



**2024  
2025**



**HUMAN  
OPTIONS**  
ANNUAL REPORT

# THE POWER OF YOU





# DEAR FRIENDS,

The power of YOU is at the heart of every story and every transformation at Human Options. As we present this year's annual report, we celebrate how one dedicated person—like you—can ignite real change and make a difference. **Because of you, we responded to 5,900 hotline calls, 498 survivors and families found safe haven and 1,200 individuals embarked on their journey to healing.**

Your compassion and action create hope and new beginnings for survivors. Whether you volunteer your time, provide resources, or advocate for our mission, you are the catalyst for empowerment. Through your involvement, you have lit the way for survivors, helping them reclaim their stories and inspire progress.

This past year we remained steadfast in our commitment to learning directly from survivors to guide the evolution of our programs. This survivor-focused approach ensures that every voice is heard, every need is recognized, and every barrier is addressed with empathy and understanding. Together, we are co-creating solutions that honor the unique challenges, strengths, and aspirations of those we serve.

This year, we took three bold steps to get us closer to achieving this vision. These include the launch of this year's three main community impact initiatives—**Courage Over Comfort, Humanity in Action**, and the **Survivor Advocacy Council**. These initiatives are advancing our goal of deepening understanding, creating empathy, and sparking action.

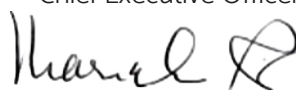
Throughout this report, you will encounter stories that underscore the importance of safe spaces, the impact of listening deeply, and the transformation that occurs when survivors are empowered to lead their own journeys. These narratives stand as a testament to the power of community and the positive change made possible by your unwavering support.

We remain dedicated to using your generosity to advance our vision of a future where every individual and family can experience healthy relationships and live free from fear. **Thank you for standing with Human Options and for being a catalyst for lasting hope and meaningful change. The power of YOU is unstoppable.**

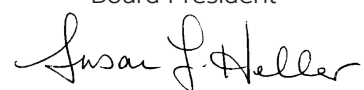
With appreciation,



**Maricela Rios-Faust**  
Chief Executive Officer



**Susan L. Heller**  
Board President



# ONE PERSON'S POWER – FROM SURVIVOR TO ADVOCATE

## AMBER'S STORY

Amber was a young girl when she first knew something at home wasn't right. One night, she stood in the hallway, watching her parents through the bathroom door. Her mother was pleading as her father hurt her. Amber didn't have the words to fully understand her experience then, but she told herself, "This isn't right. This will never be me."

By the time Amber was a teenager, the danger had evolved. The threats against her mother escalated. At one point, her father told Amber's mother he would shoot her—not to kill her, but to make her suffer. Her mother knew they had to get out.

She made a brave decision. One night, she came home, gathered her two daughters, and drove them to her sister's house. Amber's aunt saw the fear and urgency and spoke up. She connected Amber's family to Human Options. That single act of courage opened the door to her family's next chapter and a pathway to transformation.

At Human Options, Amber, her sister, and her mother received family therapy, shelter, legal support, and resources they never knew existed. Advocates listened without judgement, guided them with compassion, and helped them reclaim their future.

Amber now sees the patterns clearly. The violence she witnessed was part of a cycle shaped by trauma, learned behaviors, and silence. But she chose a different path. She broke the cycle, rewrote her story, and gave her daughters the life she never had.

Today, Amber is a mother of two, a homeowner, and a partner to her high school sweetheart. Her life is filled with love, laughter, and possibilities. And it all began with one person who saw her family's pain and chose to act.

Amber is now that person for others.

As a member of Human Options' Survivor Advisory Council and its representative on the Board of Directors, Amber brings a rare and powerful perspective. She's the only council member who lived in shelter as a teen and now gives back as an adult. Her insights shape how Human Options serves children and teens, ensuring they feel safe, seen, and supported.

Amber was once the child who needed someone to speak up. Now, she's helping us listen better, act faster, and offer a deeper path to healing.

**“Today, I have two beautiful daughters,  
I have a loving husband, we're high school  
sweethearts who just bought our first  
home together.”**

– Amber, Survivor, Mother, and Advocate





**94%**

of teens in our programs can identify at least one safe adult or resource they would turn to if they were in an abusive relationship.

**3X**

The increased likelihood that children exposed to relationship violence will repeat the cycle as adults.

**5,900**

calls received to Human Options' hotline.



**90%**

of families we serve obtain safe housing upon exiting our programs.

**98%**

of participants in our Personal Empowerment Program report an increase in their knowledge of how to keep themselves and their children safe.

**1 IN 3**

survivors have considered suicide at some point in their lives.

# A STORY STILL BEING WRITTEN

## YASMIN'S STORY

Yasmin was a single mother determined to give her daughter a better life. She dreamed of studying psychology to help others in need and hoped one day to find someone who could give them a family.

Eventually, she met someone. At first, it felt like a new beginning. But slowly, the signs emerged. After arguments, she found herself saying, "It's okay," when it wasn't. When she was out with friends, she laughed off his hurtful comments. In public, she shrank so he wouldn't accuse her of being "too much." Over time, Yasmin started to believe that being loved meant being less.

By the time the physical abuse started, she was too afraid to act. Something as simple as a house key became a weapon of control. Her partner refused to give her a spare, and when she held onto the only one, he dragged her to the ground, tore her purse apart, and kicked her in the head. Her ears rang. When he asked, "Do you want me to kill you?" she thought, "Yes, just end it."

Thankfully, Yasmin's story didn't end there.

Her mother-in-law, herself a survivor, recognized the signs and understood Yasmin's fear. She knew what it meant to be trapped and how to

help. When Yasmin's abuser planned to be away for several days, she saw a window to escape. She packed her car, left the key behind, and drove away. Then, her mother-in-law became that one person who changed everything, connecting her to Human Options.

When Yasmin entered our residential program, she felt something she hadn't felt in a long time: safety. Our advocates welcomed her without judgment, listened with compassion, and made her feel seen. Over time, she found a therapist, secured her own apartment, and held her new keys in her hand. They were no longer a symbol of control, but of safety and empowerment.

Yasmin reclaimed her determination, juggling school, work, and therapy all at once. She re-enrolled in school and began studying psychology. She had spent years in fear, and is now creating a life defined by strength, purpose, and choice.

"I feel like a changed person," Yasmin says. "I feel like I can overcome anything. I can do anything."

Yasmin holds the keys to her own future. And her story is still being written—for herself, her daughter, and the next generation.

**"I feel like a changed person. I feel like I can overcome anything."**

– Yasmin, Survivor, Mother, and Student



# THE POWER OF YOU:— **LISTENING, LEARNING, AND LEADING WITH HEART**

## **Relationship violence is everyone's concern.**

Last year, Human-Centered Design became a guiding force at Human Options—placing survivors at the heart of how we innovate, listen, and respond. That culture shift sparked something deeper: a commitment to not just hear survivor stories, but to have them guide our next steps. This year, that commitment came to life through three bold initiatives—each one rooted in survivor voice and designed to deepen understanding, create empathy, and spark action.

Human Options' **Survivor Advisory Council** has officially launched, marking a significant milestone in our mission to ignite social change and support survivors at every step. The Advisory Council provides strategic input on program development, policy recommendations, and community outreach. Composed of five dedicated members, the Council is already making an impact. Notably, two members courageously addressed the Board of Supervisors, sharing personal insights into the profound impact that the loss of Family Resource Center funding would have on survivors in our community. We believe that their stories inspired the Board of Supervisors to act to restore funding. Additionally, one member stepped forward to share her powerful story on the inaugural Courage Over Comfort live podcast, bringing a vital survivor perspective to a broader audience.

Beyond these achievements, we are deeply inspired to witness the strong bonds and meaningful connections beginning to form among the Council members. Their expertise, lived experience, and growing unity are already showcasing the power of a caring and empathetic community.

With the support of the Advisory Council, we launched our second initiative, **Courage Over Comfort**, a four-part live podcast series. Courage Over Comfort embraces vulnerability and holds space for brave conversations that are vital to breaking cycles of relationship violence. The word courage comes from the Latin “cor,” meaning heart. Courage in its simplest form is the ability to tell one's story with your whole heart. In this space, we recognize that both sharing and listening to these stories creates discomfort. That discomfort matters and is often where the breakthrough in our collective understanding begins. In our first episode, Survivor Advocacy Council member Amber Tran joined Dr. Liza Eshilian-Oates, a Kaiser Permanente physician and Human Options Board Member, to explore the intergenerational cycle of abuse. They highlighted how relationship violence impacts children and how medical professionals can recognize the signs and intervene. Their conversation revealed how compassion, curiosity, and training can transform a survivor's experience and connect them to help.



The stories of survivors have shown us that transformation happens when a community walks alongside them. Their stories showed us that individuals have the power to make a difference, and when the Human Options community comes together, that impact multiplies. The vision is at the heart of **Humanity in Action**, our third initiative, a collective movement to end relationship violence in Orange County. Launched in May, this volunteer and community engagement initiative emphasizes that change doesn't look one way; it harnesses everyone's unique talents. Already, volunteers from the Insurance Industry Charitable Foundation donated a \$10,000 grant and renovated our Children's Program space at the emergency shelter, transforming it into a place of healing and reconnection. Humanity in Action invites individuals to make an impact across four areas: connecting people to help, strengthening

families, creating safe spaces for survivors to speak their truth, and building networks that make institutions—workplaces, churches, service providers—ready to respond.

Together, these three initiatives reflect our belief that empathy is the starting point—and action is the outcome.

This is how we make relationship violence everyone's concern.

**This is the power of YOU.**





# COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT: **CAPITAL GROUP – THE POWER OF YOU IN ACTION**

This Community Spotlight highlights the profound impact of **Humanity in Action** and the incredible results that happen when individuals and organizations unite to support survivors. Through the partnership with Capital Group in Irvine, both financial contributions and hands-on volunteer efforts demonstrated how collective creativity, compassion, and connection can make a lasting difference.

The story began with a simple conversation between our board member, Andrew Gray, and his friend, Brian Clark of Capital Group and a shared desire to help children affected by relationship violence. What started as a small act of giving quickly blossomed into a meaningful collaboration between Human Options and Capital Group. Employees became inspired to learn more about the needs of survivors and discovered common ground in using human-centered design to shape positive, survivor-focused outcomes. Together with Human Options, the team identified the Children's Program at a transitional housing site as an area ready for transformation.

Instead of making assumptions, the volunteers took the time to listen directly to survivors, parents, and teens about what would make the space truly supportive and safe. The feedback was clear: teens needed a dedicated area of their own and families wanted a communal space to connect

and heal together. Guided by these insights, the team thoughtfully reimagined the program areas, designing new layouts, murals, and furnishings that reflected the hopes and needs of those served. With a generous grant and more than forty volunteers contributing their time and talents, the transformation was completed in just two days. The program space, once suited only for young children, was redesigned to serve youth up to 17 years old. Two distinct environments emerged, one for younger children and another for teens, each fostering connection and growth. The immediate joy and sense of belonging felt by children and families affirmed the positive impact of this collaborative effort.

This partnership's influence did not stop with the renovation. Volunteers continue to support Human Options through ongoing giving and advocacy, demonstrating how powerful change happens when people and organizations connect their skills, resources, and hearts to a shared cause. The ripple effect of their involvement continues to spread, sparking new opportunities for healing and hope.

This story captures the essence of Humanity in Action: anyone can make a difference by using what they have—skills, networks, resources, or simply a willingness to listen and help. One connection, fueled by compassion and community spirit, can grow into a transformative partnership that creates safe, welcoming spaces for survivors and their families.

This is the power of you coming together.

**“The Human Options and Capital Group partnership is a force magnifier, and I’m incredibly proud of what we accomplished together.”**

– Monica Nirenberg, Capital Group volunteer



# OUR EVENTS

## FALL LUNCHEON 2024

Featuring keynote speaker, Beverly Gooden, a distinguished writer, social activist, and survivor. Guests heard Beverly share her story and her groundbreaking work spearheading the #WhyIStayed hashtag, a response to pervasive victim blaming of relationship violence survivors. Held on October 11 at the Lido House Newport Beach, the event raised over \$235,000 to help sustain Human Options' programs in Orange County.

Photo 1: Anthony Tran, Amber Tran.

Photo 2: Maricela Rios-Faust, Beverly Gooden.

Photo 3: Steve Churm, Cinda Churm, Katie Nuñez, Fred Nuñez.

Photo 4: Amber Tran, Clay Richardson, Courtney Williams.



## ANNUAL MEETING 2024

Each year, Human Options hosts our Annual Meeting, which celebrates the impact made possible by our donors, Board of Directors, and community partners. Held on December 6 at the Newport Beach Country Club, nearly 100 guests gathered to celebrate the impact Human Options made in 2024.

Photo 1: Gary Faust, Maricela Rios-Faust, Vivian Clecak, Robert McKee, Cinda Churm, Steve Churm.

Photo 2: Scott Allen, Les Thomas, Ellen Thomas.

Photo 3: Karen Green, Scott Green.



## SERIOUS FUN 2025

Human Options was honored to celebrate DOVE honoree Wendy Peterson at the Serious Fun Gala, "Studio Serious Fun," held at the Balboa Bay Resort on May 17. Guests enjoyed a disco-themed evening with a DJ and authentic disco dance floor, raising over \$570,000 to benefit Human Options' life-saving programs.

Photo 1: Maricela Rios-Faust, Wendy Peterson, Susan L. Heller.

Photo 2: Dan Peterson, Laurie Peterson, Celina Doka, Steven DiBernardo.

Photo 3: Gabriella Blanchard, Ali Schwan, Jenny Dinnen.

Photo 4: Abdo Khoury, Wendy Peterson, Michele Khoury.



# AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS

At Human Options, we strive for a future where every person can live free from fear and violence. Our dedication to this mission is constant, but there are pivotal moments each year when our impact is most deeply felt, when our voices echo louder, our community bonds strengthen, and real transformation begins.

In 2024, our Shine the Light Walking Vigils emerged as powerful beacons of remembrance and resilience in Costa Mesa, Irvine, and Santa Ana. Each gathering was not only a tribute to those lost to relationship violence, but also a celebration of survival and healing. These vigils transform public spaces into sanctuaries of hope, where survivors, advocates, and community members stand together, reclaiming the streets and demanding lasting change.

Our awareness campaigns reached thousands, challenging stigma, promoting healthy relationships, and empowering individuals to act. We believe that awareness opens doors—and that every voice can spark prevention.

By joining forces with cities, collaborating with local governments, law enforcement, and grassroots organizations, we are building a unified response centered on survivors and meaningful systemic change. These partnerships are the heart of our work, forging spaces where survivors feel truly safe, supported, and empowered to seek help.

City vigils embody this commitment. When a community publicly confronts relationship violence and declares, “You are safe here,” it sends a resounding message of hope. At the Costa Mesa vigil, a survivor—moved by the sense of safety and solidarity—stepped forward for help and found refuge in our emergency shelter that very night. Her story is a testament to the transformative power of community, turning awareness into action and cities into safe havens for healing.

These vigils go beyond honoring those lost; they build trust, break silence, and open pathways for survivors to access vital services. Together, we demonstrate that united communities can create real change and every survivor can discover the courage to step into safety and healing.

Photo 1: Maricela Rios-Faust

Photo 2: Members of the Costa Mesa Police Department, including: Joyce LaPointe, Interim Chief of Police; Ron Lawrence, Ret. Chief of Police; Jason Chamness, Deputy Police Chief; Mayor John Stephens of Costa Mesa, and Maricela Rios-Faust

Photo 3: Human Options Staff with Family at Love Shouldn't Hurt Teen Conference

Photo 4: Guadalupe Sosa



# DONOR THANK YOU!

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# GET INVOLVED

## A COMMUNITY UNITED TO END RELATIONSHIP VIOLENCE.

Safety in every action. Together, a safe-haven.

### WHAT IS HUMANITY IN ACTION?

Humanity in Action is a bold collective movement powered by Human Options that turns everyday acts into life-changing support for survivors of relationship violence. It invites individuals, families, businesses, and entire communities to use their own strengths to help build a safer Orange County through connectedness, talent, or influence.

### WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Relationship violence impacts everyone in our community. Breaking the cycle requires more than services, it takes all of us. Humanity in Action empowers every part of our community to prevent abuse before it starts and create a safe-haven, healing, and hope for survivors already impacted by violence.

### HOW DO I GET INVOLVED?

No matter your talents, there is a place for you in our mission to make an impact.

#### INDIVIDUAL

How can I directly support a survivor of relationship violence?

- + Become a Hotline Advocate
- + Offer Pro Bono Services
- + Lead a Skills Workshop

#### FAMILY

How can I, my family, or friend group help support a survivor and their family?

- + Host an In-Kind or Donation Drive
- + Adopt a Family for the Holidays
- + Prepare Homes for Move-In

#### NETWORK

How can I influence my networks?

- + Serve on an Event Committee
- + Host a Lunch & Learn
- + Advocate for Survivor-Centered Workplace Policies

#### COMMUNITY

How can my organization or community help make our community safer for survivors?

- + Volunteer or sponsor our awareness and prevention campaigns.
- + Run for Human Options at the OC Marathon.
- + Ask your Company to Sponsor an Event

### EVERY ACTION COUNTS.

Whether you're a teacher, business owner, neighbor, or teen: your voice, your hands, and your heart can make Orange County safer for everyone. Humanity Starts Here.

GET INVOLVED AT: [humanoptions.org/humanity-in-action](https://humanoptions.org/humanity-in-action) CONTACT US AT: [humanity@humanoptions.org](mailto:humanity@humanoptions.org).

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HUMAN  OPTIONS

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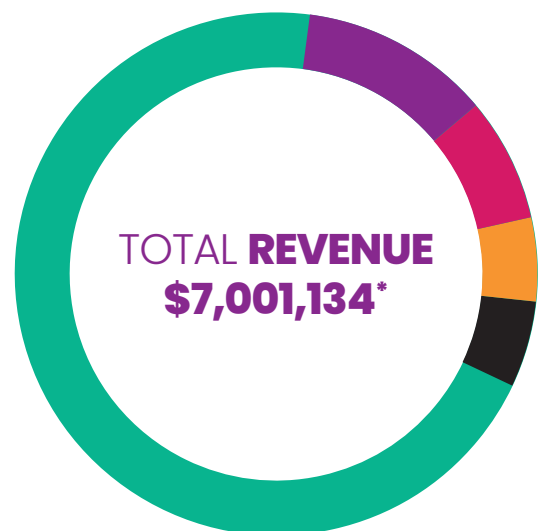
As of Fiscal Year End June 30, 2025

### Expense Sources

- ♥ Program Services – 80%
- ♥ Fundraising – 5%
- ♥ General & Administrative – 15%

### Revenue Sources

- ♥ Government – 57%
- ♥ Individual – 17%
- ♥ Private Grants/Foundations – 10%
- ♥ Benefit Events – 7%
- ♥ Earned Revenue – 7%



\*The revenue shortfall of \$305,378 was covered by the release of restricted revenue from prior years.

# GOVERNMENT GRANTS

FROM 7/1/24 – 6/30/25

## **Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)**

- + CDBG Tustin
- + CDBG Santa Ana
- + CDBG Costa Mesa

## **Families and Communities Together (FaCT)**

- + FaCT Corbin FRC
- + FaCT Newport Mesa FRC
- + FaCT Magnolia Park FRC
- + FaCT Minnie Street FRC
- + FaCT Oakview FRC
- + FaCT Westminster FRC
- + FaCT South Orange County FRC
- + FaCT CHEC FRC

## **California Governor's Office of Emergency Services**

- + CalOES Domestic Violence Assistance Program
- + CalOES County Victim Services Program

## **County of Orange**

- + OC Community Resources
- + OC Health Care Agency
- + Strong Families, Strong Children – BHS

## **Office on Violence Against Women**

- + Improving Criminal Justice Responses
- + Legal Assistance for Victims
- + Transitional Housing Assistance

## **Housing and Urban Development**

- + Domestic Violence Bonus Project – Housing

## **Health and Human Services**

- + Family Violence Prevention Services



## OUR MISSION

To ignite social change by educating Orange County to recognize relationship violence as an issue that threatens everyone, advocating for those affected by abuse, extending a safe place for victims, and empowering survivors on their journey of healing.

## OUR VISION

We are committed to a future in which every person and family in Orange County experiences safe, healthy relationships and lives free from fear.

## OUR VALUES

### Diversity

We embrace different perspectives and lived experiences of others.

### Ingenuity

We actively work to create original and inventive solutions to further our mission.

### Respect

We recognize dignity as a basic human right.

### Individuality

We call on the unique gifts of others for igniting social change.

### Curiosity

We cultivate an appetite for knowledge and understanding.



**HUMAN**  **OPTIONS**  
PREVENT. PROTECT. EMPOWER. TRANSFORM.

**949.737.5242**

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