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Human Trafficking in the News

Sasse urges Barr to open sex-trafficking investigation into Pornhub

Sen. Ben Sasse Tuesday demanded Attorney General William P. Barr investigate adult video giant Pornhub for allegedly facilitating human trafficking. "In several notable incidents over the past year, Pornhub made content available worldwide showing women and girls that were victims of trafficking being raped and exploited," the Nebraska Republican wrote in a letter to Mr. Barr.

Eight Northeast Tennessee men charged in human trafficking investigation

Over a two-day period beginning March 12, as part of an undercover investigation aimed at addressing human trafficking in East TN, authorities placed several decoy advertisements on websites known to be linked to prostitution and commercial sex cases. The focus of the operation was to identify individuals seeking to engage in commercial sex acts with minors. As a result of the operation, detectives and agents arrested eight men and identified four potential victims.

Human trafficking under reported

The number of victims of human trafficking in this state is disproportionate among Native Americans, according to the North Dakota Human Trafficking Task Force. However, they acknowledge there are gaps in data, which is leading to gaps in resources. According to the task force, 436 victims have been served since 2016. But that number is much higher than reported, because the task force doesn't have data from tribal nations. And those nations aren't getting necessary coverage to help the problem.

[Click here to read these articles on our website](#)

Wonder what impact COVID-19 is having on trafficking?

Truckers Against Trafficking (TAT) is creating a video dispatch series to describe the impact COVID-19 is having on trafficking and how TAT's key market sectors can respond effectively. The videos are purposefully "bite-size" and content rich to encourage wide distribution and implementation across audiences. As each video is created, it will be housed on a new webpage under the Resources section of our website. Videos will cover various aspects of human trafficking during the pandemic, protecting your children online, ways to respond to people closest to you, updates from the National Human Trafficking Hotline and others.

"We are already receiving great interest from people and organizations for these videos," commented Kendis Paris, TAT executive director. "It's our job to continue to educate our audiences to:

- understand how the pandemic is affecting the realities of the underground sex trade,
- urge them to keep their eyes open,
- call 911 if they are seeing a crime in progress,
- exercise extra doses of compassion if they do come into contact with a potential victim ... even if they are difficult and do not present as a victim,
- call the hotline to access victim services or if they are unable to ascertain if what they're seeing is indeed trafficking,
- continue to educate their broader sphere of influence, such as other drivers, salespeople, CEOs, on how their companies, truck stops, bus terminals, oil towns, etc. can effectively combat this crime and provide the aid vulnerable populations so desperately need."



Economics of COVID-19 are increasing the vulnerable population

While people might think sheltering-in-place and the fear of catching COVID-19 would decrease human trafficking, the National Human Trafficking Hotline (NHTH) says their statistics show no dip in calls during this time.

The economics of this pandemic, however, are actually increasing the vulnerability for people either choosing to participate in the sex trade or being forced to do so, i.e., trafficking victims.

The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) and the NHTH describe these vulnerable populations as having limited access to friends, family, teachers and social workers and unable to access the services that were once available. Many of them, like kids now running away from home due to abusive caretakers or families facing economic hardships and considering familial pimping, are in a worse situation than ever. When society does reopen, there may be so many individuals desperate to pay bills and feed themselves, they are willing to do just about anything an exploiter tells them.

While there are regional differences in demand statistics, based on local social distancing rules in a state/region, and some buyers, who refer to themselves as "hobbyists" on sex boards, being leery of contracting the virus, commercial sex transactions are still occurring on the streets, in hotels and at Airbnb's, etc. In all likelihood, the buyers who are still active are the worst of the worst, thus presenting law enforcement with unprecedented opportunity to remove tens of thousands of dollars out of the sex trade/human trafficking market, if these individuals can be caught and held to account.

As always, vigilance is paramount

This is not only true for TAT's law enforcement partners, but equally true for industry members -- whether trucking, bus or energy -- who are still out there and will find themselves, now and especially in a few months, in places where people in desperate situations will be.

"This is an excellent time for individuals to be educating their family members, especially their kids," suggested Kylla Lanier, TAT deputy director, "as well as anyone within their sphere of influence, especially someone on the outskirts of their family who may have lost their job and was already shaky financially, as to what pimps/traffickers are really like. And think beyond sex trafficking to labor trafficking as well ... especially, as we'll see a lot of hurting businesses try to cut costs to keep their doors open and may seek to take advantage of their employees' desperation."



TAT Ambassador Bill McNamee moved by survivor testimony even as his presentation moves others

Bill McNamee joined the trucking industry 30 years ago, because, "in the Marines, we were trained, then tasked to perform. Nobody was breathing down our necks to get us to follow orders or to get the job done correctly ... so trucking was a perfect fit for me, and I've had a successful career."



Bill McNamee

During his career as a truck driver, McNamee, who currently works for Carbon Express, received TAT training and felt equipped "to go out there and help in the fight." He actually made a call to the National Human Trafficking Hotline when he observed obvious pimp control over some females who were dropped off at a truck stop. He has also used his TAT training as a volunteer firefighter and medical first responder, keeping his eyes and ears open for signs of trafficking when he's out on calls.

Recently, as a member of America's Road Team, McNamee became inspired to become a TAT Ambassador and be able to make presentations educating more people about human trafficking. "I wanted to tell anyone who would listen all about this miserable problem we have in our world," he said, "and I wanted to make others aware of the work we, as professional truck drivers, do to fight human trafficking."

Earlier this year, McNamee spoke at a human trafficking seminar at the First Baptist Church in O'Fallon, Illinois. Prior to his presentation, he listened to a human trafficking survivor recount her experience as a victim and her ongoing struggle to recover. "As I sat there watching and listening to this young lady," he remembered, "it had such an impact on me. I almost couldn't go up there for my presentation. I had never listened to a survivor speak about the horrors of the experience or the misery that continues long after the rescue. It was life-changing for me. It literally broke my heart and put it all in perspective."



TAT Ambassador Bill McNamee presented at a human trafficking seminar in O'Fallon, Illinois.

He did make his presentation and then did a second one as a TAT Ambassador. "Both presentations resulted in people coming up to our literature table, thanking me, asking for more literature, and asking how the TAT program can come to their other organizations. Once we present this program to new folks, and they realize how important this training is and how it can help their communities and save lives, they're eager to learn more," he explained. "This is when I know that we at TAT are making a difference for good ... I'm TAT-trained and TAT-proud."

Host of the event, Jessica May, who is also co-founder, president and CEO of Renewed Strength Ministries, said, "Bill did a phenomenal job with his presentation. He impacted many that were in attendance, spoke with attendees at his booth, and was moving with the testimonies he shared. He is incredible, and I look forward to working with him again in the future. Thank you again for allowing him to participate in our event."

Truck drivers recognized for their work during COVID-19

Transportation workers, who are continuing to do their jobs in the midst of the pandemic, are receiving public recognition. Two truck drivers, both TAT Ambassadors and part of TAT's Man-to-Man Campaign fighting demand for commercial sex, recently received recognition and gratitude for work they're doing individually and collectively -- as members of the trucking industry -- during America's COVID-19 response.



Stephen Richardson, truck driver and TAT Ambassador, spoke at the White House ceremony honoring truck drivers and the trucking industry for the critical role they are playing during COVID-19.

In recognition of the critical role trucking is playing in keeping America running and ensuring families sheltered in place have the necessary goods to meet their needs, President Trump presided at a special ceremony on the White House lawn in mid-April honoring truck drivers.

"In the war against the virus, America's truckers are really the foot soldiers that are carrying us to victory," President Trump said. "Truckers are playing a critical role in vanquishing the virus, and they will be just as important as we work to get our economic engine roaring."

In addition to representatives from the American Trucking Associations, several drivers were invited to the podium to share personal stories of delivering critical goods during the pandemic, from hand sanitizer to medical supplies.

"As a professional driver, I am proud to stand here representing my fellow drivers out there doing the important work of delivering for America," said Stephen Richardson, a professional driver with Big G Express from Decatur, Alabama. "I am proud to be a truck driver, and I am especially proud of the work all of the drivers are doing now in response to this crisis."

John McKown, a UPS driver based in Pennsylvania, said he was honored to deliver thousands of gallons of hand sanitizer to the New York City Police Department after the NYPD sent an "S.O.S." to the White House requesting it.

"My whole career's been about service," McKown said. "As a military veteran and also as a police officer (former), we serve the ones that need help all over the country. What a great opportunity to grab this trailer load -- 88 drums of hand sanitizer -- and deliver it to the NYPD. ... We've done two shipments already. That's almost 10,000 gallons."

McKown was on his way to the NYPD within two hours of receiving the request for the shipment. At that point, the NYPD had reported 7,096 uniformed members out sick, or about 20 percent of their workforce. He said the officers were extremely appreciative of the hand sanitizer and noted that the shipment may well play a part in saving some of their lives.



John McKown, truck driver and TAT Ambassador, delivered 10,000 gallons of hand sanitizer to the New York Police Department.



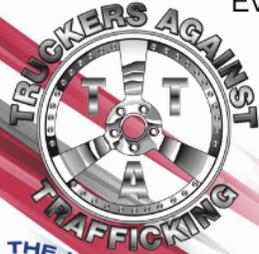
**Went to the grocery store,
and they had groceries.**

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