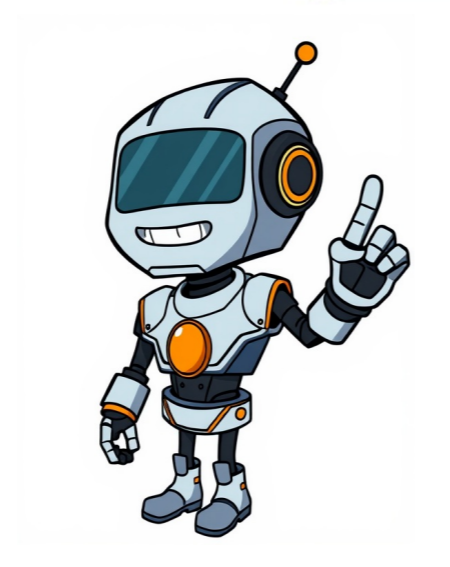


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CoSA's mission is built on restorative justice principles, aiming to reduce sexual victimization by supporting individuals who have committed sexual offenses. This approach helps them lead responsible and accountable lives within their communities. Unlike other platforms that charge fees for transactions, Zeffy offers a unique model where it covers all credit card fees and doesn't charge a platform use fee. Instead, Zeffy suggests a voluntary contribution from donors during the payment step, which is optional and can be adjusted to any amount or even "\$0" if chosen not to support. CoSA stands for Circles of Support and Accountability, a reintegration program inspired by restorative justice principles that assist individuals who have committed sexual offenses to reintegrate into their communities safely. Since its inception in 1994 by a dedicated group of volunteers in Hamilton, Ontario, CoSA has remained committed to its primary goal: No More Victims. Over the years, CoSA sites across Canada have helped thousands of Core Members, supporting them in learning to stop the cycle of harm and establishing a place within their community. CoSA's Circle method fosters honest discussion, support, and accountability through regular one-on-one and group engagement with Core Members, lasting at least one year or longer. The approach encourages Core Members to develop new skills and strategies for fulfilling their life goals while recognizing the impacts of past offenses. By treating them with dignity and respect, CoSA offers an opportunity for change, making reintegration more successful. Studies have shown that those involved in CoSA experience a 70-80% reduced rate of reoffending compared to matched groups without support. With over 30 cities operating across Canada and worldwide, the CoSA model has proven to be highly effective in breaking the cycle of sexual offenses. By providing a safe, meaningful, and engaged life, CoSA motivates Core Members to remain crime-free, preventing further harm. One individual's personal story illustrates CoSA's impact: after learning about the program through an introductory letter and subsequent response from Susan Love, they sought support upon release from prison. Their Circle volunteers provided crucial assistance in finding affordable housing and navigating community resources, ultimately helping them reintegrate successfully into their community. Circles of Support and Accountability help make reintegration less challenging for individuals. I recently benefited from my volunteers' assistance in addressing a personal issue with my father, which had resulted in a 'drift' in our relationship. My volunteers provided guidance to help me become more assertive in expressing my thoughts and feelings to him. We now have a healthier connection. As part of CoSA Ottawa, we've worked with Susan and Emmett on our personal development. The programme has helped us stay honest and work towards positive life choices while offering valuable support. I'm grateful for the volunteers' guidance, which is crucial for individuals looking to change their lives. Their support is vital in creating a safe community. Sexual Offences on Vulnerable People: A Call for Funding and Support The Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA) organization has been a proven, effective prevention strategy against sexual offences on vulnerable people. However, if funding from the federal government is not secured soon, 14 CoSA sites across Canada risk closure or drastically reduce their capacity. This would result in approximately 100 participants losing access to services annually, putting community safety at risk. We urge you to email your local MP to request that CoSA sites in your area and nationwide secure ongoing sustainable funding. Please attach the provided CoSA letter to MPs who received it from CoSA Canada in December 2021. You can find your local MP's contact information by entering your postal code on their website. CoSA Ottawa has recently received financial support from generous donors, including Anonymous Private Foundations, Generous Individuals, and Donate a Car Canada. When you donate your car to CoSA Ottawa through Donate A Car Canada, it will be recycled or sold at auction, depending on its condition, age, and location. This partnership allows for 100% of the donation to go directly to CoSA Ottawa, as Zeffy, the platform managing donations, is 100% free to non-profit organizations. CoSA Ottawa was established in 1998 under St. John the Evangelist Church and became a registered charity in 2013. It has grown into an inclusive, non-sectarian organization guided by a volunteer Board of Directors comprising diverse local citizens. Despite its proven success having lowered recidivism rates by up to 83 per cent CoSA's future remains uncertain due to funding challenges. Susan Love, former executive director of Circles of Support and Accountability, is leading an effort to raise funds for the charity, which only works with former sex offenders to prevent them from harming others. The Ottawa Citizens best journalism, delivered directly to your inbox by 7 p.m. on weekdays. By signing up you consent to receive the above newsletter from Postmedia Network Inc. We encountered an issue signing you up. Please try again. Ottawa is one of 15 cities in the country with a CoSA branch. The Canadian-made program has also taken root in the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, South Korea and parts of Europe. Yet, even though the program has proven its effectiveness, research shows it has lowered recidivism by as much as 83 per cent in the future, remains uncertain because of funding challenges. Federal government support for CoSA ended in 2022 when a five-year Public Safety Canada grant expired. It means the Ottawa branch of CoSA now relies on short-term grants from the Ottawa community, the United Way and the Ontario Thrift Store, along with its own fundraising. But convincing the public to donate to a group that addresses sex offenses has never been an easy sell, says Loveth, chair of an upcoming CoSA gala fundraiser. Further, Ottawa city councillor and mayoral candidate Cathrin Mckenney will be the keynote speaker at the gala on April 26th. Mckenney became familiar with CoSA work while working as a counselor. I became a supporter of the work they do, says Mckenney. Restorative justice is a proven alternative to our more punitive model of justice: It focuses on repairing harm and restoring relationships. Kathleen Weedmark left a higher-paying job earlier this year to take over as program director of Ottawa's CoSA branch because she believed so strongly in the organization's mission. Somebody has to do this work, says Weedmark. Somebody has to offer support. We're dealing with clients that nobody else wants to deal with. This advertisement has not loaded yet. This advertisement has not loaded yet, but your article continues below. Weedmark says all of CoSA's clients have volunteered for the program. They've essentially raised their hands to say, I don't want to do this anymore, but I need help. And I think we have a responsibility as a community to give them help. Research shows many sexual offenses are preventable, and Weedmark says the best way to stop that cycle of sexual violence is to help offenders become productive members of society. We all have a responsibility to stop sexual assault and the way we do it is to support them so that there are no more victims, Weedmark argued. Their success in reintegrating offenders into the community has helped ensure they do not act on dark thoughts or behavioral patterns. The Circle of Support and Accountability (CoSA) approach has proven to be an effective way to reduce recidivism rates among high-risk offenders. After 11 years, Taylor remained in Hamilton without re-offending. A pilot project funded by the Correctional Service of Canada showed a 70% reduction in sexual offenses recidivism rate for 60 high-risk offenders who participated in the program. ARTICLE Zeffy offers an innovative approach to fundraising for nonprofits, deviating from traditional platforms that charge both user fees and transaction fees on every single transaction. Instead, Zeffy provides organizations with 100% coverage of these fees, eliminating the need for a platform use fee. In return, Zeffy suggests a voluntary contribution to donors at the payment stage, allowing them to opt-out or enter an amount of their choice. This model is based on the belief that all nonprofits should have access to 100% of donated funds, with contributions serving as Zeffy's sole revenue source. By covering transaction fees and service costs, these voluntary contributions enable thousands of organizations to acquire high-quality fundraising technology at no cost, saving them up to 4% per donation. This results in a significant budget boost for the over 10,000 organizations that work with Zeffy, thereby amplifying their ability to fulfill their mission to society.

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