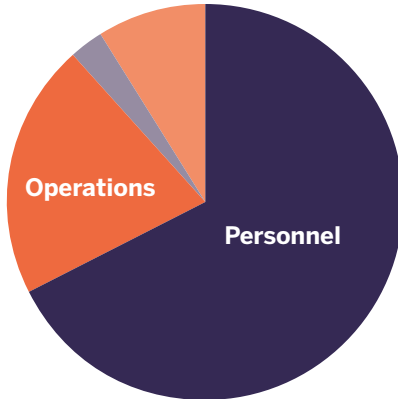
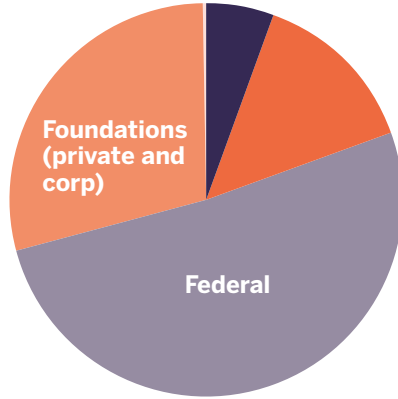
2021 FINANCIALS

Income

■ Individual & churches	\$47,070
■ Events & Corporate Sponsorships	\$114,000
■ Federal	\$422,210
■ Foundations (Private & Corporate)	\$239,000
■ Justice Enterprise	\$203
Total Income	\$822,383

Expenses

■ Personnel	\$508,370
■ Operations	\$156,432
■ General & Administration	\$21,623
■ Fundraising	\$64,795
Total Expenses	\$751,220
Net Income	\$71,163



SheFund totals

Participant Financial Support	Total individuals
Clothing	26
Education/Training	1
Transporation/Car/Gas/Car Insurance	10
Groceries	22
Coffee & Meals	38
Medical	2
Telephone	8
Rent/Housing/Utility	22

SheFund - Total (44 unduplicated) 44

Total \$ spent for SheFund \$38,387





Looking ahead to 2022

GOAL 1:

Helping survivors reach their fullest potential
– specifically to invest in two pilot programs:
Education and Job Training with participants
AND

Supportive Housing over 12 months while
participants are enrolled in or continue their
education/job training.

GOAL 2:

Building a robust clinical program in
partnership with peer mentorship services

Thanks to everyone!

Financial Contributors

Albert W Rice Foundation
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Beth Israel Lahey Health
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Bob's Discount Furniture
Cummings Foundation
Deaconess Health Center

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Women Act
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Walmart Community
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William James College
Women Connect4Good

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BayState Charitable
Savings
Cornerstone Bank
DCU
Eastern Bank
Middlesex Savings
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MutualOne Charitable
Foundation
People's United Bank
Webster Five Bank

Churches

First Parish Unitarian
Church of Concord

First Parish Unitarian
Church of Stow & Acton
Wellesley Congregational
Church
...and dozens of individual
donors, staff & Board of
Directors.

In Kind Contributions

Catherine Aldrich, Annual
Report
Cy Poon, Statistician
Diane Fitzmaurice, Alanna
Paiva, Manleen Singh,
Event Committee
Audrey Casey, Stephanie
Kowalak, Clinical Interns
Zoe Williams, Digital Art
Thanks to the following
who so generously
contributed items for our
MFA gala.
Abroad Modern
Albracca B&B
Anderson Family
Vineyards
Dave's Fresh Pasta

Foundation an Aesthetics
Boutique
Four Seasons One Dalton
Tony & Stephanie Froio
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Tim Zue

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Linda Faye House
MA State Police
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