



CHOOSE
your own
Adventure

ANNUAL REPORT



**FIRECRACKER
FOUNDATION**



*“From a
tiny spark
may burst a
mighty flame.”
—Dante*

Dear friend,

You joined an incredible mission.

Over the course of the past 365 days, there have been many important announcements.

The milestones have been marked in beautiful photos, sparkler celebrations and often a little media attention.

You have been there for every bit of good news.

THANK YOU.



In this report, you can take it all in. Within these pages you will find every challenge you met, every goal you surpassed and every program built with your loyalty, faith and sacrifice.

On every page, feel the significance of the work you've contributed to. You deserve it.

It has been an adventure and you have been a loyal companion.

Therefore, **YOU** decide.

In your first Annual Report from The Firecracker Foundation you get to **Choose Your Own Adventure.**

If you love surprises, suspense and instant gratification, this is your lucky day. The biggest news is on page **18**.

If you want the news straight up, if you love things in chronological order with proper headings and a table of contents, you are still in luck.

You can choose to read this report from beginning to end.

Simply keep turning pages.

It all begins now.

Cheers!

Firecracker

Tashmica 'Firecracker' Torok
Founder & Executive Director

P.S. – I would totally go with the adventure if I were you.



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BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Each member of your leadership team brings to the table a level of expertise that has helped create the foundation you celebrate today. They have worked diligently to build programs that honor the young survivors we serve and educate the community about ways to protect all children from sexual abuse.

They have kept an eye on the future, while planning for today.



A heartfelt thank you to:

AMANDA DUBEY-ZERKA - PRESIDENT



In the beginning of my career as a Social Worker I was given the following scenario: You approach a river and you see babies floating down the river, in danger. What do you do? Do you jump in and rescue the babies or do you try to find where they are coming from and take action there first?

My initial response was to jump in and save the babies. But, really, both actions are important. Through my work with The Firecracker Foundation, I feel like I am doing both. I am creating programs that directly serve the needs of the community, as well as supporting education and prevention to end sexual trauma in our community.

Being on this board for the past year is part of my own personal mission as well as my professional mission to end sexual trauma. This work is powerful, invigorating and important. I am a proud volunteer of The Firecracker Foundation!

Ryan Knott – Vice President

Suban Nur Cooley

Rana Kardahji - Treasurer

Emily Dryzga

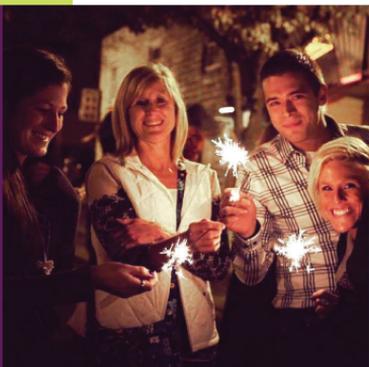
Shannon Nobles – Secretary

Amanda Lick

CONTINUE YOUR ADVENTURE

Meet your **first Firekeeper** on page 8.





MISSION

Honoring the bravery of children who have survived sexual trauma by building a community invested in the healing of their whole being.

VISION

We believe in the healing power of quality therapy that is rooted in consistency, faithfulness and deep trust.

We believe in fostering a community committed to learning how to protect their children and sharing that knowledge with others.

We believe that delving into the arts can provide a healing outlet that supports the work done in therapy.

We believe that physical exercise helps children reconnect their hearts to their bodies while building confidence in their abilities.

We believe that through the collaboration of our community resources, we can provide families with the resources they need to break the cycle of abuse in our generation.

We believe the adult survivors in our community are uniquely qualified to mentor, serve and advocate for children on their path to healing.



CONTINUE YOUR ADVENTURE

Have you met the **first therapist** contracted because of your support?
Meet her on page 5.



YOUR THERAPIST

HAVE YOU MET MEGAN SPEDOSKE?

She is the first therapist contracted by The Firecracker Foundation thanks to you!

Megan Spedoske is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker in the State of Michigan who provides therapy to children, teens and young adults. She was born and raised in Lansing, and she returned home following her graduation from the George Warren Brown School of Social Work at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri. Megan has been a Field Instructor and Field Liaison for Michigan State University School of Social Work. Her training and career have centered around supporting children with a strong emphasis on trauma and loss. She has experience working with children and families from an inpatient residential treatment setting, community-based agencies and, now, within her private practice, Reflections Behavioral Health, LLC. Megan loves being with her family and friends and is honored to have the opportunity to support healing and growth, one child at a time.



Right now, legal guardians, therapists, counselors and other service providers can refer clients unable to afford the cost of therapy to The Firecracker Foundation and YOU have their back.

CONTINUE YOUR ADVENTURE

What if a child is not ready for talk therapy? Find out how you help them **heal in their own time** by *turning the page*. One therapist won't be enough. Guess what? **There will be more.** *Go to page 9* for some exciting news.



YOGA THERAPY

Yoga therapy class is wonderful. Thank you so, so much for providing this for my child.

– A Teen Survivor’s Mother

You established the first free yoga therapy class for teen sexual trauma survivors to be offered in mid-Michigan ever.

Thanks to a partnership with **Free Being Yoga Network**, four teenagers in mid-Michigan have participated in trauma-sensitive yoga classes with instructor Belinda Thurston.



Every class begins with a singing bowl, blindly choosing a positive affirmation and sharing what each student wants from their yoga that day.

At the end of each term, every student is gifted with a yoga mat for continued practice at home, a journal, a note from a fellow survivor and a sparkler to honor **the light that burns within them.**



CONTINUE YOUR ADVENTURE

Read about how yoga instructors have used their **generous practice** to support this healing program *on page 15.*

Learn about a **high-flying way** volunteers spread awareness about sexual assault and raised funds for advocacy and services nationwide *on page 13.*



ADVOCATES

In April, 21 members of your community came together to begin their training as advocates for the children in your neighborhood, your schools and your family.

Training included three important parts:

- The Firecracker Foundation Orientation
- Darkness to Light: Stewards of Children with Trysta Harns



“Stewards of Children® is an evidence-informed prevention solution that increases knowledge, improves attitudes, and changes child protective behaviors. It offers practical prevention training with a conversational, real-world approach.”

- Advocate Training led by Dr. Rebecca Hayes

Advocates learned facts about child sexual abuse, the side effects of trauma and information on how to report suspected cases of child abuse. They also practiced active listening using different scenarios for role play.



Every prospective advocate is required to submit to a state and federal background check and provide The Firecracker Foundation with a DHS clearance proving that they'd never been accused or convicted of child abuse. They are also required to obey the foundation's code of conduct and agree to uphold standards of confidentiality.

This ongoing training is being developed to best prepare volunteers to be ambassadors of hope and healing in the community. For more information on becoming an advocate visit: <http://thefirecrackerfoundation.org/get-involved/volunteer/>

CONTINUE YOUR ADVENTURE

You may want to flip over to *page 4* to read the **mission and vision statements** you've adopted by supporting this foundation, or perhaps you'd like to **celebrate your winnings** on *page 17*.



YOUR FIRST FIREKEEPER



A year ago, I was universally blessed to be a part of the beginning of The Firecracker Foundation. Within a minute of Firecracker sharing her story with those of us able to be present for one of her many “finest hours,” I knew that I had to help in whatever way that I could. I have a story too, but my path to healing is different, quiet, and lonely. To know that somebody was brave enough to open up to the world so freely in an effort create

the loving resource that victims require if they are to even dream of finding some healing, broke my heart and rebuilt it in an instant. It was broken because nobody should ever face what Firecracker or other victims have faced, but it was rebuilt with the promise that something better could exist to love the silent sufferers back into an existence that is good, safe and healthy. I did the only thing that I knew to do at the moment and offered my financial support. The healing it has brought to me can never be fully repaid. It is a treasure, a new fire inside of me that I will keep fed with the desire to help others. — Kelly Bungee Rogers

CONTINUE YOUR ADVENTURE

To find out **what's next**, go to page 20.



YOUR INVESTMENTS

You are a community of 448 survivors and advocates.

You live in two different countries and 15 different states.

Thanks to 276 individual donors and 15 local businesses you have raised more than \$20,000 since July 31, 2013.

Your investments provided the seed money necessary to form a sustainable nonprofit.

THANK YOU!

You can continue to spark healing for children who have suffered tremendously from sexual abuse and trauma.

GIVE GENEROUSLY TODAY.

In the past year, you've helped secure proper accounting services, insured our operations, and allowed us to offer training and hospitality to your community of survivors and advocates.

Safeguard the legacy you've created. Become a Firekeeper and give monthly.

Your support has guaranteed the ability of The Firecracker Foundation to serve the first clients to be referred for therapeutic services.

You are truly making a difference in the lives of local children, their families and the organizations that support them.

Your generosity deserves to be honored with good stewardship. You'll find a full financial report on our website by Aug. 31.

For your convenience, a donation envelope has been included. You may return it with your donation or donate online here: www.thefirecrackerfoundation.org/invest.

CONTINUE YOUR ADVENTURE

Healing comes in many forms. Learn about one way to **find healing** on page 6, reminisce about **where it all began** on page 12, or check out our **new digs** on page 19.



FIREKEEPERS

This is your circle of Firekeepers.

Charged with building the blaze created by the generosity of your community, they invest monthly.

Sparking healing isn't enough for them. They want a blaze. **Join them.**

Alex Bailey

Jennifer Briere

Tameshia Bridges

Suban Nur Cooley

Emily Dryzga

Molly Fillmore

Sarah Hillman

Carol Hunt

Kim & Alfred Jackson

Rana Kardahji

Yvonne LeFave

Amanda Lick

Kathleen Livingston

Sara Metz

Shelley Mielock Davis

Shannon Nobles

Leanne Perry

Kelly Bungee Rogers

Lysne Tait

Nichole Taylor

Kristin Thomas

Rachel Warner

Throughout history, the firekeeper has held a place of honor within their community's for protecting and building the fire that sustains life. Thank you for taking this organization from a tiny spark to a roaring blaze. I honor you. - FC

CONTINUE YOUR ADVENTURE

There's more than one way to build a blaze. Check out the **first advocate training** on page 7 or turn to page 14 to learn about the **outreach into the community** that you inspired.



SOULFIRE 2014

Twelve brave survivors volunteered to share their personal story with YOU in a calendar sold to raise funds for therapy services for children.

Each survivor crafted images with the talented Jena McShane of McShane Photography and had their hair and makeup expertly done by Heather Jarous of City Salon.



The result was a powerful tool of advocacy and storytelling – Soulfire 2014.

The project culminated in a gallery showing where survivors were honored for their bravery in the company of their family and friends.

Alissa Folger, like other survivors, participated because she wanted to lend her voice to children living in silence.

She was amazed at the empowering effects of freely sharing her story.

When I got involved and decided to do this project, I was so excited to be able to do something to help these kids. I never dreamed how much it would actually help me. By making this project happen, you have not only helped the kids, but you have helped give me a voice and the courage to tell my story, which I've never done before.

I also wanted to let you know that I am currently in recovery/treatment for an eating disorder and was struggling to meet the goals that my treatment team had set for me. Since I got involved with this project, I have gained two more pounds and my doctor said that my vital signs have improved drastically. Before that, it had been months since I had gained weight.

The only thing that changed was my involvement with this project. :)

You, this project, and all the other survivors have given me so much. You are not only helping these brave kids, you are helping to heal all the rest of us. Thank you for everything you are doing! I will be forever grateful. <3

Thank you for giving Alissa a safe space to share, a circle of survivors to support her and a way for her to help serve children like her who have suffered sexual trauma.

#Soulfire2015 is in production and will be available for presale in October of 2014.

CONTINUE YOUR ADVENTURE

Breaking the silence is just one way to **empower a survivor's spirit**. Turn to page 6 to read about another, or read about the time you **launched a new nonprofit** for kids in your home town on page 12.



STARGAZING 2013

You started it all on July 31, 2013.

You spent an evening listening to Firecracker's survivor story and we are still humbled by your response.

Thank you for attending Stargazing 2013.



Because of your reception, Stargazing will be an annual event that celebrates the bravery of a different survivor every year.

The goal is to represent a diverse look at how victims of child sexual trauma attempt the leap from surviving to thriving.



You will get the opportunity to take a look at the many ways there are to heal.

This personal presentation will inform us all of ways to continue to advocate for children who suffer terrible trauma within YOUR community from the perspective of adult survivors.

Stargazing will mark future anniversaries for many years to come.

You will continue to be celebrated for all you do.

CONTINUE YOUR ADVENTURE

You are going to be astonished to see what **your investments** added up to *on page 9*.



OPERATION FREEFALL

Twelve brave volunteers jumped out of a perfectly good airplane during Operation Freefall.

Kathie Dunbar, Leigh VanHandel, Jessica Hart, Tyler Dyke, Kirbay Preuss, Becky Hayes, Tom Gauthier, David Ware, Emily Dryzga, Heather Dufner, Edwin Pino (in Monica Pino's stead) and Tashmica Torok gathered at Midwest Freefall on a cool spring day to share in an empowering, bold experience.

They each took a 2-mile high stand against sexual assault by skydiving to raise awareness and funds for local and national services and advocacy programs.

DON'T WORRY.

They landed safely and had an absolute blast.

They were also the most successful fundraising team in the entire country!

How amazing is that?!



You could be a part of the 2015 Operation Freefall team.

Recruitment begins this fall. You'll never forget taking to the sky for this important cause.

Send an email to info@thefirecrackerfoundation.org to sign up now!

CONTINUE YOUR ADVENTURE

If you are interested in joining supporters who **help from a yoga mat** instead of falling through the sky, *flip to page 15* or reminisce about **where this all began** *on page 12*.



COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Come right in. You're welcome. Make yourself at home.

That has been your response to The Firecracker Foundation.

Whether it be inviting us into your place of worship, sharing free pie or marching at the Capitol during Take Back the Night, you have encouraged this mission warmly.

Every time you extend an invitation, you are telling survivors in YOUR community that their story belongs.



In an answer to your incredible hospitality, we've decided to extend Darkness to Light: Stewards of Children training to all community groups that raise funds for therapeutic services through The Firecracker Foundation.

This progress will allow more children to begin their healing journey with you by their side and inform your fellow neighbors about ways in which they can protect children from abuse.

The conversation is not being silenced.

You are encouraging empowerment, support and awareness.

You are changing YOUR community for the children who live in it.

You are amazing. Thank you.

For more information on the many ways to get involved, visit <http://thefirecrackerfoundation.org/get-involved/>



CONTINUE YOUR ADVENTURE

Meet the **heroes working behind the scenes** on page 16 or find out how your commitment won some **big rewards** on page 17.



FIRECRACKER YOGA

Thanks to you and the support from sponsor LansingYoga.com, Firecracker Yoga began in the fall of 2013.

Firecracker yoga is an ongoing series of donation-based yoga classes used to raise funds for the yoga therapy program.

Six local yoga studios, their generous instructors and nearly 75 yoga students rolled out their mats in the fall of 2013 and dedicated their practice to offer healing to young survivors.

They raised nearly \$800 – enough to give 10-15 teens six weeks of trauma-sensitive yoga therapy.

WOW.

A big thank you to each of these beautiful homes of generous practice.

East Lansing Pump House

Bikram Yoga Capital Area

East Lansing Hot Yoga

Just B Yoga

Yoga Sanctuary

Hilltop Yoga



Thank you for being a part of our sangha. Namaste.

To host a Firecracker Yoga class, send an email to yoga@thefirecrackerfoundation.org

CONTINUE YOUR ADVENTURE

Keep the fire burning. *Turn to page 10.*



VOLUNTEERS & INTERNS

Starting a nonprofit organization is challenging work. Fortunately, you have a small team of supporters who give huge helpings of their time and talent to coordinate, organize, create and keep progress moving forward.

You have these many hands to thank for making light work.

Alexis Dickie – Volunteer Coordinator

Pete Broderick – Web Manager

Katie Livingston – Volunteer Committee Chair

The Firecracker office is constantly buzzing with activity. You are fostering the future of the nonprofit industry with the implementation of five internship positions. Three talented MSU students have been awarded positions and the screening process is ongoing.

Maggie Lasley – Social Media & Communications Intern, Summer 2014

Drew Sheldon – Generous Practice Intern, Summer 2014

Taylor Vander Hyde – Social Media & Communications Intern, Spring 2014

For more information on available internship positions visit: <http://thefirecrackerfoundation.org/internships/>



CONTINUE YOUR ADVENTURE

Speaking of incredible volunteers, **meet your Board of Directors**
on page 3.



CAPITAL REGION COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

You made The Firecracker Foundation a **two-time grant recipient** of the Capital Region Community Foundation (CRCF).

In February, you took on the Big Bang-quet Challenge. In your first attempt to win, you secured a fourth-place finish and raised **\$5,044.75** in the challenge sponsored by MSU Federal Credit Union, the University Club of MSU and CRCF.



YOU DIDN'T STOP THERE.

In March, the CRCF created a fun Facebook competition where members of the community had to 'LIKE' their page and leave a comment naming their favorite nonprofit organization. You were all over it. In the end, you won **\$2,500** for foundation programs and services.

You won **\$7,544.75** with your loyalty and activism. Well done!

Thank you for choosing The Firecracker Foundation as the organization worthy of your votes. Thank you for claiming us as your favorite.

Grant recipient of:



Capital Region
community foundation
The Center for Charitable Giving

<http://crcfoundation.org>

CONTINUE YOUR ADVENTURE

Your generosity didn't end with \$5 votes and comments online. **You**



CHARACTERS UNITE AWARD

Earlier this summer, founder and executive director Tashmica 'Firecracker' Torok was nominated by fellow Lansing Derby Vixen teammate, Melissa Kress Terry for the Characters Unite Award from USA Network.



The award is intended to celebrate unsung heroes who work to create a more unified United States by tackling pressing social issues within their community. The award carries with it a **\$5,000** cash prize, inclusion in a national public service announcement and the hosting of a local event meant to bring the community together.

Guess what? **Firecracker won!**

This award will bring your work into the national spotlight and provide more financial support for the therapeutic services you want to make accessible to all children who don't have the means to seek healing services on their own.

This fall, you are invited to be her honored guest at a celebration of this humbling tribute to her efforts.

Thank you, Melissa for your kindness, compassion and encouragement. You humble me and inspire me to continue on through the rough spots. Sincerely, FC.

CONTINUE YOUR ADVENTURE

Are you curious about the **upcoming celebration**? Turn to *page 11*. Learn exactly how much **you invested** in the healing of children on *page 9* or read about **high-flying advocates** on *page 13*.



NEW DIGS

Have you visited the new digs?

We are now operating in an office at the Center for New Enterprise Opportunity!

In our new home, we have the benefit of networking with other ambitious entrepreneurs growing their businesses in mid-Michigan while affording staff, volunteers and advocates a place to meet, collaborate and take a ride down an indoor slide.

As a new nonprofit, we are also excited to have access to business consulting resources to help us to continue to expand program services in a sustainable and responsible manner.



Take note of our new address and phone number:

**NEO Center
934 Clark St.
Lansing, MI 48906
517.242.5467**

Stop by. You are always welcome.

CONTINUE YOUR ADVENTURE

Meet our dedicated **board of directors** *on page 3.*
Find out **what's next** by *turning the page.*



SO WHAT'S NEXT?

As we begin our second year together, the future is bright.



It is now time to inform those who work closely with children that The Firecracker Foundation is ready and willing to support them.

Share this report with your child's school counselor, your family therapist, social worker or kid-friendly business owner. Therapeutic programs are ongoing and referrals are being accepted.

#Buildtheblaze with Firekeepers whose loyalty will make sure we can keep our promise to provide consistent

care to children in need of a supportive community. Invest consistently.

Do not be silent. Keep the conversation going. You have boldly given a voice to children who have suffered sexual trauma. Continue to learn about issues related to child sexual trauma and share that knowledge with others. The resources you envisioned are now a reality.

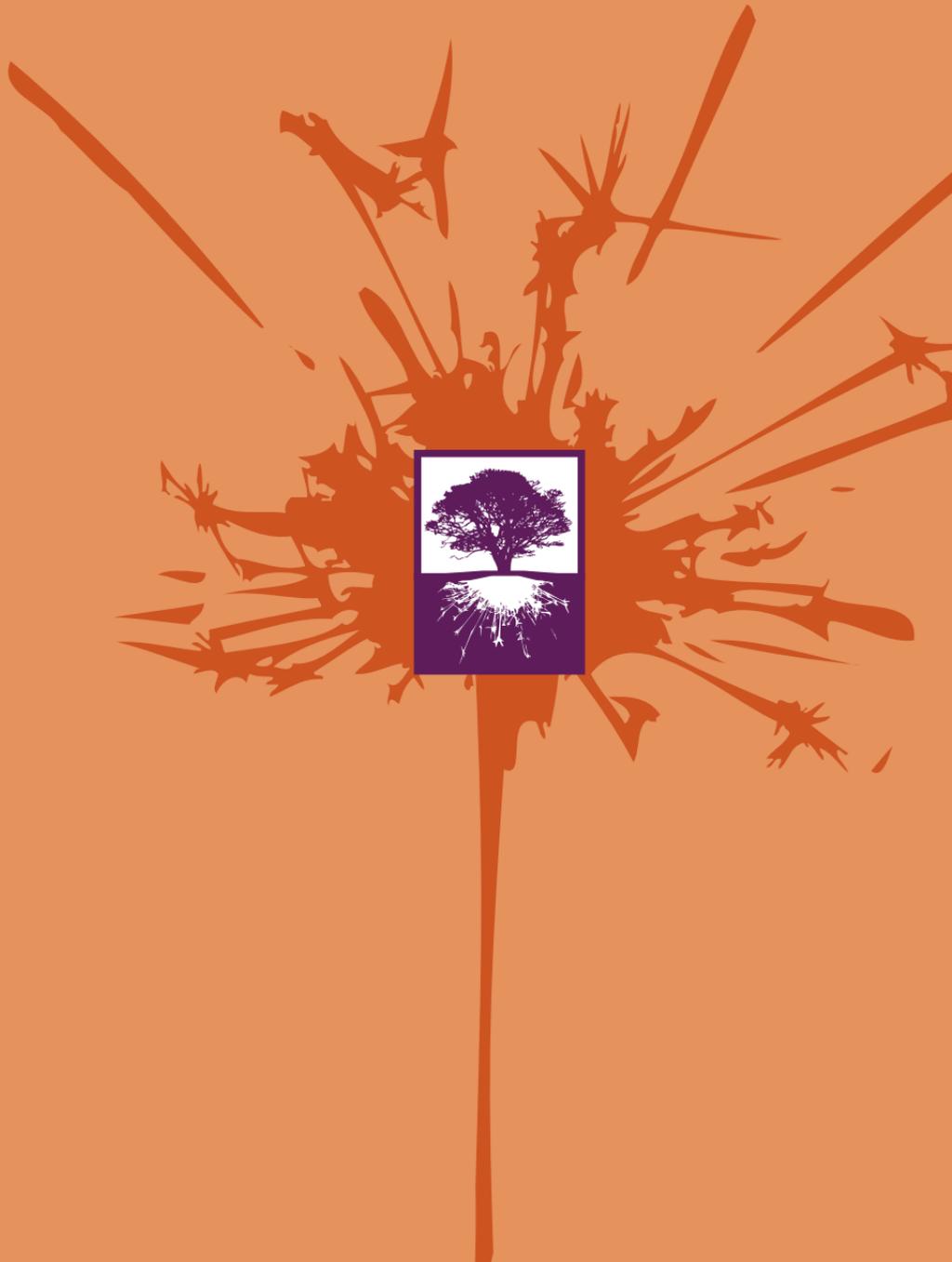
YOU DID IT.

Congratulations!

CONTINUE YOUR ADVENTURE

Go back to page 18 to take another exciting look at what you accomplished in only one year and imagine the possibilities. **Choose your own adventure.**







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