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## Quarterly

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*/'karita:s/ (noun) love of humankind, charity*

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Volume 5 Issue 3

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# Dahlia's Hope



## The cornerstone of Dahlia's Hope is trauma-informed, clinical therapy blended with recreational therapy and peer support to help survivors of sex trafficking heal and move forward toward independence

There is not one face to human and sex trafficking. It can be a parent or a spouse trafficking their loved one, a scammer on a dating app or a complete stranger. For Faith, it was an older man promising a better life.

At just 13 and living in an abusive home, Faith accepted the proposition of a man from her hometown in Mexico to go away with him. But it didn't take long for the dream to unravel into a nightmare. Taken to a large city in the United States, Faith was blackmailed and forced into child trafficking. She was sold for sex for the next four years.

Her first escape attempt was unsuccessful — her trafficker found her and beat her so badly her entire jaw was shattered. On her second escape attempt, she made it to the police department and found safety and freedom. But the nightmare wasn't quite over. After escaping from her trafficker, Faith struggled to find the resources and help she needed to rebuild her life.

In 2015, the U.S. State Department estimated there were 1.2 million individuals being trafficked in the U.S. alone, though that number is widely believed to be an underestimate. But for those millions of survivors, there are only 1,000 total spaces

in aftercare programs across the country.

As Faith began her own healing journey, she was desperate to provide other survivors with the aftercare and support she knew they needed. Faith had a new dream — and Dahlia's Hope made it come true.

Dahlia's Hope is a Salt Lake City-based nonprofit offering holistic aftercare programs and services to survivors of sex trafficking who are ready to start a new life and work toward independent living. Since seeing their first client in December 2019, Dahlia's Hope has served a total of 32 sex trafficking survivors, with 17 currently active cases.



*Dahlia's Hope operates a therapeutic farm for survivors where they can enjoy recreational and animal-led therapy experiences. "A lot of our survivors have had part of their lives stolen from them and they never learned to recreate in a healthy way," said COO Cara Durfee. Photo courtesy of Dahlia's Hope.*

The cornerstone of the aftercare provided by Dahlia's Hope is clinical therapy, said Cara Durfee, the organization's chief operating officer. It is the only way survivors can start to process and heal from their trauma.

"If survivors aren't provided assistance and resources and healing, something like 85 percent of them will go back to being trafficked," Durfee said. "Our program really views aftercare as an ongoing, lifelong process."

There is no time limit on the programs offered by Dahlia's Hope — survivors can stay active in the program for as long as they want. The only eligibility requirement is that participants have completed any necessary residential treatment — such as drug

detox or rehabilitation — before they begin the outpatient programs that Dahlia's Hope provides.

From there, Dahlia's Hope becomes a one-stop resource for sex trafficking survivors.

"The biggest focus we have is clinical therapy and trauma healing," Durfee said. "It's such a critical piece to these survivors becoming independent."

Survivors participate in individual and group trauma-informed therapy, as well as recreational therapy and animal-assisted therapy at a farm owned and run by Dahlia's Hope.

"It's important to us that our survivors learn healthy recreation," Durfee said. "A lot of our survivors have had part of their lives stolen from them and they never learned how to recreate in a healthy way."

If there are any services survivors need that Dahlia's Hope doesn't provide directly, they work with local and national partners to refer survivors to the right place. These can include medical services, legal services, dental and healthcare and



## The Dahlia's Hope TEAM

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Founding Board Member  
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*Dahlia's Hope staff, board members and survivors gathered to celebrate the second anniversary of the organization on July 19. In just two years, Dahlia's Hope has helped dozens of survivors of sex trafficking in Utah. Photo courtesy of Dahlia's Hope.*



*Dahlia's Hope is a one-stop resource for survivors of sex trafficking. If there is a resource the organization can't provide in-house, such as medical care or legal services, Dahlia's Hope works with local and national partners to refer survivors to the right place*

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housing and education assistance.

"It's kind of whatever our survivors need, we find a way," said Durfee. "Our goal is to help them have the life they always wanted."

Having access to all these services in the same place was critical to Faith's vision, said Cherstyn Stockwell, a founding board member of Dahlia's Hope.

Stockwell first met Faith in 2017 when Faith made a trip to Utah with one of Stockwell's friends. At the time, Faith was still living in the same neighborhood as her trafficker, hiding behind dumpsters and doors when she saw his van drive by.

At the end of her visit, Faith decided she wanted to move to Utah. She stayed with Stockwell and her family for a year before moving in with a more permanent host family.

"We could tell that she was truly eager to heal," Stockwell said.

What they didn't realize, Stockwell said, was how important helping other survivors was to that healing journey.

Faith was working toward her GED and had a job with doTerra. She was earning enough money to get her own place with roommates.

She even served as a key witness in the trial of her trafficker. But she still showed up at Stockwell's house in March of 2019, in tears because she wanted to be doing more to help other survivors.

Dahlia's Hope was established as a 501(c)(3) by the summer and started serving survivors by the end of the year. And all the credit goes to Faith, Stockwell said.

"This was not our idea," she said. "This is 100 percent Faith."

The final piece of Faith's vision was that the programs Dahlia's Hope offers be available to anyone who needed them. The organization serves men and women, from minors to adults. It is the only operational

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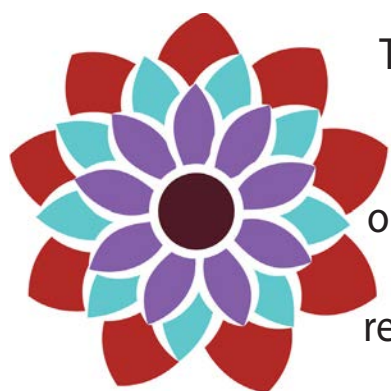
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<sup>2</sup> Based on year-to-date 2021 average network availability excluding commercial power outage and planned maintenance.

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Recreational therapy activities include rock climbing, tubing, sailing, rafting and more. At the therapeutic farm, survivors can work with animals, participate in horticulture therapy, or volunteer to help with the farm's upkeep and maintenance. Photo courtesy of Dahlia's Hope.



The Dahlia's Hope logo features the dahlia flower, the state flower of Mexico where the organization's founding survivor is from, as well as colors that represent the various stages of a survivor's healing journey.

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and comprehensive program of its kind in Utah, focusing on sex trafficking survivors and their aftercare.

"It's an obvious critical need that we're meeting," Durfee said.

And it's a need that's a lot closer to home than people realize.

"We like to think this is a foreign problem or a problem that's brought across the border," Durfee said. "But this is a problem in our own country and in our own state and in our own communities. Survivors look like your neighbor. It can happen to anyone and it does happen to a wide variety of people, even right here in Utah. Eliminating the stereotype of what it looks like is really important."

Dahlia's Hope offers all their programs and services free of charge to survivors. Their \$800,000 yearly budget comes from a combination of government grants, foundations, corporate sponsors and individual donations. The organization has also received more than 8,000 volunteer hours, which have been crucial to its success.

Any increase in funding is used to hire more therapists, Stockwell said, but the organization is always operating at capacity. For now, the board is committed to continuing the organization's organic growth while still providing a high quality of care.

"We don't want to turn away survivors," Stockwell said. "Not right now."

When the founding group of members and funders sat down to think of a name for their new non-profit, Faith immediately thought of the Dahlia, the state flower of Mexico. It is a resilient flower that can grow almost anywhere and comes in a wide variety of colors, each symbolizing something unique. All of these colors are incorporated in the organization's logo: burgundy for betrayal; purple for safety, dignity and royalty; blue and green for a fresh start; and red for power and strength.

But Dahlia's what? That was harder to come up with. Stockwell finally suggested Dahlia's Home, but Faith said that wasn't quite right.

"Faith said it had to be more than a home," Stockwell said. "It couldn't just be a home. It has to be more than that. It had to be hope."



Dahlia's  
Hope

## BY THE NUMBERS

32

Survivors served with aftercare programs.

7

Survivors housed in transitional housing program.

2

Survivors received subsidized rent to keep them in their current housing.

2

Survivors placed in shelters protecting them from immediate harm.

4

Connected with Western Governors University partnership for higher education.

4

Survivors assisted in accessing trauma-informed healthcare.

1

Survivor assisted to access reconstructive surgery, repairing damage done by her trafficker.

2

Survivors connected to trauma-informed legal services.



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### NEW MEXICO

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Photo courtesy of Hope4Utah

## Hope Squad is a school-based, peer-to-peer suicide prevention program

In 1999, a task force was convened in Utah County to address one important concern: the Provo City School District was losing an average of one student a year to suicide.

“We did all of this — task forces and meetings and conferences — because we were losing kids to suicide in Provo,” said Cathy Bledsoe, who was part of the initial task force. “And after bringing all these agencies and organizations and community members together, we were still losing students.”

After a lot of effort and expertise, the group finally arrived at a solution: a peer support program where kids could be trained to look out for other kids who were struggling or otherwise at risk. The team spent a year developing a curriculum and launched the Hope Squad program at Timpview High School in 2004.

It would be nine years before the district lost another student to suicide. Hope Squads are peer support

groups in elementary schools, middle schools and high schools. Students nominate their peers to be squad members, and faculty advisors and school principals make the final selection.

The squads meet weekly and participate in the approved and standard-

ized curriculum that covers social and emotional learning, self-care and empathy, as well as suicide prevention and QPR (Question, Persuade, Refer) training.

“Kids will talk to kids before they talk to adults, so it’s the kids who will know if a student in the school

is struggling,” Bledsoe said. “I know this program really makes a difference.”

It didn’t take long for lots of other people to figure out what Bledsoe already knew. There was so much interest in Hope Squads from so many schools that a non-profit called Hope4Utah was formed to bring all the squads under one umbrella. Bledsoe currently serves as the assistant director of that organization.

Schools pay a fee of \$500 a year to participate in the program. In Utah, the cost is entirely covered by funding allocated by the state Legislature for suicide prevention in schools. The fees represent the bulk of Hope4Utah’s operating budget.

Today there are Hope Squads

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***"Our goal is to prevent suicide through public awareness and education, reduce stigma, and serve as a resource to those touched by suicide."***

CONTINUED on next page





Hope Squad members share the things they learn with the whole school through class presentations, assemblies and other events. Many schools host a Hope Week with a series of activities focused on suicide prevention. Photo courtesy of Hope4Utah.

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operating in 1,000 schools across 33 states.

“Now we have a lot of people addressing this problem,” Bledsoe said.

One of those people is Laura Giles. She serves as a Hope Squad advisor at an elementary school in the Alpine School District. She also helps train new Hope Squad advisors and bring new participating schools online.

“We teach the Hope Squad kids to watch out for kids who are struggling,” Giles said. “Maybe they don’t have suicidal thoughts, but they are struggling with other things they might need help with. They’re looking out for each other and learning to be kind.”

Hope Squad members learn how

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## HOPE4UTAH

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# HOPE SQUAD

## CORE VALUES

-  We believe in education. The Hope Squad program was built by educators in partnership with mental health experts. The evidence-based training changes how schools approach mental health and suicide prevention.
-  We value taking initiative. Hope Squad members are trained to take action when someone is struggling. Instead of waiting for a peer to come to them, Hope Squad members are the ones to reach out first.
-  We value openness. Hope Squad members are trained to be aware of their peers and watch for warning signs. They learn to show empathy to their peers, listen without judgment, and reduce stigma regarding help-seeking and mental illness.
-  We value self-care. You can help others best if you are also taking care of yourself. We advocate for maintaining healthy boundaries, building resilience, and avoiding burnout.
-  We value community. It takes a village to raise a child, and it takes an entire community to save one. The Circles4Hope model recognizes the role of mental health partnerships, school programs, and community connections working together for suicide prevention.

## AREAS OF FOCUS

-  Safety. Hope Squad members recognize the warning signs of suicide, reach out to peers in distress, and refer them to trusted adults.
-  Connectedness. Hope Squad members actively look for ways to support their peers and increase connectedness in their schools.
-  Bullying Prevention. Hope Squad members recognize bullying, intervene, and encourage other students not to be bystanders.
-  Mental Wellness. Hope Squad members promote resilience and self-care and work closely with their local mental health agency.
-  Reducing Stigma. Hope Squad members reduce the stigma associated with mental illness and mental health and show that it’s OK to get help.
-  Substance Abuse Prevention. Hope Squad members understand the complexity of substance abuse, encourage peers to make healthy choices, and persuade struggling peers to get help.



After the first Hope Squad launched in 2004 at Timpview High School, the district went nine years without losing a student to suicide. But the number of suicides isn't the most important outcome to measure, said Doran Williams of Wasatch Behavioral Health. The

more important outcome is raising a new generation of people who are more informed about suicide and mental health and more comfortable talking about them. Photo courtesy of Hope4Utah.

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to help their peers solve problems, but they also learn how to recognize serious risks and elevate them to a trusted adult.

"We do want them to reach out and be kind if it's a problem they can solve, like inviting someone to play with them at recess," Giles said. "But we also train them that it is not their job to solve every problem or be responsible for other people and their choices."

Hope Squad members also share what they are learning with the rest of the school through assemblies, events and activities. Most participating schools host a Day of Hope every February, and some host a whole Hope Week focused specifically on suicide prevention education for the students and faculty.

But the impact of the Hope Squads program is more than just suicide prevention, Giles said.

"It really does totally change the culture of the school and makes it a place where people are really looking out for each other," she said. "It's

not just the Hope Squad kids that are doing it. Everyone is doing it."

A few years ago, a new boy moved into her school, Giles said. He had been texting with a friend from his old school when that friend said he was contemplating suicide. The new student immediately went to a Hope Squad member for help. Together the two students went to their principal, who contacted the principal at the new student's previous school. That principal located the parents of the at-risk student and they were able to intervene.

"It was such a good team effort of people working together to get this boy the help he needed," Giles said.

This kind of intervention and support is the immediate goal of Hope4Utah and the Hope Squads program, but the organization also hopes to have a longer-term impact on addressing the misperceptions around mental health and suicide.

"The whole purpose is to get rid of the stigma and build a new generation that can talk about these issues," said Doran Williams, associate director of Wasatch Behavioral Health, a Hope4Utah partner. "The goal is to eradicate suicide completely. That will never happen, but that's the goal that's out there."

The stigma around mental health

is that people who are suffering are weak, that they have a character flaw or they should be able to "snap out of it" themselves. Misperceptions about suicide include that people who die by suicide are selfish or that suicide can be explained by just one factor.

"Suicide is a complex problem and you can't pin it on one cause," Williams said.

It is also a problem that touches just about everyone. Williams himself lost a family member — a brother-in-law — to suicide. The Hope Squad at his nephew's school was integral to his healing, Williams said.

"Training these kids builds a community of support, today and in the future," he said. "And how we respond when they need help will help build and strengthen those relationships."

Those relationships and communities of support will also be the key to ultimately removing the stigma around mental health and suicide, Williams said. Kids in schools with Hope Squads are learning how to create protective factors and skills — inclusion, kindness, support and empathy — that will serve them the rest of their lives.

"The youth understand this," he said. "It's OK to get help. It's OK to get treatment. It's even OK to have

those suicidal thoughts. But let's talk about it and do something about it."

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## After a successful pilot in Iron County, the 4-H Mentoring Program was launched nationwide in 1994

While it's most commonly known for farming, agriculture and livestock activities, 4-H is actually the largest youth development program in the country, offering everything from STEM to robotics to youth leadership training — in addition to the more familiar activities.

But perhaps the most impactful program 4-H offers is one that few people have heard of — the 4-H mentoring program. After a successful pilot in Iron County, the program was launched nationwide in 1994. In 2001, Utah County became the lead location for all 4-H mentoring across the state.

The 4-H mentoring program is geared toward kids ages 9 to 15 who are considered “at risk” due to factors including socioeconomic instability, family instability or poor academic performance.

“We are trying to address any current issues and prevent any future ones by putting a mentor in their life,” said Brandon Summers, program coordinator for the Utah County program. “That mentor acts as a guide and an advocate and someone they can go to.”

Following the Youth and Families Promise curriculum, 4-H mentoring has three key components:

The first is one-on-one mentoring. Volunteer mentors meet with their mentees once a week for at least an hour to do everything from baking

classes to playing sports. Beyond the initial one-hour weekly meeting, what the pair does and how often they see each other is really up to them.

“We don't want it to be too rigid,” Summers said, “because we really want them to establish that trust and build that friendship.”

For Megan Roper, volunteering as a 4-H mentor was the perfect opportunity to use her own life experiences to serve someone else.

“It puts life into perspective of

where you've come from and how you can help,” she said.

Roper started as a mentor in 2016, paired with a 14-year-old girl. They worked together in the program for four years, but the relationship of trust they established has transcended 4-H. Even though Roper no longer serves as a 4-H mentor, and even though her mentee has moved on from the program as well, they still stay in touch with phone calls, texts and even an occasional visit.

“I wanted her to know that I truly did build a relationship with her, so we really do keep in touch and still take care of each other,” Roper said.

For Roper, the mentor/mentee relationship was really more like an older sibling/younger sibling relationship, and weekly activities were a vehicle for sparking meaningful conversations and addressing tough questions. Giving teens lots of trusted people to offer advice and help is good for everyone, she said.

“These regular meetings are chances to have a really good conversation about whatever was going on and to let these teens know that someone other than their parents is willing to help them and hear them out,” Roper said. “I think it's really deep down inside all of us to provide that help and 4-H mentoring is an opportunity to do that.”

The second component of the mentoring program curriculum is the weekly 4-H club. The clubs offer 4-H programming, as well as giving kids a safe and productive place to be after school, all at no cost to families or school districts.

Most 4-H weekly clubs are hosted at elementary schools, and these schools are indispensable partners

### **4-H Mentoring Program Mission Statement:**

*“We are committed to providing an environment which fosters belonging, independence, generosity, and mastery among mentors, youth, and families. These are the four essential elements of positive youth development.”*



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The mentoring program took a hit during the coronavirus pandemic. Many activities were canceled or went virtual, and engagement suffered. According to program coordinator Brandon Summers, in 2021 the program is focused on rebuilding with the goal of reaching 300 participating kids. Photo courtesy of 4-H Mentoring.



Kids participating in the 4-H mentoring program benefit from having more trusted adults in their life to offer guidance and support. Mentors also benefit from the opportunity to put their own life experiences into perspective and use those experiences to help other people. Photo courtesy of 4-H Mentoring.

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to the program, Summers said. Not only do they provide space for activities, but participating schools can also refer students to the program and be eyes and ears for mentors and program managers as well.

“We want partners who are really going to engage with us and work together,” Summers said.

The third and final pillar of the 4-H mentoring program is the family itself. Family programming includes a monthly Family Night Out where families can come and enjoy free activities ranging from ice cream socials to live theater performances to service projects for others in need. These activities are designed to give kids and their parents the tools and confidence to address any challenges they might be facing, as well as give them a break from thinking and worrying about those challenges all the time.

“We really want to strengthen the family unit,” Summers said. “And even if a kid or a family isn’t considered ‘high risk,’ every kid can benefit from a mentor in their life.”

Olivia Gruwell was one such

CONTINUED next page



## 4-H Mentoring Program Outcomes

**771**

total youth participants.

**312**

total volunteer mentors.

**26**

family camps and events.

**95%**

of youth participants say they learned a new skill.

**74%**

of youth participants say they feel more confident about themselves.

**87%**

of youth participants agree they have adults who care about them.



Mentors and mentees in the 4-H mentoring program meet once a week for an hour to do a variety of activities together, from running to baking classes to crafting. But weekly activities are really just a vehicle for forming long-lasting, trusting relationships that support mentees and their families. Photo courtesy of 4-H Mentoring.

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kid. Though she didn't come from a typical high-need family, she jumped at the chance to get involved in 4-H mentoring and joined as a mentee 16 years ago.

"It was huge for me," she said. "It ended up being one of the biggest life-changing things I could have done for myself. It was a very motivating experience and I learned a lot of skills and how to do a lot of things."

Those skills came in particularly handy when Gruwell's family became a traditionally high-risk family after she had completed the program.

"The skills that 4-H taught me helped me deal with what my family went through later on," she said. "It taught me such a great sense of independence and morals and values. More than anything, I learned to fight for what is best for me and do what is best for me."

The 4-H mentoring program had such a profound impact, in fact, that Gruwell took a job with the program as a site coordinator. She opened the Springville site in late 2020. The Springville mentoring program currently includes 23 kids, with a goal to reach 30 to 35. As a site coordinator, Gruwell handled everything from recruiting local partners to planning

weekly activities, to matching mentors and mentees.

"That's a very delicate thing," she said of creating the mentorship pairs. "You're changing lives right there. But it's also one of the most fun and fulfilling parts."

The Utah 4-H mentoring program currently operates sites in Utah, Duchesne and Iron counties, with a total budget of just over \$1 million for 2020 through 2023. Most of the funding comes from grants, including two new grants from the Department of Justice that allowed the Utah program to expand its offerings. The program currently has 21 staff members across the state with 200 kids currently being served.

The pandemic had a massive impact on the program, Summers said, with activities going virtual and engagement falling. So 2021 has been about reconnecting and rebuilding, and so far, it seems to be working. Summers said they hope to be serving closer to 300 kids soon, offering them the positive youth development opportunities that are the core of 4-H's mission.

"4-H as an organization has always been about positive youth development and they have a lot of resources to put behind it," Summers said. "There's definitely a need for more prevention services and 4-H saw an opportunity to provide those services across the country. Our most important goal is always to be reaching more kids."



*The 4-H mentoring program includes weekly 4-H clubs, usually hosted at local elementary schools. Club activities include 4-H programming such as STEM activities, robotics, farming, agriculture, and youth development training. Photo courtesy of 4-H Mentoring.*



## 4-H MENTORING

### goals

**GOAL 1:** Reduce delinquent behavior including, juvenile delinquency, opioid and substance use, and other risk factors.

**Goal 2:** Improve positive outcomes in at-risk youth including, improved academic performance and increased social competencies.

**Goal 3:** Strengthen family relationships and attachment to the community by increasing family engagement in the program.



## 4-H MENTORING

### program activities

**Mentoring:** Youth are matched one-to-one with screened, background check-approved volunteer mentors. Mentors meet with their mentee once a week to act as a friend, guide and role model.

**M&M:** Mentor & Mentee activities planned by the 4-H staff for mentors to bring their mentees. This is an opportunity for mentors and mentees to meet and befriend others in the program.

**FNO:** Family Night Out activities are planned and provided by the staff at 4-H mentoring. These activities are fun opportunities for families to bond. All costs are covered by 4-H.



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