

Brandon Kehoe Testimony for Speaker's Task Force on Human Trafficking

Currently, there is a lack of legal accountability to those who harbor juveniles that are reported missing or runaway. This lack of accountability leads to at-risk youth becoming victims of child sexual abuse, human trafficking, drug offenses, child abuse, and several other serious criminal violations. We need to do better.

The crime of human trafficking impacts every corner of our state. Regardless of economic status, race, religion, creed, sexuality, etc. human trafficking does not discriminate. Human trafficking is a complicated social issue and often misunderstood by the general-public. It is portrayed by Hollywood in a way that differs from how it actually takes place. This further complicates an already challenging issue for the professionals who are tasked with addressing it. Human trafficking does not occur in a way that is easy to identify. It happens in plain sight, behind the scenes of technology. The use of technology is where the manipulation begins and continues to thrive, seemingly undetected by citizens in their day-to-day lives.

I have been in law enforcement for the past twenty years. For the past four years, I have been working as detective and a member of the Sheboygan County Human Trafficking Task Force (SCHTTF). I am fortunate to have other local service providers that are aligned with these efforts and are involved with an organized team who strive to make a difference. As a result of the collaboration, SCHTTF has made a positive difference in Sheboygan County with how human trafficking negatively impact us.

Human trafficking is an exhausting process for victim/survivors, family/friends, and professionals. Victim/survivors of human trafficking have needs that are unlike any crime victim. The buildup of trauma, mental harm, allegiance to the offender and substance abuse issues make the process for victim/survivors complex and very difficult. Due to the lack of brain development, professionals and family/friends struggle to help victim/survivors understand and identify as a victim/survivor of human trafficking. With a common reference point of human trafficking provided by Hollywood, unless victim/survivors are locked in a cage or driven around in a windowless van, kids and teens are often unable to understand and label that what they have experienced is not love and connection, but human trafficking.

Along with human trafficking victim/survivors unique needs, there is also a barrier to trusting law enforcement professional. I have had countless cases that have involved meeting victim/survivors multiple times to build rapport before understand a quarter of the trauma they have endured. Time spent earning their trust and building a relationship with them puts all professionals in a better position to hear and understand their experiences. This often takes an organized group of people to unpack the trauma that has been done. In turn, this helps empower victim/survivors not to recant or relapse just to be forced back into the life of trafficking.

Sheboygan County Human Trafficking Task Force meets monthly and are committed to providing ongoing prevention education and awareness training to other multi-disciplinary teams, the larger Sheboygan community, while continuing to review and maintain best

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practices around serving and providing a coordinated response to community members impacted by human trafficking. As a result of this collaboration, we have made a positive difference in Sheboygan County with how human trafficking negatively impacts the community.

As a result of this time and energy, SCHTTF has identified a legal gap that we feel needs to be addressed to safeguard the vulnerable children in our state. I am aware from networking with other law enforcement professionals in our state, that the issues I am referencing are not specific to just Sheboygan County. This is a state-wide issue. From the analysis of the research, our task force identified multiple other states, unlike Wisconsin, who have enacted specific legislation to protect vulnerable children.

Our team has conducted research and learned that in 2001, Assembly Bill 763 (see attached) was introduced on the floor to make it a class C misdemeanor to harbor a runaway juvenile. Proposed state statute 948.47 was included as where the law would fit within Chapter 948 but unfortunately that law was never enacted.

With the assistance of Representative Amy Binsfeld, we have worked on getting legislation organized to make a positive change and add a necessary safeguard that currently does not exist. We are strongly encouraging enacting this law, because without it, there will be not accountability on those who enable human trafficking to take place. We recognize that society and the risks to our children have significantly changed since 2001, which is why we feel this needs serious consideration since the factors in our world has completely changed.

To provide some context I would like to cite a heading from the Wisconsin Department of Justice's website, "The mission of the Wisconsin Department of Justice Human Trafficking Initiative is to make Wisconsin inhospitable to human traffickers and to support victim-centered strategies and partnerships throughout the state."

The Sheboygan County Human Trafficking Task Force's vision aligns with the Wisconsin Department of Justice Human Trafficking Initiative, however without the legal tools to hold those who enable crimes against children to occur, we aren't able to fully create an environment that is truly inhospitable to those who wish to prey on children.

Lastly, I want to leave you with a statement made to me during an investigation by a Mother of a 17-year-old human trafficking victim that was victimized in two different residences in our city while reported as a missing juvenile. This investigation lead to multiple different men being arrested for child sexual assault and providing drugs to a person under the age of 18. Sadly, the child victim was exchanging sexual intercourse for Methamphetamine due to getting exposed to the drug by an older male, who had sexually assaulted her.

"How can something awful like this happen, where someone hides a runaway girl in their home, knowing they are supposed to be home with their family, and nothing happens to them. They allowed these horrible things to occur. If they wouldn't have allowed my

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daughter into their home, none of this would have happened, how is there no justice for that, something has to change because there are other kids my like mine out there who need help.”

Thank you for considering our proposal to further protect children in our state.

Beth Heilman Testimony for Speaker's Task Force on Human Trafficking

We know what Human Trafficking is, we have been tasked to learn about it and work in it. Some of us work with victims and survivors directly, some of us want to make a difference for victims and survivors. Whatever your part is, you are necessary, it takes a village! In Sheboygan County our "village" is made up of highly qualified and committed individuals from different services coming together to work in it AND make a difference for victims and survivors.

I have been privileged over the past 8 years to work directly with victims and survivors. As an advocate at our local domestic violence and sexual assault agency, speaking publicly, and educating youth and adults in a prevention aspect. The last 4 years I have worked with families directly involved in human trafficking or directly impacted by human trafficking. These are difficult cases, often emotionally draining and time consuming. It is not uncommon that during the course of my investigation period, which is only a short 60 days, I may never be able to define their case as human trafficking.

Sheboygan County Social Services prides themselves on being proactive in preventing Human Trafficking. As part of this initiative, the Department of Social Services has formed a Human Trafficking Work Group within the agency. I am privileged to be a part of that group. This work group educates the Child Protective Services, Youth Justice, Public Health, and Behavioral Health Divisions about human trafficking, as they are working directly with a population highly effected by human trafficking. I am also one of two social workers that the Department of Social Services has as part of the Sheboygan County Human Trafficking Task Force. It is here that members of the community, that work directly with victims, meet to talk about what we see in the community and raise awareness through events and presentations.

Another part of my position is co-facilitating an educational group called My Life My Choice. During the course of 10 weeks, my co facilitator and I guide girls through the process of understanding behaviors that put them at risk and empower them to take control of their safety. These groups are run in schools as well as outside the schools. During a recent session, at a local school, a girl in the group told me there was no way she would be dumb enough to fall for any of this. I gave her an example of how we all can be vulnerable at any time and have our guard down. No matter what I said she continued to say those that fall for it are stupid.

Running away from home instantly makes a youth more vulnerable to human trafficking. We have youth in our community running away, not once, but sometimes multiple times a year. How do we protect these youth, who are arguably most at risk? Our county rose to this challenge and assembled a group to bring together local law enforcement and social services. Law enforcement, tracks and analyzes the number of times a youth has run away from home, and their involvement in criminal activity. The team's current listing, for example, has an individual on it, that ran from home 22 times since January 1 of 2022, and another that ran 17 times in that same time frame. Youth, like this, even prior to running that many times, are already labeled as high risk. The group is tasked to report on what services are or have been attempted for each youth identified as at risk. This reporting occurs at 6 weeks, then again at 3, 6, 9, and 12 months out from the youth being labeled at risk. As a part of Child Protective Services, I know, that many of these youth are not coming from positive home lives, however that is not always the case. I recently worked with a family, where the mother had never had her 14 year old fully in her care. The girl had lived for a couple years with her grandparents, until she attempted suicide,

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then her uncle and his family took legal guardianship of the child, until she became too much for them to handle. More recently mother and daughter were couch hopping together. When this no longer worked, the youth couch hopped herself, from friend to friend. The mother indicated that she knew all the people her daughter was staying with and had talked to them, yet she could not provide me a name, phone number, or even an address for any of them. This youth was at risk due to mental health concerns, housing instability, risk taking behaviors, lack of school attendance, and no stable adult in her life.

I am proud to be here today and tell all the great things my community is doing. I am proud to be a part of a community that values and prioritizes holding people accountable for the trafficking of individuals, and follow through in making sure that victim survivors have the help and resources they need to heal. However, now more needs to be done. Local law enforcement has utilized the ability to give citations to individuals who are known to be harboring runaways, this is not enough. There are a number of known houses in Sheboygan where runaways frequent, solely because they know that those household members will keep them and not turn them over to police. I recently worked with a family that lived in a home that was a frequent stop for runaways. A constant flow of people in and out of the home, a lack of food in the home, and frequent drug use made for an unsafe living situation for the young children that resided there. It was in this known flop houses where runaways were traded drugs for sex. It isn't right to have these known houses and no way to hold the owners accountable.

The need to protect runaway youth, is not specific to Sheboygan County. Our task force has found legislation, in other states nearby, that we would like to impliment. We are requesting legislation be put in place, that would make harboring a runaway a chargeable criminal offense. We need a safeguard to protect our runaway youth, and send a clear message to individuals, that assist with crimes against children, that it can not be tolerated. A citation might scare some people, but many it just doesn't.

I recently found myself sitting beside good friends that were living this nightmare. Their nearly 18 year old child had run away, and found herself in the arms of people that promised her the world. They got her hooked on meth, they gave her places to stay, and provided her clothing. She was lucky enough to have family and friends that loved her and was willing to take risks to protect her and get her home, others are not so lucky, they don't have the resources. The power to assist is there, we just have to want to do it. Thank you for considering the bill that could help save our children.



GREEN BAY POLICE DEPARTMENT



October 25th, 2023

Representative O'Connor, members of The Speakers Task Force on Human Trafficking, and distinguished guests, thank you for allowing me to address the task force on this important topic.

In 2015, I was assigned the position of School Resource Officer with the Green Bay Area Public School District. The position is within the Investigative Division of the Green Bay Police Department. Prior to this, I was patrol officer for 15 years.

During the summer of 2016, I was tasked with attempting to locate a 16 yr. old female runaway. Prior to being reported as "missing", this young girl had a history of drug activity, a sexual assault incident, and being habitually truant from school. As the investigation unfolded, I found that she was said to be involved in "prostitution", a term used by others who knew her. That summer, the juvenile runaway was located in St. Louis, Missouri. Officers conducted a traffic stop of a vehicle. Inside, they located the missing female, another juvenile out of the City of Green Bay, and two adult males from Missouri. As a follow-up, I contacted investigators from the Missouri agency. I was told, if officers had not located the juveniles, their involvement as victims of human trafficking would have been imminent. Furthermore, the investigators told me once the juveniles value to make money was done, their lives would be in jeopardy.

In 2017, a 16 yr. old female was reported "missing" from the City of Two Rivers. A family acquaintance had contacted her by way of text message, asking if he could take her down to Milwaukee to get away for a while. The "family acquaintance" knew she was having some issues at home and offered a fun weekend away. The adult male sent a car to pick her up and she was driven to Milwaukee. Over the course of the weekend, she was kept at an apartment, physically assaulted, brought to purchase inappropriate clothing, and forced to sell herself along a strip. The suspect offered to bring her to Green Bay, where she could enjoy a hotel stay and not have to "work". In Green Bay, she was again forced to perform commercial sex acts. In Green Bay, the group she was with committed a brutal robbery. I was called to investigate the robbery. We were able to identify all involved. When the missing juvenile was identified, we discovered she was, in fact, the victim of human trafficking.

These are just two examples of human trafficking cases I, along with other detectives, have investigated. Sadly, they are not isolated incidents. We know that victims of human trafficking do not always remain in one geographical area, transported by their traffickers throughout the state. It is vital that law enforcement agencies share the necessary resources to track both the offenders and victims.



GREEN BAY POLICE DEPARTMENT



In 2016/2017, I was promoted to Detective and asked to be assigned human trafficking cases. Following my investigation into the missing juvenile found in Missouri, I quickly realized our department had not been identifying victims of human trafficking properly. What we and community members had been calling simple acts of prostitution was, in fact, incidents of human trafficking. Having been a patrol officer, working all shifts and areas within the City of Green Bay, I too was naïve to the activity in Green Bay.

As I began looking into suspected incidents of prostitution and/or human trafficking, I found that Green Bay, a city of just over 100,000 residents, was flourishing with this type of criminal activity. To support my findings, I began to collect raw data. The data was collected by way of monitoring police calls, interviews, establishing community relationships, and investigations. The data is not part of the City of Green Bay Police Department's official statistics but rather a tool used to assist in investigations. From 2017 to September 2023, I gathered the following raw data:

CASE/SUBJECT DATA:

TRAFFICKERS:	229
VICTIMS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING/PROSTITUTION:	401
LOCATIONS OF PROSTITUTION/HT INCIDENTS:	134
SUBJECTS AT-RISK FOR INVOLVEMENT:	308
HT NETWORKS/ORGANIZATIONS:	124

CASES INVESTIGATED:

2017:	76
2018:	46
2019:	68
2020:	63
2021:	44



GREEN BAY POLICE DEPARTMENT



In cooperation with several law enforcement agencies, namely the Wisconsin Division of Criminal Investigation and the Brown County Sheriff's Office, we have successfully investigated human trafficking cases throughout the area. The subjects arrested in these cases have been charged both at the state and federal levels. I would like to highlight a few of these investigations. In 2020, the City of Green Bay Police Department initiated an investigation that resulted in the arrest of a subject trafficking approximately 15 victims, at least one being a juvenile. In 2022, our department arrested a male subject who trafficked as many as 10 different victims, throughout several states. Most recently, in 2023, we arrested a male subject for trafficking approximately 10 female victims, two of which were juveniles.

As mentioned above, I have collected the names of subjects who have been deemed to be at-risk for exposure to human trafficking type activity. These names have been brought to my attention by school staff, advocate groups, Child Protective Services, and other community partners. Some common themes I am seeing, as was the case in the juvenile female transported to St. Louis, are prior sexual assaults, drug use, runaway issues, and habitual truancy. It is my hope that we work with our community and school partners to identify those juveniles who are at risk and offer any assistance necessary.

Nearly all of our human trafficking investigations have a drug nexus. It is not uncommon for "pimps" to use a victim's drug addiction to coerce them into commercial sex acts. Recently, in the City of Green Bay, we have seen an increase in our homeless population. We have investigated several incidents of human trafficking involving victims within the homeless population. Traffickers know that people affected by homelessness have little support system, thus target them specifically.

On the topic of housing, I have investigated very few cases in which temporary housing, following contact with a victim, has not been an issue. Once a human trafficking victim has been located, he or she needs a safe housing option. It is my hope, in the future, that police departments, as well as reputable advocate groups secure funds to provide temporary housing solutions.

Our continued fight against human trafficking is not one for law enforcement to combat alone. We have relied on assistance from many groups in the community and continue to do so. In the past year, our department had partnered with Awaken Wisconsin, a human trafficking victims advocate group. It is vital that a relationship is maintained with these victims, both for prosecution of the offender and for their healing process.

Thank-you for your time and continued support in fighting human trafficking. I believe the State of Wisconsin has shown itself to be leader in this fight. I would encourage this task force to ensure that funding is available for law enforcement officers to conduct future victim recovery operations. I also would ask that you consider offering funding to advocate groups, such as



GREEN BAY POLICE DEPARTMENT



Awaken Wisconsin, so that they too can assist victims with temporary housing and quality of life needs.

Respectfully,

Detective Craig Pakkala

Det. Craig Pakkala



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DEAN M. SMITH
CHIEF OF POLICE

Approximately 15 years ago I self-initiated the Oshkosh Police Department's response to internet sex trafficking and prostitution related crimes. This was in response to a significant amount of internet prostitution ads being placed in our area on prostitution websites such as Escorts.com and Backpage. The most current prominent site is Skip The Games. There are others as well.

I initially started this effort by contacting the City of Milwaukee Police Department's Vice Unit for guidance. They were extremely helpful in providing expertise and reports that helped us get up and running.

After a short while of conducting these operations in the City of Oshkosh with much success, I was asked to train other agencies in our area, and other locations, on how to conduct these operations.

The Oshkosh Police Department continues to run these types of investigations on a continuous and ongoing basis. I would estimate that I have initiated and been involved in 300-400 of these investigations. These investigations include

- Internet ads
- Reversals
- Illicit Massage Parlors
- Strip Joints

Why Conduct Vice Investigations

We conduct these investigations due to the wide array of criminal activity that we encounter. This includes the crimes below and some examples I can provide.

- Sex Trafficking involving pimps
- Robbery of both those who pay for sex and those selling sex (prostitutes and customers both targeted)
 - Pimp entering room discuss Jefferson St case
- Sexual Assault (truck driver case)
- Extortion (videotaping case)
- Gun and Weapon Offenses (felons in possession of firearms and CCW along with electric weapons)
- Drug Trafficking Operations (not uncommon for us to make PWI arrests)

-Drug Possession (heroin and methamphetamine addicts)

-Child Neglect (baby in car seat)

All those that engage in criminal activity put themselves in a position to be victimized. Further we realize and understand that prostitution taking place out of houses in neighborhoods or hotels in our city diminishes the quality of life.

Also, because of the sexual nature of prostitution it involved individuals that are involved in other sexual crimes (**Eric Philipsen case**).

Finally, there is the spread of STDs (BB is common in our UC contacts).

HOW INVESTIGATIONS ARE CONDUCTED

Our investigations mimic what we see to be occurring on the street. This includes running our investigations out of undercover apartments (reversals and regular), hotel rooms, truck stop and car "dates". In our investigations we seek to interact with and investigate online prostitution ads, illicit massage parlors and strip clubs.

During the course of the investigation, we will interview the offender(s) to get an understanding of the situation. We all also analyze their cellphones which gives us a better understanding of what people are actually involved in as so much information is included in the phones. This includes communications with a trafficker and/or customers of prostitution. We always connect the females with advocates. This is done in person based on advocate availability and contact information is always provided.

MESSAGE PARLORS

Our illicit massage parlor investigations are lengthy and include surveillance of the suspect business and employees, interviews of the customers of the business, search warrants at numerous locations (business and residences) and ultimately interviews.

-Indicators such as hours, strip mall location, male customers from all over the place

TOOLS, PROCESSES and TECHNIQUES

Our most successful tool is our willingness to investigate as many of these types of ads, businesses and incidents as possible. And be as thorough as you can. You truly never know what type of crime(s) or situations you will uncover and where these investigations may lead. We are, at times, able to prosecute suspected traffickers for collateral crimes such as gun possession or felony drug crimes when we don't have a cooperative victim.

It is important to understand that sex buyers share information. This is in the form of online forums in which they discuss what cities to avoid (where operations take place), what services are offered and at what rates are charged. They discuss techniques to avoid law enforcement as well as robberies etc.

NEW/ADDITIONAL TOOLS

-jail time for sex buyers

-Many slip through the cracks (multiple jurisdictions) if not charged

-something similar to drug court for offenders (no involvement seems to have no impact)

Speaker's Task Force on Human Trafficking
Testimony of Shira Phelps, Alex Stanley, Brooke Johnson
October 25, 2023

Good morning, Mr. Chairman and Task Force members,

Introduction: Shira Phelps

Thank you for the invitation to be here this morning. My name is Shira Phelps, and I am the Executive Director of the Office of Crime Victim Services at the Wisconsin Department of Justice. I come to this work with over 20 years of experience in anti-human trafficking and anti-gender-based violence advocacy, policy, and multidisciplinary collaboration. I have worked on local, state, and national teams to provide training and technical assistance on victim- and trauma-centered responses to human trafficking, domestic and sexual violence.

I have with me today two members of the OCVS team, Alex Stanley and Brooke Johnson, two extraordinary professionals with extensive background in responding to human trafficking.

Introduction: Brooke Johnson

My name is Brooke Johnson (Waukau), I am from the Stockbridge Munsee Band of Mohicans and Menominee Nations. For the past seven years, my work has been dedicated to addressing the urgent crisis surrounding the trafficking, abduction, and murder of Indigenous women and children by drawing media awareness to the alarming reality Indigenous women and children face today. I am the Coordinator of the Wisconsin Department of Justice's Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women's Task Force which is charged with helping fight the abduction, homicide, violence and trafficking of Indigenous women in Wisconsin. The task force focuses on examining the factors that contribute to missing and murdered Indigenous women and the response from social service organizations, understanding the roles federal, state, and tribal jurisdictions play, and improving and implementing robust data collection and reporting methods.

Introduction: Alex Stanley

My name is Alexandra Stanley and I am the new Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) Administrator at the Wisconsin Department of Justice, Office of Crime Victim Services (OCVS). I started at Wisconsin DOJ in the Division of Criminal Investigation as the Task Force Coordinator for the Wisconsin Anti-Human Trafficking

Task Force, a federally funded statewide enhanced collaborative model (ECM) multidisciplinary team. I transitioned to my new role at OCVS this month.

Prior to joining Wisconsin DOJ, I worked as a Victim/Witness Specialist at the Alameda County District Attorney's Office in Oakland, CA for three years assigned to violent felony cases, including sex trafficking. I have over a decade of direct service experience in both the community and courts advocating for victims of violent crime across three states, including adult and minor survivors of human trafficking and domestic and sexual violence, child welfare-involved youth and non-minor dependents, and recently arrived immigrant and refugee families.

Testimony: Shira Phelps

Today, we are going to tell you a little about the work we do in OCVS, discuss some of the realities of human trafficking survivors, what we know survivors need to heal and move forward, how human trafficking impacts Indigenous communities, the current landscape of victim services in Wisconsin, and what we believe this Task Force can do to address human trafficking in our state.

The Office of Crime Victim Services is the victim services division of the Wisconsin DOJ, charged with and deeply committed to centering the experiences and voices of survivors in all we do. OCVS provides direct victim services through our Victim Resource Center, Wisconsin's address confidentiality program Safe at Home, and Wisconsin's Crime Victim Compensation Program. We provide training for law enforcement, prosecutors, sexual assault nurse examiners, advocates, victim witness, and judicial personnel. We administer tens of millions of dollars in federal and state funding for direct victim services throughout the state. We coordinate and lead many state-wide multidisciplinary committees and task forces including the Wisconsin Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Relatives Task Force, the Task Force on Children in Need, the Crime Victims Council, and the Attorney General's Sexual Assault Response Team, to name a few. We also work with policymakers to promote victim-centered solutions related to justice system and public safety issues.

A few weeks ago, our colleague, DOJ Division of Criminal Investigation Director Jake Jansky accurately described human trafficking as the "exploitation of vulnerability". Factors such as poverty, child abuse and neglect, housing insecurity, substance use, and previous trauma make our children vulnerable to those who will harm them. If those are the factors that create opportunity for our children to be trafficked, what

does it take to provide safety, healing, and security for survivors? We must look holistically at a survivor's needs, listen to them, provide long-term care that gives them options and a path to self-determination and health.

Testimony: Alex Stanley:

In my work both as a community and systems-based victim/witness specialist, I witnessed firsthand the importance of providing long-term supportive services to survivors of human trafficking. Long-term case management provides a touchpoint for human trafficking survivors who, throughout their journey of victimization, stabilization, healing, and empowerment, require an extra level of support in the form of ongoing, nonjudgmental, survivor-directed services. Local, state, and federal agencies, which encompass not only victim service providers, but also law enforcement, prosecutors, medical providers, school personnel, juvenile justice, child welfare, and the myriad other systems that survivors come in contact with, must work to build trust with survivors of both sex and labor trafficking. We owe it to them to take our time to build that trust and follow their lead.

As best practice, which also maximizes limited resources, service agencies must co-advocate, or collaborate to support victims and their service needs. By *service needs*, I mean everything from housing, clothing, food, mental and physical health care, employment training, victim rights assistance, to help understanding the legal process, peer support, and safe places to recover from debilitating trauma. In practice, what this might look like is one community-based advocate, law enforcement-based advocate, or victim/witness specialist contacting another fellow advocate, knowing that advocate's agency provides a service that the first advocate's agency cannot. The survivor ideally signs a release of information allowing these advocates to communicate and coordinate on their behalf creating a mini-case management team and thereby maximizing the benefits for the survivor. It is essential to this work that local victim service organizations know each other's services and work to build strong relationships with each other, for comprehensive service provision and better outcomes for survivors.

You have heard from the leadership of several multidisciplinary teams whose testimony reinforced the crucial role that these teams play in identifying and stabilizing victims, investigating these crimes, and prosecuting offenders. These complex investigations and prosecutions can, and often do, span years; therefore, long-term victim service providers trained in supporting the unique and complex needs of trafficking survivors require deliberate and proactive collaboration and communication across all

disciplines. Multidisciplinary teams throughout the state should act as a network of providers, collaborating on victim service referrals from Milwaukee to Hayward or Beloit to Rhinelander, providing the most updated contact information for providers throughout the state and connecting folks in real-time. Local law enforcement can benefit from this connection as well, so that they know who to contact for service needs that are essential to stabilizing a trafficking victim involved in a potential case near them. None of these goals can be achieved if we are not properly supporting community-based service organizations.

Lastly, and most importantly, survivors must always be at the forefront of what we do. We cannot pretend to walk in their shoes or know what is best for them. Meaningful engagement with survivors and lived experience experts is key to this work and must be done in a way that does not tokenize their experience or force them into situations where their voices are diminished. We must pay them fairly. We must follow their lead. This notion challenges us to go beyond just being victim-centered and trauma-informed, but truly centering survivor voices at the core of our work.

Testimony: Brooke Johnson

I am here today to talk about the intersection between missing and murdered Indigenous women and children and sex trafficking. This intersection is a deeply troubling and complex issue that arises from a variety of interconnected factors. Understanding these factors is essential to addressing systemic challenges that Indigenous people face in Wisconsin.

Indigenous women and children are disproportionately vulnerable to sex trafficking due to a range of social, economic, and historical factors. Historical trauma, colonization, systemic racism, and poverty have exacerbated this vulnerability. These factors alone lead to Indigenous women and children experiencing a higher risk of exploitation and victimization. A significant challenge in addressing the issue of trafficking is the lack of comprehensive data and awareness. Many cases of missing and murdered Indigenous women and children go unreported, underreported, or misclassified, making it difficult to assess the full extent of the problem. This lack of visibility hinders efforts to combat the trafficking of Indigenous people. The critical issues surrounding data collection (or lack thereof) regarding the trafficking of Indigenous women and children are significant and multifaceted. These issues hinder our understanding of the scope of the problem, and impede our efforts to combat trafficking and protect some of the most vulnerable

populations. Data on trafficking is often fragmented and not standardized. Different agencies, organizations, and jurisdictions collect data differently.

Everyone has an important piece of the puzzle but we do not have the data infrastructure to put them together in a way that tells the whole story. As the task force moves forward, I respectfully ask that you pay special attention to the data deficit around human trafficking with an emphasis on the challenges we face related to Indigenous victims.

Testimony: Shira Phelps

The landscape of victim services in Wisconsin is in crisis. We are facing devastating cuts from the federal Victim of Crime Act (VOCA) grant program – dollars that come from the Victims of Crime Fund, which are collected fines and fees from federal prosecutions, not dollars from taxpayers. VOCA is the largest grant program for victim services administered by OCVS. To make a very long and complicated story brief, over the past 5 years, we have been able to award a total of \$44 million in VOCA funds to victim service providers throughout Wisconsin. Next year and for the next three years, we will only have \$13 million in VOCA funds to award. Victim service programs will be deeply impacted, many having to close their doors. This will have devastating impact on survivors and their families. When we do not have the necessary resources to support survivors, we will feel this ripple in our schools, hospitals, and criminal justice system.

I'm not here today to ask you to throw money at a problem. But I would be remiss if I didn't say that underfunding impacts our ability to do all the things we just mentioned. If we really want to change the trajectory, we must strategically connect and fund local services. These are the folks who show up at 2 a.m. and are there for survivors to call weeks, months, and even years later—long after our criminal justice cases have concluded, or the investigation has gone dark. We need to invest in *them* to support survivors. Exploitation is all about vulnerability. We need to be as dedicated to supporting vulnerable populations as traffickers are to exploiting them.

Jacalyn LaBre Testimony for Human Trafficking Task Force 10/25/2023

As a prosecutor for over 25 years, I have seen how human trafficking affects many areas of the criminal justice system. You don't come into contact with human trafficking in just one area, it is involved in many areas of criminal activity. One area we see human trafficking is drug cases. When talking with individuals who are possessing or using controlled substances information is learned about the human trafficking occurring. Women are being taken to Milwaukee and Chicago by dealers and trafficked. The women are trapped in this life due to their addiction. Once they are in these cities, they are moved to other areas or states. Their addiction to controlled substances keeps them indebted to these individuals and unable to break away. They are forced into situations where they are required to perform sex acts. It is a vicious cycle that is difficult for them to break away from. The highly addictive nature of opioids and narcotics is making it more difficult for them. Their self-worth plummets along with the addiction and they don't have the strength to leave. They continued to be trafficked or worse, overdose.

Another area where human trafficking occurs is in prostitution. Prostitution is very internet driven. Individuals can make contact with pimps over websites and arrange a place/time to meet. These individuals come from every walk of life. They don't realize that the women aren't there voluntarily. The money is often given directly to the pimp electronically or in person. Prostitution cases are difficult to intercept. An officer can stop a vehicle where a pimp has several women in a vehicle, and nothing looks wrong or criminal. There is no reason for the officer to continue the contact with them or intervene. It is also difficult for the women to leave the pimps because of the control they have over them. These women can be sold repeatedly making money for the pimp. This process can be more profitable than, for example, selling controlled substances which can only be sold once. It is difficult for them to leave not only financially but due to intimidation or drug addiction. Prostitution still occurs in certain massage parlors in multiple states. For example, out of Chicago women are being transported to massage parlors in neighboring states. They move the women around quickly to avoid detection by law enforcement. Many times, there is a language barrier with these women. Websites also are used to connect customers with the parlors. The customer comes in pays cash and receives his service. The controller of the parlor takes the money from the women and keeps the women

moving to the next parlor. Law Enforcement has a challenging time developing information because the women are continually moved around.

There is also an increase in human trafficking scams. The individuals talk on the internet to women but when they meet up for the service they are robbed or if they electronically send the money ahead of time, they woman never shows. These frauds can be run from anywhere in the world.

Children involved in sex trafficking often come to law enforcement's attention through ICAC or cyber tips. The internet has caused an increased children being involved in sex trafficking. Before the internet child pornography was difficult to obtain. Now these images and videos can be shared to multiple individuals with a few keystrokes. The images can be shared and reshared every day. Individuals can meet in chat rooms and discuss sharing files. Along with that, adults can also meet children online or in chat rooms. They chat with the child for a period of time until the child is convinced to send a picture or meet in person. Sometimes they will travel to several states to meet with a child. Or they can meet an adult who has access to a child that is willing to allow the person to sexually assault the child. Children in these situations need assistance from law enforcement and victim services. It is difficult for them to admit what happened and get the help they need. They are dependent on the adults in their lives and at times those are the ones abusing them. Children are supposed to be protected by the adults of the community not victimized by them.

In addition, sextortion is an issue especially with the youth. The child/ teenager is communicating with someone online. The child is convinced to send a photograph. Then told they must pay money or perform a sex act and if they don't the individual will release the photograph. This is causing depression and in some circumstances suicide. They don't know how to ask for help when they need it, and the results can be tragic.

Law enforcement and prosecutors around the state have worked diligently to combat this growing issue. Techniques used by law enforcement include proactive investigations, monitoring of prostitution websites, ICAC and following up on sensitive crimes complaints. Grants are an important part of this. Grants allow officers to do focused investigations outside of their normal duties. For example, prostitution stings. Often it takes a team of officers working together for a few hours to properly conduct a sting. This is difficult to do with a normal day's responsibilities. Grants such as, The Beat Patrol grant, have been helpful in allowing law

enforcement the overtime to put together a sting to address the issue in their community. ICAC and training from ICAC is essential to deal with the internet related investigations into child pornography or individuals traveling to assault a child. ICAC has resources a local department can't afford to have. The partnership with ICAC allows the local department to deal with these cases and arrests those involved in child pornography/ assaults.

Other vital partnerships in combatting human trafficking are child advocacy centers and victim services. Child advocacy centers provide necessary medical examinations for the children and specialized interviewers. These are topics children don't want to talk about, especially with adults. These interviewers are trained how to make the children comfortable and able to disclose what has been happening to them. They stress the importance of telling the truth and breaks concepts down to a level the child can understand. At times these recorded interviews can be used in court and limit the amount of time a child needs to be in the courtroom. This is crucial for child victims. A courtroom is a traumatic place for them, any ability to limit the trauma is very important. Victim services are important to allow adult woman trapped in human trafficking to get out. They need to feel comfortable talking to law enforcement about their pimp. Often they are terrified the pimp will find out and hurt them or they are dependent on the pimp. Some of these victim services include basic care kits with clothing, food, basic hygiene products and connecting them to resources that can help them. They often need medical care and other counseling services.

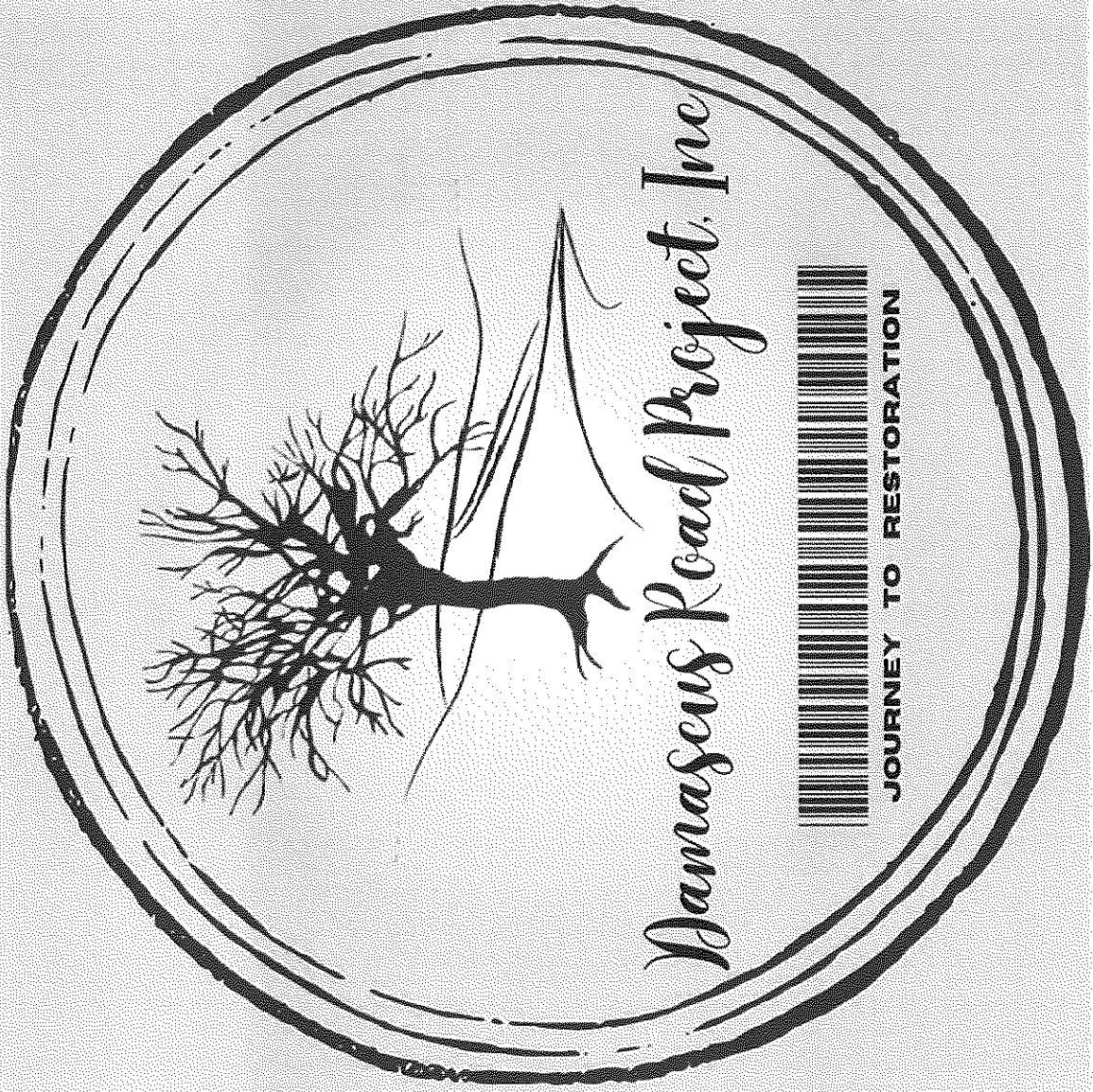
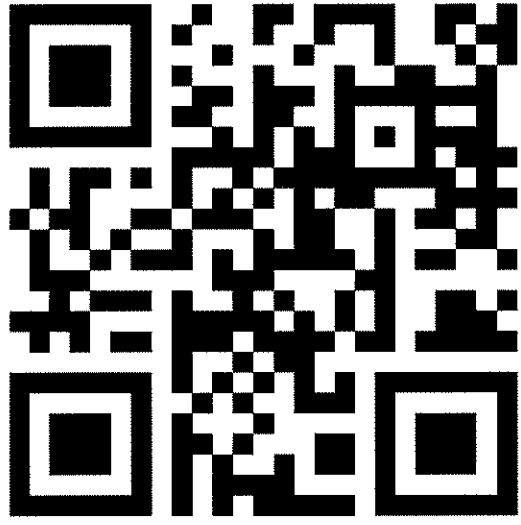
What is needed for the future. Keep ICAC funded. ICAC is a vital tool in combating human trafficking. ICAC has resources and experience the is essential to combat human trafficking. Grants are also needed for specialized investigations and necessary equipment/ resources such as translators. Funding for child advocacy centers and other victim related resources. It is important to provide the resources for victims to get the treatment they need to get out of the lifestyle and feel comfortable enough to assist law enforcement. Medical services are also a part of this.

Education is vital. Educating the children and adults of the community is important. Children need to understand the dangers on the internet and what can happen to them. They need to be taught how they can recognize dangerous situations and inform an adult about it. Adults need to learn what to look for and how to assist potential victims. The internet websites, apps and other methods of communication are ever changing. It is important for parents to

understand the current trends used by children/ teenagers on the internet. Law enforcement can't be everywhere, adults of the community need to understand the dangers children face and how to help them.

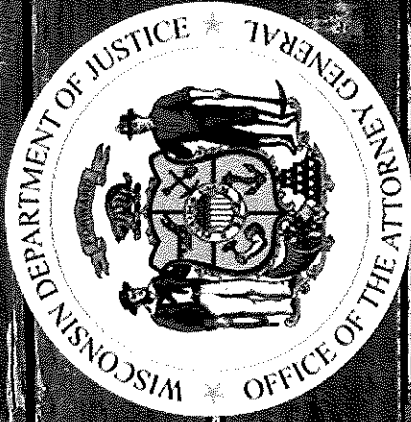
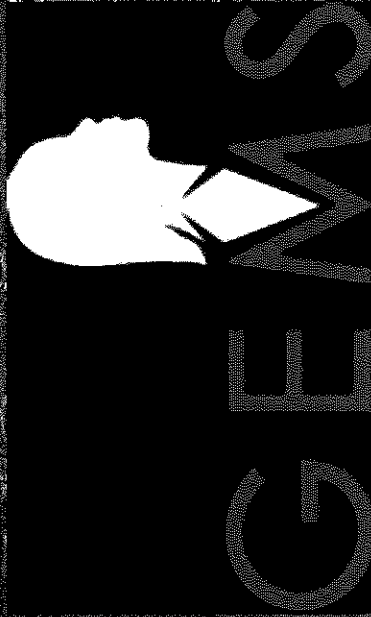
As far as potential legislative issues that need to be addressed, one issue is the rise in AI (artificial intelligence). AI has advanced to a level where it is difficult to distinguish between an actual child and an AI created image. During a case if the image is discovered to be AI and not a real child, the case may need to be dismissed. You cannot tell if it is a real child or not until the image is forensically evaluated. If you are unable to positively state that the image is of an actual child, the charge may need to be dismissed. With the advancement in technology this is going to be a growing issue. Children are our most precious resource, and they need to be protected. We need a partnership between law enforcement, prosecutors, community, and the legislature to address the issue of Human Trafficking.

Thank you for your time and allowing me to speak on this critical issue today.

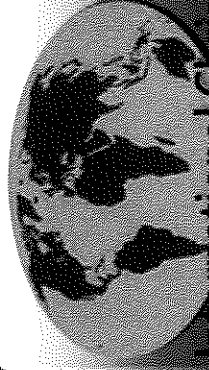


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In order to best serve our clients, we combine our experiences
with extensive training and continuing education.



MOODY
Bible Institute



**ADVERSE
CHILDHOOD
EXPERIENCES**
Interface Training (ACEs)

Networking for Transformation and Hope
International Christian Alliance of Postmen



ONLINE



WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF
CHILDREN AND FAMILIES



thisisfarms.org



DAMASCUS ROAD PROJECT, INC

Damascus Road Project, Inc. was formed in 2009.

We are an all-volunteer operated faith-led 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

Our mission is to fight the evil of human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation.

We are committed to bringing awareness through educating, restoring and empowering the abused, and advocating for the prevention and abolition of sex trafficking & sexual exploitation.

While we operate throughout Wisconsin, we primarily serve the needs of girls in the greater Fox Valley area.

ABOUT US



Damascus Road Project

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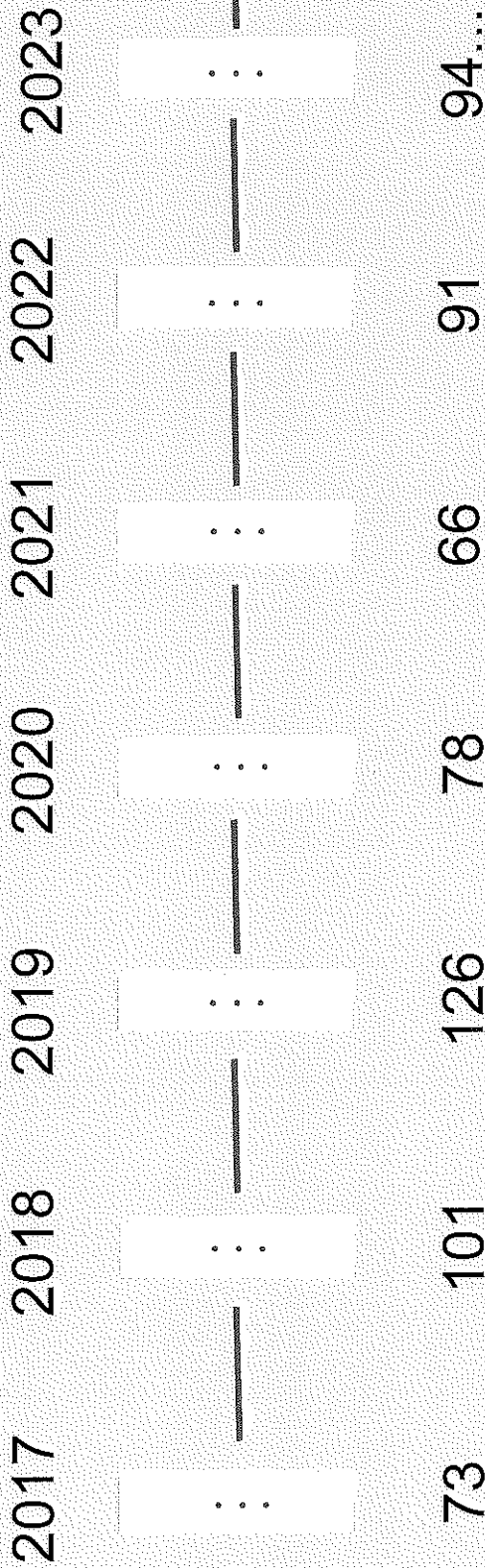
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Naomi's Story



DAMASCUS ROAD PROJECT

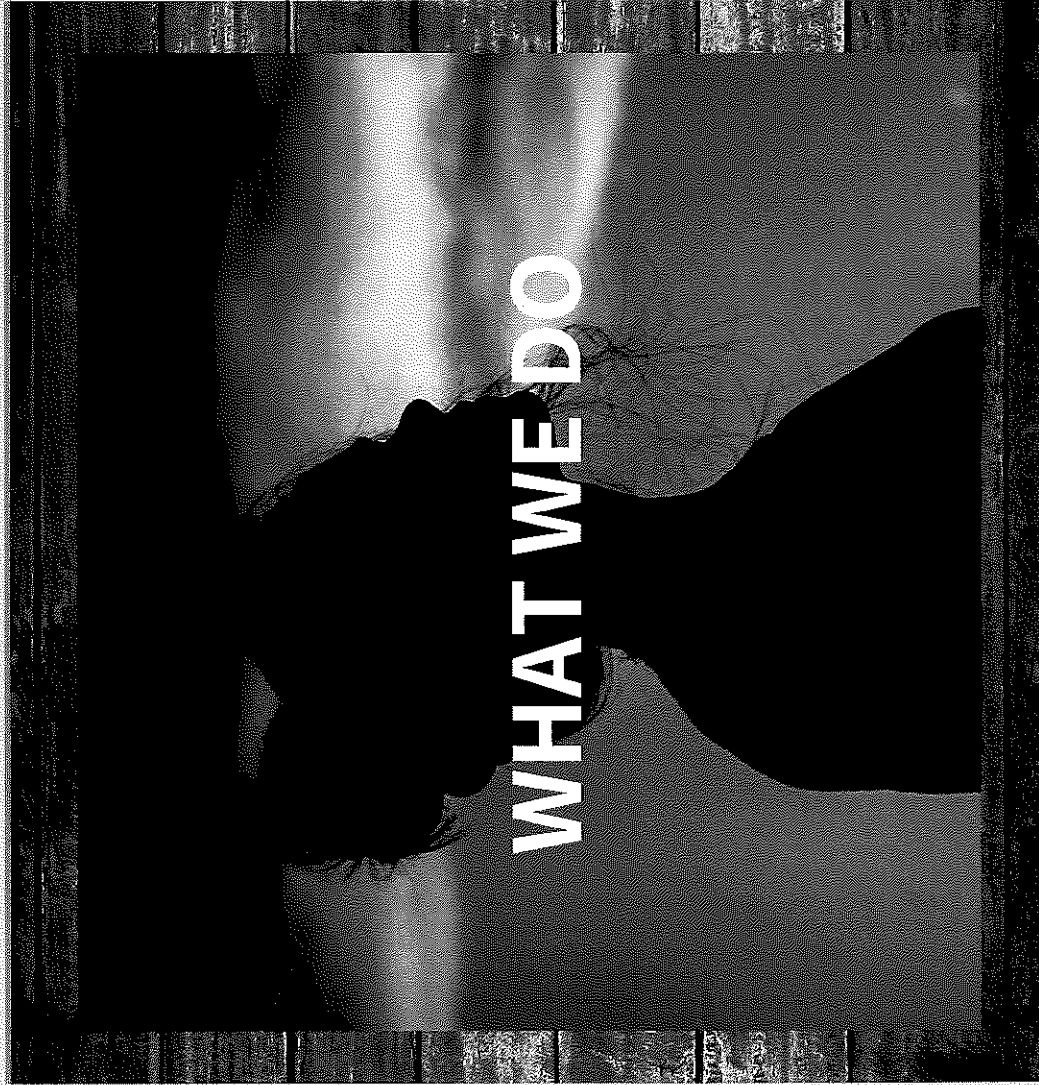
NEW CLIENTS EACH YEAR



to date

In addition to new referrals we continue to serve existing clients – these relationships last for years.

DAMASCUS ROAD PROJECT, INC



Educate

Locate

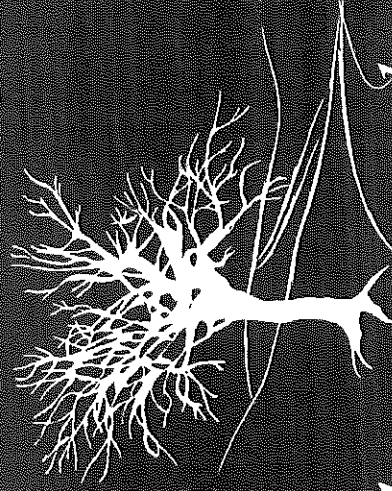
Advocate

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People were created to be loved. Things were created to be used. The reason why the world is in chaos, is because things are being loved and people are being used.

- Have you ever had sexual contact in exchange for things of value (money, housing, food, drugs, gifts or favors)?
- Has anyone harmed or threatened to harm you, or in order to get you to perform a sexual act?
- Has anyone ever withheld payment for a sexual act from you, given it to someone else, or controlled the money you should have been paid?
- Have you ever been advertised on a "sex for sale" website, had photos of you shared for profit, or participated in a porn for profit website/app, either by your doing or by someone else?
- Has anyone promised you a specific job, but that promise turned out to be untrue, and instead the "job" was in the sex industry?

If so, we'd like to help you.



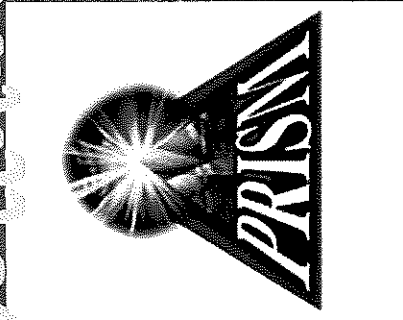
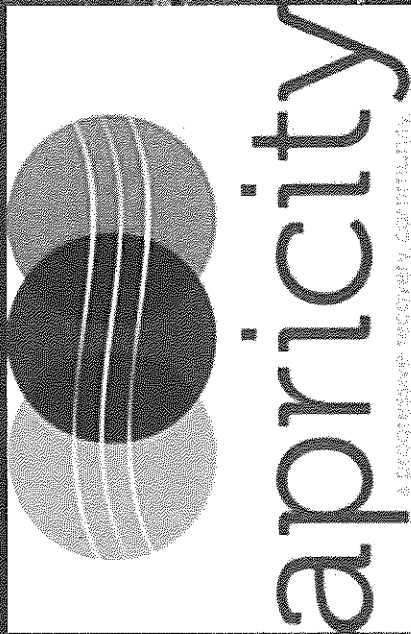
damascus road

For help, call us at (920) 659-0050.

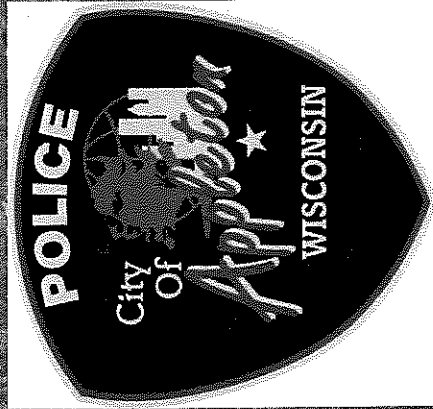
Damascus Road Project, Inc. is an anti-human trafficking / commercial sexual exploitation organization. We are faith-led, non-profit, non-law enforcement, non-government. We offer judgement-free help, referral to services support and general information.

**Posted in
female pods
in jails.**

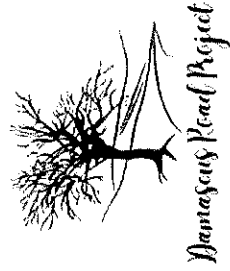
Collaborate



**CITY OF OSHKOSH
POLICE**



**During 2022 and 2023,
we have funded and transported 14 women
to long-term restoration programs
in other states,
so these brave women can embark on their
journey to healing and restoration.**



Damascus Road Project makes referrals and provides transportation to long-term restoration programs such as these, available to girls at no cost.



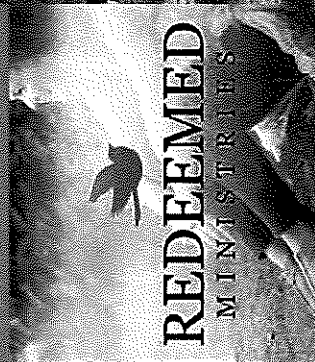
Wellspring Living



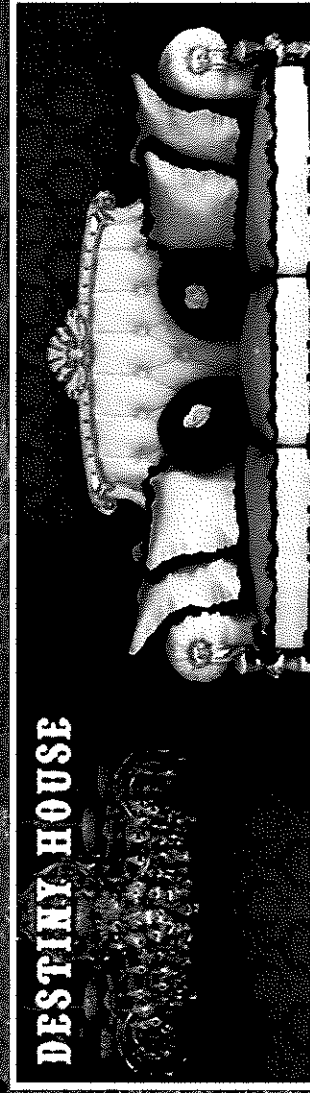
Zeteo
Community



CROOKED TREE RANCH



DESTINY HOUSE



SELAH FREEDOM
END SEX TRAFFICKING



Refuge for
Women

Aftercare for the trafficked & sexually exploited

Drop - In & Office Space



RECEPTION

DROPP-IN
MONDAYS & THURSDAYS
12-4 PM

KITCHEN

LIBRARY

APPOINTMENTS
AVAILABLE

FAMILY
ROOM

Damascus Road Project Free Boutique



YOU WILL BE *blessed*
WHEN YOU COME IN AND
WHEN YOU GO OUT
blessed WHEN YOU GO OUT
Damascus Road Project

Exodus Bag

THROW
Kindness
AROUND LIKE



- Shampoo / Conditioner
- Body Wash / Lotion / Deodorant
- Toothbrush / Toothpaste / Chapstick
- Hair Brush / Comb / Hair Ties / Razor / Shaving Cream
- Feminine Hygiene Items / New Make-Up
- Single Use Laundry Detergent
- Adult Coloring Books / Colored Pencils / Journal
- Bible / Nutrition Bars / Snacks

**We walk alongside
each girl...
providing, love,
understanding,
compassion, prayer,
faith, empowerment,
mentorship,
support and guidance
in a judgement-free
safe environment...for
as long as she'd like.**



“

Help us show her
kindness, grace and
steadfast love put
into action so she
knows she's not
alone.

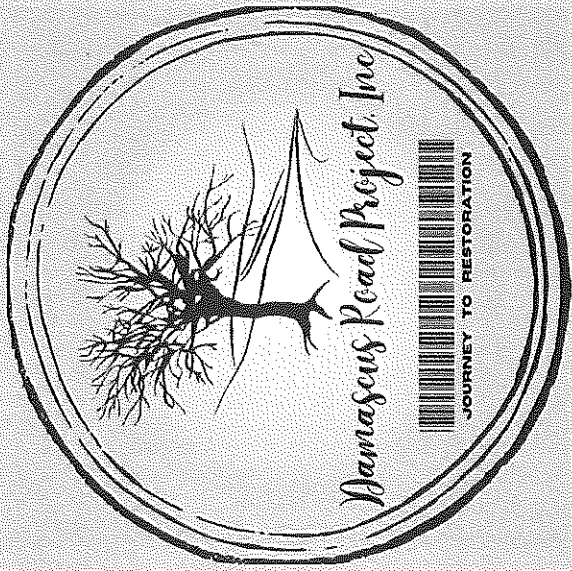
@damascusroadproject.org

#WeGetToMove



Naomi's Story





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