



WORTH IT

2023 *Garden Gate Ranch* IMPACT REPORT

MISSION

Garden Gate Ranch is a faith-based Christian organization providing safe housing and restorative and transitional services for sexually-exploited women and their children.

VISION

Garden Gate Ranch seeks to rally our communities to ensure that all women are free from exploitation and abuse.

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For the Love of Each One.

That's our motto at Garden Gate Ranch. Everything we do is for the love of each beautiful lady the Lord sends our way and for the love of each child that comes with her.

Days at the Ranch appear very normal in many ways. Residents live life as it comes, getting up in the morning, taking children to childcare, going to work or class, cleaning, and cooking meals for their families. Normal, right? To most of us, yes. But for many of our residents, these daily tasks remain new and uncomfortable until they develop into habits here at the Ranch. They don't always do their chores with joy. Academic work can be a real struggle. *"What difference does it make?"* they ask. In their wrestling, I've realized that what is "normal" to me is often foreign to others, and vice versa.

As you may already know, not all residents stay to complete the entire restoration program. We wish they did, and we ask ourselves why. I'm sure many of our community partners and donors ask the same question. If you haven't asked it yet, you will.

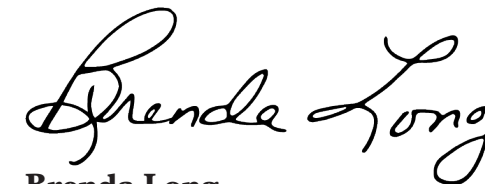
Why wouldn't a young mom who has been through so much trauma, poverty, homelessness, abuse, and uncertainty not want such a gift as we offer here at GGR? The truth is that it is much more frightening to step into an unknown future than to remain in a familiar past—even when she is told that this new way of living can help her escape and heal. It's frightening to change her "normal."

The fact is: not all women stay. Statistics say that, on average, victims escaping abusive situations will leave and return to their abuse seven times before real change happens. These numbers are true for victims becoming survivors. Some stay with GGR for weeks, some stay for months, and some stay to complete the entire program. They graduate, move into the transitional cottages, get jobs and careers, and—yes—do the "new normal" of what they learned in their time at the Ranch.

No matter the length of her stay, her life is impacted. Your support and our service change her, even when she prematurely departs. And so, we continue the good work of sowing seeds of love into each mama and child without ceasing. Of some, we witness a full harvest; for others, we nourish and water diligently as long as they remain in our care. We trust our mission and vision, and most of all, we trust the Lord to do what only He can do when a resident's journey takes her elsewhere.

Your impact as a partner is measured in each and every unselfish act of love offered to the women and children who enter our doors. YOU make this mission and vision possible with your seeds of love and support. We say it often, and it is so true, we couldn't touch the lives we touch without you. **Thank you** for making a difference in the lives of survivors.

Sincerely & For the Love of Each One,



Brenda Long
Founder & Executive Director





Human beings are not for sale.

The degrading crime of human trafficking is a global, national, and local issue. It's an Iowa issue. It's ***our*** issue.

There are an estimated 28 million trafficking victims worldwide. Of the 1% identified, few receive care and 80% are re-victimized if they don't have a safe place to go. In 2021, over 10,000 situations of human trafficking were reported to the National Human Trafficking Hotline, the top three types of which were 1) Escort services, 2) Pornography, and 3) Illicit massage/health and beauty.

Iowa receives 9 trafficking reports per 100,000 people, and ***it's estimated that 8,600 people in Iowa are victims of trafficking annually.***

Garden Gate Ranch is a Des Moines area restoration home offering survivors of sexual exploitation a safe place to heal. Our home specifically serves mothers with young children, removing the awful choice that exploited mothers must often make: stay with their child or pursue healing and freedom. At Garden Gate Ranch, she *and* her precious little one find safety, strength, and the hope of a better tomorrow.



Our Commitment
to Residents



***“I OWN ME.
NOBODY ELSE
DOES. I JUST
REALIZED THAT.”***

- A RANCH HOUSE RESIDENT

According to "Survivor Perspectives on Faith Practices, A National Study of Sex Trafficking Survivors' Experiences in Faith-Based Shelters" by the Institute for Shelter Care:

- 81% of [the surveyed] survivor population grew up with some exposure to faith/religion, but "falling away" (29.75%) or a bad experience with religious people (22.78%) were reasons that they had left the faith.
- Many of these survivors chose to apply for a faith-based program because they either wanted to reconnect with their faith (47%) or wanted to become a person of faith (28%).
- 91% of these survivors reported that they never felt pressured to engage in a faith practice.
- 84% of these survivors now identify as Christian.

"There are times when the work we do is incredibly discouraging, especially when a survivor chooses to leave before she's fully realized who she is in Christ. These statistics give us hope to persevere, even when it's hard, because what we do at GGR works; the majority of women we serve are realizing their worth and beauty in Jesus."

- Stephenie | Operations Director

CONTINUING RESTORATION PROGRAM



THE RANCH HOUSE is Garden Gate Ranch's continuing restoration home, built upon a strength-based, trauma-informed approach to survivor aftercare.

At the Ranch, survivor needs are met through private bedrooms, healthy meals, church functions, healing curriculum, therapy, academic lessons and more. This program provides holistic support through a variety of therapies and programming in key areas such as safety, sobriety, trauma, self-care, spirituality, and relationships.



THE COTTAGES are independent transitional living units that help Ranch House graduates transition smoothly into life on their own.

Upon graduation from the Ranch House, every interested resident is given a personal living space for her and her child, complete with two bedrooms, a kitchen, a living room, a bathroom, a garage, and in-home laundry. Here, she furthers her independence by working in the community and pursuing career goals while maintaining the safety and support of the Garden Gate Ranch team.



When a resident referred to the man who exploited her as “mine,” a staff member suggested the small wording change of saying “the trafficker” instead of “my trafficker.” She asked the resident if the man was truly hers. This bold momma sat back in her chair and blinked at the thought. “Yeah...” she said, realization and confidence creeping up her face. “He’s not mine. I don’t want him.”



“I have not slept so well in a long time. It has been years since I felt safe enough to totally just sleep and not always be on alert. I just feel so blessed that I am here!”

- A Ranch House Resident



“Garden Gate Ranch has brought me closer to God, and I have found I am loved even when I mess up.”

- A Ranch House Resident



RESIDENT VICTORIES

STAFF TESTIMONIALS



“When I started at Garden Gate Ranch, I thought I would be able to jump in and the residents would be so happy and grateful for my work. That’s not often the case. I’ve learned that, in this work, we can either choose to be the change through patient love and God’s guidance, or we can choose to push our own agendas. When I’m working with the residents and I see the light in their eyes finally go on—like they’re seeing life for the first time—it proves to me that God’s way is better and drives me to help them and help our program grow.”

- Ariana | Program Coordinator

“I love being a Childcare Worker for Garden Gate Ranch. God has given me a heart for caring for children and helping them grow and develop their skills. Since working for Garden Gate Ranch, God has shown me that I’m not alone in this ministry. I have love and support from my co-workers, who really care about each other and about showing kindness and God’s love to the residents and children.”

- Ashley | Childcare Worker

NIGHTS OF SAFETY

This is a tally of the individual nights of safety you provided to mothers and children in our program. Because of you, moms and their kiddos sleep safely, without the fear of assault or abuse.

866

HOURS OF CHILDCARE

Your support provided mothers with childcare throughout the week, allowing them to focus on their healing, their academics, their jobs, and their future.

4,760

HEALTHY MEALS

You fed mothers and their children healthy, nourishing meals the whole year through. Mealtimes also provided residents with the opportunity to grow in skills such as cooking, grocery shopping, and kitchen upkeep.

1,500

HOURS OF THERAPY

Because of you, survivors of exploitation and abuse received the mental and emotional support they needed through therapy and addiction recovery groups.

141

MEDICAL APPOINTMENTS

Along with meeting mental and emotional needs, you provided for residents' physical needs by giving them the opportunity to attend doctor and dentist appointments throughout the year.

48



As a survivor of human trafficking, I sought out refuge. Garden Gate Ranch was a place of harbor for me to calm the storms that had taken over for generations. Garden Gate Ranch was such an experience where I was able to truly seek the Holy Spirit and cultivate God's plan for me. On this sweet journey, I was able to meet God in a relentless pursuit for my heart and finally say, "yes, in all things." Garden Gate Ranch provided me space to become a mother and walk in truth. I do not know what my future holds, but the more I get to experience the Holy Spirit, I don't want to because His ways are higher. Like Paul, I, too, am a great example of redemptive love and grace by God to His creation.

- A Ranch House Graduate

REASONS TO CELEBRATE

MAY

We completed our first Independent Transitional Living Cottage, which is now occupied by a Ranch House graduate. Cottage #2, coming 2024!

JULY

Thanks to a generous partner, we added a children's playground to the Ranch House property. Now getting outdoors is that much more fun!

NOVEMBER

A Ranch House resident graduated! She is now living in the Independent Transitional Living Cottage, working in the community, and providing for her family all on her own.

MAY

Governor Kim Reynolds visited the Ranch and signed House File 630 into law surrounded by our team.

AUGUST

We began working with Rescue America and Safe House Project as referral agency partners.

DECEMBER

Garden Gate Ranch became officially accredited as a non-governmental agency authorized through the Debt Bondage Repair Act to certify that our residents have been trafficked. Through this act, her credit score can be wiped clean.



Tour the Cottage

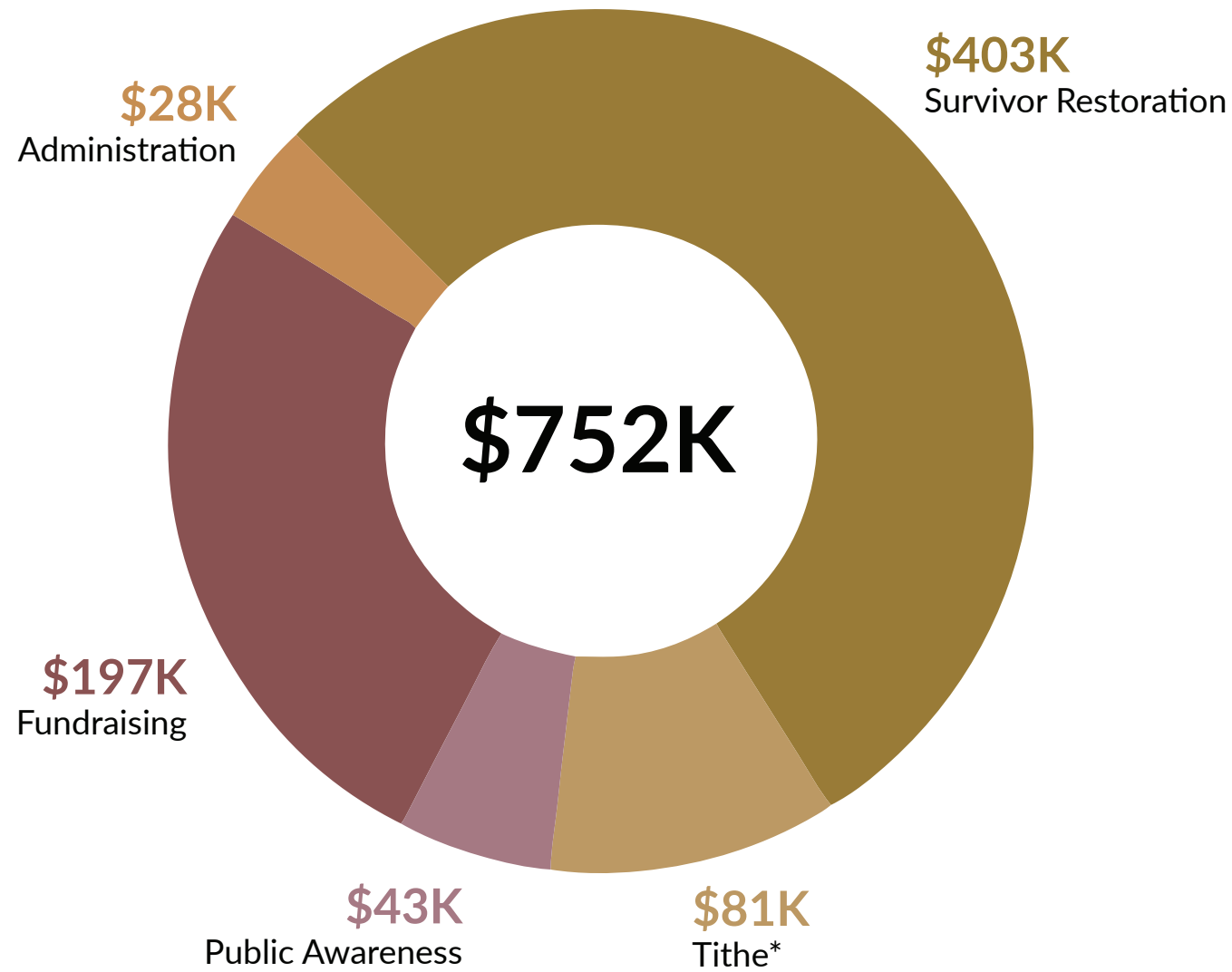
faith can move mountains

beyond brave



Experience the Playground

EXPENSES

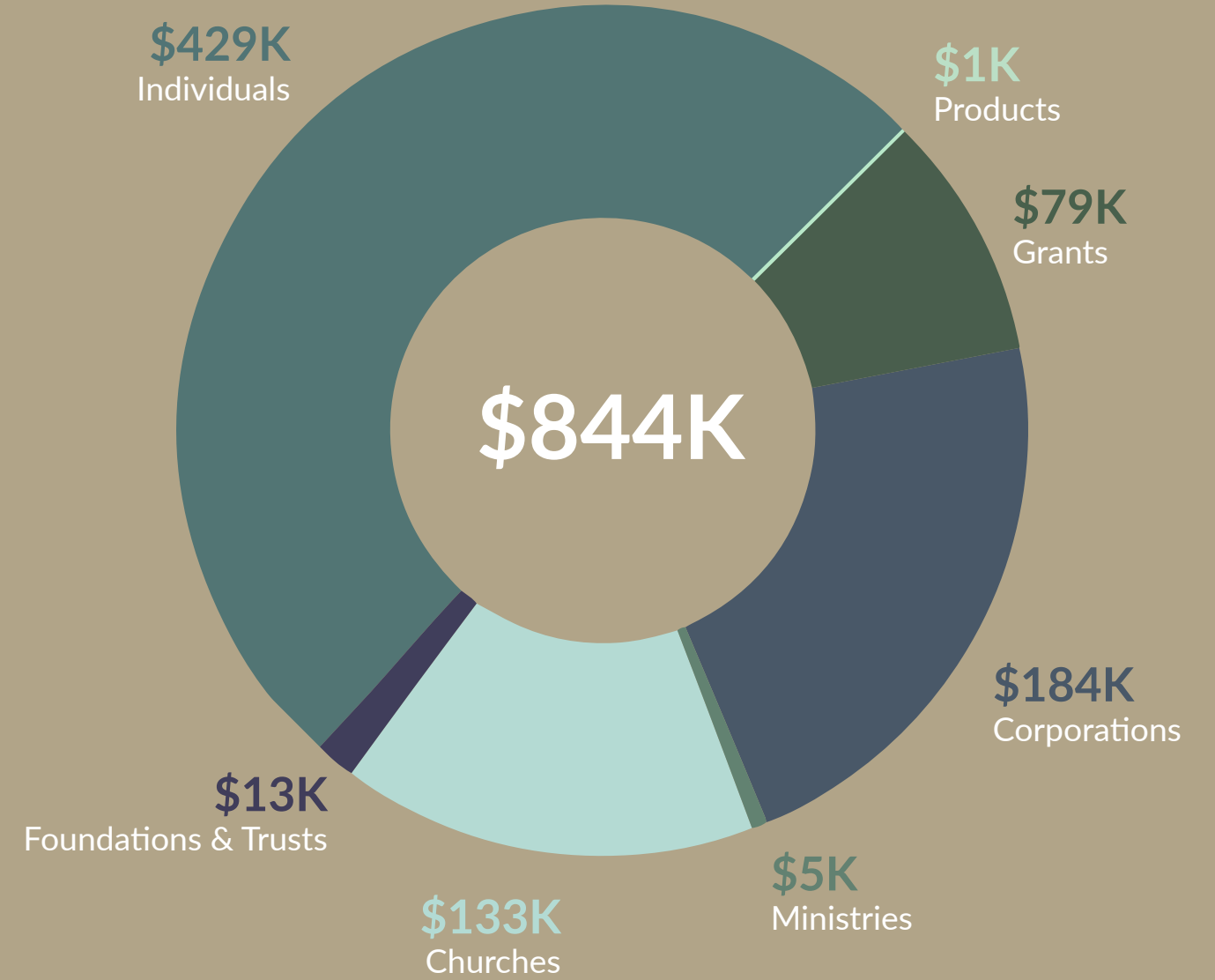


*GGR only tithes on non-restricted funds.



Garden Gate Ranch is accredited by ECFA and upholds the seven integrity standards: Doctrinal issues, governance, financial oversight, use of resources and compliance with laws, transparency, compensation-setting and related-party transactions, and stewardship of charitable gifts. Learn more at ecfa.org.

SUPPORT



Additionally, GGR received \$62K of restricted funds.



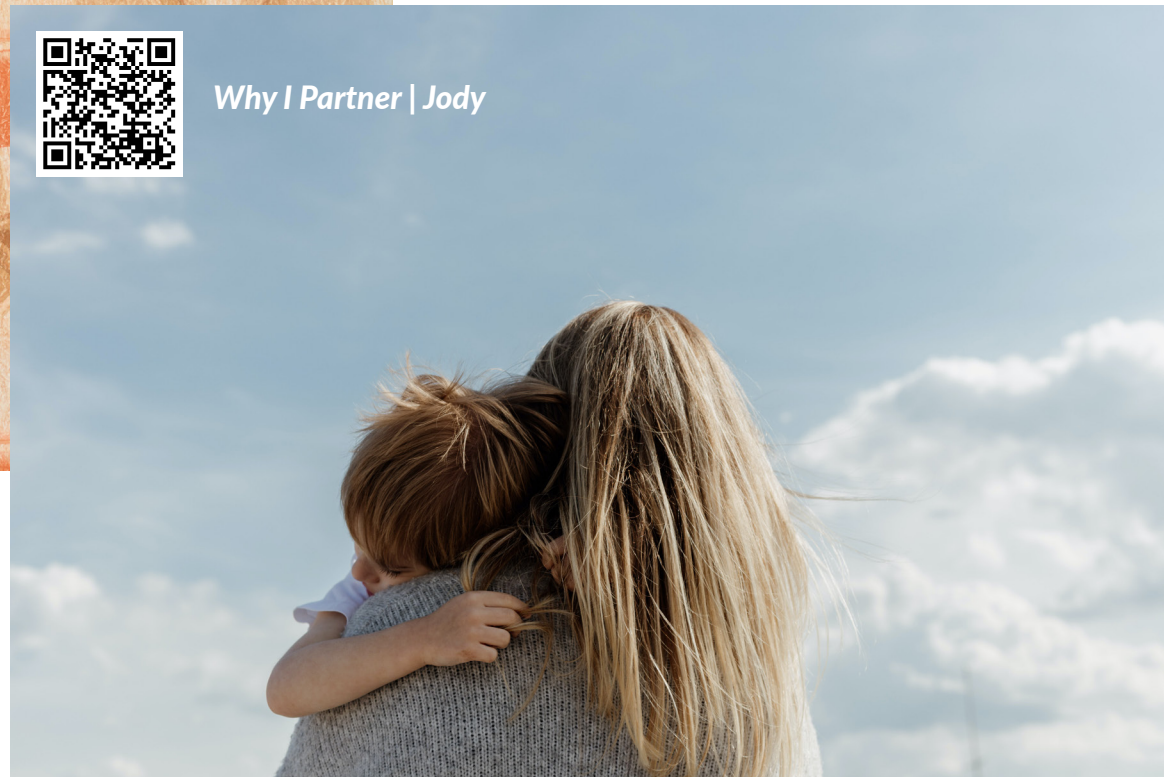
Garden Gate Ranch is one of many organizations featured on Candid Guidestar and has received their highest transparency rating award.

View our [Candid profile](#)





Why I Partner | Jody



“Last year, I attended Garden Gate Ranch’s gala, and I felt God put it on my heart to write down a pledge of several hundred dollars. This was the first time I’d heard of doing a ‘faith pledge’ and I was intrigued by the idea of pledging beyond my means. I trusted that God had put this on my heart and that He would bring this amount I had pledged. Sure enough, He delivered! A few days after the gala, I went to my mailbox and an unexpected check appeared for almost the same exact amount! I immediately wrote a check back to Garden Gate Ranch, knowing all the lives it could help. God is good, and I encourage you to trust Him and let Him guide you toward the ‘faith promise’ that He puts on your heart.”

- Brenda | Monthly Donor

To our supporters,


In my four years at Garden Gate Ranch, I've been fortunate to witness journeys of healing unfold. I've watched God engage residents in the nuanced process of untangling the complexities of their past traumas and abuses. In those deep, tender wounds, residents discover that His presence—a constant source of strength both then and now—holds them close as they confront the daunting task of addressing their trauma in order to unearth truth and healing.

Ultimately, they find not only Jesus but also a rediscovery of their God-given sense of self. Your support creates a haven for our residents, freeing them from daily concerns like where to live and how to provide for their children. This freedom allows them, perhaps for the first time, to turn inward and explore who they truly are. Years of trauma are broken; their future becomes a genuine choice.

I recall one resident's poignant response to my inquiry about her feelings on a matter: *"Feel? I don't know how to feel. I've kept myself from feeling anything since I was 8 years old. And now you want me to tell you how I feel?! I feel nothing!"* Yet, later that year, she casually expressed her desire to become a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA). In a moment of realization, she gasped and exclaimed, *"Wait! I actually know what I want, and it's something I chose! I've never been able to envision any future for myself like that!"*

Your support enables this transformative process, guiding them from a place of being beaten down to standing tall and proud, with a future that is significantly brighter at graduation. Thank you for being the safety net for our sisters—God's daughters.

- Rachel | Case Manager



“THIS IS HOW CHANGE HAPPENS.
ONE GESTURE. ONE PERSON. ONE
MOMENT AT A TIME”

Libba Bray

172 VOLUNTEERS

11,879 VOLUNTEER HOURS

930 TOTAL DONORS

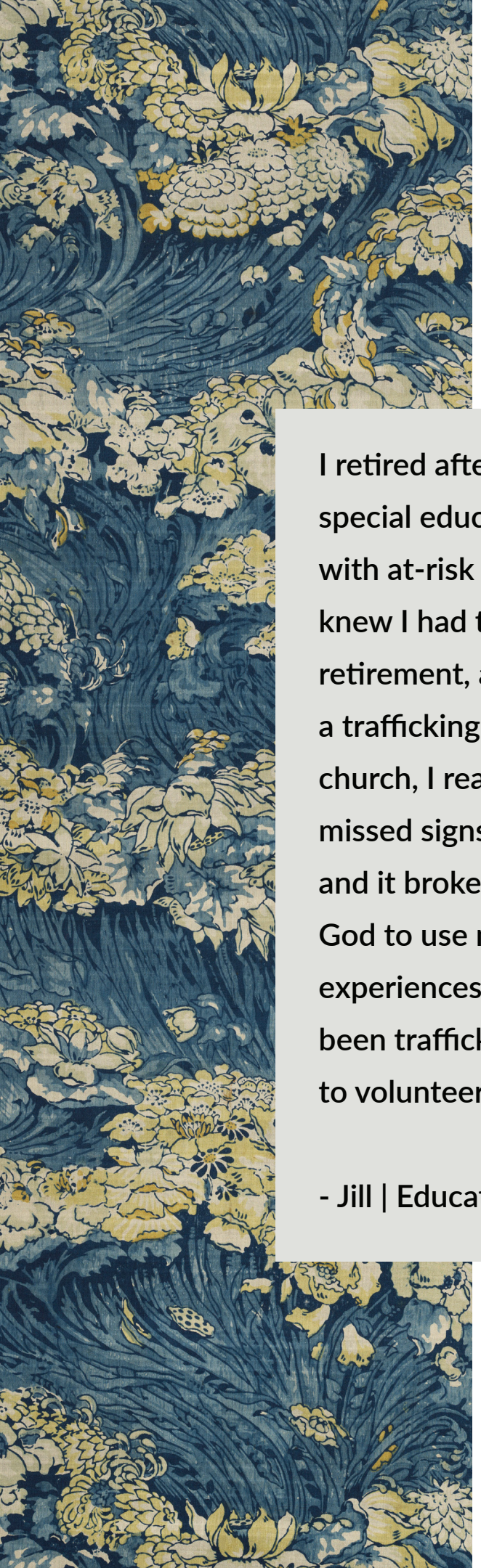
167 MONTHLY GIVERS

20 PARTNER MINISTRIES

7 GRANT PARTNERS

PROGRAMING PARTNERS

21st Century Rehab, Ankeny Smiles, Broadlawns Medical Center, Celebrate Recovery, Christ Life Center, Crossroads Clinic, DMAACC, Dr. Brad Hagarty Colfax Dental, Food Bank Of Iowa, Freedom Aviation Network, Freedom Community, Freedom For Youth Ministries, Heartland Christian Counseling, Heart Studios, Helping Hands, Hope Ministries, ISU Extension & Outreach, Life 107.1, Lions Club of Warren County, MercyOne ENT, MercyOne Pediatrics Care & Family Medicine, New Life Counseling, Optometric Associates, Ruth Harbor, Safe Families, Single Parent Provision, Southside Dental, The Well, WIC, Wildwood Hills Ranch



I retired after 38 years teaching special education where I worked with at-risk youth all the time. I knew I had to do something in my retirement, and when I went to a trafficking seminar held at my church, I realized we had very well missed signs in some young ladies and it broke my heart. I felt pulled by God to use my educational skills and experiences with women who have been trafficked. I've been so blessed to volunteer with the GGR family.

- Jill | Education Volunteer





“I recently began volunteering in a direct care role and I love it! Being able to contribute hands-on, even a tiny bit, is so rewarding as these amazing women work to rebuild their lives. Being a mother is an amazing blessing and gift; being able to lend a hand to another mom as she learns healthy skills and routines is such a special way to share that gift. I tell everyone about the great work at Garden Gate Ranch and encourage others to donate or volunteer!”

- Courtney | Direct Care Volunteer



In 2023, Garden Gate Ranch gave 24 educational presentations to local community groups. Awareness is key to the prevention and eradication of human trafficking. Request a presentation for your church, business group, women's group, etc. by scanning the QR code below or by visiting gardengateranch.com/request-a-speaker.

Request a Speaker



Love Thy Neighbour

This year in our community...



The Lutheran Women's Missionary League from Immanuel Lutheran Church came all the way from Guthrie Center to stuff envelopes for an important mailing. They plan to host a fellowship every other month this year with their offerings dedicated to Garden Gate Ranch.



The VBS kids at The Bridge Church donated \$270 to the Ranch House, helping to cover the cost of daily needs like healthy meals and therapy.



Eighth graders from Ankeny Christian Academy were each given \$10 from their school with the goal of investing the money to generate profit. They took up the challenge and turned \$260 into over \$2,000—all of which they gifted to Garden Gate Ranch!



LOOKING FORWARD

Garden Gate Ranch is pursuing both long-term goals and short-term projects. In the long-term, we plan to open the Pathway House, a 24-hour immediate rescue home intended to get survivors off the street and into safety as they begin their path to wholeness. Along with this, we will add an economic empowerment program to our ministry—a way to provide skills and job training to the women in the Continuing Restoration program.

In the short-term, Garden Gate Ranch is pursuing accreditation with national organizations. These accreditations will elevate ministry visibility and certify our ministry as credible and trustworthy to survivors and supporters via third-party vetting and rigorous ministry standards.

This coming year, our second independent transitional living cottage will be complete, making more housing available for Ranch House graduates who seek to pursue their independence while maintaining the support of their GGR community. We will also initiate the first phase in our addition of an equine center by adding fencing and a small structure for horses and other therapy animals. Along with this, we will be partnering with Menagerie Stables and Godspeed Equine to provide equine therapy to our residents until we have stables of our own.

GET INVOLVED

VOLUNTEER

INVEST

EXPLORE LEGACY GIVING

GIVE A MONETARY GIFT

INITIATE AN EMPLOYER MATCHING GIFT

SHOP OUR AMAZON WISH LIST

RUN A PASSION PROJECT

CONNECT

LIKE US ON FACEBOOK

FOLLOW US ON INSTAGRAM

SUBSCRIBE TO OUR NEWSLETTER

SUBSCRIBE TO OUR PRAYER LETTER

VISIT OUR WEBSITE

www.gardengateranch.com



BOARD OF DIRECTORS



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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



CHUCK MELINE
BOARD CHAIR



JIM HESEMAN
BOARD TREASURER



COLLEEN MORRISON
BOARD MEMBER



BEN WEDEKING
BOARD MEMBER

Most of us get up every day and go about our “normal” routine. We don’t think twice as we get ourselves dressed, take the kids to daycare, or head into work. The rhythms are familiar. Expected.

But then there are the days that throw us off balance. The day we get a call about a loved one involved in an accident, or learn that our child was just diagnosed with a serious disease. Our daily routine is shattered, and we have to find a way to pick up the pieces in order to reestablish some form of normalcy.

These high adrenaline days are the norm for the women and children that Garden Gate Ranch serves. The “normal” of their lives is trauma and uncertainty, not safe, predictable rhythms. They come to Garden Gate Ranch to tip those scales—to find healing from their trauma and the know-how to move forward in wisdom, safety, and peace.

We have seen success after success of residents doing the hard work of healing and learning the skills of parenting, taking care of a home, and preparing for a job in the community. The safety and security they feel when arriving at the Ranch enables them to begin walking their road of recovery, and our dedicated team of staff and volunteers supports them all the way. I’ve seen the look of pride and confidence on residents’ faces as they graduate from the Ranch House program and move into the Cottages, where they turn those newfound skills into beautiful rhythms of healthy, independent living.

As a member of the board of directors, it has been amazing to watch God answer so many ministry prayers over the years—from the addition of an education center, to a new playground, to the upcoming completion of a second cottage, and more. It has been a privilege to work with such dedicated individuals, who concentrate on the best recovery assistance for each woman and child that we serve. They do this because, like you, they know that each woman and child is worth it.

To all of our staff, board, volunteers, donors, and partners—***thank you*** for showing these women that they are worth a vibrant, beautiful tomorrow.

Colleen Morrison
Garden Gate Ranch Board Member





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