

~KRISTY D. CHILDS~

At the age of 12, Kristy ran away from an abusive home. She was trafficked for sex for over the next two decades. She was brutally exploited and victimized by men, labeled as a prostitute by society, and considered a criminal by the legal system.

After returning to Kansas City in 1988, she befriended a young lady named Veronica Neverdusky, who was also being trafficked for sex. In 1993 Veronica was found murdered in Penn Valley Park. In 2000, Kristy founded Veronica's Voice, to be the voice of all of the "Veronicas" who are systematically exploited, criminalized, and cast out by society. Without positive supportive relationships, community connection, proper education, job skills, and trauma recovery, it was an arduous process for Kristy to extricate herself from the commercial sex industry. She has committed herself to giving women exiting the life of prostitution the kind of support that she was unable to receive.

Kristy dreamed of going to college. Those dreams were shattered in 2002 when her daughter, Stephanie, was murdered. She left behind two babies. Kristy chose to become a full-time mother to her special-needs grandson. Despite her pain and challenges from having her daughter taken from her, Kristy continued to provide services to Kansas City's sexually exploited through Veronica's Voice and continued to educate and expose the violence of prostitution while advocating for systemic changes to reverse the focus of criminalizing victims.

Kristy's vision and passion have been recognized through numerous local and national awards and honors. After working on and pushing language into the TVPA (Trafficking Victims Protection Act) Reauthorization to recognize American children under the age of 18 as sex trafficking victims she was invited to be present as President Bush signed it into law. She is recognized as an advocate and force behind changing the way prostitution is viewed from a societal and legal point of view. Yet if you ask Kristy what is her biggest accomplishment you will get a story about one of the women and how Veronica's Voice was able to make a difference.

As a sex-trafficking survivor, Kristy's experience provides an in-depth understanding of the complex traumas related to commercial sexual exploitation. She is committed to creating survivor services specifically for those viewed as prostitutes. She has advocated for decades for systematic

changes to end the criminalization of the victims and focus on the DEMAND side of commercial sex (the buyers), which is the proper focus for law enforcement.

Kristy's success has made her an inspiration as she reaches back to help others. She is motivated by her faith and her belief that she survived for a reason. Her life motto is: **You never know how strong you are until being strong is the ONLY choice you have.**

In 2000, Kristy D. Childs founded Veronica's Voice, a Kansas City-based organization, named in honor of a murdered sex-trafficked friend, **Veronica Neverdusky**. Kristy's vision and passion has been seen through a host of services for victims, as well as education, advocacy, and legal work to target the demand and avert entry into the cycle of abuse in prostitution.

HONORS & ACHIEVEMENTS

Kristy's life's work has been recognized with numerous awards and significant legislative work, including:

- Women's Peacepower Amigas Award
- Northeast Community Betterment Award
- Women of the Year 2004 Award from the Metropolitan Business & Professional Women of Greater Kansas City
- Soroptimist Ruby Award for Women Helping Women
- Proclamation from Kay Barnes for Kristy's leadership and advocacy in the issue of violence against women
- Garnered support for the 2005 Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act (TVPRA). Defined some of the key language used in this bill
- Invited to Washington, D.C. to be present when President Bush signed the TVPRA bill into law on January 10, 2006
- Honored in Washington, D.C. by Shared Hope International for her work
- Served on the survivor panel for the Combating Demand for Sex Trafficking and Commercial Sexual Exploitation at the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington, D.C.
- Invited by then 2010-Kansas Attorney General, Steve Six, to be a member of the first Kansas Human Trafficking Advisory Board

- Joined the Hunt Alternative Fund's Demand Abolition Project's National Planning Committee
- Testified on Missouri House Bill 214, which Governor Nixon signed into law on July 12, 2011
- Received Breaking Free's Demand Change award for her exemplary work to end sex trafficking
- Testified on, and was invited to be present when Governor Brownback signed into law, SB 61, on Human Trafficking, on April 22, 2013
- Honored and recognized by the Zonta Club of Johnson County on International Women's Day for her tireless dedication to ending commercial sexual exploitation
- Recognized by the Midwest Sociological Society's Social Action Committee for the Social Action Award in March of 2015
- Received The Living Legends Award For Service To Humanity, Fight Like A Girl, Empowered For Life, 2018