

## Wheels of Justice Rides to Make a Difference

by Gregory N. Hoole, Sean D. Reyes, and Sim Gill

One in five children in Utah will be sexually abused before they turn eighteen. Child sex abuse alone costs Utah taxpayers \$1 billion annually. And these numbers do not include the victims of the child sex trade, nor do they say anything about the many other forms of child abuse, such as physical, verbal, and emotional abuse. Wheels of Justice is committed to doing something about this.

### Wheels of Justice

Wheels of Justice is a local cycling club dedicated to ending all forms of child abuse. Wheels of Justice welcomes all types of riders (roadies, mountain bikers, triathletes, commuters, casual riders, etc.) and even non-riders to its team. A nonprofit corporation, it raises money and awareness and provides limited pro bono legal services to support four outstanding organizations making a difference in our community: Prevent Child Abuse Utah (PCAU), Friends of the Salt Lake County Children's Justice Center (Friends of the CJC), Operation Underground Railroad (O.U.R.), and the Utah Domestic Violence Coalition (UDVC). Each of these organizations addresses specific aspects of child abuse. Together, they address all facets and stages of abuse, from prevention to recovery.

### Prevent Child Abuse Utah

The mission of PCAU is to forge and guide a community commitment to prevent child abuse in all forms through education, services, and public awareness. PCAU provides prevention education to both students and adults throughout the state. Its student presentations include child abuse prevention, bullying prevention, internet safety, and healthy relationships. Its adult presentations are geared towards adults working with children and the overall community. It also administers a sexual abuse prevention

training program for parents and caregivers. All of PCAU's education is evidence-informed, age-based, and free of charge.

PCAU's logo is a blue pinwheel. PCAU explains that the pinwheel "represents the carefree and innocent childhood we all wish for the children in our lives. The pinwheel symbolizes the innocence of childhood and the bright, happy future every child deserves."

### Friends of the Salt Lake County Children's Justice Center

The Friends of the CJC is a private nonprofit that provides support to the Salt Lake County Children's Justice Center. The Children's Justice Center (CJC) is a public entity supported by state, federal, and county funding, as well as the caring generosity of donors, sponsors, and grants to provide the best possible care for children, teens, and family members impacted by crime.

The CJC's expert team empowers child abuse victims to become survivors. The team provides crisis support, onsite medical exams, sensitive forensic interview sessions to record their statements, referrals to trauma therapists, client emergency fund, and much more. The Salt Lake County CJC is administered by the Salt Lake County District Attorney to help abused children recover from their experiences and receive support through all phases of the investigation and criminal justice process.

The Utah CJC has almost thirty offices and satellite locations throughout the state. Administered by the Utah Attorney General's Office, the Utah CJC works hand-in-hand with county attorneys in assisting victims of abuse. As noted by the Salt Lake County District Attorney's Office, "It seemed a natural evolution that the two agencies would eventually merge under the same vision for the

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benefit of crime victims” to accomplish the District Attorney’s goal of “no family violence from cradle to grave.” The CJC’s yellow butterfly logo represents “the delicate and beautiful nature of childhood, as well as the empowerment that comes with exercising your wings to fly.”

### **Operation Underground Railroad**

O.U.R. takes its name from the “Underground Railroad” network of secret routes and safe houses established in the United States during the early to mid 19th century to help African American slaves escape to free states and Canada with the aid of abolitionists, who were sympathetic to their cause. O.U.R. has taken on this name as it works to put an end to modern slavery in the form of child sex trafficking. O.U.R.’s Underground Jump Team consists of former CIA, Navy SEALs, and Special Ops operatives that lead coordinated identification and extraction efforts to free children.

Utah’s Attorney General leads the Secure Strike Force and the Utah Trafficking in Persons Task Force, focusing on ending human trafficking in Utah. Sean Reyes is a passionate supporter of O.U.R. and has gone undercover in various countries as part of O.U.R.’s rescue teams. These operations are always carried out in conjunction with law enforcement throughout the world.

Once victims are rescued, a comprehensive process involving justice for the perpetrators and recovery and rehabilitation for the survivors begins. In the past four years of its existence, O.U.R. has rescued 1,765 victims and assisted in the arrests of more than 858 traffickers around the world.

Although O.U.R.’s work extends throughout the world, human trafficking also exists right here in Utah. This prompted the Utah Attorney General’s Office and Governor’s Office to issue a proclamation last year declaring January Human Trafficking Prevention Month in Utah. The goal of the declaration – in addition to remembering victims and commending groups and individuals who work to educate and inspire others – is to “protect the inherent worth of each citizen and human being.”

### **Utah Domestic Violence Coalition**

A lesser-known form of child abuse occurs when children are exposed to domestic violence between adults. Children who witness domestic violence are at serious risk for long-term physical and mental health problems. Children who witness domestic violence are also six times more likely to be involved in domestic violence relationships themselves in adulthood.

UDVC is a nonprofit organization recognized nationally for providing expertise concerning issues of domestic and sexual violence to member programs, community partners, and others in Utah. UDVC proposes, promotes, and advises on policies and practices that enhance victim safety and empowerment while raising awareness of the need for prevention and intervention.

UDVC's team works closely with community-based victim service providers, key stakeholders, policy makers, and community partners to provide comprehensive, trauma-informed, statewide services, and responses. They provide technical assistance and training to member programs, law enforcement, and community partners. They also work with media and others to raise awareness of domestic abuse and the need for prevention and intervention. Finally, they operate a 24-hour confidential hotline known as the LINKLine, 1-800-897-LINK (5465), that offers trauma-informed support and connects survivors, friends, family, service providers, and others to local resources.

### **Making a Difference**

Wheels of Justice provides support to these four stellar organizations in a number of ways, including fundraising through the sale of its team “kit” and other merchandise, which Utah-based DNA Cycling has made available to club members at

a steeply discounted price to assist in this effort. Wheels of Justice also sponsors a bicycle ride every September. The ride, *Ain't No Mountain High Enough*, is not easy. It ascends all five of Salt Lake City's riding canyons (Little Cottonwood, Big Cottonwood, Millcreek, Emigration, and City Creek) in one day. Last year, only a handful finished, but all who participated had a great time. Everyone is welcome and encouraged to participate, even if they want to ride only one or two canyons.

Though the ride is not easy, neither is the fight to put an end to child abuse and help victims. By overcoming this daunting cycling challenge – climbing more vertical feet than the most prominent peak in the continental United States and even more than the Mauna Kea volcano in Hawaii – its members show kids who have been abused that they, too, can overcome any challenge, that victims can become survivors.

Everyone who rides is given a free pancake breakfast at the Black Bear Diner in Sandy, a free finisher's medal courtesy of DNA Cycling (Drive Marketing), and a free water bottle courtesy of UtahBikingLaw.com. The ride is free. Wheels of Justice simply asks that participants consider making a donation to the cause.

The community support for Wheels of Justice has been exceptional and continues to grow. Dominion Energy and a number of Utah-based companies, including Black Diamond Equipment, Diversified Insurance, DNA Cycling, First Endurance, Gregory Mountain Products, Tour of Utah, and Traeger Grills, in addition to virtually every ski resort, have all joined the fight. A number of leading law firms have also signed on as community partners, including ClydeSnow; Feller & Wendt; Gallian Welker & Beckstrom; Goebel Anderson; Holland & Hart; Hoole & King; Kirton McConkie; Lewis Hansen; Maschoff Brennan; Nelson Jones; Richards Brandt Miller Nelson; Snow Jensen & Reece; TraskBritt; and Workman Nydegger.

Joining Wheels of Justice is easy and costs nothing. In fact, just adding your name to the list provides support for the cause. For more information, you can visit the Wheels of Justice website at [www.teamwheelsofjustice.org](http://www.teamwheelsofjustice.org).

In short, perhaps nothing harms our society more than child abuse. We are grateful for PCAU, the Friends of the CJC, O.U.R., and the UDVC, who work hand in hand with our federal, state, county, city, and community partners to eradicate abuse. The solution requires all of us to work together. This is not a partisan issue; it is a humanitarian issue. Any of our loved ones are potential victims, and we all can contribute to the solution. Wheels of Justice offers attorneys an easy and fun way to make a difference. Come, join the team.