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Human trafficking in the news

Opinion: Human trafficking's thrived in pandemic

By Nicole "Nikki" Clifton ... Acknowledging the prevalence of human trafficking is an extremely crucial step for business leaders to take in order to educate and make it a "relatable" issue that a collective group will want to help address.

Investigator explains prevalence of human trafficking in Vermont

Every year since 2010, the president has dedicated the month of January to raising awareness about human trafficking and educating the public about how to identify and prevent this crime. And no state is untouched. Our Erin Brown spoke about the severity of the situation in Vermont with Lt. Michael Studin with the Bureau of Criminal Investigations with the Vermont State Police. Watch the video to see the full interview.

Three EMBARK employees credited with preventing human trafficking situation in Oklahoma City

As part of the fight against human trafficking, EMBARK has TSA-led training programs for new employees and ongoing training from Buses on the Lookout. A human trafficking situation in Oklahoma City was prevented by three EMBARK employees who have been credited with recognizing the warning signs and taking action.

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Truckers Against Trafficking Board of Directors announces leadership change

The Board of Directors for Truckers Against Trafficking (TAT) announces that as of March 1, 2022, Executive Director Kendis Paris will move into a new role as founder in residence, with Esther Goetsch, currently TAT's director of Strategic Partnerships, assuming the role of interim executive director.

In making the announcement, Scott Perry, chairman of the TAT Board of Directors, said, "We are in a very unique position that most organizations would cherish, in that we have an extremely

strong staff who are capable of excelling in many areas. Esther Goetsch is a great example of that strength of character and capability, and we are so extremely pleased to have her stepping into this role to make sure TAT is pursuing its mission every single day. The battle we are fighting takes strong leaders, strong teams and strong industry partners, and we have all of that at TAT. We are extremely grateful for the selfless role that Kendis Paris has played in building this organization from the ground up and are extremely excited for the great work she will continue to do in a much broader capacity benefitting many more stakeholders.

Goetsch, who has been with TAT for seven years, has scaled the Coalition Build (CB) program into one of the organization's key strategic activities, responsible for bringing together diverse partners across the United States and Canada to build networks and collaboration to close loopholes to traffickers. CBs serve as catalysts for public-private partnerships at the local and state levels, where they generate new partnerships within industry and law enforcement, which are then able to extend the human trafficking awareness and training they gain more deeply into their communities. During her time at TAT, Goetsch has not only worked closely with all the organization's programs, but she has also represented TAT at numerous legislative and governmental meetings, both in the United States and in Canada.



"Kendis has been a tremendous leader, not only because of her clear vision and dedication to the work, but because she leads with compassion and integrity. She has been an inspiration and mentor to me over the years and has left a lasting impact on the anti-trafficking movement. I am happy for this next chapter for her and honored to be stepping into the role of interim executive director. During my time at TAT, I have seen awareness of human trafficking grow and permeate society. I have also seen, through TAT's work, the mobilization of dedicated, compassionate partners across every industry, as well as law enforcement step up and champion this work. These great strides forward, along with a growing, dynamic and diverse team at TAT, a supportive board, faithful donors and the ever-growing mobile army of transportation professionals, make me very hopeful for the future of TAT and grateful for the role I can play in being part of it."
- Esther Goetsch

Paris, who has led TAT as executive director since 2011, said, "It has been an incredible privilege to help create and scale TAT over the last decade of my life. I've loved getting to know so many tremendous professional drivers, industry professionals and law enforcement personnel, who are dedicated to combating the horrors of human trafficking, and I'm humbled that TAT has been able to play a role in victim recovery. Esther is the right successor to take TAT to the next level, and she will do a fantastic job working alongside the broader TAT team, the TAT Board of Directors and Advisory Committee, as well as the myriad of TAT partners, in delivering on TAT's mission of discovering and disrupting human trafficking networks."

Paris will leave TAT April 15 to establish her own consulting firm, which will pursue broader impact efforts through targeted systems change. Her focus there will expand beyond the scope of work she began at TAT more than a decade ago.

Check out the 2021 Truckers Against Trafficking annual report

TAT has released its [2021 annual report](#), so be sure to check it out. It not only details progress made in the trucking, bus and energy industries with people and organizations trained and training, but it profiles organizations and people, highlights work being done in both Canada and Mexico, and notes new resources created, like the local driver training video.

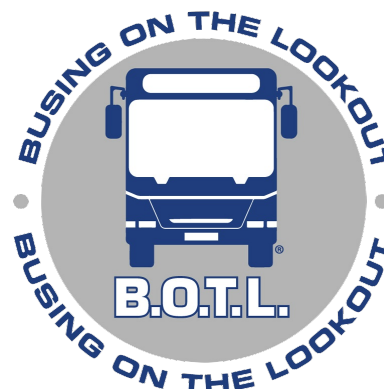
TAT 2021 ANNUAL REPORT

Now available!



BOTL work with gaming industry continues to gain momentum

Following the World Game Protection Conference in Las Vegas, Nevada in February where Busing On The Lookout (BOTL) Director Annie Sovcik addressed a crowd of casino security and surveillance managers, Willy Allison, the founder/owner of World Game Protection commented, "Thanks so much for your talk at our show. It touched a lot of nerves. I had old-school, hard-nose, casino veterans say to me they didn't know how bad it was. I also had a few people say they have training and awareness programs in place, mainly the tribal casinos. They take it seriously and that's heartening."



For the past several years, BOTL has been working to engage the gaming industry to help improve identification of trafficking victims at the intersection between buses and casinos in the United States. This initiative, funded through support from the Dressember Foundation, has been replicating TAT's Coalition Build (CB) model of building public-private partnerships with key industry stakeholders in target locations to improve training, awareness and local engagement.

Since late 2019, BOTL has coordinated five bus and casino CBs with partners from five different casino gambling hubs (Las Vegas and Reno, Nevada, Atlantic City, New Jersey, Shreveport, Louisiana and Black Hawk/Central City, Colorado). These events reached a combined audience of 539 people, with attendees representing 50 resort/casino properties, 80 law enforcement agencies, 13 bus companies/transit agencies, and 7 truck stop/casino properties.

Co-hosts for each event were local, state and federal partners from industry and law enforcement, including the Colorado Attorney General's Office, the Colorado Gaming Association, the Nevada Attorney General's Office, the Nevada Trucking Association, the New Jersey Attorney General's Office, the Greater New Jersey Motorcoach Association, the Louisiana Attorney General's Office, the Greenwood Police Department, the Nevada Resort Association, the Las Vegas Metro Police Department, the Southern Nevada Human Trafficking Task Force, the Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada and the Department of Homeland Security / Homeland Security Investigations.

In addition to these locally focused events, BOTL has joined national partners from the American Bus Association, the National Indian Gaming Commission, the American Gaming Association and World Game Protection to reach the leaders in the casino and bus industries. Through four national events focused on human trafficking and casinos, BOTL has reached a total audience of over 770 industry leaders.

BOTL's "Casinos Combating Human Trafficking" materials are comprised of a 24-minute, multi-media online training/webinar, a toolkit for casino managers and a casino wallet card. For more information and to access these materials, please visit [here](#).



Annie Sovcik, BOTL director, presented at the World Game Protection Conference in February as part of BOTL's casino work.

Empower Freedom presents at Teamster event



Ashley Smith, TAT's Energy Operations director, presented on human trafficking, TAT and Empower Freedom, TAT's energy training program, at the Annual Pipeline Steward School and Business Agent Officer's Conference, Feb. 7-9 in South Carolina. Hosted by the International Brotherhood of Teamsters Building Material and Construction Trade Division, along with the Teamsters National Pipeline Labor Management Cooperation Trust Committee (LMCT), the event drew an audience of 110.

Smith received an invitation to speak following her presentation at the Pipe Line Contractors Association (PLCA) event in December. Rachel Johnson, Public Relations manager at Precision Pipeline, and the person who helped secure Smith's invitation, also spoke about TAT and why fighting human trafficking is important to her company and how they use TAT's resources in their human trafficking awareness program.

Smith shared, "As a result of this event, we have widespread interest from local unions and the training team to present the Empower Freedom training to their members as the training for pipeline-specific jobs. We were also able to connect with various trucking companies, contractors and pipeline companies that work on projects across the United States. These connections will help to roll out TAT's training programs to the various companies and unions that are a part of safe pipeline construction and maintenance."



This was the first time Ashley Smith, TAT Energy Operations director, presented at a Teamster event.

Small audience but big results at Indianapolis Coalition Build



While the Indianapolis Coalition Build (CB) in February only drew 44 attendees from truck, truck stop, bus and law enforcement sectors, the people who attended were highly motivated to action by the end of the event.

Co-hosted by the Indiana Motor Truck Association, Indiana State Police, the Indiana Office of the Attorney General and TAT, the CB produced the following:

- The Indiana Motor Truck Association (IMTA) will be playing the TAT training video at their safety managers' meeting for members in 2022
- Gary Langston, IMTA president, began talks with legislators the day after the CB to have human trafficking training legislatively incorporated into the CDL curriculum.
- Guardian Relocation has pledged to train drivers in 2022 and have TAT materials displayed in the driver's lounge.
- The Indiana Department of Education pledged to incorporate the BOTL school transportation video for their entry-level driver training for all new drivers starting in March, about 1,500 new drivers each year. They also pledged to include BOTL in their mandated annual driver recertification class for all 15,000+ drivers statewide in 2022 and are looking to institutionalize it to be included in that training every 2-3 years.
- Indygo (Indianapolis Public Transit) pledged to train all their drivers with BOTL materials.
- Kokomo City Transit pledged to hang victim-centered posters at their locations and train all their bus drivers with BOTL materials.

Caleb Middleton, Security coordinator for Indygo, said, "Thank you to all those who put this seminar together. It's been very informative and instructional. I'll be sure to relay this information to my leadership and team for next steps."

Langston stated, "We are spreading a wide net in Indiana to address human trafficking."



Maj. Jon Smithers, Indiana State Police CVE commander; Gary Langston, president of the Indiana Motor Truck Association; Barbara Smithers, VP of the Indiana Motor Truck Association; Satnam Singh, executive director of the Indiana Diverse Trucking Association; and Jeremy Reymer, founder and CEO of DriverReach visited during one of the breaks.

TAT presents to Illinois Sheriffs Association

Eighty sheriffs from around Illinois learned more about the crime of human trafficking and strategies to combat it, when they attended TAT's four-hour law enforcement training in Peoria in February. Conducted by TAT Deputy Director Kylla Lanier and TAT Training Specialist and Survivor-Advocate Annika Huff, the training also included how to employ a victim-centered approach. TAT provided handouts and a law enforcement-specific webinar for the sheriffs to take back to their agencies to train their deputies.

"TAT has systematically been providing training on human trafficking for the commercial vehicle enforcement units of our nation's state patrols to great success," stated Lanier. "But we have also recognized the need to conduct these trainings for sheriff's offices around the country, as they are often the first responder to calls from truck drivers who are reporting sex trafficking. Armed with the knowledge about this crime and how to best engage with a victim of human trafficking, deputies will be better equipped to bring perpetrators to justice and to recover victims of this heinous crime."

Several of the sheriffs are sending their deputies to TAT's March Illinois training, and TAT has been invited back to train chief deputies throughout Illinois as well. Comments

about the training included, “This was very powerful, and it really made me think about the trafficking issue,” and “We have also included our emergency management staff and our search and rescue team members in local human trafficking training.”

SURVEY RESULTS SAY...



Agreed that information presented was new to those in attendance



Know more now about how to identify human trafficking and communicate with a possible victim using a victim-centered approach

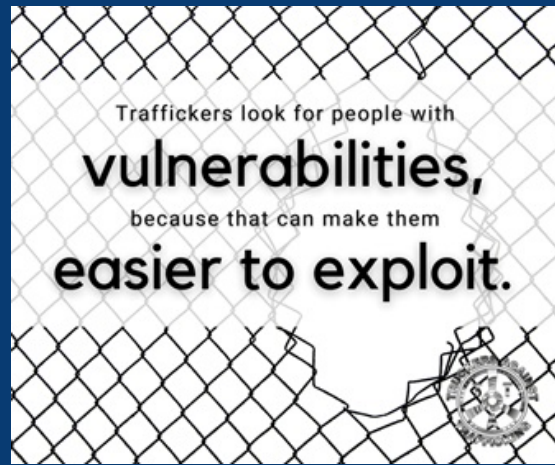


Believe the case studies presented will help them recognize red flags of human trafficking at interdiction and inspection stops



Annika Huff, TAT training specialist and survivor-leader, answered questions for law enforcement officers at the training.

Traffickers look for people with vulnerabilities because that can make them easier to exploit. Data shows that the vast majority of trafficking victims identified in the United States are people who have historically faced discrimination: People of color, indigenous communities, immigrants and people who identify as LGBTQ+ are disproportionately victimized. In addition, people living in poverty, or foster care, or are struggling with addiction, trauma, abuse or unstable housing, are all at comparatively higher risk for trafficking. The more we know about what human trafficking really looks like, the better we'll be able to recognize a victim and make the call.



Read more here from Polaris: [link here](#)

March 2022 Calendar of Events

Mar. 2 – Marathon Oil Human Trafficking 201 training, Houston, TX, Ashley Smith, TAT Energy Operations director, and Kylla Lanier, TAT deputy director, presenting

Mar. 4 – Illinois Southern Command Law Enforcement training, Fairview Heights, IL, Kylla Lanier, TAT deputy director, and Annika Huff, TAT training specialist and survivor-leader, presenting

Mar. 6 – National Rotary Conference, Denver, CO, Susan Dold, TAT systems administrator, presenting

Mar. 7-10 – Mississippi Law Enforcement trainings, various locations in the state, Kylla Lanier, TAT deputy director, and Annika Huff, TAT training specialist and survivor-leader, presenting

March 7-9 – Price Gregory Safety and Leadership Conference, San Antonio, TX, Ashley Smith, TAT Energy Operations director, presenting

Mar. 10 – 2022 Community Transportation Association of the Northwest virtual conference, Annie Sovcik, BOTL director, presenting

Mar. 15 – Rotary Club of Community Action Against Human Trafficking, virtual, Louie Greek, Coalition Build specialist, presenting

Mar. 21 – Dave Nemo Canada episode, Liz Williamson, TAT training specialist and survivor-leader, and guest Whilna Stewart-Franklin, UPS Canada Region Community Relations director, presenting

Mar. 21 – West Virginia Sheriffs training, Martinsburg, WV, Kylla Lanier, TAT deputy director, and Annika Huff, TAT training specialist and survivor-leader, presenting

Mar. 22 – West Virginia Sheriffs training, Dunbar, WV, Kylla Lanier, TAT deputy director, and Annika Huff, TAT training specialist and survivor-leader, presenting

Mar. 23-26 – Mid-America Trucking Show, Louisville, KY, Louie Greek, Coalition Build specialist, Susan Dold, TAT systems administrator, Brandy Belton, FDP director, and Hillary Benanzer, data analyst, attending

Mar. 28-April 1 – New York State Patrol trainings (6), Albany, NY, Kylla Lanier, TAT deputy director, and Annika Huff, TAT training specialist and survivor-leader, presenting

Mar. 29-31 – 2022 National Domestic Highway Enforcement (DHE) Conference, St. Louis, MO, Louie Greek, Coalition Build specialist, presenting



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