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Thursday, Apr. 26, 2012

Human trafficking comes to focus in Ripon

Event at Ripon High brings awareness to grim reality of issue

By Zachary Senn
Teens in the Newsroom

More than 60 students gathered in multi-use room at Ripon High School on Friday to learn about one of the greatest modern-day injustices: human trafficking.

After a short video was played, explaining the issue and presenting several staggering statistics, event coordinator Emily Hobbs began to speak. The Modesto Junior College student originally had planned to "Cover the Night" with the Kony2012 Campaign, but as she felt that interest in the campaign was waning, she thought something closer to home could instill a more effective and lasting passion. "You can hear about (Joseph) Kony, (leader of the guerrilla Lord's Resistance Army) and how horrible things are in Uganda, but what you don't realize is that it happens right here."

The purpose of Friday's Sex Trafficking Awareness Night presentation was to educate young people of a very real issue in our area. Many visitors watched in shock as they were informed by the video that there are as many as 27 million slaves in the world today, and that an estimated 46 percent of the 800,000 slaves in the United States are used for sex services. She shared reports of sex slaves being discovered in Oakland, Hayward and even Modesto.



Zachary Senn - Sex Trafficking Awareness Night. Emily Hobbs, right, with Nicole Rose, left, in front of their information table. (Zachary Senn/Teens in the Newsroom)

Earlier this month, The Bee wrote an editorial that began: "When police pick up a teen or woman for prostitution, the assumption might be that she's entered 'the world's oldest profession' so that she can buy drugs or pay the rent. But what if this young lady is not a criminal at all, but a victim, someone who has been trapped into this behavior by a pimp who has financial and even physical chains on her?"

"Authorities say this frightening scenario is increasingly common around the country. While the Stanislaus County district attorney's office has not yet prosecuted this kind of case, there's anecdotal evidence of it locally — enough that the office has organized a task force of law enforcement and social service agency representatives."

Event guest speaker Nicole Rose is a mother of

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two from Ripon. Although she does not work for any one organization, she calls herself an advocate for human trafficking awareness. At her information table Friday were fliers in support of the CASEAct, an initiative to end the brutality of sex trafficking, and several pieces of literature from the group Without Permission, which is based in Modesto.

Without Permission is a faith-based group that works to find practical ways to involve and educate people about the enormous problem that sex slavery has become. The statistics in the literature stated that the average age of a pimp or trafficker is only 19, while that of the slave at the time of abduction is between 12 and

14; also, 85 percent of second-time runaways are recruited into the sex trade industry within 48 hours.

Rose told the audience that gangs and organized crime rings are moving to traffic more and more human cargo because "it costs money to make drugs, to distribute weapons ... but it costs them nothing to abduct a human being."

Hobbs, who attended Ripon High, became passionate about human trafficking awareness after watching the documentary "Sex + Money" while visiting a church in Stockton. She feels education about the issue is important, as it will inspire more people to fight against this and other social injustices. Even though sex slavery is something that happens at a local level, many residents do not know about the darker side of suburban life.

Arlette Hernandez, a Ripon High student, had never heard of sex trafficking and was shocked that slavery still existed and was so prevalent in our area.

Rose said that sex slavery is difficult to detect because "these girls are too afraid to speak the truth, and if they did, they can't prove it." Often, a pimp will tell a suspecting law-enforcement officer that the girls are his "nieces" or friend's daughters, she said. Rose is a strong supporter of CASEAct, or the Californians Against Sexual Exploitation Act, which would require convicted pimps to be registered as sex offenders, as well as stiffening punishments for owning and selling human beings. The bill also would treat prostitutes as victims of sexual abuse instead of treating them as criminals. "Putting these girls in prison is adding insult to injury," Rose said.

The facts having been presented, along with several ways to become involved, Hobbs invited those who were comfortable to join her in prayer. "I believe that the most powerful way we can combat this is with prayer," she said. Although the event was held at Ripon High School, and the attendance was primarily made up of students and alumni, it was open to everyone. While praying, Emily entreated for "every heart in this room to burn for justice."

"It really only takes one person to make a difference," she commented after the event.

Nicole Rose, holding up the book "God in a Brothel: An Undercover Journey into Sex Trafficking and Rescue," showed the signature of author Daniel Walker, followed by his words "Live Dangerously." "That's what I want to do," said Rose. "I can't know the information that I know and do nothing."

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Norma Jean Almodovar

This whole idiotic crusade against 'human trafficking' is nothing more than an ideological agenda to abolish all prostitution. If it weren't, the so called anti- traffickers would mention that sex trafficking is a very small part of prostitution activities and a smaller part of human trafficking. The majority of victims of human trafficking are forced into domestic labor, agriculture, garment manufacturing etc. For NONE of these occupations is there a full on crusade to abolish the work.

Most sex workers are not victims of trafficking, most are adult and most of us have chosen to engage in sex work for a variety of reasons.

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The facts are that for the greatest number of child sexual exploitation cases, (90%) the predator is someone whom the child knows and trusts- like teachers, preachers, boy scout leaders, coaches, priests, and even, unfortunately, law enforcement agents. The US Government's own studies show that 68% of the predators of child sexual exploitation victims are family members.

And if we are going to talk about victims of violence, then the 12 MILLION incidents of intimate partner violence each year is a good place to start. And the 1 MILLION incidents of intimate partner rape each year. And the more than 88,000 reported rapes each year (non sex trafficking related) for which the cops manage to arrest about 20%, leaving 80% of the perpetrators to continue raping others. There are between 400,000 to 500,000 untested rapes kits languishing in police evidence lockers nationwide....

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