



IN OUR OWN BACKYARD

a closer look at
SEX Trafficking
in Hampton Roads

Plus ...
Inspiration
Help/Assistance
Encouragement
Support Groups



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Imagine what a lifetime of sexual abuse could do to a person's soul?

The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children estimates that more than 100,000 children in the United States are victims of sex trafficking. Sadly, too many people in Hampton Roads are still oblivious to the number of young girls and boys being transported to Hampton Roads for the purpose of performing sex acts.

Just three months ago, two North Carolina women brought a 13-year-old girl to Virginia to work as a prostitute. Whitney Rachell Hayes and Rachael Michelle Masingene pleaded guilty to a lesser charge of transporting a minor across states lines for prostitution.

In July of last year, Roberto Darden of Newport News and Ujima Crudup of Hampton were arrested for taking advantage of a vulnerable teen and blackmailing her into prostitution. The indictment, says that these two men received money in exchange for sex acts performed by the 13-year-old girl. They took the young girl to hotels around Hampton Roads, giving her alcohol and illegal drugs, and then videotaped her as she engaged in sex acts with customers.

Virginia gang members have found a gold mine in sex trafficking.

Juarez-Santamaria, a leader in the Pino Locos clique of the MS-13 gang, prostituted a 12-year-old girl in Virginia, Washington, D.C., and Maryland. In addition to prostituting the victim for cash, he allowed various MS-13 members to rape her, and forced her to use marijuana and alcohol prior to the sex acts. Juarez was sentenced to life imprisonment in October of 2011.

Another convicted gang member, Amaya (a.k.a. "Murder") was an MS-13

member who sexually exploited three girls, running a juvenile prostitution business. He recruited clients and provided security at the appointments, which included carrying a machete. Amaya threatened the juveniles - who were runaways - and physically assaulted them if they did not have sex with his clients.

Alexander Rivas took control over two female runaways and pressured them into serving as prostitutes. Every Friday and Saturday night, he would have approximately 100 clients lined up to pay for sex with these two young girls.

Another Virginia Gang, the Underground Gangster Crips lured seven high school girls using social networking sites like Facebook and MySpace, into prostitution, and trafficked these young girls throughout Virginia exploiting the juveniles for sex.

These are just the stories that made it into the headlines in Hampton Roads and around Virginia. There are hundreds of similar stories that will never be told.

These girls were physically, mentally and spiritually raped. Children don't wake up one morning and decide they are going to become prostitutes. Girls who are being pushed and forced into the sex trade, are younger than ever. They are no longer foreigners illegally imported for sexual exploitation, but are just as likely to be the girl next door who is being victimized and forcibly raped. Girls as young as twelve are being offered sexually to "johns" in massage parlors, along street corners and bars, advertised with ads on Internet social networking sites like Craigslist/Backpage.com, or cataloged like merchandise by Escort Services.

The Church Guide first exposed the nasty presence of sex trafficking in the Hampton Roads area in a feature article presented in our March 2011 issue. If you would like to read that article and gain a better understanding of this horrible injustice to so many girls and boys, please visit www.TheChurchGuide.com and click "Featured Articles." Many thanks to Patrick and Lori McKenna with the Virginia Beach Justice Initiative and Jennifer Wakefield with Tears In Action Project, on the information provided to help write this follow-up.

These girls, teens and women have the same act done to them over and over until there is not a shred left of who they were created to be. No amount of human retribution or compensation could ever be given to these women to heal the wounds created by the abuse of their wicked, greedy captors.

The criminals who attempt to recruit or exploit your children into sex slavery, leer around shopping malls and schools; they post on social media or dating sites, and sometimes the naive teen is simply tricked or lied to by peers or family members.

Sadly, when caught in the act, these raped teenagers are seen as criminals ... labeled as prostitutes and not as victims.

These hurting, sexually abused young women are looking for hope and freedom and desire a new life.

So why doesn't she just walk away?

Where would she go? Pretend we live an ideal world where ... her trafficker doesn't know where her family lives. He hasn't threatened to steal a younger brother or sister or kill her parents. She's not hand-cuffed to the bed frame; she's not so weak or drugged that she can't get up. Why can't she just walk away?

If she's a minor who can't go home because of an abusive family, she could get lucky and be placed into a foster care program that is not designed to help teenagers with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Just as likely, she'll go to juvie. But who would she talk to? She's been told by her pimps that cops cannot be trusted, and she's seen that played out. The good ones will send her to jail for the night, take all her clothes as evidence, and release her to the streets in the morning with nothing but a prison uniform. Not because they're cruel, but because there are no other resources or ministerial outreaches to help.

If she's no longer a minor, her options are even slimmer. She has no other marketable skills. She has no money, no place to live. What is she supposed to live on? She would go from a skanky apartment with food in the fridge and a life of abuse to the streets, where she'd still be vulnerable to abuse, but also to weather and starvation. And if her trafficker has carefully brought a drug addiction into the situation (because who would want this life without some kind of escape) how would she get clean?

That is the bleak picture. Sex trafficking is not a victimless crime, and the victims need our help.

Behaviors of a survivor

When trying to understand the complexity of a sexually exploited survivor's mental and emotional state, you must understand the trauma she has endured. Often, the trafficker or pimp will break a girl's will in order to prepare her for prostitution and

separation from her previous life which is accomplished through the use of several methods including physical and sexual violence, manipulation, isolation, coercion, threats, starvation, beatings, rape, gang rape, threats of violence to the victim's family, forced drug use and emotional abuse (AFNAP Provider Project). Additionally, studies have found that there is a correlation between sexual and physical violence and negative health behaviors such as substance abuse, risky sexual practices, depression, and suicide attempts.

Should Christians get involved?

American Christians, who understand the incomprehensible scandal and moral horror of sex trafficking must recognize that this is an issue of high moral and spiritual priority.



We must demand the enforcement of laws meant to protect human beings from being sold into sexual slavery and/or sexually exploited, and the vigorous prosecution of those who are engaged in sex trafficking. We must demand that any American involved in such activities be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law, and that every effort be made to release women and young people from sexual slavery.

The Bible gives us some direction when it comes to helping such victims.

One of the condemnations that God held against Israel when He exiled them from the promised land was their treatment of sojourners, widows, and orphans:

Thus says the LORD: Do justice and righteousness, and deliver from the hand of the oppressor him who has been robbed. And do no wrong or violence to the resident alien, the fatherless, and the widow, nor shed innocent blood in this place. (Jeremiah 22:2-3)

Sex-trafficking is not only prostitution and rape, but oftentimes it is

the method by which girls and boys are kidnapped or stolen away from their parents and made sex slaves (thus essentially an orphan is created). It is also injustice to sojourners (because many times these are children from other countries). As believers we must stand up for the rights of those who can't stand up for themselves. You could be their last hope.

Who in Hampton Roads is doing something about it?

In The Church Guide's original expose some eighteen months ago, there was very little being done in the Hampton Roads area specifically addressing sex and human trafficking. But praise God, there has been an increase in the number of ministries and organizations coming together to combat this problem and assist its victims.

Survivors Not Victims

SNV is local organization founded by Veronica Thomas. A survivor herself of childhood sexual abuse, SNV helps local victims of sexual abuse overcome the psychological stigma and empowers them to become survivors and overcomers through education, counseling and training. (757) 251-2441 or visit www.HelpingSurvivors.com

Sought Out

Sought Out is a ministry serving Hampton Roads since 1987. Founded to stand alongside churches and individuals promoting relational and sexual wholeness. Sought Out asserts that freedom is possible and readily available for persons struggling in broken relationships, issues of abuse, sexual addictions, and unwanted same-sex attraction and/or homosexuality. Contact Rev. Bob Price (757) 679-6456 or you can email bob@soughtout.org.

Tears In Action Project

Tears in Action strives to be world changers. Members choose to seek justice, and strive to be a voice for the voiceless and the hope for the hopeless. They are working to raise awareness of human and sex trafficking. Contact: Jennifer Wakefield tearsinaction@gmail.com

Jewels for God

This company near Fredericksburg, helps rescued victims from sex slavery and trains them in how to start their own business making beautiful jewelry and other items, which they then market in the United States. The company is called Jewels for God, as the rescued women are God's jewels and of great value, even as they have been devalued by men - but also because of the lovely jewelry they make. For more information visit the website www.Jewels4God.com

Area Domestic Violence Ministries and Shelters supporting victims of sex exploitation and trafficking

HER Shelter for Domestic Violence (Help & Emergency Response)

The H.E.R. Shelter is a private, non-profit agency, certified by the United Way of South Hampton Roads, and the statewide coalition, Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance (VSDVAA). They have a 24-hour emergency hotline where a trained advocate can assist individuals in need with information, referrals, or when appropriate, can provide safe, emergency housing for a woman and her children. H.E.R. provides programs to help women become self sufficient. They serve the cities of Portsmouth and Chesapeake.

Contact: Beth Ross, 757-485-1445 beth@hershelter.com, 24 hour hotline: 757-485-3384 www.hershelter.com

Domestic Violence Prevention Ministry

D.V.P.M. is a ministry of advocacy and resources to battered women and their children within the Apostles family and our community. They are an outreach of Apostles Lutheran Church, 370 Johnstown Rd., Ches. Contact: Mary Lou Taylor 757-547-4692 or 757-421-2162. All calls are confidential!

Our House Families

Through financial assistance and financial literacy, Our House Families helps prevent homelessness. By providing tangible resources to families in crisis, they help families avoid homelessness, eviction or essential utility cutoff.

OHF also works with the VBJI and provides emergency shelter, transitional housing, counseling, education and other comprehensive programs to help homeless families make the very challenging transition from homelessness to home. They provide a safe place to live and help people work through the often-complex & difficult circumstances that caused them to become homeless. 405 D Street, Chesapeake, VA Contact: 757-545-4075 www.ourhousefamilies.org

Samaritan House

Samaritan House is committed to fostering personal safety, growth and self-sufficiency in adults and their children through the freedom from domestic abuse and homelessness. They also partner with the Virginia Beach Justice Initiative in providing housing for trafficked victims when needed.

2620 Southern Blvd. Virginia Beach Contact: (757) 631-0710 24 hr Hotline: (757) 430-2120

Others taking an active role in combating sex trafficking and providing help and assistance to past victims are: Awaken Church in Virginia Beach, CHKD, Release Me Ministries, Regent's Center for Global Justice, and Westminster Reformed Presbyterian in Suffolk.

National Hotlines, Help and Assistance

National Human Trafficking Resource Center
1-888-373-888

The National Human Trafficking Resource Center (NHTRC) is a national, toll-free hotline, available to answer calls from anywhere in the country, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, all year.

The NHTRC is a program of Polaris Project, a non-profit, non-governmental organization working exclusively on the issue of human trafficking.

They are not a government entity, law enforcement or an immigration authority.

National Trafficking Hotline
1-888-373-7888

This human trafficking hotline will help you determine if you have encountered victims of human sex trafficking, will identify local resources available in your community to help victims of sex trafficking, and will help you coordinate with local social service organizations to help protect and serve trafficking victims so they can begin the process of restoring their lives.

International Justice Mission
703-465-5495

IJM is a human rights agency that brings rescue to victims of slavery, sexual exploitation and other forms of violent oppression. IJM lawyers, investigators & aftercare professionals work with local officials to secure immediate victim rescue and aftercare, to prosecute perpetrators and to ensure that public justice systems - police, courts and laws - effectively protect the poor. www.ijm.org

And lastly ...

What happens to the traffickers if caught?

You might be wondering what happens to the recruiters or pimps if they are caught. If you are a victim, you have probably been threatened so many times that you live in fear of your pimp, and begin to believe they will never be caught or punished. Your hope has been stripped away, just like your clothes, self-esteem, and everything else.

Sex trafficking is a federally prosecutable crime. Under all current state laws, sex traffickers are sentenced to life in prison without parole if their victims were under the age of 14, or if the sex trafficking resulted in death, kidnapping, or sexual abuse (all ages). Because of the criminal nature of most recruiters and pimps, even if their sentence for sex trafficking was at a minimum of 20 years in prison, other sentences can be stacked on top of it, ensuring that they will never be able to hurt another woman or child again. Reintegration into society hardly plays a role for recruiters and pimps, because they are in most cases sentenced to life behind bars.

The bulk of the cases where child sex trafficking victims have been rescued have come through the quiet observation of someone in the public noticing something out of the ordinary, taking action and getting involved.

Upcoming Events you may want to be a part of ...

Virginia Beach Citizen's Crime Prevention Steering Committee is going to be hosting a Human Trafficking symposium on January 15.

Virginia Wesleyan is hosting a free screening of the film, "Sex + Money," a documentary about domestic sex trafficking. The film will be shown on Monday December 10 at 7 pm.

Saving Sam



Working with the Virginia Beach Justice Initiative over the past year or two has been a complete blessing. I have been able to be a part of the awareness event, lobby with legislators, public speaking engagements and even working with a victim.

A few months ago, I spent some time with a victim in Hampton Roads. Sam* was trafficked from Atlanta, to South Carolina, North Carolina and finally Hampton Roads. Her "boyfriend" (pimp) moved her at 17 from military base to military base because "that's where the money's at" she told me.

Even until I dropped her off at the bus station to return to her hometown while he was in jail, she was in love and anticipated his release. As an activist and advocate, this was hard for me to stomach, but I realized it's not my place to talk her out of love with her pimp ... it was my place to show her God's love.

In the 12 hours I spent with Sam*, we searched for her belongings at the hotel that she was working out of ... sadly all of her things were gone. All she had were the clothes on her back, her cell phone and a Bible that she carried with her.

Her services had been offered on backpage.com (a common place for this) and she was pressured to service between 10-15 men a day, but admitted that she liked the money and felt addicted to it.

Talking about her family made her cry. Sitting with her while she called her family to tell them she was coming home, made me cry. It was a joyous occasion.

As she called each of her sisters and parents, they all spoke with such enthusiasm and anticipation to see her. Suddenly, the cold hard young women freshly out of jail became this tender hearted little girl, with a family that loved her and a hope for a new future. It was the most beautiful thing to witness.

As I dropped her off, we hugged and she asked what my actual name was. I asked her how she saved my number in her phone and she told me "My life saver."

We both cried and said our goodbyes. I explained that this season in her life is just that ... a time period that was ending and that the Lord loves her the exact same as He did before she was in "the life". There is nothing you can ever do to make the Lord love you less. She smiles with tears streaming down her face and got on the bus. I stayed until the bus left, she waved and texted me each and every state to let me know she was okay and finally when she was home. She'll probably never know that she touched my life just as much as I touched her. You can train for years but nothing can prepare you for the first hand story of a victim and a hug from a broken child of God.

*Name changed for confidentiality.

By Jennifer Wakefield
Tears In Action Project



Sam looking out over the Pembroke/Town Center area