

Outrage fires fight against shameful crime

Drive to end prostitution of children targets exploiters

By [Gracie Bonds Staples](#)
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You have to love stories like Kaffie McCullough's.

One day she's going about the business of running a nonprofit, reading about the shameful exploitation of little girls, and the next day her whole life is changed.

"I just cried thinking this is not right," said McCullough, recalling the newspaper article.

That men would make children into prostitutes was awful enough. To have them get away with it on a misdemeanor charge was downright shameful.

McCullough rearranged her schedule and the next day joined 400 other women at a forum the article highlighted to address the issue.

Months later in March 2001, pimping a minor became a felony, and giving girls who'd been sexually exploited a hope and a future became McCullough's life.

She talked about her journey recently, about becoming director of A Future. Not A Past, the statewide campaign that was started to end the prostitution of children in Georgia.

Big deal? Yeah it is.

According to a study commissioned by the nonprofit, nearly 300 girls are exploited each month on Georgia streets, through escort services and online.

On a busy night, 109 girls, mostly 12- to 14 year-olds are prostituted, the study found.

McCullough, of Atlanta, said that ending child prostitution depends on increasing the number of exploiters who are brought to justice.

"If we focus only on providing services for victims, then we'll always have victims. They'll just have different faces," she said.

By shifting some of the focus to johns, she hopes to stop demand.

Here's the other thing she's doing and where you can help.

Earlier this year, McCullough said her agency established a scholarship fund in honor of Harold and Kayrita Anderson, an Atlanta couple who donated \$1 million to the Atlanta Women's Foundation, which funds A future. Not a Past (www.afuturenotapast.org).

It's one more tangible way, McCullough said, to show these girls that this isn't just about getting them to dream; it's about giving them the means to achieve their dreams.

Scholarship amounts, she said, will be determined on an individual basis.

You decide how much you want to give but, please, dig deep.

To suggest a story, write Real Living, The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, 6455 Best Friend Road, Norcross, Ga. 30071; e-mail gstaples@ajc.com; or call 770-263-3621