

CHARLOTTE'S HIDDEN CRIME

The Underground World Of Human Trafficking



Charlotte is home to one of the fastest growing criminal industries worldwide.

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In Charlotte we celebrate the very same things that put the Queen City on an unfavorable list that most are unaware. Many of the characteristics that attract a growing population, such as a stable economy, a vibrant sporting scene and access to a sprawling coastline, also provide the foundation for a horrible hidden crime.

Ranking 9th in the country and number one in the state, Charlotte is home to an underground world of human trafficking – and one of the fastest growing criminal industries worldwide.

MODERN DAY SLAVERY

Human trafficking is the illegal trade of human beings, mainly for purposes of sex trafficking or forced labor. According to Brenda Livingston, Director of Women's Ministries at Central Church in Charlotte, it's everywhere. "It's happening in hotels all over Charlotte," said Livingston. "It's the mission of our ministry to raise awareness and money to end this injustice."

Livingston was able to put a name and face to this horrible crime when she met a woman in her congregation, now married with children, who was trafficked at age 18. "When you can put a face to it, it becomes very real." Livingston started efforts in her church to help those fighting on the front lines, including community fundraisers and a call center, with FBI trained volunteers, to reach out to underage victims behind the online ads. The most at-risk victims are young girls with a history of abuse and neglect – the average age is just 12.

ADVOCATES FOR CHANGE

Several groups in Charlotte are working hard to end this injustice. They meet in church spaces at



How You Can Help

To support efforts to raise awareness and put an end to human trafficking in Charlotte, check out these websites to access more information:

presentageministries.org lilypad-haven.org
 justiceministries.org A21.org
 polarisproject.org Vigilantetruth.com

Get Involved to Make a Difference

Please consider being a sponsor, making a donation or participating in these community events to help stamp out human trafficking:

THE BALLANTYNE BALL – FEBRUARY 11, 2017

The 3rd annual masquerade ball benefits Lily Pad Haven which provides safety, housing and services for victims of human trafficking. To learn more about the Ballantyne Ball and Lily Pad Haven, visit ballantyneball.org.

PURE RELIGION 5K – APRIL 22, 2017

Help stamp out human trafficking at Central Church's 7th annual Pure Religion 5K to promote awareness and fight against human trafficking. Sponsors are needed, so sign up now at centralinc.org/reach-out/pure-religion.

Pure and genuine religion in the sight of God the Father means caring for orphans and widows in their distress, and refusing to let the world corrupt you. – James 1:27

a quarterly Human Trafficking Summit to share resources and amplify important messages to their respective constituents.

These groups include: Present Age Ministries; On Eagles Wings; Justice Ministries; Vigilante Truth, Lily Pad Haven, and members of church ministries who all work to educate, inform and empower change to end Human Trafficking. Charlotte is so high on the list that it attracted a field office for A21, a global organization that works to end trafficking in the twenty-first century.

These groups work tirelessly to rescue victims, provide Safe Houses, educate children and the public. For example, Lily Pad Haven, founded in 2012, just opened their fourth Safe House to provide emergency and transitional housing for girls 18 years and older. They caught the attention of Kat Belk, of the Belk Department store family, who challenged her friends to honor her 90th birthday by raising \$90 thousand dollars for Lily Pad Haven. She managed to raise \$135 thousand in fact, to further the cause.



"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

– Margaret Mead

BELIEVE THAT YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Janice McKelvey also attends the quarterly Summit and leads an "End Human Trafficking" ministry at William's Chapel Methodist Church. Her group helps unite Charlotte-area churches in an annual prayer vigil.

"It is time to tell the world that this injustice deserves attention and call to action ways to help," said McKelvey. "There is so much more that we can do if more people knew about the problem in our community and around the world." ■