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## HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN THE NEWS

### Former Westlake Schools Superintendent Arrested in Sex Trafficking Sting

Dan Keenan, who for years served as superintendent for the Westlake school system and who is currently the executive director of the Martha Holden Jennings Foundation, was among ten men arrested in a recent human trafficking sting in North Olmsted conducted by the Northeast Ohio Human Trafficking Task Force and partner agencies.

### Black girls and the sexual-abuse-to-prison pipeline

Black girls, who make up a bulk of child sex trafficking victims, often end up behind bars after surviving or attempting to escape abuse. Girls like Cyntoia Brown-Long, who was sentenced to life in prison for killing a 43-year-old man who paid to have sex with her when she was 16. She was eventually granted clemency and released after serving 15 years.

### DPS: 30 children found in human trafficking operation

MIDLAND-ODESSA, Texas (KOSA) - On Tuesday May 9, Texas Department of Public Safety Criminal Investigations Division (CID) ran a missing and exploited child operation and found a total of 30 children. The age of youngest child recovered was 13 years of age. Law enforcement's goal was to find or recover children reported missing in Midland and Ector counties. The process also targeted people seeking to exploit and victimize trafficking victims, and identified and apprehend people suspected to be involved in human trafficking.

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## WinCo Foods driver honored with Harriet Tubman Award

Joe Aguayo, a WinCo Foods driver, is the 2023 honoree of the TAT Harriet Tubman Award presented by Protective Insurance. Aguayo received the award at the "Protective 500" event/Harriet Tubman presentation celebration weekend hosted by Protective Insurance in Indianapolis, Indiana May 26-28.

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.



(L to R) Jeffrey Silvey, senior vice president of Protective Insurance, Aguayo, Laura Cyrus, TAT senior director of Industry Training and Outreach

In mid-September 2022, Aguayo was driving in an \*area of the country known for its hot springs and no cellphone service. As he rounded a curve, he saw a woman standing near the fog line of the road staring at the mountains. She had a shaved head and was wearing nothing but a beach towel. It was evening time; there were no cars or other people around; and Aguayo had a sinking feeling something was off.

“Honestly, I had no idea what the situation was,” he offered. “I just knew in my gut something was super wrong. My first instinct was to call authorities and get them there as fast as they could.”

Obeing an explicit company policy prohibiting unapproved riders in the truck, Aguayo continued on his way, fully intending to help the woman. On this extremely remote stretch of road, he drove an additional 10 minutes or so, until he came upon the next police call box, placed every so many miles along the roadside to compensate for the lack of cell service. Pulling his truck over, he alerted authorities to the woman, described her and her location and then continued on his way, confident he had done what he could to help.

A few months later, driving near that same stretch of road, Aguayo had a weather-related accident and asked the trooper helping him if he knew what happened to the woman found near the hot springs a few months prior. To his surprise, this trooper had also assisted the woman and was amazed to be reunited with the person who had placed the call for help.

The trooper related that when the woman was recovered, she was in very rough shape, identified as a 27-year-old victim of human trafficking and exhibited behavior consistent with having been drugged. She mentioned she was from an area nearly three hours away. The trooper transported her to the hospital, where she was kept for several days before being released and issued a case worker.

Aguayo also learned that the same day he made the call, an earlier call had come in reporting a naked woman wandering around the hot springs. But when law enforcement responded to the scene at that time, they were unable to locate the woman.

Law enforcement reported this to be the second Indigenous human trafficking victim found naked in this area. The first one was reported two years earlier in the same month in the same circumstances, and law enforcement believe the remote location, coupled with limited access to cell service, has made the area a dumping ground for perpetrators. The investigation is ongoing. The trooper told Aguayo that he likely saved the woman’s life. Had he waited until his own cellphone had service again -- and not used the roadside call box -- her story likely would have ended differently.

Aguayo commented, “While I am humbled to receive this award, it’s also hard to know situations like this are happening at our back door. I would hope that everyone will always trust their instincts; you may never know whose life you may be saving.”

WinCo Foods began rolling out TAT information and materials in the summer of 2022. Having now connected the dots between his experience, the issue of trafficking and the fact that the area has been identified by law enforcement as a dumping ground, Aguayo wonders how many other cases have been missed over the years.

*\*As this is still an ongoing investigation, many identifying elements have been removed.*



As a result of an almost decade-long relationship with Dave McCleary, chairman emeritus of the Rotary Action Group Against Slavery in Roswell, Georgia, TAT received an invitation to participate in a panel discussion at the International Peace Conference, held in Birmingham, Alabama in June.



*Members of the industry panel at the International Peace Conference included (L to R): Erica Sarkissian from Delta Airlines; Greek; Mark VanBeest from G6 Hospitality; and Dave McCleary, moderator and Rotarian.*

Hosted by Rotary International District 6860 (North and Central Alabama), in partnership with the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, and the Institute for Human Rights at the University of Alabama Birmingham, the two-day immersive conference brought together people from across the nation and the globe to highlight the pursuit of peace at all levels of society. Participants and attendees included distinguished leaders in academia, government, public safety, religion, business and community service to share ideas and propose solutions to some of society's most complex challenges. Rev. Dr. Bernice A. King, CEO of The King Center in Atlanta, provided a keynote address.

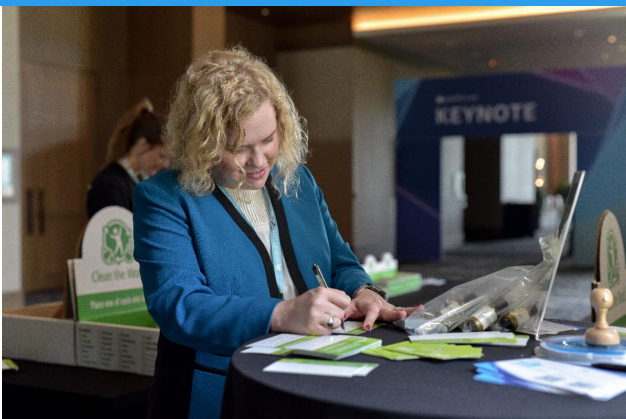
TAT Coalition Build Specialist Louie Greek took part in a panel discussion focused on what various industries, such as transportation and hospitality, are doing to combat human trafficking. McCleary moderated the panel, which included Greek, Mark VanBeest, vice president of Brand Services and External Affairs from G6 Hospitality, and Erica Sarkissian, program manager for Employee Engagement Anti-Human Trafficking/Government Affairs from Delta Airlines.

In the breakout session with a near-capacity attendance of 75, Greek spoke about TAT's programs and resources and how the industries TAT works with have taken ownership of the issue of human trafficking and are working with TAT to combat it. A number of attendees were interested in follow-up initiatives, with one potential opportunity being the participation of a Birmingham high school becoming involved with TAT's new Youth on Transportation program.

Greek shared, "It was an incredible experience to participate in the panel discussion at Rotary's International Peace Conference and sit among other representatives from various industries who are taking steps to combat human trafficking within their companies. This panel was a great opportunity to share the practical steps companies are taking to equip industries to combat human trafficking as a part of their everyday jobs."

TAT also had a booth at the conference, as well as the Freedom Drivers Project, which enjoyed a total of 136 guests from all over the globe.

## TAT attends Amazon Freight Partners' Upshift Live event



*Following her presentation at AFP Upshift Live, Cyrus helped build hygiene kits as part of a community giveback activity in*

In response to an invitation from Rob Grady, general manager of the Amazon Freight Partner (AFP), Laura Cyrus, TAT senior director of Industry Training and Outreach, presented to more than 200 attendees at the AFP Upshift Live event in Austin May 16-17.

Cyrus gave a short explanation of human trafficking, shared the case study of a trucker whose call to authorities over suspicious activity in a truck stop parking lot was responsible for the recovery of a young woman who was kidnapped, tortured and trafficked for several months and the arrest and conviction of the two

conjunction with Clean the World, an Orlando-based social enterprise, which provided hygiene supplies for attendees to build kits to be donated to an Austin-area non-profit.

traffickers who perpetrated the crime. She concluded her presentation with an appeal for attendees to take TAT's free training and also assign the training to their drivers.

"We're so grateful to Rob and his team for including TAT in their Upshift Live event," said Cyrus. "I was able to share the TAT message as part of the opening keynote of the conference. Thank you to the AFP team for their incredible support of our mission. I'm excited to see the continued ripple effect of our work together!"

Following the presentation by Cyrus, Grady challenged those in attendance to complete 100% of TAT's training by the end of May. He also shared a QR code to donate to TAT on a special NFG page TAT made for the event and shared that Amazon would be matching all donations up to \$10,000.

Cyrus manned a booth at the event's exhibitor hall, where many attendees stopped by to pick up wallet cards and decals and express their pride in Amazon for supporting the TAT program and making the training available. Cyrus related that members of the private security firm hired to work the event came to the booth to express interest in training their own team on human trafficking, because they're always at conventions and large events and recognized that their people could be part of spotting the red flags of trafficking as well.

## Canadian transit and trucking moved TAT travel northward in May



At the CUTA event, TAT's Annie Sovcik presented on the role transit can play in fighting human trafficking. She's seen here along with fellow panel members (from left): Charli Champagne from NFI Group; Sovcik; Eesha Patel from KPMG; and Oriana Vacarino, also from KPMG.

TAT staff traveled to Canada multiple times in May for events that included:

### *Canadian Urban Transit Association Spring Summit (CUTA)*

Annie Sovcik, TAT senior director of Programs and Strategic Initiatives, presented at the CUTA Spring Summit in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan on the role Canadian transit can play in fighting human trafficking. Sovcik presented alongside experts in diversity, equity and inclusion as part of the Summit's track focused on Equity, Truth and Reconciliation.

"TAT is grateful to CUTA for providing us with a platform to reach transit representatives from throughout Canada with information about human trafficking and the resources TAT offers through its Busing on the Lookout (BOTL) program," commented Sovcik. "As TAT/BOTL activates bus companies and transit agencies to be on the lookout for human trafficking -- and always use trauma-informed approaches when interacting with suspected victims or other vulnerable individuals -- these partnerships are critical to preventing and ending human trafficking."

### *New Brunswick Coalition Build*

Truckers Against Trafficking (TAT), together with Day & Ross, the Government of New Brunswick - Women's Equality, the New Brunswick Department of Justice and Public Safety- Highway Safety Enforcement and the Atlantic Provinces Trucking Association, co-hosted the New Brunswick Coalition Build (CB) on May 24 in Moncton, New Brunswick.

Close to 100 people attended the CB, representing nine law enforcement and government agencies (federal, provincial and local), seven trucking companies, one truck stop company, one trucking association and one bus company. Panel members on the law enforcement panel included David Lane, MOM, CD, RCMP Human



Trafficking investigator and Nova Scotia Human Trafficking coordinator; Det/Cst Brandon Gaynor from the Criminal Investigation Division of the Fredericton Police Force; Karly Church, survivor leader and Human Trafficking Crisis Intervention counselor; and Dylan Wecht, TAT Public Sector Engagement specialist. Feedback from surveys taken following the event showed that 98% felt their knowledge was increased as a result of the CB; 96% felt better prepared to combat trafficking; and 100% plan to share the information they learned with their company/agency or network.



*Karly Church, survivor leader and Human Trafficking Crisis Intervention counselor, addressed the audience as part of the law enforcement panel.*



*(L to R) TAT staff Brandy Belton and Annie Sovcik met up with "Ampy" (the Day & Ross mascot), Laura Dickinson from Day & Ross, and Cherie Hass from the New Brunswick Dept of Justice and Public Safety/Highway Safety outside the Freedom Drivers Project before one of the Day & Ross events.*

### *Quebec UPS Canadian Headquarters and Day & Ross*

In separate events, the Freedom Drivers Project (FDP) visited the UPS Canadian headquarters for two days, where 140 drivers and employees toured the mobile museum. Whilna Franklin-Stewart, UPS Canada Region Community Relations director, and Derek Venman, vice president of Operations and a member of the TAT Canada Committee (TCC), guided the tour and spoke with employees about human trafficking. Then the FDP traveled to Day & Ross facilities in Hartland and Moncton for their associates and drivers to tour the exhibit. UPS is a North Star Level TAT sponsor, and Day & Ross sponsors TAT at the Freedom Driver Level.

After touring the FDP, Graham Shave, HR director at Day & Ross, commented, "This brought [human trafficking] into perspective. For me, it was really impactful, and it just made it real. I will be talking to my family and friends."

## **TAT completes matching grant successfully**

Thanks to the amazing generosity of so many donors, TAT successfully completed its \$20,000 matching grant offer from The Three Sixteen Kegler Fund in the first two weeks of May, raising more than \$36,000 for needed programs and the production of materials. The contribution donors make to the impact and reach of every TAT program is crucial and incalculable.

## **CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

**June 5** - BNSF Logistics, FDP, Springdale, AR

**June 6-7** - South Carolina Department of Public Safety law enforcement training, Blythewood, SC

**June 7** - Arkansas Coalition Build, Lowell, AR

**June 10** - Weekly Town Hall – Human Trafficking Awareness, virtual

**June 12-14** - TAT Boot Camp

**June 20** - Rotary of Northern Colorado quarterly meeting, Ft. Collins, CO

**June 22** - New Jersey School Bus Contractors Association Conference, Longbranch, NJ

**June 26** - Texas Association for Pupil Transportation Annual Conference, Woodland, TX

**June 29** - Boys and Girls Club, FDP, Nashville, TN

June 20 - Mode Global human trafficking awareness webinar, virtual  
 June 21 - Massachusetts Human Trafficking Task Force law enforcement training, Plymouth, MA  
 June 21 - UPS employee and driver event, Middletown, PA  
 June 21-23 - 2023 Private Motor Truck Council of Canada, Ontario, Canada  
 June 21-22- Colorado State Pupil Transportation Annual Conference, Pueblo, CO



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