

# IGNITE

FIRST RESPONDERS LIFE GUIDE  
March 2023 / ISSUE NO. 15

*My Identity as a First Responder*

*The Three  
Steps I Took  
to Deal with  
My Trauma*

RAISING AWARENESS  
OF PTSD

*Even Though I Walk  
Through the Valley*

UNITING FIRST RESPONDER FAMILIES

**YOU MATTER!**

# IGNITE Magazine

Contact Info:

*www.authorloriegurnett.com*  
*IGNITE@authorloriegurnett.com*

## Credits:

*Editor:*

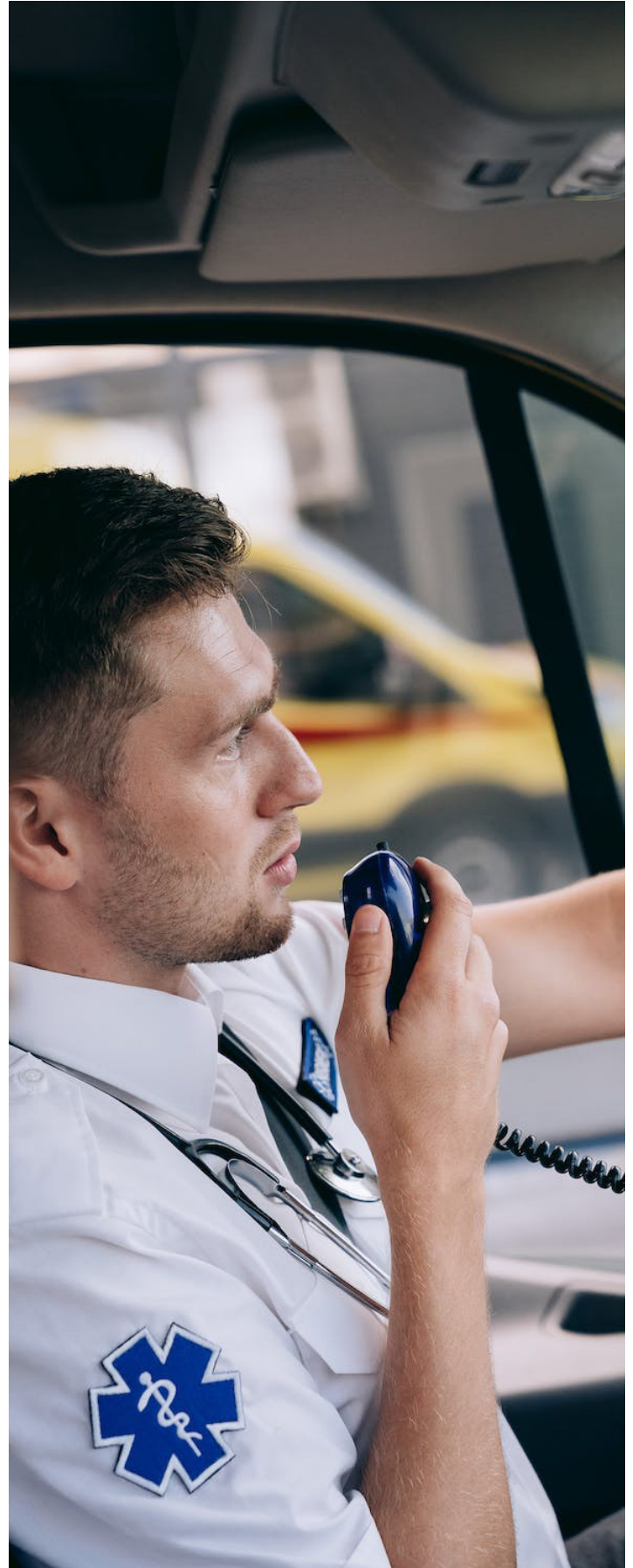
*Lorie Gurnett*

*Articles:*

*Lyndon Wall*  
*Denny Bates*  
*Daniel Veil*  
*Ray Burlet*

*Photography:*

*Allen Beilschmidt sr.*  
*Andre Estevez*  
*Ricardo Esquivel*  
*Victor Freitas*  
*Pixabay*



# IGNITE MAGAZINE

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Lorie Gurnett – Creator & Editor

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“Your word is a lamp  
to my feet and a light  
to my path.”  
~ Psalm 119:105 ~



Nelson Senft

Nelson Senft has been pastor of a small church in Northern Alberta for 27 years. He is also a part time instructor at Peace River Bible Institute. Nelson has been married to Margaret for 34 years. They have two married children and are looking forward to the birth of their first grandchild this spring. Nelson grew up on a grain farm in Saskatchewan, and loves to help local farmers when they needed it. He served for twelve years with the LaGlace Volunteer Fire Department, County of Grande Prairie.



Debbie Marks

Debbie Marks and her husband Rick, have been married for 49 years. They live on a 23-acre homestead in Pleasantville, Ohio. Together, they enjoy planting and harvesting a 1-acre garden of chemical-free crops.

Debbie enjoys building Fairy Gardens, reading, and painting and is presently writing her memoirs.

Debbie's goal is to leave a legacy for their nine grandchildren, to become their heart's desire, and leave a legacy for their children. After all, this is the "Circle of Life."



Chad Kennedy

My name is Chad Kennedy, Canadian Armed Forces Veteran and First Responder, I have PTSD, I know grief, I know trauma, I have contemplated suicide...



April T. Giauque

April T Giauque is a published author, amplifying speaker, & writer. Her first published work, Pinpoints of Light: Escaping the Abyss of Abuse, is her memoir about escaping abuse, being homeless with five children, and finding the light. Her second book, Out of Darkness Find, Fuel, and Live in Your Light, takes you on a healing journey to step out of Darkness and into the light.

As a writing coach, ghostwriter, and editor, she empowers women to move from trauma to truth and darkness to light by helping them uncover the heart of their story and share it boldly through writing and speaking.

# SHATTERED PIECES

BY EDITOR: LORIE GURNETT

Do you know what it feeling like to have the rug pulled out from under you? Or perhaps the wind knocked out of you? Life can be a rollercoaster and can sometimes be very difficult to navigate.

Have you ever dropped a porcelain bowl on the floor? Do you recall how the pieces shatter and scatter? My life has felt like this many times. It is very difficult to clean up all the shattered pieces without cutting yourself, plus if you try to put it back together, it never appears the same. I have learned that when I shatter, it is not my job to pick up the pieces. You see, I need to trust God to pick up those shards of my life and discard the pieces that are no long needed. He is refining me and shaping me. He is the great potter; I am just the clay in His hands.

I have a strong fear of falling, what God has been teaching me is that when the rug is pulled out from

under me and I fall backwards, I no longer need to fear. I am not saying that I don't fear, but that God's protection is greater than my fear. I can fall into His loving arms and trust He is holding me and refining me into something more wonderful than I could ever imagine.

One of my biggest prayers is for God to give me the heart of David, the wisdom of Solomon, the faith of Samuel, the strength of Samson, and the trust of Ruth. I want to become a woman after God's own heart despite the darkness that is threatening to destroy me. He is holding me and He has the victory! I only need to crawl into His loving arms and allow Him to heal me. He is the one who is in control, I only need to trust.

When the shattered pieces of your life scatter, crawl into His lap and allow Him to hold you. He will never give up on you and He is the great protector and creator.

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"Its breaking is like that of a potter's vessel that is smashed so ruthlessly that among its fragments not a shard is found with which to take fire from the hearth, or to dip up water out of the cistern." - Isaiah 40:14

# My Identity as a First Responder

Article by:  
Nelson Senft  
biblefel@gpwins.ca

## What inspired me to do what I did:

My family and I moved to the Grande Prairie area in 1996 where I began to pastor a church in a small town and have continued to this day. About a year after we arrived, I was invited to join the county volunteer fire department which I did. As a pastor who lived in the town, I was more available to respond to calls during the day when many of the volunteers were away at work. I saw it as a challenge, and opportunity to learn new skills and a way I could serve the community outside of my role as a pastor. As people saw me as a first responder to emergencies it gave them the chance to see me as someone who was concerned for the well-being of the entire community and not only my church family. I continued as a fire fighter for twelve years and considered it to be a valuable experience that taught me many things about life and service.

Some Things I Learned about my identity as a first responder:

### **I am a member of the community who can respond and help**

In any community, it is easy to conclude that someone else can take the time and effort to become a volunteer first responder. I thought hard about that before joining the fire department, concluded that I had the ability,





“By God’s grace I am what I am”

~1 Cor. 15:10~

I did make mistakes and there were times I admit I did not respond when I could have gone out. I am not proud of these times, but there were many times when I did get out of bed and go into the night.

Sometimes the people we helped were not appreciative of our help, quite the opposite. I thank God that none of my mistakes caused much harm to others, and some of the things actually helped people.

Who will see and experience things that are hard to forget. I have been to scenes of attempted suicide, death, and some of the memories linger. I have learned that someone must do the hard things in life and that God can heal my memories of events He never intended to happen.

Who will put other’s interests ahead of my own.

the opportunity to serve as a responder, and there definitely was a need in our area.

**I am someone who cannot fix everything but can do something.**

“I can do all things thru Christ who strengthens me”

~Philippians 4:13~

Being somewhat of a perfectionist, I struggled at times with my role as a first responder. I can remember times when we were riding to a fire or a motor vehicle collision and thinking, I do not have the first clue about what to do when we get there. This was not a good feeling! But we were always able to help, even if all we supplied was traffic control at a traffic collision scene or remaining at a fire scene to put out hot spots. I saw that everyone’s contribution was important, no matter how small.

**Who will make mistakes and not be thanked but will do it anyway.**

“Each of you should look not only in His own interest, but also in the interest of others.”

~Philippians 2:4~

Although it was not the easiest experience in my life, my time as a volunteer responder taught me to put the interests of others ahead of my own in very practical ways. I learned to see the pager going off as a call from someone who needs help.

In summary: My identity was not found in being a hero but a helper.

We do what we can do, it is never enough and will never be appreciated fully by others.

If we are secure in who we are and secure in God, we can face any situation with confidence.



*“Although it was not the easiest experience in my life, my time as a volunteer responder taught me to put the interests of others ahead of my own in very practical ways.”*



# Even Though I Walk Through the Valley...

## Psalm 23

Article by: Debbie Marks

I don't know about you, but this is where I found the solution to go through grieving for my mom after her passing. It is hard to explain to someone else the hole left in your heart when you lose two special people rolled into one, my mom and my best friend. Mom was my confidant, along with being there to hold my hand. Because of her, I learned to manage my childhood abuse.

We would talk at least 4 to 5 times a week. Those times I needed to talk to her while driving home from somewhere, I would call her and we would talk until I arrived home. I miss those talks!

Then came the time I didn't expect. The call that started her travels through many trials and tribulations but also finding peace in her life. It was with her and my strength that we moved forward through her life no matter what we faced. My siblings found it very difficult to understand and thought I was wrong in many avenues I went through with her. But it did not matter to me. I supported my mom with her needs and she was comfortable. But my family and grandchildren were there to support her by visiting her and sharing their different excitement's going on in their life. You name it from sports to boyfriends, birthdays, and their special school activities. My mom loved sharing her talents, with the kids and encouraged them to do the same. During



my childhood, my mom taught me how to sew my clothes, learn to grow our produce, then preserve them by canning and freezing them. I carried these lessons through with my children and taught them the same. To this day we all enjoy the food we grow that is natural and chemical-free. They love it when the popcorn we grow is ready to collect the cobs and dry them.

The best part is popping the first batch smothered in butter over an open fire with the grandkids around us.

I was reaching the end of putting up

a heavy harvest which I had mentioned when I realized my mom was now my top priority going forward. I would become her caregiver and I looked at this as a proud moment in my life.

Knowing now, she did her best during my childhood. Going through my young adult difficulty. Don't get me wrong it was not out of a sense of duty, but the love I had for her.

*"I realized at that moment that when I was born, it was just my mom and me in the delivery room, now it was just my mom and me together in her passing."*

I gave my mom the chance to visit places and see the ocean. There is nothing like eating pizza and having a beer while watching the ocean water beat against the shore. The sunsets were breathtaking and just jaw-droppingly amazing. We even had fun going whale watching in the Atlantic Ocean, near Plymouth Rock. Have you ever looked over the side of a boat right into the eye of a whale swimming alongside? Wow! Taking roads signed "Not a Through Road" and seeing what is at the other end?

If you have not guessed, we loved our travels. She loved being able to visit with her friends and elderly family members. Even though, despite her disabilities, we made the most of any valleys



we might have had to go through. We looked at each situation, talked, and laugh, then we would handle whatever it was and complete it with a checkmark midair and say "DONE."

To this day, I have so many fond memories that we created together, even though they were just between the two of us, has helped so much during the grieving period.

Because we looked at things this way, I found I was able to find my way through the last week of her life. We talked about our travel memories and watched rerun Ohio State games. Three days before her passing the music therapist that visited the home had my mom sing two of her favorite Christmas carols. While my mom sang the songs, the women recorded them for my mom to give to me as a Christmas gift.

By the way, I still have them.  
I might not have listened to  
them during the past years,  
but I know they are still there  
for my listening pleasure any  
time.

Then three days later, on  
December 20, 2015, I held  
her hand for the last time.  
I realized at that moment  
that when I was born, it  
was just my mom and me  
in the delivery room, now  
it was just my mom and me  
together in her passing.

I have a comforting poem  
that has given me the  
strength to carry on with my  
life and live up to her lessons.

“Gone From My Sight”





# Gone From My Sight

By Henry Van Dyke

I am standing upon the seashore.  
A ship at my side spreads her white  
sails to the morning breeze and  
starts for the blue ocean.  
She is an object of beauty and strength,  
I stand and watch her until at length  
she hangs like a speck of white cloud  
just where the sea and the sky come  
to mingle with each other.

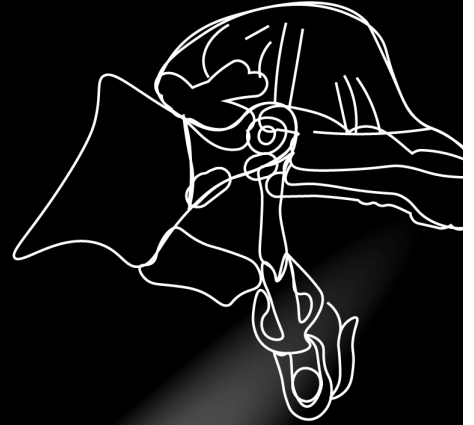
Then someone at my side says,  
"There, she is gone!"

Gone where?

Gone from my sight. That is all.  
She is just as large in mast and hull  
and spar as she was when she left my  
side, and she is just as able to bear her  
load of living freight to her destined port.  
Her diminished size is in me, not in her.  
And just at the moment when someone  
at my side says, "There, she is gone,"  
there are other eyes watching her coming,  
and other voices ready to take up the  
glad shout:

"Here she comes!" And that is dying.

# Are you interested in Writing An Article?



Connected with Law  
enforcement, EMS,  
Firefighters,  
Or Military?  
Reach out today!



Topics we cover:  
Identity, PTSD, Complex PTSD, Suicide, Grief  
Trauma, Communication. and Marriage.

Reach out for more details:  
[lorie@authorloriegurnett.com](mailto:lorie@authorloriegurnett.com)



## Raising Awareness to PTSD

Article by: Chad Kennedy

My name is Chad Kennedy, Canadian Armed Forces Veteran and First Responder, I have PTSD, I know grief, I know trauma, I have contemplated suicide...

Diagnosed in 2018, I would keep my "demons" at bay with medication, allowing me to "function" and keep my fight or flight in check while working. A member of the Alberta Sheriff Highway Patrol, I have been exposed to numerous traumas over the past 15 years, the tipping point for me was the Icefields bus crash in Jasper National Park on July 18, 2020.

On August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2020, I was in a dark and lonely hole. The first time in my life, suicide seemed to be the only option, a bottle of rum, a backyard fire, and a plan. Though most would find that drinking their sorrows away leads to bad decisions, my plan shifted from suicide to



*"When all you know is fight or flight, red flags and butterflies all feel the same."*

*~ Cindy Cherie ~*



the drunken decision to walk across Canada to raise awareness of PTSD amongst our Public Safety and Military personnel.

I would continue to work as if nothing was bothering me, no conversation of suicide, no conversation surrounding

DOCTOR.”

I took my Sergeant’s advice, I went to see my doctor, truly a phenomenal man who not only knows me, but understands PTSD. I would be put off work indefinitely. I am fortunate to have received amazing help through WCB, my psychologist, my occupational therapist, 8 weeks with THE NEWLY INSTITUTE in Calgary, support from friends and family, and now help through Veteran’s Affairs.

April 2<sup>nd</sup> 2022, along with my support team, would start the cross Canada walk east from Cranbrook B.C., ending the first leg in Montreal on September 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2022. Numerous talks with multiple agencies from recruit to the highest ranks

the “bus crash”, NO CONVERSATION surrounding being f\*\*ked up! I was scared and like most didn’t know how to ask for help... the last help I had received was back in 2018, it wasn’t a good fit and I had formed the opinion that the psych world had no idea what we as public safety personnel face.

February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2021, evening shift, as usual I was an hour early, squaring things up paperwork wise from the last shift, uniform on... I would head to my patrol car, duty bag, lunch bag, and keys, ready to roll. I froze, my heart racing, my hands shaking, every sense was tingling, I felt as if though something bad was to happen. Hypervigilance was in overdrive. I was scared!

I called my Sergeant; I told him something wasn’t right. His words: “Chad, you have a lot on your plate. You haven’t dealt with the bus crash, you announced you’re walking Canada, and you’re going through a separation. GO SEE YOUR



“Dreams are made if people only try. I believe in miracles... I have to... Because somewhere the hurting must stop.”

~Terry Fox~



all revolving around mental health... PTSD isn't a me thing, a here thing, a there thing, it knows no boundaries, and never discriminates. It is an issue that isn't only here in Canada, but an issue that encompasses the globe. YOU ARE NOT ALONE!

As we gear up for the second leg of the walk on June 2<sup>nd</sup> 2023 in Quebec, know that I continue to attend therapy on a regular basis, speak openly about PTSD and suicide, and work hard at selfcare & mindfulness.

The bus crash in Jasper as horrible as it was, was a moment that changed my life for the better, for without that moment, I would never have had that drunk moment around the fire.



*“Strength doesn’t come from the uniform we wear, it comes from within, and by being true to yourself, you’ll find strengths you never knew you had.”*

*~Chad Kennedy~*



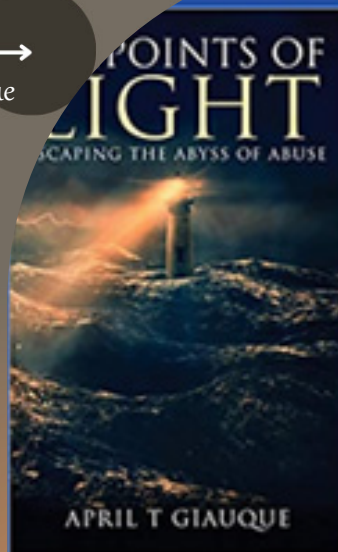
# The Three Steps I Took to Deal with My Trauma

Article by: April T. Giauque

April 28, 2020. That's my Birthday! That was the day I received a gift for my birthday that was delivered in bravery by the stroke of a pen resulting in JUSTICE.

Why would I need Justice? Well, when Trauma entered into my life through domestic violence and abuse, I had to swim in it for a while until I hit the bottom, made an exit plan, left, and then took on the "trauma fight." I shared about that journey in my book *Pinpoints of Light*, but today, I wanted to share something more.

I took three steps dealing with my trauma and I did it with Justice!



## The Speakers



APRIL TRIBE  
GIAUQUE

April 26th

Some Birthday gifts are best saved for the next day. This is that story. Imagine getting your typical COVID19 quarantine day started only to check your phone and see a text that says, "Bob (my ex-husband) changed his plea to guilty and he was transferred to the Utah State Prison last Friday." (This came from one of my sources). What went through my mind, my heart, and my soul? It was one word, justice.

Background:

Many of you know my story. For those that don't, I escaped a mentally, emotionally, and physically abusive marriage on November 28, 2006. I fled for my life with 5 kids in tow. We were



KSLTV.CO

We had our piece of justice when we were given the protective order in December 2006. I used it to keep us safe, but nine other victims did not have this. Here was the pattern: Bob would commit a crime (violation of the protective order, stalking, soliciting sex, groping, exposing himself, sexting, and more). Then the victims would take him to court. Eight out of nine times my Bob would be able to get the charges dumbed down in plea deals. He would only serve minimum jail time. Then he would get out, violate his probation, find a new victim, and start the cycle again.

For nearly twelve years, nine of us (his victims) went through this revolving door in courts. We had to take time out from work, paying lawyers, seeking protection

*“We were protected and stayed hidden for twelve years.”*

homeless, but not hopeless. We fought for justice to protect ourselves. I was able to get a protective order and used it each of the seven times he violated it. We were given peace in that justice, but it was not enough.

We were protected and stayed hidden for twelve years. Unfortunately, I watched nine more women become victims at his hands. I felt helpless for them. Think about it. If I stood and spoke up, that would tell \*Bob where we were. He would go after my children—again. What could I do? I sought prayer, fasting, and wanted answers.

First Step in Dealing with my Trauma by Finding Justice was Through Sharing the Story

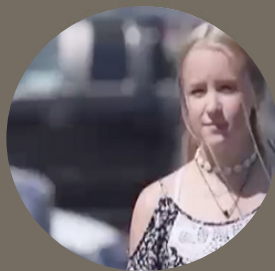


through an overwhelmed system, and waiting for justice to come about only to have nothing really happen. FRUSTRATION!

So with everything happening, I was prompted to GET the WORD OUT! My first step in getting awareness to the world was writing my book, Pinpoints of Light; Escaping the Abyss of Abuse. I knew that as soon as that book was published I was waving a white flag screaming – here we are! Come and get us! However, I had to put that aside and follow what God wanted me to do. So, I did. His plans are better than mine.

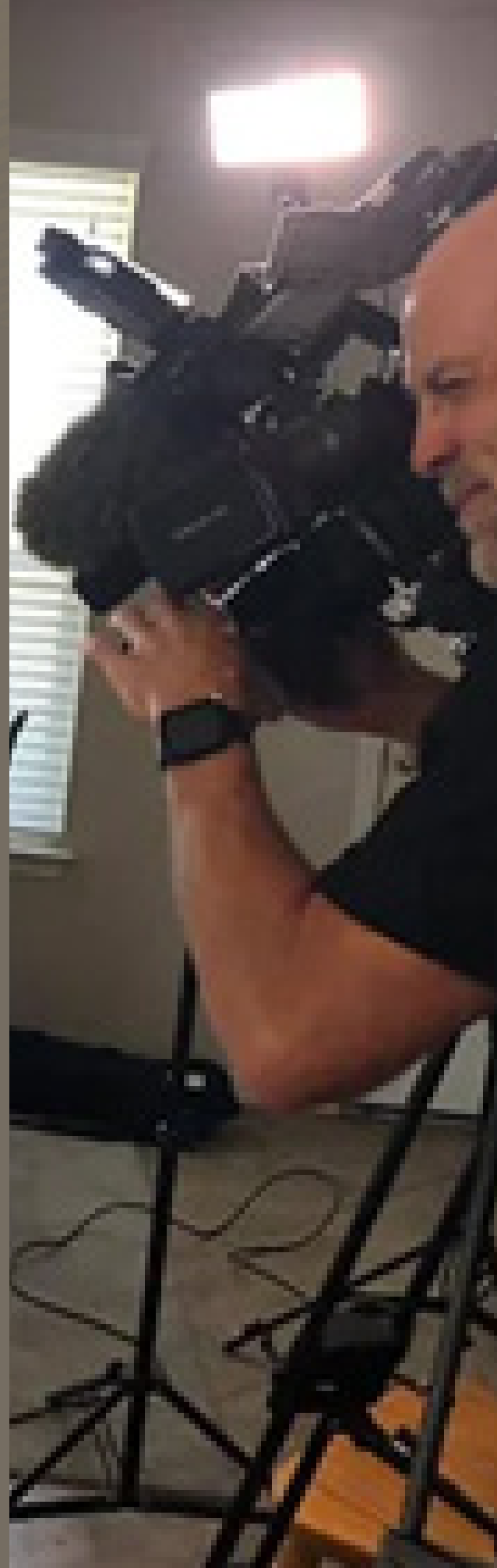
Second Step in dealing with my Trauma:  
Finding Justice By Reaching out to the  
Victims, DA office, & Letters

ENOUGH! I remember myself screaming till my throat was raw – ENOUGH! I had taken the first step and published my book. Through that book, several victims



reached out to me. Several shared such sad accounts of their experiences: the violations that Bob committed against them, the way they were terrified, and tried to seek help from a system that was failing them. It was heartbreaking. It felt like I was a detective finding a trail of victims.

In July 2019, two more victims happened. They were so young, ages 15 and 16. The same age as my daughters. Bob stalked

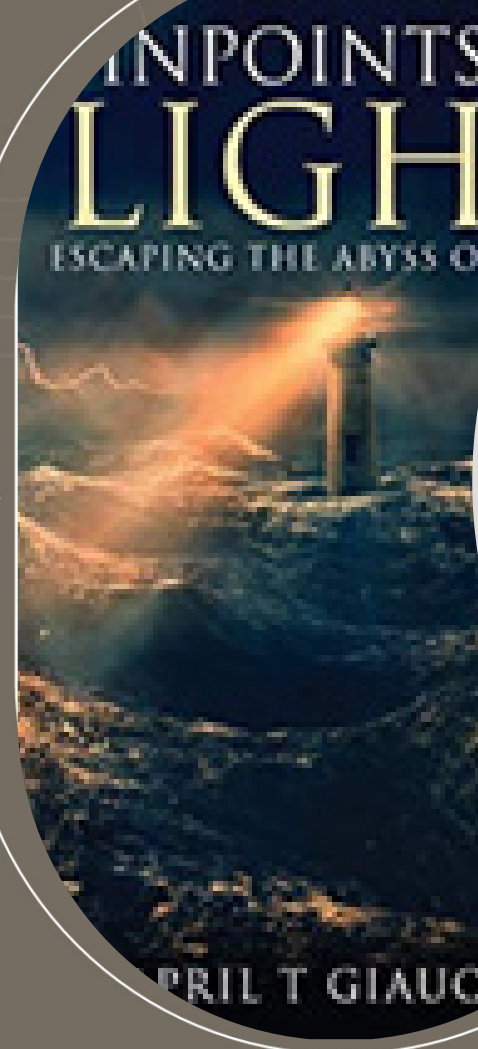


them and approached them asking for sex. You see, Bob has been trying to find my daughters ever since we escaped. That is why he is a stalker. He is looking for us. He violated us and that is why I escaped. He can NEVER see them.

Seeing the story of the new victims was when I screamed ENOUGH! That was it! We (my husband and my family) stood up! I made contact with the DA office, I wrote a letter to the judge, and I wrote to the prosecutors sharing with the court our side of the story – the full story since we were the first set of victims.

Third Step to dealing with Trauma Through Justice: Leave the System and Contact the Media.

July 27, 2019, I made a phone call that would change my life. I was able to



ton. After our KSL 5 TV Investigative Report a repeat offender was slipping through the cracks. He has victimized multiple women and girls in Utah for more than a decade. He is guilty and is now serving a sentence in Utah State Prison in Draper.



make contact with the local news station. I shared with them the story. I shared every detail I could about my story and the victims' stories. I knew that they would find more. They did! For over a month they did interviews, collected evidence, spoke with the DA office, etc. This time we were going to be more than a splash on the news. This time the story was going to make a difference. Brittany Glas was the reporter who took up the investigation.

On August 26, 2019, the story went live. It

KSLTV.COM  
**KSL Investigates: Repeat Offender Transferred To Prison**

BREATH OF LIFE GIVE  
OUR WORDS TO SHARE OUR  
STORIES. MAY WE ALL BE BRA  
ENOUGH TO PICK UP THE  
AND WRITE

WWW.APRILTRIBEGIA

*“This picture is me September 2019 finding out FELONY charges are pressed against Bob.”*



made a huge impact. The awareness, the contact, the pictures, the story, the truth was out. He could no longer hide. The community would not tolerate it. We (the victims) were NO LONGER silent by the system. We were standing up, shouting and all could hear it.

This picture is me September 2019 finding out FELONY charges are pressed against Bob. I had no words but one, JUSTICE! My emotional response was so RAW! If he was guilty of these charges, then he would go to State Prison and not the revolving jail system. That meant true safety for the community. It also meant mercy; Bob could finally get the mental help he needed.

The short story? Bob's court dates kept getting bumped for 7 months. However, Bob was booked in the County Jail in August 2019 and remained there until April 23, 2019. If you are counting that is 281 days he served in jail prior to sentencing.

Yesterday, the Reporter wanted my response on the final judgment and asked, “Do you feel the sentencing was enough?” That question was suspended in a sort of time-warp for me. This was what I felt: Should Bob have more time in prison? Yes.

Should it have happened with the 12 other different charges (three of which were felonies but were changed in plea deals)? YES!

But...do I know everything? No.

Do I know that God has a plan for everyone and that His plans are best? Yes.

Does that mean I understand the plan? ...No.

Does that mean I am meant to or supposed to understand them? No (quietly).

Birthday Gift over 12 years in the Making (Now 15 years).

Here is something interesting to note. On Monday, hours before any of this news was shown to me, Heavenly Father inspired me with a quote: "The breath of life gives us our words to share our stories. May we all be brave enough to pick up the pen and write." I smiled as I wrote those words. I think God did too. He knew in a few hours that I would be thrust into the depths of the story again. He knows it all.

JUSTICE. MERCY. FREEDOM. PEACE—were my gifts yesterday! It all came full circle. I started this journey with my children when we escaped seeking justice from the courts for a protective order. We were given that. It worked for us. We were kept safe for twelve years. However, we also saw the system fail victims and that was heartbreaking. Then I was told to write the story in a book to save others.

I was shaking as I started my first draft. I remember praying for help—to be brave! He gave that blessing to me line upon line and precept on precept to know what

to do. When I was prompted to write the letters to the DA's office and to the judge, my hands were steady this time. And finally, when I was told to call the reporters, I spoke with conviction and firmness. I knew that the story would finally be able to change the lives of entire communities.

I was brave. I did it with pen and paper. Trauma was no longer going to keep me a prisoner. The results working through trauma are now ultimately justice and safety—mercy even. What incredible Birthday gifts. To anyone reading this, please stand. Please share your story. Please follow your calling. Trust in God. He will make you brave. He will give you justice. He will give you peace. He did it for us.

By: April T. Giaouque

“JUSTICE. MERCY.  
FREEDOM. PEACE—were  
my gifts yesterday!”



# IN HONOR OF OUR FALLEN HEROES

A hand wearing a brown leather glove holds a single red rose with green leaves against a grey granite monument. The rose is positioned vertically, with its stem resting on the hand and its head pointing upwards. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with green grass and trees.

Tyler Harris  
Michael Lynch  
Gina Ayres  
Juan Wilson  
Mark Miller  
Don Parrish  
Sara Weaver

## HEROES

**"I think a hero is any person really intent on making this a better place for all people."**

**~Maya Angelou**