

## To Our Community,

The holiday's are hard for many people, even in the best of conditions. They stir memories of family members who are no longer with us, can bring financial hardship as we spend just a little too much trying to "show" our children and families how much we love them, and many people try to drown the holiday blues with whatever makes them feel better...sugar, shopping, alcohol...

For Survivors the holidays are overwhelmingly difficult as we are watching the community bustle about preparing for whatever holiday they celebrate this season, seeking anything that will deaden the blow from being **purchased over, and over, and over**. We are forced to put our names on lists to get a free coat or boots this holiday season. The only gift we receive are the basics of what every human needs to survive winter in New England. These necessities don't inspire feelings of love, hope, or joy. **Even amid "The Giving Season" we are forced to accept whatever others decide we need. Even then it is still an exchange. Forced to give our deepest gratitude so we can ensure we don't freeze to death this winter.**

For many Survivors we have been "celebrating" in group homes and institutions since we were children, holiday joy a thing we may never have even experienced. Holidays are a brutal reminder of all we have not, and all that we are not, that we are not welcomed anywhere, that we are forgotten by our community. If we are being honest, most of us have at some point wish we would cease to exist. So we wander the streets waiting for whatever perpetrator will pay to access our bodies.

"The Life" is completely null and void of choice. We don't get to decide whom has access to our bodies, or how much they pay to access it. We don't get to decide that we will or won't "perform" certain acts. Christ, we are lucky if we get to choose the position, we are violated in. When they pick us up we don't get to choose what they do to our bodies, for how much, where they will do it, or for how long. Pretending to enjoy it like we pretend to be grateful for your stupid free coats and boots.

Even when seeking the most basic of human rights like shelter we don't get to choose. We don't get to choose to sleep where we feel most safe whether it be a mat on the kitchen floor or a plastic mattress in a dorm. We don't get to choose what we eat, most of us dining on whatever the shelter or soup kitchen staff decided to cook for us, after their staff picked through and took what they wanted. We are forced to go wherever we are told, eat at the time that they say, go to bed when told to do so and that is IF we are even allowed in out of the cold. We don't get to choose if we celebrate at Grandma's or Auntie's this year our families have long since moved on without us if we even had a family to begin with.

At LIFT we are asking you to help us **Give the Gift of Choice this Holiday Season**. We aren't going to patronize Survivors by condescending to them that all they need and will receive this year are winter jackets and boots because we think that's what they need. Heck no. As a Survivor-Led organization, we promote returning choice and agency to Survivors so they can make decisions for themselves. If they want to purchase fabulous sparkly flip flops and a bikini for the Holiday than so

it will be done. **Allow them to pick whatever sparks joy for them, without judgement, without explanation, without anything expected in return.**

We frequently hear that its not about the material things and that's easy to tell people when you are in a position to want for nothing material. This holiday it is our hope that Survivors can have the ability to make at least a decision for themselves, what do they want for the holiday this year? And it is our hope that you will help us provide access to resources for them to be free to make that choice.

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LIFT is seeking donations of gift cards that will be distributed to Survivors at Jana's Place, HARBOR, and through Street Outreach. Recommended stores and vendors include Target, Walmart, TJ Maxx, Marshalls, Kohls, Sephora, Ulta, Amazon, or Visa Gift Cards. Additionally, gift cards to chains like Dunkin Donuts, McDonalds, CVS, Walgreens, etc. are extremely helpful for the Street Outreach Team to distribute.

In Solidarity,



CEO and Founder