

The Abell Report

What we think about, and what we'd like you to think about

Published as a community service by The Abell Foundation

Sex Trafficking in Maryland:

Police, Social Agencies Say Human Trafficking Growing Faster Than Authorities Can Control: Five Recommendations to Address the Problem

ABELL SALUTES: Shepherd's Clinic, for providing low-cost or no-cost health care services to the poor. "Shepherding 2,000 patients a year."

Mark Goodspeed is a 46-year-old, divorced, unemployed construction worker with little prospects for employment; he is suffering from cardiovascular and stress-related problems and is being treated regularly by a cardiologist, a general practitioner, a psychiatrist, and a social worker in state-of-the-art facilities as often as three times in one week. For these health treatments, he pays nothing.

Mr. Goodspeed is one of the more than 2,000 patients in 13 zip codes throughout Baltimore who have no health insurance but are treated ("being shepherded," as executive director Jack VandenHengel puts it) at Shepherd's Clinic at 2800 Kirk Avenue in the Coldsteam-Homestead-Montebello area as if they had. For their medical treatment—primary and/or specialty care (cardiology, dermatology, endocrinology, gastroenterology, gynecology,

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Kim* is a victim of six years of sex trafficking. She comes out of Ohio, a slender blue-eyed blonde with a father who repeatedly assaulted her and a mother who refused to believe Kim's account of the attacks. So Kim ran away from home. She met a man at a bus station, a friendly stranger who pretended to give her the affection denied her by her parents.

But the man was a pimp who prostituted Kim and then sold her to another sex trafficker. This man kept her in a house in northeast Baltimore and solicited her across Baltimore, Washington, and Virginia. Kim never saw sunlight and only felt fresh air on the car rides to area hotels where each night a procession of men with money used her as they wished.

She was 15 when this started and 21 when the pimp beat her up to reinforce a lesson: Her life was not her own. Kim was part of a world that is now apparently growing at a relentless pace: human trafficking, a form of modern-day slavery in which victims, many between the ages of 12 and 20, many of them runaways who were victims of sexual exploitation at home, find themselves forced into prostitution by amoral and predatory men.

Nationally, the U.S. Department

of Justice estimates that more than 250,000 youths are at risk, while Shared Hope International, an anti-trafficking organization, estimates the average entry for female victims is 13. Some are as young as 9 years old.

In the Baltimore area, authorities interviewed over the past few months by The Abell Foundation describe a problem spreading beyond the grasp of police, prosecutors, and social-work agencies.

Sex trafficking is growing so relentlessly that, in May, the Governor's Office of Crime Control & Prevention and the Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force brought together some 400 officials to talk about a dangerous new age, in which the classic notion of prostitutes and street-corner assignments has been replaced by computer-savvy pimps and johns; by a thriving national network of online sex advertising; by outwardly respectable hotels whose management officials sometimes seem to turn a blind eye to such activities—and by girls like Kim who are pulled into this world and don't know how to escape.

"These are girls from every kind of background, economically, racially, ethnically, all over the place," says Baltimore assistant U.S. attorney Rachel Yasser. "Some from good families,

**All survivors' names and specific details about their circumstances have been changed to protect their identity.*

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some not. Often there's sexual abuse at home. Sometimes it's family members actually selling these girls. And the girls run away, and they don't begin to know how to survive on the street."

"They are taken in by men who see vulnerability, who see need," says Rosalyn Branson, executive director of TurnAround, Inc., a Baltimore agency reaching out to such girls. "They come up and talk to her. Is it a father that's missing? Then he's daddy. If it's love, then he's a boyfriend. Girls targeted in a suburban mall—when he comes up and says she's the most beautiful thing he's ever seen, and her eyes open this big, and she's so touched by someone thinking she's beautiful—there's the start of it. She's run away from home, she's got need all over her, and he's bringing what she needs."

Law enforcement officials stress the distinction between classic notions of street-corner prostitution and this brand of human trafficking, in which girls are held against their will, isolated from outsiders, beaten, threatened with public shame—and most of them are adolescents.

"People hear about prostitution, and they think, 'Well, it's a victimless crime,'" says Aaliyah Muhammad, a Baltimore City assistant state's attorney assigned to the Sex Offense Division. "But we're talking here about runaways, about girls who have been abused at home, and they're on the run. In the past the model was: Arrest them, they're defendants. But they're not. They're victims. And a lot of them don't even know they're victims."

"We're talking about slavery," says

Sidney Ford, special advisor to the Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force, the team of agencies formed five years ago by the U.S. attorney's office, the Attorney General of Maryland, and the State's Attorney for Baltimore City.

"It's slavery," says Ford, "because these folks have no choice. And it's slavery because there's violence, there's threats, there's coercion...and it's slavery because it goes into their psyches, and they're walking around, and this trafficker has such a hold on their lives that they're dependent on him for absolutely everything."

"It's absolutely slavery," adds a Baltimore police undercover officer assigned to human trafficking cases. "In order to get these girls to perform, you have to show them some kind of violence, in order to keep the other girls in check. You know, 'If I try to escape, here's what's gonna happen because I saw what they did to her.' The pimp thinks, she may have done her job, but tonight I'm gonna have to put my hands on her so that the other girls see I'm still running this.' And the girls don't know how to get away. That's why it's modern-day slavery."

Such words were echoed on September 25, by President Obama, in a speech to the Clinton Global Initiative. Obama decried "the debasement of our common humanity...the injustice, the outrage, of human trafficking, which must be called by its true name—modern slavery."

Included in that slavery, Obama declared, were girls "lured by the false promises of a better life, and then imprisoned in a brothel and tortured if she resists," specifically citing the

case of a Bronx girl "fleeing an abusive home. She fell in with a guy who said he'd protect her. Instead, he sold her—just 15 years old—to men who raped her and beat her...."

Baltimore knows such victims too well. Some of them sit in the offices of TurnAround, a Baltimore nonprofit agency assisting sex trafficking victims, where they talk about their lives with executive director Branson and Melissa Snow, head of TurnAround's anti-trafficking program.

There's Kelsy, an athletic 12 year old who writes wistful poetry. She had a father who visited her bedroom every night. Then she met a man who said he'd take care of her. He was 30 and worked as a doorman on The Block. It took Kelsy 18 months to find her way free.

There's Sam, now 24, who was abused by family members since childhood. Two relatives paid her parents for Sam's sexual services. The family began selling her to strangers. There were more than a hundred different men over the years. Once, she recalls, her father sold her for the night to cover a bet. When Sam questioned the sexual abuse, her parents said they depended on her for financial support.

"I was desperate for their love," she says, "and this was the only love I knew. It probably sounds stupid. I finally got out when I knew I was going to die." That's when she decided she had to run away.

There's 15-year-old Denise, a high school girl studying three different languages. She grew up in a home with a drug-addicted mother. Denise bounced around to many different

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foster homes never having a stable place to call home. An older friend told Denise she could work as a dancer on The Block. Denise stood outside a strip club a few nights later and heard a man tell her she was beautiful.

“I didn’t have any place to go,” she says. “I was lost, I was upset, I was crying. And he walks up and says, ‘You’re hungry, come on, get in my car. I’ll get you something to eat.’ I was exhausted and fell asleep. When I woke up, I didn’t know where I was.”

She was in Washington, DC, and the man was a pimp who told her what she had to do to make money if she ever wanted to get back to Baltimore.

“We have made it a priority in Maryland to pursue criminals who lure or coerce children in prostitution,” U.S. attorney Rod Rosenstein declared in 2010. “Maryland’s Human Trafficking Task Force works with law enforcement officers and private-sector organizations to identify and rescue victims of human trafficking and prosecute criminals who exploit them. Pimps who victimize children are at the top of our list.”

And yet, for all such muscular words and good intentions, interviews with individuals at law enforcement and social-work agencies indicate the human trafficking problem is spreading faster than efforts to control it.

At last May’s conference on Combating Human Trafficking in Maryland, attendees were told of the spiraling national problem—and of specific local problems. Law enforcement officials describe the Baltimore-Washington area as a key location in what they refer to as The Circuit: a string of cities where girls sold into prostitution are regularly trafficked.

Maryland sits at the heart of it, and Interstate 95 is the key piece of geography, connecting such major cities as

New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, and points south.

Along I-95 come rest stops, truck stops, and bus stations. All are prime locations for exploitation. The National Human Trafficking Resource Center estimates 70 percent of human trafficking incidents occur at truck stops. It’s where predatory pimps make contact with desperate girls running from intolerable home lives, and thus begin the journey into human trafficking.

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“Baltimore’s right in the heart of it all,” says Sgt. Sean Harrison, of the Baltimore City Police Department’s human trafficking unit. “It’s like the drug trade, it’s up and down the I-95 corridor. From Georgia to Canada via 95, that’s one of the routes. They take these girls on the road. They migrate state to state posting online ads, they follow high-profile conventions and big sporting events. Or else they stay in one place where there’s a connection, like Baltimore’s Block.”

“Maryland is ripe for fostering human trafficking for a number of reasons,” says Adrian Sanders, special agent for Homeland Security Investigations. “It sits right on Washington and has a large international presence. There’s I-95 bisecting the state. We have an international airport where we’ve actually seen victims transported through BWI. We have three major

truck stops where we’ve recovered victims, and bus terminals which are frequently used. And we’re in close proximity to almost all major metropolitan areas on the east coast.”

Law enforcement people talk about another problem: hotels whose management people cast an apparent blind eye at the dreary business they are hosting each night.

“I think the hotels don’t want to know,” says prosecutor Aaliyah Muhammad, of the Baltimore state’s attorney’s Sex Offense Division. “I can’t say the top executives know, but in general, hotel people know there’s something going on. But, if it’s not a distraction, if people aren’t complaining, they don’t want to know.”

Law enforcement authorities say much of the contact takes place at middle-level and high-end hotels, which seem safer to prospective customers worried about getting mugged by lurking pimps.

“High-class hotels,” says Sgt. Harrison. “In their eyes, it’s all right. Hey, Hollywood’s made movies about it, like *Pretty Woman*. Here’s a john, looking for this prostitute. High-class hotel. Same thing going on here, over at the Inner Harbor, out in Towson, quality places. If I’m bringing a girl into my room, how’s the hotel going to be responsible for that, how are they going to know? If the girls get four consecutive rooms down one hallway, it just looks like a guest’s coming in and getting four rooms.

“In these big hotels, there’s no noise level, and no one gets into fights. They look for hotels where they know no one’s going to make a scene—because it’s upscale. Whereas, if you get one of those back-alley dives, you might get robbed or shot or stabbed. This man’s paying for this young girl, they don’t want to bring any attention to themselves. So it’s like, ‘OK, what’s your room? We can

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meet at the bar. Or I'll be at your room. Less chance of being mugged at a nice place.

"Listen," says Harrison, "you think these hotels want to start profiling these girls? These girls aren't wearing the tiny shorts, with the high heels and their boobs hanging out. No! They may be dressed like an average child, or a teenager. And the pimp's not walking around in a big fur hat with gold chains."

"We've had trouble getting people to understand this is a violent crime," adds another police officer who works human trafficking. "It is a violent crime. But the hotels look at it, they're not associated with any visible violence, so it's OK. The girls use pre-paid credit cards to pay the bill. So as long as the bill's paid, then who's to say it isn't a bridal shower when you've got a whole row of rooms taken on one card?"

Nationally, efforts are made by antitrafficking groups to negotiate with hotels, convincing them that it's good business to stop trafficking. Some have signed a Tourism Child-Protection Code of Conduct. Some hotels aren't so cooperative.

"Do the hotels know? They know, of course they know," says Montgomery County police Sgt. Ken Penrod, a veteran in human trafficking cases. "They know what's going on, but they're profiting from it. We've notified them what's going on. Sometimes their staffs will assist us in finding these individuals. They'll call us. We've provided them with training, and with access to websites like Backpage. They can look at the pages and tell us if they see any of these girls.

"And here's the thing," says Penrod. "When we set up this kind of training with the hotels, and then they intentionally ignore us—then we

know they're culpable and turning a blind eye. And then we can put pressure on the hotels. That's when we know they're culpable."

For girls ensnared for months, and sometimes years at a time, a natural question arises: Why don't they try to escape such conditions?

The short answer, authorities say, is: Where to?

"Where does one go?" asks Turn-Around's Branson. "One of the things these guys do is explain the world to these girls. Which is: 'There's a straight world, and there's us. And the straight world does not want you anymore.' And they're not actually being

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dishonest. There really isn't a place to go. How do you go and tell your family—your mother, your brother, whomever—that you've been turning tricks, that you've had sex with a thousand guys? You don't. You don't.

"What he tells her is, 'You're dirty, and they're not going to accept you.' And they're mostly right. And so, when it comes to running, the 'where to?' becomes a problem."

"The question we ask them," says a Baltimore undercover policeman, "is: 'What made you stay?' The answer is, you're dealing with young victims coming from dysfunctional situations, or they're wards of the state, or they've been in abusive rela-

tionships. So here you have a guy who starts out to be this loving, caring man, a father figure, providing everything they need: food, shelter, clothing. In return, these girls find out, all they have to do is have sex every night with these men.

"So, if you're coming from a place of homelessness to a place where someone's caring for you, it's hard to leave that. Especially young kids. Like one young girl said, all she wanted was a family. She was 14. She was running away from foster care. She met the pimp at a mall in Baltimore County. We see a lot of these connections being made at malls.

"She's 14 and she's doing cocaine that the pimp got her into, and she's pretty much just surviving. But she's not surviving. Because she's got no one. She's a child. You ask her, 'What movies do you like?' 'Oh, I like cartoons on television.' She's a kid. She's not built. She has the body of a 14 year old, barely 5 feet tall, no adult features yet, not even developed. And a lot of these girls, that's what's out there working."

In legalistic language, sex trafficking is defined by the Trafficking Victims Protection Act as "a commercial sex act induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such act has not attained 18 years of age." A commercial sex act includes prostitution, sexual performance, and pornography.

Similarly, the Maryland Human Trafficking Prohibitions Law criminalizes those who "knowingly engage in a device, scheme, or continuing course of conduct designed to persuade, induce, entice, or encourage" anyone into exploitive or commercial sex.

Over the past four years, the Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force has uncovered "hundreds" of sex trafficking victims, though individual law enforcement agencies here

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say they have not compiled reliable statistics on the trafficking. But, as an indicator, in 2010 in Baltimore City, there were roughly 1,200 arrests for prostitution.

At last May's Governor's Conference here, law enforcement officials were told that, across the country, girls are generally required to meet quotas of \$500 to \$1,000 a night. One report drily observed, "Law enforcement has observed a shift from networks of criminals engaging in narcotics to human trafficking. From a revenue standpoint, narcotics are a depletable resource that needs to be repurchased and replenished whenever sales are completed. When human beings are the goods being trafficked, criminals are able to observe revenue from each transaction and they do not have to worry about depleting their 'commodity.'"

And the "commodity" is easy for customers to find.

Law enforcement officials point to burgeoning Internet traffic, and invariably focus on Backpage.com, which carries an estimated 70 percent of the Web's online "escort" ads. Many of these girls are minors—though, in their ads, most claim to be in their 20s. They pose for color photographs in various stages of undress, their faces partially hidden, their bodies mostly exposed.

"This is a huge challenge for law enforcement," says federal prosecutor Yasser. "Advertising on the Web means people can operate anonymously. Instead of working on street corners where law enforcement get to see them, this is out-calls and in-calls, people showing up at hotels and homes. It's all anonymous now."

"Human trafficking has always operated in the dark," says Montgomery County's Sgt. Penrod. "But it

was always centered in word of mouth on street corners and bars. Now it's the vehicle for online advertising. I can be in Washington one day with five girls, and put out ads, and have clients there in minutes. In a few hours, I can move to New York City and do the same thing. What used to be word of mouth is now confessions on the Internet."

In the Baltimore County offices of TurnAround, Rosalyn Branson talks ruefully about this new era of computerized sex trafficking. TurnAround has provided counseling for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault since 1978. But it's only a year since the organization started working with sex trafficking victims—over a hundred of them so far.

In fiscal 2010, with a \$1.3 million budget, TurnAround provided direct service to 1,100 adult and child victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. With \$245,700 in Abell Foundation funding, the organization began providing emergency shelter and support services for Baltimore-area victims of human trafficking. TurnAround works closely with the Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force's law enforcement partners to remove young women from sex trafficking, and to provide adequate safety, especially in cases where the victim wishes to report her trafficker. In addition, TurnAround has a Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Juvenile Services (DJS) to implement a screening tool to flag youth at high risk of sex trafficking or who are currently being exploited. TurnAround also has created a screening tool specifically for the Baltimore City Prostitution Diversion program, with the goal of identifying women who are currently being trafficked or who were previous trafficking victims.

For TurnAround, this connection started the night 21-year-old "Kim"

showed up, after the severe beating by her pimp that put her in the hospital. It wasn't her first beating.

"When they first brought her to a house in Baltimore, from Ohio," says Branson, "she told the pimp, 'I'm not doing that.' So he beat her up. Then he had other people beat her up and rape her—that day. She wasn't the only girl in the house. There were three or four girls who were already a part of the system. And the next couple of days, she was beaten and she was in a bad way, so she couldn't actually work because they hurt her. So they kept her in a room, fed her a little bit, and had the other girls talk to her. And if she says she's leaving again, she gets beaten up again."

By the time she arrived at TurnAround, "Kim" had spent six years on The Circuit, sexually servicing strangers, being transported to various hotels in Maryland, Washington, and Virginia—and finding herself marketed, like so many other girls, on computerized websites.

"Take a look any day," says Branson. "There's 16 pages of ads on Backpage.com. There's a hundred listings per page per day. Or World Sex Archives. All these spots that traffickers and johns visit which literally describe where to go, how to get there, how much to pay, who to go to. They're describing sexual assaults online, and the buying and selling of human beings."

Two examples from a typical day at Backpage.com:

"Hello gentlemen. My name is Taylor. I do not discuss donations over the phone." And yet she lists "\$120 for half an hour and \$200 for an hour." She claims to be 23 but looks adolescent.

"Hot Asian girl" poses in Towson. She's wearing flimsy lingerie. She claims to be 23 but looks about 16. Offers a "\$60 special."

And on and on each day, by the hundreds in the Baltimore area alone, their faces slightly obscured but their bodies on display.

“It’s not just local girls,” says Branson. “They’ll bring girls here from out of town, take them to a hotel, put the ad up, and customers start coming. It’s that quick. One of the ads I read said, ‘As you’re landing in Baltimore—or any major city—you can order the girl to be waiting for you when you get to the hotel.’ It’s that easy.”

“There are even websites,” says Baltimore prosecutor Muhammad, “that allow you to critique these girls. You know, rate them. How good the sex is, how their boobs are, how they treat you.

“In a sense,” says Muhammad, “the Internet has made it easier for us. We can see what they’re posting. We can track the posts; track the people putting themselves online. We check accounts and addresses. We’re able to subpoena records. It’s a paper trail. But there’s so many of them now, and it’s obviously getting bigger.”

In the face of such growth, many law enforcement agencies are severely undermanned and unprepared. Muhammad says she is the only prosecutor in the Baltimore state’s attorney’s office focusing fulltime on human trafficking. Sgt. Harrison is one of only three Baltimore City police assigned fulltime to human trafficking.

“It’s far beyond what we have the resources to handle,” says Harrison. “And Juvenile Services, same thing. I’d like to say we’ll have 3,000 officers working on these cases once we get proper training in place. But, right now, it’s just a handful of us.”

Some police departments are further advanced than others. In Montgomery County, says Sgt. Ken Penrod, “We’re doing a lot of training.

The problem is, most cops don’t come into contact with this kind of stuff on the street. I’ve been here 25 years and not until I started dealing with it directly did I understand how prevalent it was.

“A lot of police don’t understand the ramifications. I see a lot of snickers and a lot of smiles about it. If I call these guys pimps, they understand. If I say human trafficker, they think smuggling. It’s hard to explain to them that that’s what a pimp is. They’ve got a cavalier idea about this. It’s not just the police. I go to Annapolis all the time, and the state’s attorney’s office, and I see the same attitude. So it’s pretty frustrating.”

That frustration finds itself most vividly manifested at street level. On a recent afternoon, with TurnAround’s Melissa Snow sitting nearby, a young woman named Leslie described living in a modest Woodlawn hotel room with her son.

A young man, “a gentleman,” says Leslie, helped her when she had car trouble. Then he ingratiated himself further: buying her food, watching her young child. Soon it became “a dating thing.”

He took her to a house, where there were other men—and girls—and Leslie learned the new facts of her life: She would now be working at Chez Joey, on The Block, as a “dancer.”

“I didn’t know where to go or where I was,” says Leslie. “I was praying real hard, and I was crying. I didn’t know how to get my son out. I’d go to the club and just keep working. There was no dancing. You’d go into one of the so-called champagne rooms in the back and service these men. That’s all you’re doing there, you’re selling these rooms.

“But one of the (older) girls asked if I wanted to get out, and I said yes. She called the police, who came to the back door. I told them what hap-

pened, and told them about my son.”

Now came that moment of frustration.

“When the traffickers brought us from the house to the club we had to keep our heads down the entire time so I couldn’t explain to the cops exactly where they were keeping my son. The cops said I should take a taxi, and once I found the house I could call 911 from a pay phone and they’d handle it. My God, I didn’t have money for a taxi and the trafficker had taken my cell phone—and where do you see pay phones anymore? So the police were no help at all.”

Not long thereafter, she says, an employee at Chez Joey contacted the pimp and threatened to summon the police if Leslie’s son was not turned over to her.

“They brought my son to the door of the club,” says Leslie, “and I took a bus—it was Free Bus Day—to a girl’s house and waited. The FBI came. I didn’t know if it was part of a plot, I was scared to death. But then somebody picked me up, and somebody took me to a hotel, where I met Melissa.”

It’s where Melissa Snow and TurnAround got into the picture.

“Right now,” says Virginia Geckler, policy, research, and training chief with the Governor’s Office of Crime Control, “TurnAround is our major provider of specialized care for these girls. The state depends heavily on TurnAround—and they don’t have enough resources, either.”

Rosalyn Branson still remembers the night “Kim” arrived a year ago, after her pimp beat her up, and the young woman became TurnAround’s first human trafficking connection.

“She was in pain,” says Branson. “Still wounded, still pretending, on the surface, to be OK. You know, ‘It’s what I do. I’m a working girl, I do this.’ I’ve had several girls say this to

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me. It's a shell, but it's where we start."

"Their clothes," adds Melissa Snow, "have been purchased by the trafficker. Everything they had has been taken away, including their identity. Literally the first thing they do is change your appearance, change your name. They will then brand the girls with a tattoo of the traffickers name so that you are owned, you are marked by this particular owner of the product."

"And what we do," says Branson, "when we get these calls, we arrange for a handoff at a safe place." Maybe it's police headquarters, or a hotel, or a fast-food parking lot.

"We find the victim has the clothes on her back and nothing else. We keep jogging suits in the trunk of the car, we get her dressed, and then we get her fed. And we take her to a safe place and let her get a good night's rest" while a TurnAround staff member stays with her.

Then comes a variety of treatment, coordinated by TurnAround, of each girl's psychological trauma. TurnAround finds housing, education, job training—and counseling.

"These are girls with huge holes in their hearts," says Snow. "Many have been sexually victimized at home. They run away and meet these men and hang onto hopes of a loving relationship, and the men turn out to be pimps who use the girls' vulnerability as a bargaining chip.

"They say, 'You can't stop the abuse at home, where dad comes into your room. Out here, you're in charge, you get to say when and where and how much.' It's a lie, but for somebody living in a nightmare at home, this seems like an empowering option. And, when they realize what they've gotten into, it's too late. And they don't know how to get out.

"At TurnAround," says Snow, "the

strength of our program is that we know how to approach survivors and we have specialized services and we're informed. We listen. And nobody was listening before. What these girls need is to belong, to be a part of something, to have a family, to have love and affection. One of the most hopeful things we've seen is when we do properly respond—put the victim first—they truly can heal. They can go on to find the life they hope and dream for. We have girls back in school, taking college classes, joining cheerleading squads, catching up on lost opportunity.



"Most importantly, we need the Baltimore community and its leadership to say no, this can no longer happen here. Not in our city—our children are not for sale," says Rosalyn Branson, executive director of TurnAround, Inc.



"It's been an amazing year," says Snow, "and yet we know for every one survivor found there are potentially hundreds more still enslaved. We celebrate the victories and realize that we are just scratching the surface."

So what can be done? Branson and Snow list concrete steps that Baltimore can take to protect its youth from sex trafficking and to hold accountable those who would harm the City's children:

1) Provide more training: There are currently a handful of law enforcement officers who are trying to tackle this growing issue.

More training is needed for law enforcement officers in other units who can identify and respond to this issue.

2) Work directly with runaways:

Law enforcement and social service agencies need to view runaways as a vulnerable population who are the primary targets of pimps and traffickers. More prevention and direct intervention need to be done with this group of youth in Baltimore to protect them from predators in our community. In 2007, the Dallas Police Department found that youth who ran away four or more times were at extremely high risk for being targeted by a trafficker.

3) Help to create stronger legislation:

Buyers drive the demand and create a job opportunity for pimps and traffickers to exploit girls in our community. Therefore, we need stronger legislation aimed at holding traffickers and johns accountable. Other states have done this. This year, the Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force is aiming all of their legislative efforts into passing an asset forfeiture bill for convicted human traffickers. This would allow law enforcement to seize and freeze assets that the traffickers have purchased while selling girls. Once convicted, these assets would be sold and placed into a victim services fund. In 2008, Cook County, Illinois, adopted the Public Morals Nuisance Violation Ordinance, which significantly increased fines for arrested johns. Offenders now face fines of \$500 to \$1,000, plus impoundment fees for their vehicles.

4) Involve the hotels: We need our area hotels to stop being complicit and work with law enforcement to identify and stop sex trafficking.

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We want them to join efforts by the Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force Public Awareness Committee to raise awareness.

5) Provide more resources for survivors of sex trafficking: Often survivors are recovered with just the clothes on their back and

rebuilding is a long and challenging process. Survivors need food, shelter, clothing, education/GED, job training, life skills, employment opportunities, and therapy. Organizations on the Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force who are working with these survivors in Baltimore need financial support. “Most importantly,” says Branson,

“we need the Baltimore community and its leadership to say no, this can no longer happen here. Not in our city—our children are not for sale.”

If you see something and are concerned that it could be human trafficking, call the National Human Trafficking Hotline and Resource Center at 1-888-373-7888.

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physical therapy, podiatry), brief or extended—they pay what they can pay: sometimes \$5.00; sometimes \$10.00. More often than not, as is the case with Mark Goodspeed, they pay nothing. The services are provided by volunteers who put in as many as four to five hours a week—their time in service is coordinated so as to ensure the continuity and integrity of the doctor-patient relationship.

The facility has a large waiting room (most all of the 20 chairs are filled by the 9:00 a.m. opening), eight fully equipped examination rooms, a lab, pharmaceutical storage, office space, a kitchen, a meeting room, and a wellness center.

All medical services at the clinic are provided by active and retired physicians, nurses, and other health professionals who donate their time. Last year, 350 volunteers donated 16,542 hours of service. Funding of the clinic’s operation is made possible through grants from foundations. The Abell Foundation has been a contributor for 16 years; in 2011, it awarded the clinic \$75,000. The cost to serve each patient for a year is \$375.00; the cost per visit, \$88.00. The clinic’s annual budget is approximately \$750,000.

Shepherd’s Clinic originated in the leadership of the University Bap-

tist Church at University Parkway in a committed partnership with the Seventh Baptist Church at North Avenue and St. Paul Street, where VandenHengel was the pastor. He recalls, “We could see, all around us that peo-

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*“For their medical
treatment—cardiology,
dermatology,
gastroenterology,
gynecology, physical
therapy, podiatry—
patients pay what they
can pay. Sometimes \$10,
more often than not,
nothing,” says
Jack VandenHengel,
executive director,
Shepherd’s Clinic.*

ple with nonemergency needs were flooding the emergency rooms of the nearby Union Memorial Hospital. These were not people with broken arms or knife wounds. These were people who needed medical help with diabetes, heart, gastro, and mental health issues. But they had no medical insurance, they had no health provider that would take care of them.

“In the late 1980s, a friend, Hunt Gressit, who was working as a PA at Union Memorial, and I began a dialog among the leadership and the congregations of the churches we belonged to. We asked ourselves: What kind of program could bring relief to the poor who could not get medical insurance? So we, and another friend who had a background in social work, Ellen Udovich, began to think about a clinic that would meet the need. We drew up a model and began to seek funds, and with good fortune and the generous leadership and support of Union Memorial Hospital, in 1991, we were able to open in a basement in a row house at North and St. Paul. Dr. William Finney had just retired from Union Memorial, heard about us and what we were trying to do, and he immediately joined us and provided the much-needed linking with Union Memorial.

“When it came time to decide the name of our clinic, we came together on ‘Shepherd’s Clinic,’ inspired by the Biblical model of the shepherd caring for his sheep.”

Abell Salutes Shepherd’s Clinic, for providing low-cost or no-cost health services to the poor, and, as recently retired executive director Jack VandenHengel describes the experience, for “shepherding 2,000 people a year.”