

Wow! Awaken's 7th Annual Banquet was simply electric!

More than 800 community members united together to take a stand against sex trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation in our community. Powerful speakers ignited the audience with stories of trauma and violence punctuated by stories of healing and hope.

Senator Catherine Cortez-Masto, known for her work on this issue, honored Awaken and its supporters sharing that, “Sex trafficking is a serious problem in our state, and Awaken is a key partner in supporting women and girls impacted by human trafficking.”

Benji Nolot from Exodus Cry left us in tears with his story of the scared 12-year-old girl that he met on her first night in “the life.” The pain he felt as he had to walk away and leave her in the hands of her traffickers was palpable.

Rebekah Charleston shared how she became a victim of sex trafficking, an all too familiar tale of manipulation, false love and abuse. Seeing this bright woman own the stage and courageously testify to the years of pain and humiliation she endured, was inspiring.

The passionate cry for action from our speakers sparked an outpouring of support for this cause. Donors who were deeply moved by the stories of those we serve and haunted by those we have yet to reach, **gave more than \$300,000 in gifts and pledges**– thank you!!

This much needed funding couldn't have come at a better time. To date this past year, we've served more than 140 women and children – a 40% increase over 2017. We're on track to open the area's first home for victims of commercial sexual exploitation and our youth intervention program for minors is rapidly expanding.

This work wouldn't be possible without our amazing community of supporters. Thank you to the sponsors, attendees, volunteers and auction item donors who made this event a total success.

If you were there that night, I hope you felt as encouraged and motivated as I did. If not, we can't wait to see you at next year's event on November 16, 2019!