

The cost of the COVID-19 for nonprofits

Canceled events total over half-million dollars in potentially lost donations for SAFE

March 18, 2020, Austin, TX – For the safety of our clients, staff, donors, and volunteers, The SAFE Alliance has canceled one of our biggest annual fundraising events and postponed another. Our doors will stay open for survivors of violence and abuse – closing them was never an option – but the impact of COVID-19 is already taking its toll on our resources.

We expected to raise \$400,000 at this year’s SAFE Together Celebration Luncheon, originally scheduled for March 25. With that event canceled, we are trying to make up the lost donations through a virtual tour fundraiser starting today and continuing through the date planned for the Celebration Luncheon. We hope to meet our \$400,000 goal, but this is uncharted territory.

Our next major fundraiser, Touch-A-Truck, raised over \$160,000 last year in support of the children, adults, and families SAFE serves. This year’s event has been postponed indefinitely.

“Donations keep our doors open,” said SAFE Chief Development Officer Angela Glode. “Right now, survivors are in our shelters getting the counseling and care that will help them heal from violence and abuse. Fundraising events like our Celebration Luncheon and Touch-A-Truck are a huge part of why we can offer that much-needed support. With the COVID-19 pandemic in full force, we have two choices: Make cuts to SAFE’s vital services or find a way to get the donations that aren’t coming in through fundraising events. We’re dedicated to raising those funds, and so we are calling on our community to help us.”

We need donations to keep our doors open, but the financial hit is not the only impact we face. SAFE depends on our volunteers for everything from making art with children to accompanying survivors during sexual assault forensic exams. Our volunteers are literal life savers.

For their safety and the safety of our entire community, we have canceled multiple volunteering groups for the month. Our volunteers don’t just organize our Donation Warehouse and clean cottages (which are of course important), they also take time out of their lives to plan activities that help children in shelter create happy memories – they’re modeling positive interactions with adults that many kids have never experienced. They provide home cooked meals for survivors of sex trafficking, giving a little comfort to people who are continuously exploited.

And if the lost donations and lack of volunteers weren’t enough, we are also seeing a massive decline in donations of in-kind items. We are in desperate need of cleaning supplies, diapers, formula, and baby wipes. We’ve had some luck with asking donors to purchase items online and have them shipped directly to our Donation Warehouse, but many of the items we need in our shelters are sold out online. Plus, we know how important a face-to-face thank you is when creating lasting relationships with supporters. It’s hard to accomplish that during a pandemic.

About SAFE

At SAFE, we strive to provide safety, stability, and healing for children, adults, and families that have experienced violence and abuse. We do this by providing shelter and housing, support services, and prevention programs to stop the cycle of violence. Learn more at safeaustin.org.

Despite the current world health events, the mission of SAFE hasn't changed. We are working to support survivors of violence and to stop abuse for everyone. Our doors stay open.

While the world faces a pandemic, our program staff are hard at work determining contingency and safety plans for the more than 1,000 people who stay with us in our shelters and housing programs. We are figuring out how to continue providing forensic exams and advocacy to survivors in the immediate aftermath of a sexual assault. Our staff are providing services to the people who depend on SAFE through some of the most difficult times in their lives. And we are making sure our 24/7 SAFEline remains open because we know that in times of isolation, people who are not safe in their homes are in the most danger.

If you would like to interview our staff about the impact of COVID-19 on SAFE, please contact Communications Coordinator Antwon R. Martin at 512.772.9374 or amartin@safeaustin.org.

About SAFE

At SAFE, we strive to provide safety, stability, and healing for children, adults, and families that have experienced violence and abuse. We do this by providing shelter and housing, support services, and prevention programs to stop the cycle of violence. Learn more at safeaustin.org.