

## volunteer spotlight

# Tiffany McGee

## Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Survivor Ventures

By Beth Lloyd

Tiffany McGee volunteers 40+ hours per week with **Survivor Ventures**, a nonprofit that counters human trafficking. As the Executive Director, she is responsible for program design, fundraising, victim services, negotiating with landlords, furniture donations, moving services, advocacy, employment services, emotional support, victim rescues, and pet adoption.

Human trafficking (HT) is modern-day slavery and Virginia ranks 15th in the US for this crime. Most HT programs focus on criminal justice and basic human services. While those interventions are vital, many victim service agencies lack resources to help survivors find long-term employment.

Most survivors of human trafficking have extensive trauma histories and criminal records which present barriers to even low-wage, entry-level jobs. Economic empowerment is what makes survivors' rehabilitation sustainable in the long term. Without stable employment, many survivors will slide back into the same sectors that exploited them.

Their *Survivors to Entrepreneurs* (S2E) program fills this gap by creating a pipeline to connect survivors with jobs and job training programs that are appropriate for their needs, breaking the cycle of recidivism. S2E provides the following programs:

**Paid Internships:** Subsidized stipends with an assignment at an approved small business worksite. Small businesses offer a less stressful work environment for participants who often suffer from complex and prolonged trauma, enabling survivors the opportunity to develop positive work habits.

**Job Coaching and Wraparound:** To ensure survivor-centered, therapeutic training, Survivor Ventures provides on-site job coaching and mental health counseling through the intensive community treatment (ICT) model. Small business owners are trained in trauma-informed care and survivors are connected to VBJI for case management services.



**Exposure to Entrepreneurship:** Small business owners are in a unique position to provide meaningful supervision and training for survivors. Entrepreneurship allows individuals to start their own business and rise above the systemic discrimination they face due to their criminal records and victimization.

**Specialized Training:** Runs in conjunction with the Certificate in Retail Operations offered by the Retail Alliance Foundation. This program equips participants with the competency needed to one day open their own business. Through this program, participants create a vetted business plan and are connected to local entrepreneurial resources to gain access to co-working spaces, business grants/loans.

Tiffany lives in West Ghent (Chelsea) with her husband, Patrick, a US Navy SEAL, their two young children, Jack (4) and James (3) and their escape artist dog, Audrey, a Cheagle who often holds up traffic on Claremont.

Looking to volunteer? Tiffany suggests contacting them by calling or emailing at 757-317-0352 or [info@survivorventures.org](mailto:info@survivorventures.org). When asked what benefits she receives from volunteering, Tiffany replies: "Definitely not sleep! Even though I'm running around all the time and our house has become an enormous storage unit for donations, my kids see me working for something bigger than myself, something worth fighting for. I think that's a huge benefit!"