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Human trafficking in the news

School counselor: Online human trafficking is a local problem

CENTER, MO. — Adria Palmer, counselor at Mark Twain High School, said sex trafficking isn't something we can pretend to ignore. "I want parents, grandparents and guardians to know that just because we are from a small rural area doesn't mean it isn't happening," she said. "Because it absolutely is."

'Trafficking happens in the shadows': WNC a hot spot for human trafficking, official says

ASHEVILLE, N.C. (WLOS) — A local non-profit serving six communities in western North Carolina now wants to make sure people in the mountains know about a hidden issue impacting the most vulnerable of the population.

CVSA releases results from 2022 Human Trafficking Awareness Initiative

WASHINGTON — More than 2,460 law enforcement officers participated in this year's Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance (CVSA) three-day Human Trafficking Awareness Initiative. All three of the alliance's member countries — Canada, Mexico and the U.S. — participated in this awareness and outreach effort to educate commercial motor vehicle drivers, motor carriers, law enforcement officers and the general public about human trafficking, according to a CVSA news release.

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

Three transit workers honored with TAT Harriet Tubman Award

Three employees of EMBARK, the Oklahoma City transit authority, are the 2022 honorees of the TAT Harriet Tubman Award presented by Protective Insurance.

Kirk Rayner, Nicole Cavicante and Laura Figueroa received the award at the "Protective500" event/Harriet Tubman presentation celebration weekend hosted by Protective Insurance in Indianapolis, Indiana May 27-29.

"We really appreciate you acknowledging all of us," shared Cavicante. "It's a blessing. We have hearts of gold, and just to

know that there is someone out there noticing and that you all want to recognize and include us means so much. We are so proud that we helped potentially save a life. That's the most important part. It makes us want to keep doing this work and keep serving our community in as safe a way as possible."

A big thanks to our partners at Protective for providing such a lovely platform for our Harriet Tubman Award celebration.

TRUCKERS AGAINST TRAFFICKING'S

**HARRIET
TUBMAN
AWARD**
PRESENTED BY PROTECTIVE INSURANCE



Kirk Rayner



Nicole Cavicante



Laura Figueroa

The Harriet Tubman Award presented by Protective Insurance, which carries with it a \$2500 check, is named in honor of famed abolitionist Harriet Tubman, whose courageous personal actions resulted in the transportation of 300 slaves to freedom through the Underground Railroad and whose overall role in the freedom movement was instrumental in the freeing of thousands more. Born into slavery in 1820, Miss Tubman was the first African American woman buried with full military honors and the first to have the inaugural Liberty ship named after her – the SS Harriet Tubman – by the US Maritime Commission. The award was created to honor a member of the transportation industry each year, whose direct actions help save or improve the lives of those exploited or prevent human trafficking from taking place.

In early 2021, EMBARK trained all its staff and drivers with the Busing on the Lookout (BOTL) materials. Later that year, while driving his regular route, Rayner, an EMBARK bus driver, picked up a passenger in distress and turned his BOTL training into action. As the woman boarded the bus, she was crying, and Rayner could see she seemed frightened. She was dirty, disheveled and had cuts and bruises on her body. She kept looking around as if she were afraid someone was watching her. When Kirk engaged her in conversation, she told him he couldn't help her ... she was running away from "bad people" and believed they were tracking her.

When he arrived at the transit center, Rayner contacted his route supervisor, Nicole Cavicante, and told her it was urgent. Cavicante spoke with the woman, who was trembling as she described being transported state-to-state by people who were controlling her. She was confused about her whereabouts and said that when she boarded the EMBARK bus, she was trying to get somewhere safe. Thinking about a transportation contract EMBARK has with the Palomar Family Justice Center, an Oklahoma City-based organization serving victims of domestic violence and sexual assault, Cavicante enrolled the aid of Laura Figueroa, the bus driver dedicated to the Palomar contract. Figueroa helped make the woman feel safe, and she confided additional information that indicated she was likely a victim of sex trafficking. Figueroa transported her to Palomar, where the staff gave her some food, conducted an intake and coordinated next steps with law enforcement and a shelter.

"Transportation is a barrier to receiving life-saving services for so many of our clients," shared Anden Bull, Palomar COO. "Palomar's Partnership with EMBARK is instrumental in filling that gap, so that our clients can find safety and healing."

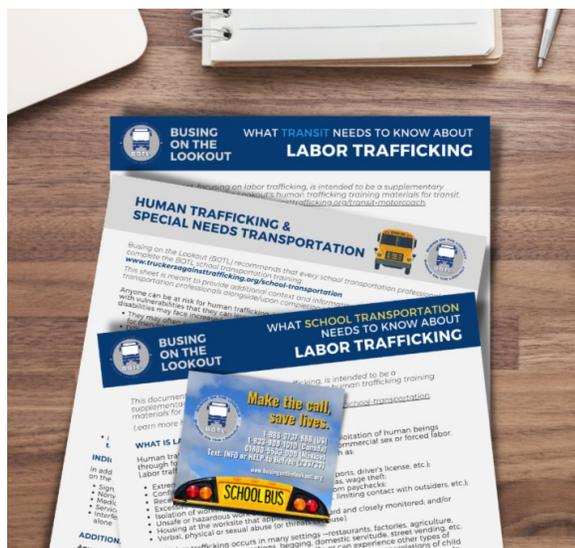
Annie Sovcik, BOTL director, emphasized, "It is an honor to recognize these three extraordinary

EMBARC employees used the quick and thoughtful actions they took to support a woman in distress on one of EMBARK's buses. Through engaging the woman in conversation and helping to connect her to local resources, these employees exemplified what a difference frontline transit employees can make in the recovery of suspected human trafficking victims. Beyond that, the kindness and sensitivity they showed is a beautiful example of transit employees taking a victim-centered approach."



Protective Insurance ensured that TAT's three 2022 Harriet Tubman award winners enjoyed a spectacular weekend at the Indianapolis 500 and their award presentation.

BOTL creates new labor trafficking resources



In response to feedback and questions from partners, Busing on the Lookout (BOTL) has created a number of specifically tailored resources for school transportation and transit. Those resources include a [school transportation wallet card](#), an information sheet on [human trafficking and special needs children](#) for school transportation, and two-two-page backgrounders on labor trafficking -- one for [transit](#) and the other for [school transportation](#).

Through pre-orders and recent requests, BOTL has already distributed over 47,000 school transportation wallet cards. In addition to promoting virtually, staff will also be sharing these resources at school transportation conferences across the country this summer and fall. If you would like to receive these materials, please contact tat.truckers@gmail.com.

Coalition Build in New Mexico targets energy industries

ConocoPhillips and the New Mexico Attorney General's Office co-hosted a Coalition Build (CB) with TAT in Carlsbad, New Mexico in late May. This is the first in-person CB in Carlsbad and follows a virtual CB held in late 2020, both geared to reach the heavy energy presence in the area. Fifty-five participants attended, representing the energy industry as well as local, state and federal law enforcement and some child advocacy organizations.



Many of the participants at the Carlsbad CB took time to tour the FDP.

Jay Ratliff, special agent in charge/commander of the AG's Human Trafficking Task Force, provided the human trafficking 101 presentation. He joined Natasha Sing, forensic interviewer for CASA Kids, and Morgan Langer, special agent for Homeland Security Investigations, on the law enforcement panel.

Ratliff said, "This event was a huge success in building stronger partnerships and really connecting the key stakeholders to unite in the fight against human trafficking. I can't express my gratitude enough to Truckers Against Trafficking and Conoco/Phillips for bringing us all together."

Surveys taken after the CB were positive, with comments such as:

"The law enforcement panel was very enlightening. Great idea!" and "Very powerful indeed! Very grateful to have heard her (the survivor) story as it really adds perspective to this issue, especially to those of us that don't have first-hand knowledge of this issue."

TAT presents at TravelCenters of America (TA) Petro Expo



Close to 1000 TA Petro managers at the Expo listened to TAT Coalition Build Specialist Louie Greek present on the work of TAT and travel plazas in the fight against human trafficking.

Louie Greek, TAT Coalition Build specialist, and Liz Williamson, TAT field trainer and survivor-leader, spoke to approximately 1000 TA Petro managers at the TA Petro Expo in April in Sandusky, Ohio. This is the first time the Expo has been held since the pandemic. Continuing to work on deepening relationships into the critical travel plaza/truck stop industry, Greek and Williamson shared ways TA employees can combat human trafficking at their locations, as well as success stories of fellow employees who got involved and saved a life.

TA is one of TAT's earliest partners in the travel center/truck stop industry, with TA beginning training for all employees in 2011. Barry Richards, TA president, recorded a personal message at the beginning of the TAT training video, emphasizing the organization's passion for combating the crime of human trafficking. Over the years, hundreds of store managers and employees have attended TAT Coalition Builds nationwide, and TAT materials are displayed at many TA stores. A longtime TAT corporate sponsor, TA has also sponsored multiple product promotions in its stores to support TAT's mission.

Freestyle Transport and Freestyle Logistics

Check out this beautiful new wrap Freestyle has put on one of their trailers to complement their Everyday Heroes truck, which was purchased last fall!

According to Freestyle Transport management, Freestyle Transport is wrapping one of their new trailers to help show their support of TAT and help spread awareness. They believe TAT and the Freedom Drivers Project have done so much to bring awareness to drivers and companies that this is the least they can do to help. The new trailer went on the road in May.



Trafficking victims can and do come from all racial and ethnic groups. In a 2011 report from the US Department of Justice analyzing data from federally funded task forces, 40 percent of sex trafficking survivors across the U.S. were Black, while Black people made up only 13.4 percent of the U.S. population.

Source: US Department of Justice

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.



<https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/cshti0810.pdf>

June 2022 Calendar of Events

June 2-4 – Kansas School Transportation Safety Conference, Salina, KS, Lexi Higgins, BOTL deputy director, presenting

June 2 – FDP at Working Together to End Human Trafficking, Quincy, IL, Brandy Belton, FDP director, presenting

June 3-4 – FDP at Illinois Trucking Association Truck Driving Championships, Bloomington, IL, Brandy Belton, FDP director, presenting

June 6 – 2022 Statewide Florida Transit Safety and Operations Summit, Tampa, FL, Annie Sovcik, BOTL director, presenting

June 6-8 – School Transportation News Expo, Indianapolis, IN, Lexi Higgins, BOTL deputy director, presenting

June 7 – DTG Recycling Quarterly Safety Summit, Seattle, WA, Chris Moreno, TAT Industry Training Program specialist, presenting

June 8 – Erie Anti-Human Trafficking Coalition virtual, Liz Williamson, TAT field trainer and survivor-advocate, presenting

June 8-10 – Private Motor Truck Council of Canada Conference 2022, Niagara Falls, Ontario,



Matt Fuller, TAT Canada program manager, presenting

June 9 - MEASURE x TAT/BOTL Webinar: Six Ways to Protect Black Girls, virtual, Annie Sovcik, BOTL director, presenting

June 10 – FDP at Montana Trucking Association Annual Convention, Billings, MT, Brandy Belton, FDP director, presenting

June 11 – FDP at Montana Trucking Association Truck Driving Championships, Billing, MT, Brandy Belton, FDP director, attending

June 15 – Colorado State Pupil Transportation Association Conference, Pueblo, CO, Annie Sovcik, BOTL director, presenting

June 16 – National Traffic Law Center CDL Conference virtual, Kylla Lanier, TAT deputy director, presenting

June 21-23 – Alabama Law Enforcement Agency training, six trainings in Selma, AL, Kylla Lanier, TAT deputy director, and Kelly Alsobrook, TAT field trainer and survivor-advocate, presenting

June 22 – FDP at Walmart Headquarters, Bentonville, AR, Brandy Belton, FDP director, attending

June 23-24 – FDP at J.B. Hunt, Lowell, AR, Brandy Belton, FDP director, presenting

June 23 – Canada Energy Digital Primer, Ashley Smith, TAT Energy Operations director, and Liz Williamson, TAT field trainer and survivor-advocate, presenting

June 25 – FDP at Arkansas Trucking Association Truck Driving Championships, Rogers, AR, Brandy Belton, FDP director, presenting

June 27 – FDP at Walmart, Ottawa, KS, Brandy Belton, FDP director, attending

June 28 – International Bridge Tunnel and Turnpike Association's Maintenance, Engineering & Roadway Operations Conference virtual, Cleveland, OH, Esther Goetsch, TAT executive director, presenting

June 29 – Wyoming Pupil Transportation Association, Casper, WY, Annie Sovcik, BOTL director, presenting

June 29 – FDP at Walmart, St. James, MO, Brandy Belton, FDP director, attending

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