



**Women of Courage Virtual Gathering Remarks by Joy Rauls, CACTX CEO
April 9, 2020**

Welcome to our very first virtual WOC gathering. I want to take a moment to thank each of you for what it must have taken to step away from everything this moment is requiring us to do to be with us virtually today. Like many of you I'm homeschooling kids, managing a job and a team remotely...not to mention all the handwashing.

I also want to thank all of our sponsors for believing in us AND staying with us. We need you to power our dreams and we need you to help carry our work through the unique challenges presented by this pandemic.

I wish we were at the Fairmount in downtown Austin right now. Enjoying each other's light and energy and that feeling of hope that comes from knowing there are so many likeminded and passionate women (and men) who will courageously dream big dreams alongside us for our Mission, Vision, and kids.

I was planning to spend this luncheon sharing with you, in some level of detail, the journey our 71 children's advocacy centers (CACs), our team and board have been on since our last gathering. But given the realities of what is going on in the world, what it means for our work, and that we only have you for thirty minutes, I can't take you on that journey today...but what I can do is tell you where the journey has taken us.

We are going to eradicate child sexual abuse in Texas.

That's a really big dream. It actually reflects an expansion of our organization's vision. Several people have told me it's impossible and that there is too much evil in the world, and while it will be hard, and the result will likely not come in our lifetime...there is research that says it is possible.

I thought twice (or maybe 1000 times) about whether to share that big dream with you today...I was worried that I wouldn't be able to work this webcam, or that the medium we are communicating through wouldn't effectively convey how strongly we feel about accepting this challenge, I worried about sharing a dream with you without the plans....and there's probably truth to all of that.

But ultimately I decided share with you what we are planning to do, what we believe we can do—even if you don't get all of the details today—because I couldn't think of a reason or strategy or set of circumstances which justifies withholding hope.

And with all the darkness, pain, and grief the world is suffering right now, I want you to know that there are solutions to big and complex problems, and that there are people with the courage to try.



So, stay tuned...because we will have a more in-depth reveal of what we are working on when we meet, hopefully in person, on August 20th at the Fairmount (so save the date) ...and stay hopeful and courageous for our kids.

And I want to talk to you about what the children of Texas are facing now.

As with each of you, we are recalibrating services and strategy in order to respond to the impact of the coronavirus on our programs.

One of the strategies which ultimately leads to the eradication of child sexual abuse is ensuring that every child impacted by abuse is restored. Our CACs and their partners deliver on that promise every day.

But the implications of COVID-19 have made that challenging. With children home, without access to safe adults, you know who I'm talking about—our teachers—reports to the child abuse hotline are down dramatically and children are not safe, let alone restored. While home is the best place to keep us healthy, it isn't always a place of safety.

In this nearly unparalleled moment in history, we must show up for each other in unparalleled ways.

Please visit our website, www.cactx.org, for resources and tips for how we can all keep children safe and make a difference at this time.

I realize that today I've put two seemingly contradictory ideas before you today:

- that CACs are serving the one in ten children who will be sexually abused before their 18th birthday; and
- that we will eradicate child sexual abuse in Texas.

But while these two things seem contradictory, they can both be true and that's because they are connected to each other and we have to hold space for both.

Thank you for living in that paradox with us today.

I also want to thank you for finding the courage to emotionally be with this issue today. That is a special kind of courage given what the world is experiencing.

We struggled with how to come to you with this the issue of child sexual abuse given everything that is going on. One concept that has helped is the idea of comparative suffering. If you're listening to Brené Brown's new podcast, she covers this the March 27th episode. It's brilliant. She talks



about how we don't have to size up one tragedy against another because empathy and compassion are not in scarcity.

So, I'm going to conclude our time together by flipping that wise advice around a bit. **The way I see it, if there's no scarcity of the empathy and compassion to respond to the world's pain, then there can be no scarcity for the hope that will heal it. Simply put, there's enough empathy, compassion, and hope to go around.**

I'm going to hold to that as we weather this storm and I'm going to ask you to stay with us. Stay curious about our upcoming work; use the resources and tips on our website and share them to keep the kids in your life both safe and healthy; and give hope (in whatever form you can) as you are able.

I'll see you on August 20th.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joy Rauls". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "R".

Joy Rauls, Chief Executive Officer