

# Romance Scam Survivors Find Support and Empowerment through Innovative Peer Support Program

ANN ARBOR, MI, UNITED STATES, February 16, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Valentine's Day holds special meaning for many people who believe you can't put a price on love when showing someone how much you care. But for others, it can be a painful reminder of just how costly love can be if you have been the target of a romance scam.



Romance Scams

Cybercrime Support Network (CSN), a public-private nonprofit group supporting individuals and businesses affected by cybercrime and online fraud, recently concluded its inaugural Peer Support Program, created to help individuals impacted by romance imposter scams.

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*Gerri Walsh, President of the  
FINRA Investor Education  
Foundation*

Launched in May 2021 with funding from the FINRA Investor Education Foundation (FINRA Foundation) and sponsored by Early Warning Services, LLC, the network operator of Zelle®, the program helps participants combat feelings of loss, embarrassment and isolation, while teaching cybercrime awareness, education and prevention practices.

“The FINRA Foundation is honored to play a role in bringing this cutting edge and affirming program to fruition,” said Gerri Walsh, President of the FINRA Investor Education Foundation. “We are excited for the continued growth of

this program and are proud of the immensely positive impact it plays in the lives of romance scam survivors.”

The COVID-19 pandemic led many to seek connections and intimacy through virtual means, and scammers were ready to exploit the situation. In 2020, consumers reported nearly 24,000 romance scams to the FBI Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3), a 22% increase from 2019. Moreover, the total losses associated with those complaints exceeded \$600 million, surpassing the 2019 number by more than \$125 million.

The Peer Support Program is facilitated in collaboration with Give an Hour, a nonprofit focused on providing mental health education as well as barrier-free access to mental health care from licensed professionals. Participants engage in ten, weekly group sessions—offered at no cost—in a safe, virtual environment, allowing individuals to connect with others across the country who have had similar experiences. Participants are guided through a defined course curriculum centered around identification of fraud and scams, as well as education on general cybersecurity best practices.

After graduating from the program, course participants expressed feelings of empowerment and support from peers with shared experiences. One graduate shared, “I have found strength and dignity to move forward in a positive way.” Another added, “When I told my truth about my horrible experience, there was no judgment on anyone's part.”

“Give an Hour is a proud partner of CSN’s Peer Support Program, a partnership that provides help and hope to romance scam survivors. Our generous mental health providers not only work with CSN to support survivor recovery but to also reduce the risk of revictimization. Together, we are combating the emotional suffering associated with these crimes within a safe and supportive community of care,” said Trina Clayeux, PhD, CEO of Give an Hour.

For more information on CSN's Peer Support Program and access to resources for romance scam survivors, visit: [www.fightcybercrime.org/peer-support](http://www.fightcybercrime.org/peer-support).

#### About Cybercrime Support Network

Cybercrime Support Network (CSN) is a public-private, 501(c)(3) nonprofit collaboration whose mission is to serve individuals and businesses impacted by cybercrime. With the strong support of our sponsors, Craig Newmark Philanthropies - AT&T - Cisco Systems - Comcast - Deloitte - Early Warning - FINRA Foundation - Google - Microsoft - Navy Federal Credit Union - Security Studio - Trend Micro - Tripwire - Zelle, CSN can continue to support individuals and small businesses through FightCybercrime.org, a resource database for those impacted by cybercrime and online fraud, and ScamSpotter.org, a website to help identify scams and stop fraudsters. For more information, please visit: [www.Cybercrimesupport.org](http://www.Cybercrimesupport.org).

#### About the FINRA Investor Education Foundation

The FINRA Investor Education Foundation supports innovative research and educational projects that give underserved Americans the knowledge, skills and tools to make sound financial decisions throughout life. For more information about FINRA Foundation initiatives, visit [www.finrafoundation.org](http://www.finrafoundation.org).

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