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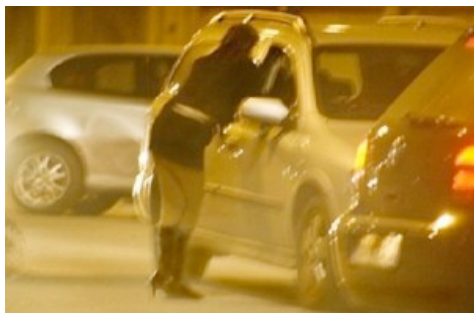
Human and child trafficking on the rise

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A young girl is seen in this photo soliciting sex in Western Europe. Most people think child trafficking is only a problem in other countries but over the years it has increased dramatically in the U.S. Currently it is believed that between 100,000 and 300,000 American children are the victims of child trafficking. Courtesy photo | U.S. State Department

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By [Lisa Collacott](#) | 1 comment

Human trafficking is not just a problem in other countries. Trafficking for sex or labor exploitations is increasing in the United States at an alarming rate.

While there are many organizations around the country that are trying to put a stop to human trafficking through prevention one organization in Colorado Springs is working with victims once they've been rescued.

Restore Innocence is dedicated to helping victims of child trafficking. The organization is working on opening a safe house where victims can be restored and reintegrated back into society. Victims would receive counseling and medical treatment as well as receiving help in getting a job or into college.

"Our big vision is to open the Cinderella House which is an all-encompassing after-care facility. Once the girls are rescued and taken off the street they would come to us for healing and restoration," said Michelle Korth, founder and executive director. "It's getting them on their feet before they are out in society and having a safe place for them even after they leave. They can know they're cared for and loved and they can come back for holidays. We'll always be in their lives. It's not just a program where they come and leave."

The average age of victims Restore Innocence works with is 18-year-olds.

CHILD TRAFFICKING STATS

There are approximately 100,000 to 300,000 human trafficking victims in the United States.

Korth said 90 percent of all human trafficking victims in

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Organizations fighting trafficking

Restore Innocence - www.restoreinnocence.org

Stop Child Trafficking Now - www.sctnow.org

Human Trafficking Task Force of Southern Colorado - www.ht-colorado.org

Children of the Night - www.childrenofthenight.org

Polaris Project - www.polarisproject.org

End Human Trafficking - www.endhumantrafficking.org

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the country are American children with the average age being 13. About 70 percent are deemed throw-a-way kids — those who have run away, are in foster care or are neglected by their parents. Some kids are even sold by their parents for drugs. Only one percent of child trafficking victims are kidnapped.

According to the organization Stop Child Trafficking Now 2.8 million children run away in the U.S. each year. It is estimated that within 48 hours of hitting the streets one-third of those are then lured or recruited by sex traffickers.

The U.S. Department of Education states on its website, www.ed.gov, that children are targeted because of their "vulnerability and gullibility." The streets are not the only place victims are targeted. Young victims can be found on chat lines, clubs, through friends, at malls and even after-school programs.

Korth said there is a surprising number of victims who come from wealthy families.

Human trafficking has been reported in all 50 states and while many are trafficked for labor most of the U.S victims are trafficked for sexual servitude. The Justice Department reported that 14,500 to 17,500 foreign nationals are trafficked into the U.S. each year.

When Korth and her husband first got a glimpse into the world of trafficking they set out to make a difference and said they would have moved anywhere. However, when they learned how staggering the number was in the U.S. they knew they had to do something at home.

TOO CLOSE TO HOME

Just last month 14 men received indictments for their participation in a child trafficking ring in Colorado. Four of the men coerced girls under the age of 18 into prostitution in Denver, Lakewood, Grand Junction, Glenwood Springs and Boulder.

According to a statement by the Attorney General's office the suspects arranged "out-calls" through the Internet. They face charges of trafficking in children, the pimping of a child, inducing child prostitution and contributing to the delinquency of a minor. In addition, 10 others were indicted on charges of patronizing the operation.

According to a documentary video on YouTube by Rocky Mountain Slavery Interstates 25 and 70 are being used to transport victims of human trafficking, particularly international victims. Additionally, the video states that human trafficking is one of the fastest growing crimes in America. (That video can be seen on the left of your screen.)

Chief Jake Shirk said the Monument Police Department does not have any jurisdiction on Interstate 25 so he does not know to what extent it is used for transporting trafficking victims.

"Let your imagination run wild with what is occurring on I-25. We know there are drugs. Human trafficking, I assume there is," Shirk said.

Shirk said in his seven years with the Monument Police Department he has never received a report of human trafficking occurring in the area.

"If it was happening we'd be very concerned with it but I don't have any indication that it is," Shirk added. "I've never heard of any rumors (of it happening). If I did I would take it very seriously."

During his years with the Aurora Police Department Shirk said he never got involved in cases of child trafficking at the street level because it was always dealt with through higher level investigations. He did say, however, that there was one case of human trafficking that he was involved in as S.W.A.T. commander.

He was called in to assist with the tactical needs during a joint operation involving law enforcement agencies in metro Denver and across the state that involved Oriental massage parlors.

Korth said human trafficking is occurring in small towns elsewhere and not just the big cities. "It can happen anywhere," she added.

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