

Sex TRAFFICKING IN HAMPTON ROADS

Feature by Ray Boetcher

The program, "48 Hours" reported the story of five-year-old Shaniya Davis who was reported missing in Fayetteville, NC. Her body was later found dumped along North Carolina Highway 87.

She was last seen alive on security video cameras at the Comfort Suites hotel in Sanford. There she was seen walking hand-in-hand with 29 year-old Mario McNeill. He would later be held for her murder. Shaniya's mother was arrested for prostituting this precious, little girl into sexual servitude.

This is just one story of young people being sexually exploited & trafficked all over the world. The multi-billion dollar child sex trafficking industry exploits the poorest of the poor by forcing hundreds of thousands of children to sell themselves in order to survive.

There are many ways that a child or teen might be sexually exploited. A victim of the child sex trade may be forced into prostitution, sex trafficked, or exploited via child/teen pornography.

Sex trafficking is defined as transportation of a child, teen, male or female to another place for the purpose of forced sexual labor.

Child pornography is the sale or distribution of any sexually explicit representations of children. Other forms of child sex exploitation include underage marriage, and child sex tourism. Child sex tourism occurs when tourists visit cities with the explicit purpose of sexually exploiting children. Travel agencies regularly organize sex tours for such clients.

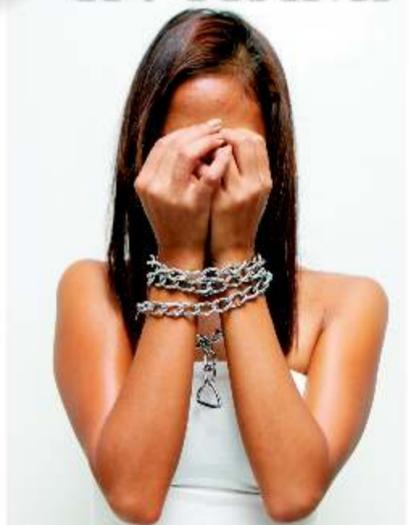
Shared Hope International reports that an under-aged prostitute, working five nights a week, could over the course of five years find herself "raped" by 6,000 men. Children exploited through prostitution typically are given a quota by their trafficker/pimp of 10-15 buyers per night ... though some service providers report girls having been sold to as many as 45 buyers in a night at peak demand times, such as a major sporting event or convention.

Worldwide, there are an estimated 31 million people trafficked for sex every single year. Of that number, at least 3 million are children. Many of these children will be raped 30, 40, even 50 times per day. And yes, it happens right here in the United States.

The State Department has filed an annual report for the last 10 years on the rise of sex trafficking. The United States is now included among the countries of the world that fail to meet preventative human sex-trafficking measures.

Sex trafficking is a subject that makes many people feel uncomfortable. But if you want to know what uncomfortable is, think of the lives of the women and children forced into it.

Sex trafficking is a brutal crime that lurks in the shadows and thrives on secrecy. Its victims are typically isolated and face a horrific life of psychological manipulation, threats, rape, and beatings. Sometimes they are physically restrained, sleeping in cages or behind locked



SELLING THE Girl NEXT DOOR

Photo by Mitch Mauricio

doors. Other times, the chains are psychological. They live a life of total submission, stripped of their freedoms, they are slaves forced into all kinds of sexual depravity for the financial profit of their traffickers. They feel unloved; they have no hope; they live in fear and shame; they feel there is no way out; they live a life of despair and are physically or psychologically forced into total submission.

The FBI has identified the beltway around Washington, D.C. as one of the 14 major sex trafficking centers in the United States. According to the Washington, D.C.-based anti-trafficking group The Polaris Project, there were 77 massage parlors in the region where sex acts were marketed with trafficked women. Its D.C. arm has already prosecuted 35 traffickers and rescued over 70 victims.

Part of the problem is that Virginia has no state legislation defining and criminalizing human trafficking as a specific crime. Instead, under the current legislation, the concept of human trafficking is somewhat embedded under the abduction law.

Just recently, Maryland and Washington D.C. passed anti-trafficking laws. As a result,

According to a CNN report, sex trafficking is often hidden under the listings for escort services. Typically if a minor is involved, the listing describes the escort as being "new," "young," "naive," or "fresh." With Latino gangs beginning to enter into sex trafficking, a red flag should go up when you read a young Latino being promoted as "visiting" the area for short time period.

Each summer, resort cities like Virginia Beach and the Outer Banks are flooded by an influx of Eastern European women working at restaurants and hotels.

This past year, news surfaced that many of these men and women were recruited to work at local Virginia Beach hotels. Once they arrived in Virginia Beach the horror began. They were forced to live 12 to 15 in an apartment. Their salaries were confiscated by the trafficker to cover living and travel expenses. These young people were tricked into working as slave labor.

The trafficker, Victor Krus was arrested and convicted, but not for trafficking. He was charged with tax fraud, visa fraud and money laundering.

There is also a report of young women being tricked into becoming sex slaves. According to a story on humantrafficking.org ... in the spring of 2004, Katya (not her real name), and a friend had gotten a summer job in Virginia Beach through the foreign exchange program. Looking forward to coming to America, the land of opportunity, Katya and her friend Lena arrived at Dulles. They were relieved to be met by fellow countrymen who spoke Russian.

The two men, Alex Maksimenko and Michael Aronov, were holding signs with the girls' names and greeted them by taking their bags and luggage. Charming and reassuring, Aronov informed the girls that they had been reassigned to a job in Detroit where they would waitress and perfect their English language skills.

The men drove Katya and Lena to the Greyhound bus station and gave them tickets to Detroit. Confused and exhausted, the girls had no reason to question the change of plans.

"When we got to the hotel in Detroit, everything changed," says Katya. "They closed the door and sat us down on the couch, took our passports and papers and said, you owe us big money for bringing you here. They gave us strip clothes and told us that we were going to be working at a strip club called 'Cheetahs.'"

To compound the problem, the most liberal of governmental supported agencies in our state may even overlook the illegality of sex trafficking.

Last month, news reports of video tapes taken at four Virginia Planned Parenthood facilities, allegedly showed its staff members eager to assist two people claiming to run a sex trafficking ring and desiring abortions for the young girls they were prostituting. The video footage showed that the Virginia Planned Parenthood staff at these abortion facilities were not alarmed when the alleged sex traffickers wanted to make arrangements for abortions and STD testing. Giving birth control and STD testing for underage prostitutes was no problem.

Is this what we as Virginians & as Christians should expect? The only acceptable response should have been to call law enforcement officials immediately and investigate & arrest the self-identified sex-traffickers of underage girls.

The BIG question is, "has this problem of sex trafficking spread to Hampton Roads?" One only has to read the classified listings on Backpage.com or EscortDater.com to get an idea of how sex might be marketed in our area.

Shocked and scared, the two women were subjected to physical, mental and sexual abuse over the next year as they were forced to work 12 hour shifts stripping for local Detroit men's clubs. According to immigration customs agent Angus Lowe, the men controlled the women through intimidation with guns and threats to hurt family members back home.

In Northern Virginia and Richmond, Latino women are often tricked into responding to ads with promises of immigration papers and money if they take "erotic" jobs in the area. The ads also lure teenage girls who run away from home and end up in prostitution rings.

It can happen (and probably is happening here) in Virginia Beach. The Church Guide printed an expose on teenage homelessness in Hampton Roads last year, and reported that there are as many as 500-800 homeless teens in Virginia Beach during the summer months. It was estimated that approximately 3000 or more homeless teens may be hidden in plain sight throughout all of Hampton Roads. An alarming result of homelessness in teens is that they often turn to sex as a way to survive.

Furthermore, according to the 2010 Census, the Hampton Roads area had a significant increase in the number of Latinos now living in our area. Like those in northern Virginia, these immigrants are equally vulnerable to false promises of green cards, and could easily find themselves prey to pimps and traffickers.

Because Virginia does not compile statistics on sexual trafficking, there is no measure of the seriousness of sexual trafficking in Hampton Roads. But all indications are that its here.

What can we as Christians do to help rid our region of sex trafficking?

Christianity bears a message of hope and restoration. As Christians we are often the people who come to the aide of those most in need. No matter if its rescuing abandoned babies left to starve, protecting the unborn, or rescuing those

being sexually exploited, we Christians should provide ministry, love, compassion, and understanding, which is so desperately needed.

The remainder of this article is not about the need to get behind legislation in Virginia to outlaw and punish human trafficking, nor is it about regulating and controlling pornography, strip clubs, massage parlors or any other façade for sex exploitation. We want to address what we as Christians should be doing to help the victims who have suffered from years of sexual bondage.

"Verily I say unto you, In as much as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." — Matthew 24:40

Stop for a minute and think, "how would you react if someone abducted your sister or daughter and/or manipulated them, forced them, exploited them sexually?"

How would you feel if the abductor sold her as a slave to sex traffickers?

For families who fall victim to this horrific fate, it is a never-ending nightmare. They rarely ever see their loved one again. If it were to happen to you, how would you ever find peace?

For many children who dare to tell of sexual violations against them, the result is often disbelief, especially if the accused abuser is a family member or a "respectable" adult within the family circle.

Sometimes, the telling in itself has dire consequences for the child ... with punishment from the confidante to shunning by other family members ... to serious physical harm from the abuser. Many children will never divulge these incidences because they have been threatened by the assaulter with danger to themselves or others if they ever say anything.

The worse part is society often sees them, and treats them as "a prostitute" not as a victim. ... **It's not their fault!!** Let these girls, boys, young men and women know that the Church is a place of refuge and hope. It is a place where they can come for help. Welcome them. Protect them. Create a ministry or an outreach to rescue these young people. Share the love of Christ.

There is only ONE shelter in the United States designed specifically to meet the needs of trafficking victims, and it only houses seven to nine victims. Can your parish, denomination or church provide a regional safe house? You can fight trafficking by paying attention to your surroundings and reporting any suspected trafficking activities to the police.

ItsNotMyFault.org provides the following signs to help you spot possible sex trafficking:

- Is not free to leave or come and go as he/she wishes
- Is under 18 years of age and is providing commercial sex acts
- Is in the commercial sex industry and has a pimp/manager
- Is unpaid, paid very little, or paid only through tips



There are more people being bought and sold at this moment, than in the entire 300-year history of the Atlantic Slave Trade.



- Owes a large and/or increasing debt and is unable to pay it off
- Works excessively long and/or unusual hours. Is not allowed breaks or suffers under unusual restrictions at work
- Was recruited through false promises concerning the nature and conditions of his/her work.
- Is living or working in a location with high security measures (e.g. opaque, boarded up windows, security cameras, etc.)
- Exhibits unusually fearful, anxious, depressed, submissive, tense, or nervous/paranoid behavior
- Exhibits unexplained injuries or signs of prolonged/untreated illness or disease
- Appears malnourished
- Shows signs of physical and/or sexual abuse, physical restraint, confinement, or torture
- Has few or no personal possessions. Is not in control of his/her own money, and/ or has no financial records.
- Is not in control of his/her own identification documents. (e.g. ID, passport, or visa)
- Is not allowed or able to speak for him/herself (e.g., a third party may insist on being present and/or interpreting)
- Has been "branded" by a trafficker (e.g. a tattoo of the trafficker's name)
- Claims to be "just visiting" and is unable to clarify where he/she is staying or to provide an address
- Exhibits a lack of knowledge of whereabouts and/or does not know what city he/she is in

Everyone of us have gifts and talents ... what can you do to help these victims of sexual exploitation who have suffered years of trauma, as well as, physical and psychological abuse.

If you are a victim of sexual trafficking and you have been persuaded, tricked, manipulated or forced into a situation and need help, call the **National Human Trafficking Resource Center** at 1-888-373-7888. This hotline will identify local resources available in your community to coordinate with social service organizations to help protect and restore your life. Remember, it's not your fault! And, you are not alone. There are dedicated people ready to offer you help, right now! Just call. If its not safe to do so, write this number down & call when you are alone, or give it to a friend and ask them to call on your behalf.

Here are some ministries to help:

International Justice Mission is a human rights agency that secures justice for victims of slavery, sexual exploitation and other forms of violent oppression. IJM lawyers, investigators and aftercare professionals work with local officials to ensure immediate victim rescue and aftercare, to prosecute perpetrators and to promote functioning public justice systems. There is a branch of IJM at Regent University. FMI: www.ijm.org (more information about IJM on next page)

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. FMI: (757) 251-2441 or visit www.HelpingSurvivors.com

Faith Alliance Against Slavery and Trafficking (FAAST) has developed a comprehensive, Christian curriculum called "Hands That Heal," to train global caregivers who

are frontline providers of aftercare for women, children, and men that have been trafficked into the commercial sex industry. The curriculum is the result of a collaboration among more than 40 academicians and field practitioners from diverse backgrounds and organizations that address the needs of trafficked individuals.

FAAST also developed *Hands that Heal* as a tool to inform and inspire churches, communities, organizations, and individuals around the world to engage in the battle against the injustice of human trafficking and to help equip them to provide transformational care to survivors. If you would like to host a Training of Trainers (TOT) workshop to teach users how to effectively use the curriculum, please contact FAAST: 625 Slaters Lane, Alexandria, VA 22314 or call 1-(888) 466-4673. www.faastinternational.org

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. FMI: Rev. Bob Price (757) 679-6456 or you can email bob@soughtout.org.

(Continued on pages 12 and 13)



See Statistics Below:

- Lowest estimates suggest that over **325,000 youth in the United States** are prostituted.
- The **average age** of entry into prostitution in the United States is **13 years old**. Age range is from 8 years - 16 years old.
- 80% of child sexual exploitation is hidden in "gang houses" and "trick pads".
- 85% - 90% of sexually exploited youth are female; 10% -15% are male.
- 52% were sexually abused as children and 52% were physically abused as children.
- 81% were runaways.
- 33% were homeless.
- 72% were in the care of Child and Family Services.
- 93% had involvement with drugs and alcohol.
- Seven times is the average number of attempts individuals had made trying to escape or leave the sex trade.
- 38% have attempted suicide.
- Average life expectancy of a child being sexually exploited is seven years.
- About **25% of sex tourists** inside the United States are American.
- In the United States, **one in five children who regularly use the Internet** are approached by strangers for sex.
- The youngest reported case of sexual exploitation is of a **5-month-old** baby.

Sources: Transition, Education, and Resources for Females (TERF) Mentor and Youth Program Evaluation Reports 2005; 2006 Prostitutes and Other Women for Equal Rights (POWER) Evaluation Report, Campbell and Heinrich, 1995. www.ecpat.net. www.unicef.com. www.freechildren.com

Sex TRAFFICKING IN HAMPTON ROADS

Continued from page 11

A Virginia Beach company, **Novo Solutions**, is doing more than helping their customers solve software business problems. They have set up a fund to provide financial assistance to organizations fighting against human and sexual slavery. The program called "Novo Reach" designates a portion of the company profits to help in the fight to end sex trafficking. FMI or to contribute, visit www.novosolutions.com.

Jewels for God, a company near Fredericksburg, helps rescued victims from sex slavery/trafficking and help them start their own business in 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. This is also a business opportunity for women locally to sell the jewelry or use it to do fundraisers. For more information visit the website at www.Jewels4God.com



Silently speaking for victims of abortion, pro-life volunteers with 40 Days for Life hold a Vigil for Victims in front of the Planned Parenthood abortion facility on Valentines Days. They also calling for Congress to quit funding abortions with tax payers money and Planned Parenthood's aiding the sex trafficking industry.

Regent Students Lobby Against Human Trafficking

By Jenn Wakefield

The International Justice Mission (IJM) Regent Chapter teamed up with The Richmond Justice Initiative and other abolitionist, to lobby against human trafficking in the Richmond area.

Advocates met with legislators to discuss the problem with sex and labor trafficking in Virginia. Many of our representatives do not know this problem exists and northern Virginia is a hot spot for sex trafficking.

Many bills were discussed such as: The Victim Service Plan to provide healthcare, education, job training,



Stop Sex Trafficking Give Life Back To Its Victims

and legal services. This bill would get the Department of Human Services more involved by developing a plan to help identify the victims of human trafficking.

Some of the other bills include a posting of a national human trafficking hotline and the expunging of criminal records for victims. Currently, there are nine pending bills related to trafficking.

"World changers begin by making an impact right where they are. They follow their passions and pour themselves out for something greater. At IJM, we often talk about how students are key agents of change (otherwise known as world changers)," said Jaclyn Lesch, the Student Ministries Program Manager. She also gave steps on how to get involved from where you are:

Call on President Obama to help end modern-day slavery. We are asking 25,000 people to lend their voices to this initiative in an effort to influence the President's budget and policy goals related to human trafficking.

If you have an iPhone or Droid, download the IJM Mobile app! It will take you closer to the frontlines of our work than ever before.

Register to attend the Global Prayer Gathering, April 8-10th. This event is the best opportunity to go deeper with the work of IJM. Staff and friends of IJM will come together from all over the world for a time of seeking God and seeking justice for victims of oppression. You can also sign up for the 2-day conference right before the GPG just for college students!

Support the work of IJM and bring rescue to the oppressed around the world by signing up to be a student Freedom Partner.

Students at Summit Christian Academy Join Fight Against Sex Trafficking

When you walk into the campus of Summit Christian Academy in Yorktown, Virginia you are greeted by a pleasant receptionist and a BIG glass jar of coins. The coin collection is part of a nationwide effort through International Justice Mission to collect "Loose Change to Loosen Chains."

Students at SCA, as many other students across the USA are collecting loose change from family and friends to contribute to IJM's work fighting human trafficking.

It is estimated that there is 10.5 billion dollars in loose change just lying around. Students at Summit are working hard to collect some of that 'loose' change every week and fill up the jar.

So how much loose change can a single school collect? Well so far they have collected over \$2000.00 for IJM and are continuing to collect change for rest of the school year.



Emmy Sych, the campus IJM president learned about the problem last year when reading one of her favorite band's blog posts. She knew she had to do something so she researched organizations and made a presentation to her school principal.

The school leadership was excited about the endeavor and after a successful first year, agreed to continue it again into this current school year. Other events have been added to build on the fundraising, including t-shirt sales, IJM music cd's and an upcoming "Justice Rally" to be held at the school.

Who Will Tell Her She Has A Father Who Loves Her!



Protecting Your Children From The Grooming of Sexual Predators

We convince ourselves that child sexual abuse will not touch us and believe that we would somehow "know" if anything happened to our child, so we tend to put off discussing it with our loved ones until a more "appropriate" time.

We don't believe that our child could possibly be a target for a sexual predator, especially if the perpetrator is someone we trust. Our minds just can't go there. We could never imagine a scenario in which our child would somehow become trafficked for sex or be in any way entrapped into child pornography.

It's like in the children's story book, Horton Hears a Who, Katy Kangaroo declares "If you can't see, hear or feel something, it doesn't exist!"

But that possibility does exist, and every day its impacting the safety of our children because of the rapid growth within the child sex industry. There is a demand for children to meet a need for pornography, prostitution, sexual exploitation, child trafficking and sexual abuse, and the only criteria needed is that the victim be a child, and in the "right" place at the "right" time, to be plucked from our families and communities, to serve a specific purpose.

The sex trade exists because there is a demand ("Johns") and there is a readily available supply (children). And there are those cold hearted criminals that have no regard for human dignity who are driven by greed to exploit others for money.

How are Children Chosen

They are chosen because they are vulnerable or already survivors of abusive homes. They have learned already that there is no use fighting back. Perpetrators know this & are always on the alert for kids that have low self-worth.

They are chosen after a trauma or disaster when children are disorientated and looking for their family members. The criminals instinctively know which children to target and they are watching and waiting for the right opportunity to take the child.

They are chosen because they find a child that has a need that they can meet. It may be that money, goods, emotions, food, shelter or relationship is offered. The Perpetrator is skilled at finding that need quickly. The have only one thing on their mind, and that is the income that will be generated from that vulnerable child, and all they need to do is gain their trust for a few minutes.

Where are the Children Chosen:

- Malls
- Bus Stops
- Schools
- Latch Key Homes
- Internet
- Magazines/Newspapers
- Streets
- Churches
- Kindergarten
- Child Care Centers

Who Recruits the Children

- Gangs, Pimps
- Women or Men
- Lover Boys (who make young girls or boys believe they are in love with them)
- Friends, Family Members
- Other Children
- Drug Dealers
- Pedophiles
- Kidnappers

Once a child has been taken, there follows a "seasoning" period

and the child is dehumanized and their only option for survival is to submit to the trafficker or perform for the "Johns" who pay for them.

The stolen child is now:

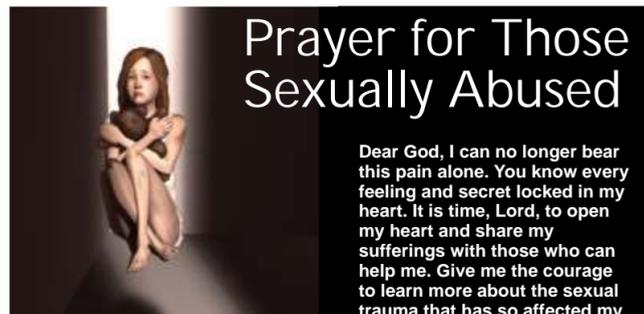
- a saleable product
- sold from pimp to pimp
- sold for pornography
- raped and beaten daily
- vulnerable & without protection
- services up to 25 clients a day
- receives no medical attention
- diseased
- addicted to drugs
- traumatized

It's no longer enough to "know" where your kids are. They must be with you, or with a trusted adult at all times. Strict monitoring of computer use can save your child's life. Sex traffickers can toy with your children over the Internet at their leisure, until they have them emotionally entrapped and primed.

When your children go off to college or travel they must be educated and aware. If someone seemingly needy asks for assistance, children should get a policeman or a security guard to help. They should be trained to understand the difference between being polite and putting themselves into danger. Kids should never lose themselves in alcohol or drugs.

They should avoid stairwells, elevators, clubs, bars, and deserted streets where they can be whisked out of sight. They should know that offers of modeling and dancing careers that seem too good to be true, are. Millions of girls have lost their lives believing they were going to be famous, or believe they are being given opportunities to better themselves or turn their life around.

Sex trafficking is an established global trade today. It's up to parents to protect children by developing trusting, open relationships, and by educating them to the very real dangers posed by this industry.



Prayer for Those Sexually Abused

Dear God, I can no longer bear this pain alone. You know every feeling and secret locked in my heart. It is time, Lord, to open my heart and share my sufferings with those who can help me. Give me the courage to learn more about the sexual trauma that has so affected my life. Though I may not understand why this has happened to me, may I take comfort in the fact that I am not to blame, and realize that I am not the only person who has been abused in this way.

Guide me to find the faith and help I need to gain confidence in mind and body, develop trust in others, and experience hope for a happy, healthy life. Lord, I know that with Your love, my physical and emotional wounds will be healed. Amen

From Princess to Prisoner

Continued from page 12

beside the park. She informed me that there have been some scary people that have also shown up at the park. One man in particular was offering children candy and telling them where he lives.

As a responsible parent, I already don't let my kids go to the park unattended by a trusted adult.

But I remember telling my mom I wouldn't leave our street while she was doing housework, and she specifically ordered me to stay on the street. Later I got the worst spanking of my life when she found me two blocks over.

I wish I knew my kids wouldn't do that, but my oldest son is very obstinate and his siblings look up to him. I do not live in fear, but I also don't live in denial. I know that bad things can and do happen to anyone.

Don't fool yourself into thinking sex trafficking will never hit home with you. I am sure people who's children were kidnapped did not wake up that morning thinking, "This will be the last day I spend with my child".

It is a horrible thought, and I don't expect people to walk around thinking the worst things are going to happen to them. But you must know, that we all have a responsibility to raise awareness; to educate ourselves and others.

We MUST do what we can to help. Due to the staggering facts and statistics, I would like to help you on your search for the truth and help you find out how you can get involved. The following are just a few of the organizations that are active in the fight against human trafficking:

Salvation Army www.salvationarmyusa.org/trafficking
Request a free packet of information along with your name and address to: Anti_sextrafficking@usn.salvationarmy.org

Distribute brochures and posters from the Rescue & Restore campaign located at: www.acf.hhs.gov/trafficking

The Initiative Against Sexual Trafficking (IAST) <http://www.iast.net/>
If you would like to go straight to the statistics, this report is full of them: <http://www.dreamcenter.org/new/images/outline/RescueProject/stats.pdf>

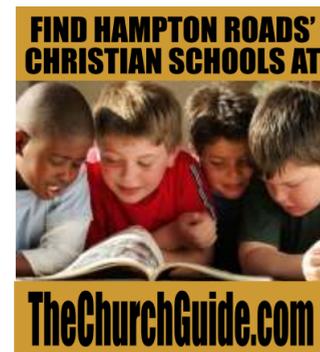
Documentary on Sex Trafficking, "Sex & Money" to Premier in April

Sex+Money: A National Search for Human Worth is a feature length documentary that follows a group of student photojournalists as they travel in an RV across the United States, seeking to understand how the sexual exploitation of children has become the nation's fastest growing form of organized crime and what can be done to stop it.

The goal is that the *Sex+Money* documentary which explores the realities of human sex trafficking, will result in bringing freedom to those enslaved.

The film premier in Phoenix on April 16th. The Church Guide will let our readers know when it is available to be seen in Hampton Roads.

FMI: www.sexandmoneyfilm.com.



A Mother's Heart on Sex Trafficking From Princess to Prisoner

By Melissa Probelsky
NewsMediaOne.com

My daughter has swung her hips since the day she started walking. It apparently was born into her. She was never taught to do this. As months went on she began flipping her hair and talking with a Beverly Hills accent. Um, we are from Norfolk, Virginia!

My husband and I talk about it often. "Where is she getting this from? Who has she been around that does this?" We are simply baffled by our daughter's actions. Because of this, we are constantly expressing how careful we are going to have to be with her. How scary her teenage years are going to be. And right now, she is only three years old!

Maybe you have children or nieces or nephews. Maybe you can relate to the fear and reverence of knowing you are responsible for another life. It is a very humbling thing, to know that you can only do your best, and that may not be good enough.

I think back to my childhood, and times when my mom believed I was in safe hands. I remember all the times I got into mischief when mom and dad believed I was safe.

I remember as a teenager, looking my mom in the face and lying to her, time after time. She believed I was at one place, and I was really at another.

Being a parent of three now, I feel helpless. I know I cannot make them be and do everything I feel is right.

My parents are amazing Christian parents, and they tried their hardest. So what can I do?

Well, I know what I can't do. I can be persistent. I can't leave my job up to somebody else. I have to try my hardest. But the real key is I MUST pray.

I want to pose a question to you. If something horrible happened to your child, godchild, niece, or nephew, what would you do? If your child became ill with a disease or treated unfairly by an organization or another person, what would you do?

Would you raise awareness? Would you try to educate others on the matter, to help your child and future children? Would you try to help matters, so other children may be spared from such an illness or injustice?

Ok, so maybe that was a few questions, but my point is, you would NOT just sit silent and do nothing, would you?

There is a serious injustice in this country and around the world that is taking place continuously and the awareness has not been raised to the level it should! It's called Sex Trafficking, also known as Human Trafficking, and Modern Day Slavery.

I remember sitting in a theatre watching the movie "Taken" and feeling mortified, but in my heart I still thought, "This is just a movie". But it's NOT! It's real life! It's happening all over this world.

The U.S. Department of State's 2007 Trafficking in Persons Report (TIP Report), estimates vary from 4 to 27 million people involved in modern-day slavery across the world. The International Labor Organization (ILO) estimates 2.4 million people were victims of human trafficking from 1995-2005.

When do we get educated? When do we begin to fight this matter of "Sex Trafficking"?

What if it was my kid, little daughter of only three years old?

I went to wake her up this morning but she wouldn't open her eyes, so I had to get creative. She loves everything princess, and so I said, "Are you Sleeping Beauty this morning?". She nodded her head "Yes". So I had one of her brothers

pretend he was a prince and come kiss her on the cheek and she finally opened her eyes.

What if tomorrow I went to get her up and she wasn't there? Then I had to ask myself, "As a Christian, what is my responsibility to this injustice? What is my responsibility to the victims and the families of the victims."

One simple scripture pounded in my head. Simple as it is, it is one of the greatest commandments. I like putting things in context, so I will give it all to you. Matthew 22:37-40(NIV) "Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: "Love your neighbor as yourself." All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

Love your neighbor as yourself! Well, I know if this happened to myself, I would want to fight. All the Law and the Prophets hang on those two commands. I do not have to do any extra soul searching to find out IF GOD wants me to do something about this. These few scriptures right here tell me HE does.

So I have been digging information on this subject and I tell you, it is not easy to get conclusive statistics and facts, because the very nature of this crime is very covert. Add in further complications with data sharing, lack of funds, and more, and you will find the information inconsistent.

What I have found, however, is that there are organizations trying their hardest to fight human trafficking/ sex trafficking, but they are having a hard time breaking the sound barrier due to lack of funds and people like you and I. Everyone knows, the best way to advertise is "Word-of-mouth". But most people don't open their mouths about anything they don't believe in, or have not been personally touched by.

So, I raise a challenge! The challenge is to read about it. Do your research! I know I will.

Our neighborhood just got a new park built and it is awesome. I have taken the kids to the park three times so far. The excitement is all throughout our neighborhood.

I was talking to my son's teacher the other day, who also lives in our neighborhood, right

Continued on page 16