

VA/NC DISCIPLE WOMEN HUMAN TRAFFICKING 2010-2011 PROJECT PROPOSAL

PURPOSE

This proposal is to seek assistance from Federal and State officials for the placement of an emergency telephone in female restrooms in North Carolina and Virginia rest areas on Interstates 85 and 95. The intent of the emergency phone is to directly aid victims of human trafficking. The emergency phone is to first and foremost provide an opportunity for human trafficked women and children to get help, and secondly to provide a secure phone for reporting suspicious activity.

Scope of Human Trafficking in the U.S.

- 600,000 - 800,000 humans are trafficked across international borders each year
- 18,000 – 20,000 are trafficked into and throughout the United States each year
- The majority are women and children
- Human trafficking is the fastest growing crime in the world – second behind drugs and ahead of illegal arms. It is our modern day slavery.

Common Themes of Victim's Stories

Children are given to others for care to help alleviate poverty conditions at home. Women are promised a job and a better life in a new land. Instead they are forced into prostitution, domestic labor, and other non-desirable situations. A common denominator is poverty.

Effects of Human Trafficking

Devastating effects on individual victims who suffer physical and emotional abuse. Safety and security are undermined in every nation it touches.

Why this proposal?

While some traffickers have been arrested in the U.S, many women never have the opportunity to escape. In a December 2010 meeting, Sandra Johnson, founder of Triad Ladder of HOPE in High Point, NC (an organization against human trafficking) sees emergency phones in women's restrooms on I-85 and 95 a positive step in trying to reach victims. Ms. Johnson confirmed through victim's recollections of their horrific experiences, they are allowed to use the restrooms on area interstates. She also noted that Human Trafficking is rapidly on the rise in North Carolina and Virginia due to military presence, I-95 & 85 (being direct north-south routes), coastal ports, agricultural industry and a large immigrant population.

Abolishing Modern Day Slavery

Experts agree that to abolish modern day slavery five things must happen.

1. Increase rescue of trafficking victims
2. increase prosecutions of traffickers
3. Treat people freed from slavery as victims not criminals
4. Stop the demand for modern day slaves
5. Educate ourselves as to the extent of the problem.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

Provide an opportunity for human trafficked women and children to get help. Provide a secure phone for reporting suspicious activity. Work with human trafficking organizations, state and federal officials (such as Homeland Security) and local and state law enforcement on the acquisition and placement of emergency (safe) phones for the purpose of establishing a means of communication for victims traveling through North Carolina and Virginia. Careful instructions would be given near the phone in order to not cause further harm to the victim, and ensure, as best as possible, the phones are not jeopardized for future victims.

Proposed Location: I-85 and I-95 rest areas

Preparation and Research

- Established a committee representing the two state regions.
Committee Representatives - Marilyn Whittaker (VA), Jennifer Larson (VA), Katherine Hughes (NC),
Regional Representatives - Donna Webster, Director of Women's Ministries (VA), Rev. Valerie Melvin, Associate Regional Minister, (NC)
- Met with Triad Ladder of HOPE in High Point on December 4, 2010 to learn about the patterns of human traffickers, and impact and feasibility of project
- Compiled all research and distributed results to each of our respective regions.

Benefits

This project will provide a means of communication for individuals being trafficked across North Carolina and Virginia as their traffickers allow the individual to use restrooms in route to new locations. Once victims of human trafficking reach their destination (possibly a private home), the intervention becomes more difficult.

Progress

The committee is active in communicating and researching information related to this project via email and in formal meetings noted below.

Committee Meeting highlights – December 4, 2010

The committee met with Sandra Johnson, Executive Director of Triad of HOPE . The meeting was attended by Rev. Valerie Melvin, Donna Webster, Jennifer Larson, Katherine Hughes and Marilyn Whittaker. It was held at the Piedmont Convention and was very productive.

- Donna shared an overview of the project.
- Sandra provided key information about human trafficking. We learned about the patterns and her opinion of the project. Based upon the organization's findings, human traffickers allow their victims to use restrooms as they travel. Sandra also shared personal stories of victims. Through these stories, we learned that even when phones are available, some victims choose not to seek help. The victims are brainwashed to believe that their capturers are the only ones that will look out for them, and they can get into more trouble if they call the police.
- Jennifer reported findings that Virginia is one of twelve states that have little or no state laws to protect human trafficking victims. Virginia criminalizes only sex trafficking or labor trafficking but not both, only include human trafficking as a mere sentencing enhancement, or have laws that are too weak or so narrowly drafted that investigations and prosecutions of

human trafficking cannot proceed. Also discussed which counties in North Carolina and Virginia were more prone to human trafficking.

- Rev. Melvin plans to check on legal ramifications for the NC Region. Donna stated that liability should not be an issue since our disciple women are volunteers.
- All agreed to proceed with the project.

Committee Meeting Highlights - January 13, 2011

The committee met via conference call. Rev. Melvin was unable to attend. Information from the December meeting was reviewed and assessed for project relevance. The group reaffirmed the decision to move forward with the project. The group also prepared for an upcoming meeting with Mr. Jones to present the proposal. Additional next steps were discussed. Attendees agreed to use this document for informational purposes within the two regions.

NEXT STEPS

- Meet with Mr. Jones (preferably at his Greensboro office). Committee to review the proposal and have open discussion regarding the issues, feasibility and opportunities to move forward with the project. If schedules do not permit, the information will be presented via phone conference.
- Share project information with the Polaris Project as soon as possible. Jennifer to identify their ability to assist in this effort. If available, the committee will inquire about the feasibility of engaging James Madison interns in the project.
- Attend Human Trafficking Awareness Day at the Capitol in Richmond on January 26, 2011. Jennifer and possibly Marilyn will be present.

Disciples Women embraces the vision of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ);

To be a faithful, growing church, that demonstrates true community, deep Christian spirituality and a passion for justice. (Micah 6:8)

Questions about this project may be sent to Katherine Hughes , Service Coordinator for North Carolina Disciple Women at katherine.Hughes@wellsfargo.com, or Marilyn Whittaker at marilyn.whittaker@ymail.com or Jennifer Larson, jenngee11@cox.net , Human Trafficking Service Project Coordinators for Virginia Disciple Women.