

## Kindness Gems in Pacific Beach helps raise funds for sex trafficked victims

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Kindness Gems necklaces with Citrine, Garnet, Goldstone, Lapis Lazuli, Aquamarine.

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*Bri Downes and Julia Freifeld*

For three years, Julia Freifeld was a crisis counselor for survivors of sexual violence. She worked with her clients while also pursuing her own education at California Polytechnic State University.

Feeling, as she described, “emotionally burnt out,” Freifeld looked for another way she could invest in the victims she cared for while still maintaining “my own inner peace.” That’s when she started a sea-glass-based jewelry company called Jewels for Change.

“I felt like sea glass symbolized the journey of going through rough ocean waters and then coming out this beautiful and resilient survivor,” said Freifeld.

The young entrepreneur would sell her jewelry to raise money for local nonprofits and charities. After discovering Healing Gemstones—a practice that’s been highly utilized along California’s coast—Freifeld transitioned Jewels for Change to Kindness Gems her senior year. She took on the company full time after graduating in 2017.

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“Gemstones have such a capacity to heal people and make people feel like the best versions of themselves,” said Freifeld, who now lives in Ocean Beach and heads Kindness Gems from her office in Pacific Beach.

“I’ve always felt jewelry is a super sentimental thing. You go on vacation and you get a necklace there that will always remind you of that trip. Jewelry has an emotional tie as well and I feel like I’ve met so many people who have a necklace that their great grandmother gave them or even how a wedding ring is this significant symbol of love.”

Partnering with another local jewelry enthusiast Bri Downes, who Freifeld met at Ocean Beach’s weekly farmers market, Kindness Gems sells necklaces, rings and earrings decorated in Citrine, Rose Quartz, Aquamarine, Moonstone and many others.

“There are times where I have people at a booth for 45 minutes telling me their stories, their struggles...and I’m able to get to know each of them very personally,” said Downes. “That’s what makes this business so incredibly special.”

Operating online and through farmers markets in Ocean Beach, Sea Port and Gaslamp, Kindness Gems also donates 20 percent of all their proceeds to help AIDS survivors and sex trafficked victims.

“We want to give back to the many different organizations that are doing so much good in the world,” said Freifeld. “We work on a quarterly basis where we choose a philanthropic project to work with. This quarter we’re working with organizations that give support to people with AIDS.”

Next quarter, Freifeld and Downes will partner with nonprofits helping survivors of sexual violence, such as Generate Hope San Diego, RISE and the Community Resource Center in Encinitas.

“What I absolutely love about this company is, once we’ve chosen an awareness project to support, then begins us learning all about the different organizations,” said Freifeld. “It’s a process of us understanding the issue, how it’s being tackled and supporting their journey through our jewelry.”

Kindness Gems also gets their pieces out to the community through wholesales with Earth Elements, a store front located in Carlsbad, Encinitas and Los Angeles. Since the business is one founded on compassion, Freifeld and Downes have also started a 24-hour act-of-kindness discount. Customers who purchase jewelry in person at a Kindness Gems booth or wholesale will fill out a slip at checkout, committing to an act of kindness within 24 hours and get a 10 percent discount on their purchase.

“We’re not going to follow people around and make sure they do what they say they’ll do,” said Freifeld. “It’s all about getting people excited about giving back and, in return, getting a healing piece of jewelry that signifies their kindness and compassion.”

She added, “Whether or not you believe in the healing power of these gemstones, these rocks are working to change lives.”

Customers can catch Freifeld and Downes selling their Kindness Gems jewelry at the Ocean Beach Farmers Market every Wednesday, at Seaport Village’s on Saturdays and in Gaslamp on Sundays. Those looking to buy online can go to

kindnessgems.com and use the promo code: SPREADKINDNESS.

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