



Hotel soaps used to combat human trafficking

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LOUISVILLE, KY (WDRB) -- It looks like an assembly line for party favors. A group of women standing around a table, stuffing plastic gift bags with bars of soap.

The women are volunteers with the group S.O.A.P or Save Our Adolescents from Prostitution. Their gathering this weekend in Louisville was part of an outreach program to deliver bars of soap to Louisville area hotels and motels. The bars are wrapped with labels with a 1-800 phone number to the National Human Trafficking Hotline.

"And this is the opportunity to get them the hotline and to really get them help," said Toshia Kimbler, a spokeswoman for the group.

Toshia Kimbler knows the circumstances all too well. She was trapped in the same world of sex trafficking years ago.

"I'm traveling around the country with the SOAP project because when I was 16, there was nobody that I could call and talk to and reach out for help," Kimbler said. "I was trafficked at the young age of 16 and I've been free for many years now. I don't know what they said that sold me on this idea but before I knew it, I was being sold on Craigslist."

The group often targets cities preparing for major conventions or sporting events, including an upcoming truck show in Louisville.

"A lot of times when events come to town, the women are forced or coerced into prostitution," said Amy Leenerts, a volunteer.

Leenerts was among a handful of volunteers who delivered to soap to area motels and hotels on Saturday.

The outreach effort, Kimbler says, is working. She points to a recent event in Ohio.

"There were two girls spotted on our missing children's poster and one of them was rescued last week - so we know that this is working and it is successful," said Kimbler.

The National Human Trafficking Hotline is 1-888-373-7888.

The organization says the women exploited in these situations often don't know what city or state they are staying in because they are moved so frequently.

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