



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **CENTRAL COAST ORGANIZATIONS CAME TOGETHER THIS LABOR DAY WEEKEND TO SUPPORT HUMAN TRAFFICKING SURVIVORS AND FAMILIES**

*Runaway Girl, Inc., along with Central Coast Freedom Network and Coastal Thrivers, Hosted Weekend-Long Survivor Retreat Thanks to Contributions from Local Businesses & Donors*

**Pismo Beach, Calif. – September 6, 2017** – This past Labor Day Weekend, three Central Coast organizations hosted a retreat for women who have survived human trafficking and their daughters. Runaway Girl, Inc., along with Coast Freedom Network and Coastal Thrivers, all leaders in the fight against human trafficking as well as in providing care and support for survivors, joined together for the first time to create what is intended to be a series of retreats with the goals of continuing healing and growth through fun and recreation, as well as peer engagement and support.

The event, which took place in the Five Cities Area, was made possible by the in-kind and monetary contributions of local businesses and individual donors from throughout the region. Supporting businesses included **California Fresh Market, Coastal Outfitters, Corporate America Lending, Fin's Seafood Restaurant, JR Enterprises, Santa Barbara Community Collaborative for Survivors, Shell Beach Surf Shop, The Surfing Goats, Survivor Leader Network, and Ventana Grill**. Individual contributors included **Jim Braebeck in conjunction with Farm Supply Company, Meadow Devour, Kathi Hardy, and Julie Nanninga**, among others. Surfing lessons, hiking, biking, group meal preparation and sharing, outdoor meditation, and a visit Avila Barn and Avila Beach Farmers Market, were just some of the activities highlighting the weekend. Twelve participants from Los Angeles and San Diego Counties who have survived human trafficking, along with some of their children, took part in the event at no cost to them.

Carissa Phelps, founder and CEO of Runaway Girl, Inc., explained that Labor Day Weekend is focused on celebrating the freedoms and rights of American workers. To those who have been trafficked, the holiday can have an entirely different meaning or little or no meaning at all. "We thought it fitting to bring survivors together over this long holiday weekend with the hope for the women, most of whom work in the anti-human trafficking field, to have time to celebrate and recreate with their families," Phelps said.

"Survivors are on a pathway of healing for a lifetime. As the healing takes place, the individual grows, discovers their potential and contributes to community in significant ways. While the services such as basic needs, education, and physical and mental health are vital to that process, elements of self-care and discovery; such as, recreation, physical exercise, relationship-building, peer support, fun, laughter, and meditative time for reflection are equally as important. That is what this weekend was all about," said Theresa Wolfe, founder and CEO of Coastal Thrivers Corporation, a recreational peer network for altruistic survivors from sexual abuse.

Participant Jessica Torres, activist, advocate, and trainer with Survivors Speak, explained that overcoming childhood sexual exploitation is an evolutionary process. "In the macro sense, the context of change and the needs are enormous, the resources scarce, and the opportunities few and far between. In the personal sense, the road is often complex and lonely. This retreat hit so many fundamental points of healing.

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The guides allowed us to enjoy events and activities according to our own abilities, needs, and interests. Always honoring our edges of comfort, yet empowering us to build new muscle — emotionally and physically — while creating community and sisterhood,” Torres stated.

“Being able to include my child was restoring on a cellular level, for the both of us. It was a weekend of firsts, team-building, and was the most fun. My gratitude for this opportunity to restore and revitalize is very deep. This experience has replenished the fire, so that I may continue to serve the youth I work with, my community, myself, and my family.”

Rebecca Turner, co-founder and executive director of Central Coast Freedom Network concluded by saying, “We are so very grateful to the area businesses and individuals who stand by us in our mission to support and help survivors in meaningful ways, and who showed their support by donating what was needed to create a positive, fun-filled, and transformational experience like what just took place for these women and their families. This event and others like it would not be possible without the support of our wonderful community.”

For businesses interested in learning more about future survivor retreats and how they can get involved, please email [RGretreats@gmail.com](mailto:RGretreats@gmail.com).

### **About Runaway Girl, Inc.**

Runaway Girl, Inc. is a first-of-its-kind California training and consulting social purpose corporation with a dual mission – to assist communities working to improve responses to human trafficking, and to improve outcomes and create employment opportunities for individuals who have survived human trafficking. The organization pairs companies, communities, and agencies with subject matter experts for survivor-led, high-impact trainings and meaningful consulting projects. The social purpose corporate structure allows Runaway Girl to partner with individuals who have transformed their lives to become subject matter experts across an array of fields and disciplines, and to lead in their own communities. The organization also creates opportunities for personal and professional growth and development, such as retreat weekends, as well as educational and training opportunities. For more information, visit [www.runawaygirl.com](http://www.runawaygirl.com), call (805) 265-3714, or email [RGretreats@gmail.com](mailto:RGretreats@gmail.com).

### **About Central Coast Freedom Network**

The Central Coast Freedom Network is comprised of people who care deeply about doing their part to end human trafficking. With a focus on community education, as well as creating and improving emergency and transitional services for local survivors, the Central Coast Freedom Network exists to mobilize the community to counter human trafficking. The group formed in 2012, filed for incorporation in August 2015, and soon after, legally became the Central Coast Freedom Network, a California 501(c)(3). For more information, visit [www.centralcoastfreedomnetwork.org](http://www.centralcoastfreedomnetwork.org), call (785) 251-3733, or email [info@ccfreedomnetwork.org](mailto:info@ccfreedomnetwork.org).

### **About Coastal Thrivers**

Based in Pismo Beach, California, Coastal Thrivers is a recreational peer network for altruistic survivors of childhood sexual abuse and sexual assault. The organization's mission is to facilitate holistic recreational activities designed to provide opportunities for survivors to engage physically, intellectually, and spiritually, which can impact individuals emotionally, for the purpose of increasing health and well-being for their body, mind, and soul. The organization's goal is to help those who have been sexually violated in their lifetime to turn their life around, till the point where they no longer function as a victim or a survivor. They function altruistically, and are driven to help others by informing, supporting, and contributing to other individuals who need the support from a network of Thrivers. For more information, visit [www.coastalthrivers.org](http://www.coastalthrivers.org), call (805) 458-6385, or email: [info@coastalthrivers.org](mailto:info@coastalthrivers.org).