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Human trafficking in the news

Transit systems taking steps to combat human trafficking

Human trafficking is a heinous crime that affects thousands of people all across the United States, but transit providers and services are uniquely positioned to help combat this illegal activity. The United Nations defines human trafficking as “the recruitment, transport, transfer, harbouring, or receipt of a person by such means as threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, abduction, fraud, or deception for the purpose of exploitation.” Millions of people across the globe are trafficked each year, and many of these victims are targeted by predators as a result of their migration statuses, economic hardships, and ethnicities. In 2020, the U.S. National Human Trafficking Hotline received 10,583 instances of human trafficking — a figure that likely undercounts the full scope of the problem across the country.

Parents of Texas teenager who left Dallas Mavericks game speak out on human trafficking case

DALLAS -- The parents of a 15-year-old Texas girl who in April left a Mavericks game with an unidentified man, ultimately prompting a human trafficking investigation, are speaking out to raise awareness about human trafficking. Kyle and Brooke Morris, in an interview with ESPN and "Good Morning America," said they want their daughter's story to be a cautionary one about the dangers of human sex trafficking and how laws governing the crime are applied.

How this nonprofit is teaching the public, truckers about human trafficking

The nonprofit Truckers Against Trafficking is pairing with Walmart Transportation on their mobile exhibit to educate drivers about the signs of modern-day slavery.

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Esther Goetsch transitions from interim to permanent executive director of Truckers Against Trafficking

By a unanimous vote, the Truckers Against Trafficking (TAT) Board of Directors has finalized the promotion of Esther Goetsch from interim to permanent executive

director. Goetsch assumed TAT's helm in March, replacing Kendis Paris, who led TAT from 2011-2022.

Goetsch has not only worked closely with all of the organization's programs in her seven years on staff, but has represented TAT at numerous legislative and governmental meetings, both in the United States and in Canada. Additionally, she scaled the Coalition Build (CB) program into one of TAT'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.



Esther Goetsch enjoyed her opportunity to meet one of TAT's Harriet Tubman Award winners, Debo Adepiti.

"The Board of Directors and I are pleased to support Esther as our executive director of Truckers Against Trafficking," Board President Scott Perry said. "We're extremely fortunate to have someone of Esther's capabilities take on this responsibility and continue the great work being done by our entire team. We're confident that our industry partners, the law enforcement community and the survivor community will all quickly recognize the passion Esther brings to this role and to our collective fight to end human trafficking."

"I'm honored and humbled to be appointed as TAT's new executive director," Goetsch stated. "The organization, founded on a firm vision to train professional drivers to help recover victims of human trafficking, not only remains strong but has grown significantly to include more modes of transportation, industry sectors and even countries. TAT's tangible impact on the lives of those affected by human trafficking is due to the dedication of the board, a creative and relentless team, and partners in the private and public sectors, who have made it their mission to end the atrocity of human trafficking. I'm a firm believer in one of TAT's driving principles, that through the mobilization of individual action, even the world's greatest challenges can be overcome. Because this fight is not over and our mission is not complete, I am energized to carry forward this critical work and embrace the next phase in TAT's mission and development."

Walmart initiates multi-state Freedom Drivers Project tour to train more employees

TAT packed up, gassed up and headed out on a Walmart multi-state Freedom Drivers Project (FDP) tour! A TAT partner since 2014, Walmart initiated this tour to take the message deeper into the heart of the Walmart family. The elements inside the FDP are designed to help visitors understand the push and pull factors of why trafficking is prevalent in our society and feel more personally connected to survivors by hearing their stories and viewing actual artifacts. Most of all, touring the FDP should help visitors leave with the knowledge of what each individual can do to be a part of the solution.

The FDP rolled into eight states in May, June and July on the Walmart location tour, including Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri,



(L to R) Antoine Sadler, Walmart driver and TAT Board of Director member, and Ryan McDaniel, Walmart VP, Eastern Division Transportation Private Fleet, flank Sadler's poster from TAT's "Man-to-Man Campaign" in front of the FDP in Bentonville, Arkansas at Walmart headquarters. Sadler worked the entire Walmart tour at the FDP and educated people about human trafficking.

Indiana, Tennessee and Illinois. In total, Walmart drivers hauled the FDP 4,027 miles. More than 1627 guests toured the exhibit, which spent an average of 11 hours at each event.

Walmart volunteers worked at the FDP at each location, earning credited hours through Walmart's Volunteerism Always Pays (VAP) program, which recognizes and further supports their associates' volunteer efforts by providing grants to eligible community organizations based on the hours volunteered. Walmart donated all VAP hours connected with this tour to TAT.

The idea for the extensive tour began with a plan to bring the FDP to select Walmart terminals, so drivers could tour the mobile exhibit while waiting to have their trailers loaded. From there, Walmart and TAT coordinated the addition of other locations, including several distribution centers connected to their truck terminals.

Additionally, Walmart designed a line of co-branded items to help raise money for TAT. With t-shirts donated by Xtreme Wear, the fundraiser raised \$7,960 for TAT programs. Other available items for employees included pens with the National Human Trafficking Hotline number (1-888-3737-888), a human trafficking information handout and flashlight keychains for anyone who showed they had the TAT app or downloaded it to their phones at the event.

Attendees praised the exhibit and commented on how it affected them personally. "It was very educational, but sad to know this does happen," said Sam Schaffer, who toured the FDP at its Plainview, Texas, stop.

At the Bentonville, Arkansas location, the heart of the Walmart family, Women in Trucking joined TAT and the FDP with WITney, their own mobile exhibit. Allyson Hay, a Walmart Fleet Driver, Road Team Captain and WIT Partner, along with WIT Director of Driver Engagement Andrea Adeyanju, were on hand to help both organizations raise awareness for women drivers, safety and trafficking. More than 70 drivers and employees toured the exhibit.

Walmart Operations Manager Rotara Smith said until he did a learning module last year, he didn't even realize human trafficking was as pervasive as it is. "This is something we need to stop, and through supporting and bringing awareness, we can make a step in the right direction to eliminate it," he commented.

Heather Jameyson, Walmart General Transportation manager, who helped create the tour, exclaimed, "This has been an incredible collaborative effort between TAT, the FDP and the hosting locations. It's a testament to our collective passion for this cause. One undeniable outcome of this tour is that more people are enlightened about this issue than ever before. You see people's faces change between the time they step on the trailer and when they step out. They have a different

perspective and feel motivated to look for and do something about situations they see that just don't look or feel right. I may never know if even one person is saved as a result of this tour, but I know we have changed what people know about human trafficking, who the victims are and who is fueling it. If that knowledge increases the odds that someone is saved by a phone call to the hotline, I'll take it. If just one of those people who have toured the FDP trailer comes out with a fire in their belly to do something more in their community, I'll take that too."

"This has been a humbling experience," said TAT Freedom Drivers Project Director Brandy Belton. "To see so many Walmart drivers, management staff and employees from the terminals and distribution centers learn about human trafficking and how many different forms it presents itself, has been incredible. It's truly an honor to engage, answer questions and help our guests better understand how they can safely help protect themselves, their families and their communities."



School's In for summer

In preparation for the new school year, Busing on the Lookout (BOTL) staff have been making the rounds of summer school transportation conferences. In June and July, the team presented at eight school transportation events in six states and one Canadian province, reaching over 1,000 industry stakeholders from across the U.S. and Canada.

"Members of the school transportation industry truly care about the children they're transporting," said Lexi Higgins, BOTL deputy director. "School bus drivers and other school transportation staff play an important role in the lives of children, especially when it comes to keeping them safe. I'm inspired by the way the industry welcomes our training with open arms,



Lexi Higgins, BOTL deputy director, connects with attendees of the Kansas

and recognizes this is an important topic when it comes to student safety.”

School Transportation Safety Conference in Salina after delivering a keynote presentation June 3.

"The pupil transportation industry is dynamic, and your important messages ... demonstrated that you recognize the important role we play in the lives of our students, that you understand the passion we feel towards our mission of safely transporting the world's most precious cargo, and that you are an advocate for the students in our care," shared Heather Handschin, vice president of the Virginia Association for Pupil Transportation. "You had a captive audience in class! Your story with a personal connection with yellow school buses is so heartfelt. I hope everyone that heard the message becomes another link in the safety chain, and that they reach out to your team for assistance."

While at these summer events, BOTL asked attendees to share their experiences and observations about possible human trafficking instances they've noticed in their daily work lives. So far, staff have received more than 400 survey responses.

For information on BOTL school transportation materials, how to reach out to your local school district and ways you can encourage your school district to BOTL train their transportation staff, simply download the [school outreach toolkit](#).

Our thanks to the following organizations for hosting BOTL this summer:

- Kansas School Transportation Safety Conference, Salina, KS
- School Transportation News Expo East, Indianapolis, IN
- Wyoming Pupil Transportation Association Conference, Casper, WY
- Southeastern States Pupil Transportation Conference/Virginia Association of Pupil Transportation Conference, Hampton, VA
- New York Association for Pupil Transportation Conference, Saratoga Springs, NY
- Ontario Transportation Expo, co-hosted by School Bus Ontario
- School Transportation News Expo West, Reno, NV
- National School Transportation Association Conference, Niagara Falls, NY

TAT shares spotlight at this year's Rocky Mountain Safety Rendezvous



Presenting at the 63rd Annual Rocky Mountain Safety Rendezvous in July, TAT Industry Training Program Specialist Chris Moreno taught attendees about human trafficking and how they, as the eyes and ears of the nation's highways, could help stop this nationwide scourge.

Hosted this year by the Utah Trucking Association, the conference included Q&A sessions after each presentation, giving Moreno the opportunity to share TAT's options for local driver training, details of adopting an anti-trafficking-in-persons policy and news about TAT's new [ELD app](#), called eTAT.

Attendees took home 750 free wallet cards and vehicle decals, providing quick access to the [National Human Trafficking Hotline](#) number. If your organization would like to receive TAT materials to share with your associates, please visit the [materials](#) section of our website.

"I want to thank the Utah Trucking Association and all the presentation attendees for such a warm welcome," Moreno said. "Everyone at TAT appreciates the opportunity to educate and inform the transportation industry about how easy it is to help stop human trafficking. As a constant presence on our nation's highways, drivers have a unique potential to see signs that others might not. Together, we can help authorities recover those who are trapped."



Trafficking victims can and do come from all racial and ethnic groups. In an analysis of child trafficking cases by the Connecticut Human Anti-trafficking Response Team, 73 percent of referrals that the CT Department of Children and Families received in 2018 for high-risk or confirmed victims of human trafficking were children of color, while children of color make up less than half of the state's youth population. 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.

Source: <https://love146.org/lets-talk-about-race-and-human-trafficking/>



August 2022 Calendar of Events

Aug. 2-5 – Oregon law enforcement trainings, various locations, Kylla Lanier, TAT deputy director and Public Sector Engagement senior director, Kelly Alsobrook, TAT field trainer and survivor-leader, and Dylan Wecht, Public Sector Engagement specialist, presenting

Aug. 1-3 – Napa River Insurance Transportation Leadership Conference, Indianapolis, IN, Laura Cyrus, senior director of Industry Training and Outreach, presenting

Aug. 8 – Mapleton Public Schools driver training, Denver, CO, Annie Sovcik, senior director of Programs and Strategic Initiatives, presenting

Aug. 10 – Tri-State Anti-Human Trafficking Task Force, virtual, Liz Williamson, TAT field trainer and survivor-leader, presenting

Aug. 12-14 – FDP at Iowa State Fair, Des Moines, IA, Brandy Belton, FDP director, attending

Aug. 17 – Woodbury County Sheriff's Office law enforcement training, Sioux City, IA, Kylla



Lanier, TAT deputy director and Public Sector Engagement senior director, Kelly Alsobrook, TAT field trainer and survivor-leader, and Dylan Wecht, Public Sector Engagement specialist, presenting

Aug. 19-22 – FDP at Missouri State Fair, Sedalia, MO, Brandy Belton, FDP director, attending

Aug. 23 – Coalition Build, Helena, MT, Louis Greek, CB specialist, Dylan Wecht, Public Sector Engagement specialist, and Beth Jacobs, TAT field trainer and survivor-advocate, presenting

Aug. 24 – National Transportation in Indian Country Conference, Louisville, KY, Annie Sovcik, senior director of Programs and Strategic Initiatives, presenting

Aug. 25-26 – FDP at Freestyle Corporate Event, Seattle, WA, Brandy Belton, FDP director, attending

Aug. 26-27 – FDP at Amazon Corporate Event, Seattle, WA, Brandy Belton, FDP director, attending

Aug. 29 – Washington State Public Transportation Conference/State Public Transportation Partnerships Conference, Spokane, WA, Lexi Higgins, BOTL deputy director, presenting

Aug. 31 – FDP at Sapp Bros., Salt Lake City, UT, Brandy Belton, FDP director, attending

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