

# January Newsletter

## Human Trafficking Awareness

### Special Dates

- **Jan 6** - Vol. mtg. 4-5pm
- **April 19** - (Save the Date) - Spring Fashion Show



Welcome to a new year! And a new topic, since January is Human Trafficking Awareness Month. It seems that we are hearing more about human trafficking lately, and the term conjures up different images for each of us. A common image is of foreign women being brought to the U.S. in deplorable conditions for the purpose of sexual exploitation; or a stranger lurking in the shadows ready to grab an unsuspecting victim. Let's take a look at more accurate and comprehensive information about human trafficking.

Human trafficking is defined as the use of force, fraud, or coercion to compel a person into commercial sex acts, labor, or services against his or her will. The two main forms that trafficking takes are labor and sex trafficking; however it can also include child labor, forced marriage, child marriage, child soldiers, debt bondage, commercial sexual exploitation of children, involuntary domestic servitude, etc.

It may be helpful to look at some common myths about trafficking in order to get a clearer picture:

### Current Needs

- **Baby monitors**
- **Bath towels**
- **Laundry detergent**
- **Trash bags (33 and 13 gal size)**

- ♦ **Myth - It is always a violent crime, involving kidnapping or physical force.** In reality, most traffickers use psychological means such as coercion, threats, and manipulation to force victims to provide commercial sex or exploitative labor. They may use drug addiction, fear of harm to their families, controlling their money, confiscating passports, isolating from friends and family, manipulating them into believing that they are in love with their trafficker, etc.
- ♦ **Myth - Victims will be desperate to escape their trafficker.** Victims are often unable or reluctant to ask for help because they are ashamed, they blame themselves, may not recognize their situation as something illegal, or they fear retaliation. Many victims are in debt bondage where the trafficker requires the victim to repay an amount for food or housing. Some victims are afraid of imprisonment or deportation.
- ♦ **Myth - Trafficking involves transporting people across a border.** Human trafficking does not require any transportation at all. Being forced to work or engage in commercial sex against their will is considered trafficking. The majority of victims are exploited in their own country; most of the US victims of sex trafficking are American citizens.
- ♦ **Myth - Most trafficking involves commercial sex trafficking.** Many experts believe that forced labor actually comprises more cases than sex trafficking. Labor trafficking occurs in many types of businesses, including nail salons, agriculture, restaurants, and domestic service. There does seem to be a much wider awareness of sex trafficking than labor trafficking in the US, which may contribute to the perception that it is more widespread than forced labor trafficking.

Look for more information about trafficking in next month's newsletter!

## Survivor Story

### Ima Matul

We take a departure this month from our typical domestic or sexual violence survivors in order to further our knowledge of the topic of human trafficking. Ima Matul is a survivor of forced labor trafficking who has turned her ordeal into an opportunity to advocate for other trafficking victims.



Matul was born and raised in Indonesia, in an impoverished, rural village; as a teenager she was working as a housekeeper when she was approached by a labor recruiter with what she thought was a wonderful work opportunity. She was promised a job as a nanny in Los Angeles, which seemed like a dream come true at the time.

Matul did begin the nannying job, but never received the \$150/month pay that she was promised. Her employers, naturalized US citizens who had emigrated from Indonesia, confiscated Matul's passport and effectively kept her hostage in their home. She was made to do all household chores, working up to 18 hours a day, with no days off. Physical and verbal abuse was a daily occurrence if there was any mistake made in her duties. The traffickers told her that if she ran away the police would arrest her and put her in jail where she would be raped. Matul could not speak much English, had no knowledge of her rights, no money, and no outside contacts. This was Matul's life for three years.

Eventually, Matul was able to write a simple note asking for help and slipped it to a nanny who worked next door. The nanny's employers helped her sneak away and took her to CAST (Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking) in Los Angeles, where Matul received counseling, legal help, English lessons and job skill training that enabled her to obtain real employment and live independently.

Matul's experience has led her to found the National Survivor Network, and to become a powerful spokesperson for survivors' rights; she works with legislators to promote legislation that will help detect and spread awareness of human trafficking.

Thank you to this amazing survivor for her tireless work and advocacy!

## Recap of Events

### Around the Shelter

Our Adopt-a-Family program was a huge success! Twenty-two families were given gifts by donors in the community, helping to provide a merry Christmas to many children. Check out the storage room with all of the organized piles of presents... and this was *after* two families had picked up their gifts! A big thank you to all who might have helped with this holiday program!



## Recap of Events

### Float Preparation

So what do you do when the boss says she wants our holiday float to be an old-fashioned red truck? You join forces and collaborate to make it happen! Design by Beth, engineering by Andy, and grunt work by the rest of us... and voilà - an old red truck!



### Holiday Parades

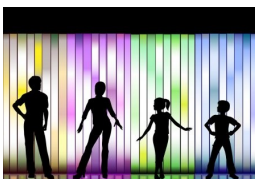


What a fun “parade season” this was! We participated in 3 local parades - Edinburg, Woodstock, and Strasburg. In an effort to reach a wider segment of our county’s population, we decided to take part in the parades in Edinburg and Strasburg for the first time ever. It was so nice to receive a warm welcome in each of the towns! A great big thank you to all who volunteered to walk and ride!



## Upcoming Event

### Spring Fashion Show



Just a reminder to save the date of Sunday, April 19, 2020 for our Spring Fashion Show! This year’s fashion show will be held at the Conicville fire hall from 2-4 pm. We know it is a ways away, but spring calendars fill up fast, so put the date on yours today!