

# Tampa Bay 2021



**IN OUR BACKYARD** Super Bowl Report

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[www.inourbackyard.org](http://www.inourbackyard.org)



# Executive Summary

In connection with our year-round anti-trafficking work, IN OUR BACKYARD (IOB) has worked for the last **12 consecutive years** to eradicate sex trafficking surrounding the Super Bowl through partnerships with top law enforcement, local nonprofits, and government agencies in host cities across America. IOB was honored to come alongside leaders already doing incredible work to stop human trafficking in Tampa, including the One Team Tampa Bay event, The S.O.A.P Project, the Super Bowl Host Committee, bp, Florida Restaurant and Lodging Association, Securus Technologies Inc., Jet Food Stores, Monster Energy, Hillsborough Commissioner's Office, Send Relief, Van Dyke Campus of Grace Family Church, and others. Highlights of our Linking Freedom In Our Backyard operation in Tampa 2021 include:

- Engaged **400 volunteers** in anti-trafficking education and advocacy.
- **150 convenience and corner stores were equipped** to recognize and report human trafficking throughout the Greater Tampa area.
- **Two minors** from the missing children's booklet were recognized by convenience store staff during the first hour of outreach.
- **5,000 Missing Children's booklets were distributed** predominantly to convenience stores by volunteers throughout the Tampa area.
- **14 of the 36 children in IOB's Missing Children's booklet were reported no longer missing** within one week of the Super Bowl.
- Through collaborative efforts, IOB **placed 1,200 Freedom Stickers** in restrooms stalls during its outreach event, creating a pathway to FREEDOM for those trapped in HT.
- Over 2,000 suspected incidents of human trafficking were identified in connection with corrections facilities. Information gathered produced **80 verified leads** for potential cases of trafficking to law enforcement and agencies.
- Law enforcement, in partnership with anti-trafficking efforts of IOB and many other nonprofits and agencies, announced **75 arrests** of alleged sex buyers and individuals selling sex.
- One was a **confirmed minor**, and two human trafficking survivors were connected to Selah Freedom.
- One trafficking survivor received service from IOB partner, Chris Baker of INK180, to **replace two tattoos** which included the branding of her traffickers name with a beautiful cover up tattoo.
- **Three of the individuals arrested** have been charged with human trafficking.
- **The recovery of six individuals were believed to be victims of human trafficking** during the 10-day pre-Super Bowl operation "Operation Game Over" according to Sheriff Chad Chronister.

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**IN OUR BACKYARD** is a national leader with more than a decade of dedication to the fight against sex and labor trafficking. IOB links arms in the fight against human trafficking by empowering communities to prevent this atrocity and creating access to freedom for victims of human trafficking (HT). Exposed to the devastating realities of HT, IOB Founder Nita Belles was driven to take action to stop the exploitation of children, women, and men. Her book, *In Our Backyard: Human Trafficking in America and What You Can Do to Stop It*, has been acclaimed as the primer on human trafficking in America.

## 12 Years of Super Bowl

IOB partners with top law enforcement, non-profits, the convenience store industry, and government agencies in host cities across America to raise **awareness of human trafficking and mobilize regular citizens to fight this atrocity year-round.**



*Myth:* The Super Bowl increase sex trafficking.



*Reality:* Sex trafficking happens every day with cases reported in every U.S. state. Sex buyers increase sex trafficking.

Statements have been made that the Super Bowl is the largest human trafficking event of the year. Some have also asserted that sex trafficking does not increase surrounding the Super Bowl. These are both myths. The truth is, **human trafficking happens 365 days a year everywhere in the United States** and does increase when there is increased demand due to conventions, as well as sporting and entertainment events that attract predominantly male populations with disposable income. **The Super Bowl is not the cause of sex trafficking, but it has become a catalyst to fight it in host cities across America over the last 12 years.**

## Fighting HT the other 364 days a year

In addition to our Super Bowl work, IOB works year round across the nation, with six other programs including:

- Teens Against Trafficking - Empowered over **8,000 teens** to stay safe from traffickers.
- Training and Mobilization - Over **69,000 participants** trained.
- Freedom Stickers - Over **500,000** posted in public restrooms in all 50 states.
- Convenience Stores Against Trafficking - Partnered with over **20,000 stores.**

# Tampa Super Bowl LV - 2021



The purpose of IOB's collaborative work surrounding the Super Bowl is to bring attention to this horrific crime and come alongside the host community as we take coordinated and effective action to stop human trafficking surrounding the Super Bowl and beyond. IOB recognizes geography, climate, politics, culture, socio-economic, gender, and racial factors have implications on how we collaboratively address human trafficking. ***We work with local partners to ensure the work is trauma informed and victim centered.*** This year our work reflects our core values of sustainability and collaboration that **always result in increased, ongoing anti-trafficking efforts after we have departed.**

Many conversations and multiple trips over the course of a year culminated in a 10-day operation surrounding the Super Bowl in Tampa in 2021. IOB was honored to come alongside leaders already doing incredible work to stop human trafficking in Tampa, including Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office, One Team Tampa Bay, Grace Family Church- Van Dyke, S.O.A.P, Florida Restaurant and Lodging Association and others. IOB collaborated with the above agencies, as well as our partners, Securus Technologies Inc., Thorn, the National Association of Convenience Stores (NACS), and the National Center on Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) to stop sex trafficking surrounding the Super Bowl and beyond. IOB served more than 400 volunteers in anti-trafficking education and advocacy and 140 volunteers in outreach training. In addition to **leading a command post working group of 50 individuals serving virtually and in-person who dedicated efforts to collaborate and ensure the success of the operation.** Words are not adequate to express our appreciation of the amazing partnerships and the life-saving work being done across Florida. Strong partnerships with like-minded advocates were essential to the success of our work.

## Linking Freedom In Our Backyard Event

On Saturday, January 30th 2021, more than **400 volunteers** showed up at the event – *Linking Freedom In Our Backyard* (LFIQB) – at Grace Family Church Van Dyke to learn more about human trafficking and distribute awareness materials—including Freedom Stickers and Missing Children’s booklets—to convenience stores. This seventh annual event is an extension of IOB’s national, year-round **Convenience Stores Against Trafficking** program, which grew out of IOB’s Super Bowl efforts. 140 volunteers equipped **150** convenience and corner stores throughout the Tampa metro area to recognize and report human trafficking.



Executive Director Cheryl Csiky shares her survivor testimony alongside Therese Flores, survivor, author, and founder of The SOAP Project leading the One Team Tampa Bay Event.

**Educate, Mobilize, and Partnership:** Linking Freedom IN OUR BACKYARD’S inclusive outreach event facilitates collaboration among individuals and groups who share the common goal of stopping human trafficking through a collaborative public awareness event and resource fair. Each year volunteers are able to connect with local anti-trafficking organizations and collaboration continues after Super Bowl, resulting in **greater anti-human trafficking resources and efforts going forward.**



## Missing Children Outreach

IOB created and distributed booklets containing pictures and information on 36 children from Tampa and surrounding areas sourced from the National Center on Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) registry. 5,000 booklets were distributed through the One Team Tampa Bay event, IOB's outreach efforts and collaboration with other local nonprofits. **14 of the 36 children in IOB's Missing Children's booklet were reported as no longer missing** within one week of the Super Bowl.



## Freedom Stickers

Through collaborative efforts, IOB placed 1,200 Freedom Stickers in restroom stalls around Tampa to **create a pathway of FREEDOM for those trapped in human trafficking**. Freedom Stickers were created in collaboration with trafficking survivors, who directly contributed to their design and objective. Since their creation, more than 500,000 have been placed nationwide and have successfully led to multiple victim recoveries. Freedom Stickers are placed in public restroom stalls in high-traffic areas such as convenience stores, restaurants, hospitals, schools, bars, airports and government buildings. Public restrooms are the safest place for a victim to call or text for help.



## Quotes From Participants

**"While what we did seemed small, it has obviously been used by God in huge ways."**

**"Well structured and organized. Materials and routes were all thought out. It's bigger than I expected."**

**"That this is an epidemic that needs a lot of help to stop it & that most men think these girls are doing this by choice."**

**"The need to help reach and recover is so great and that we each can do something to help."**

**-Volunteers and partners were extremely passionate and asked for additional materials to distribute in their neighborhoods after the outreach.**

## 2021 One Team Tampa Bay Resource Fair Organizations



A21-Advocates Against Trafficking-ANEW International-Bridging Freedom-  
Catholic Diocese of St. Petersburg-Community Campaign South Shore-Created-  
Crisis Center-ECPAT-Empowered To Change-Florida Dream Center-  
Healing Root-Her Lighthouse-  
Hillsborough Commission On Human Trafficking-Hope Restored  
-In Our BackYard-iRIse-It's A Penalty  
Junior League of Tampa-Justice Restoration Center-  
Lutheran Services of Florida-  
Miracles Outreach-More Too Life-  
NoMore-One More Child-Operation Underground Railroad-  
Pasco Commission on Human Trafficking-Paving The Way Foundation  
-Priceless Journey-Rahab's Daughters-Redefining Refuge  
-Selah Freedom-Send Relief-SOS Human Trafficking Ministry-Strip Club Ministries-  
Tampa Teens-The FREE Network-The SOAP Project-United Abolitionist  
-US Institute Against Human Trafficking-Victims2Survivors

*Special Thanks to Notti Skipper Groover of NOMORE for coordinating the Resource Fair organizations!*

## Law Enforcement Support

IOB spent six days of our time in Tampa conducting our online surveillance operation in an undisclosed location. Our operation funneled and analyzed large volumes of data, analyzing connections to domestic sex trafficking that could aid in law enforcement efforts to stop this criminal enterprise. This collaborative involved law enforcement personnel from across the nation who work with IOB's Super Bowl operation yearly, IOB volunteers and others from nonprofit organizations with domestic sex trafficking expertise. **The operation laid a critical foundation for best practices in this field.** IOB board member and Human Trafficking Sergeant, Molly McDade of Multnomah County Sheriff's Office led the operation, along with Cheryl Csiky. **IOB provided 80 verified leads to law enforcement as a result of this collaboration. Collaborators included** eleven Florida counties, National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, Securus Technologies Inc., IOB volunteers, students from Portland State University interning for the Multnomah County Sheriff's Office Human Trafficking Unit, INK180, and others! *Due to the sensitive nature of this operation, we are unable to provide information on ongoing investigations.*

### **Law Enforcement Feedback:**

**"This literally is being handed a case."**

**"We immediately contacted the IOB command post for additional information "**

**"We want people vetted, this command post is a plus because we have vetted trained volunteers to work for a week with leg work that law enforcement needs done"**

**"We have law enforcement in the command post that verified the identification of potential suspects and potential victims with connections to the local jail and state prison in collaboration with eleven counties"**



## **IOB would like to thank:**

**bp:** Special thanks to bp and Amoco extending our sincerest appreciation by providing 5,000 Missing Children Booklets for volunteer outreach efforts to equip convenience stores against human trafficking.

**Hillsborough County Commission on Human Trafficking:** We appreciate **Hillsborough Commissioner Kimberly Overman's** leadership and vision in overseeing the professional and effective operation. Also, a special thank you to **Heather Curry**, Ph.D. Lead Projects Coordinator for the COHT.

**Tampa Police Department:** We would like to recognize the fine work of **Assistant Chief Lee Bercaw and Detective, Major Crimes Bureau Andrea Hughes**. Their leadership and professionalism was chief in stopping this criminal activity surrounding the Super Bowl and beyond!

**Grace Family Church-Van Dyke:** IOB would like to extend our sincerest thanks to **The NOMORE Foundation** and the entire **Grace Family Church staff**. They worked hard to make our *One Team Against Human Trafficking* event so successful. Your dedication to the fight against human trafficking is commendable.

**Women Voice Network:** Special recognition goes to the videography team and dedication to the event and partners. Also a tremendous thank you to **Iris Garcia** for her immeasurable contribution to these efforts.

**Florida Restaurant and Lodging Association:** A great thanks goes to the Florida Restaurant and Lodging Association Tampa area chapter. It's Director of Membership, **Dannette Lynch** provided connections to local restaurants which enabled the IOB core team to enjoy delicious meals.

**The Franciscan Center:** We extended our warmest appreciation to **Christina Strain**, the sisters, and staff for their safe and comfortable lodging during our stay.

**Send Relief:** We value and appreciate our partnership for the third year in a row with Send Relief. We are proud to link arms with this exceptional group of people. A big thank you for the event supplies, monetary donation, and those who volunteered for our event.

**Jet Food Stores:** Amazing thanks to Jet Food Stores and staff who volunteered at our event and core IOB team while providing snacks to all volunteers, partners, and law enforcement! **Caylee Hancock, Advertising Specialist** was instrumental in training volunteers to visit convenience stores during outreach!

**Monster Energy:** We want to recognize the generosity of Monster Energy who provided event supplies in addition to quenching and energizing our army of volunteers at our *Linking Freedom outreach* event. This is our second year partnering with staff dedicating time to volunteer! Special thanks to **National Account Manager—Circle K, Monster Energy Heather Dooley** for all of her heart to stop this atrocity in our backyard!

**Hertz:** Our warmest regards and thank you to Hertz for partnering with IOB providing our partners and volunteers transportation during the 10-day operation.

# Sponsors

IOB's anti-trafficking work surrounding the Super Bowl and beyond was made possible by the sponsors below for both monetary and in-kind donations from organizations and companies across Tampa and the U.S!



Report current as of 2/25/21. Additional updates on the outcomes of the operation will be provided in future revised versions.