CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION ON HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Human trafficking, one of the most grievous injustices of our time, is something that’s happening in the cities, suburbs and rural areas of every New England state. It isn’t limited to just illicit massage parlors, and it isn’t a crime that only affects non-citizens or recent immigrants. The reality is that young women and children born in the U.S. can be victims of trafficking, too. And it’s happening in plain sight in our own community. We need to shine a light on this often hidden issue to help current victims and prevent future victimization. While much is being done to address the issue, more needs to be done to eradicate this form of modern-day slavery.

Meet the Panelists

Captain Pi Downsbrough: Captain Downsbrough is a 27-year veteran with the Massachusetts State Police. She is currently the Commander of the High Risk Victim Unit which is a state-wide investigative unit focusing on the commercial sexual exploitation of children and youth. Over the past 12 plus years, she has been actively conducting human trafficking investigations and has been a strong advocate for trafficking victims, focusing on improving a systemic response. As part of her assignments she was a member of the F.B.I. Innocence Lost Task Force and served on the Massachusetts Attorney General’s Human Trafficking Task Force, which lead to the implementation of the Massachusetts Human Trafficking statute. Captain Downsbrough has participated in Human Trafficking curriculum development and presented at numerous conferences and community events regarding Human Trafficking. She also serves as an instructor for local and state police academies.

Mike Posanka: Mike Posanka is the Resident Agent in Charge (RAC) for Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) in Manchester, New Hampshire. Among other areas, HSI is a lead federal agency for Human Trafficking, Child Exploitation, and Narcotics investigations nationwide. HSI Manchester is responsible for investigating these cases throughout New Hampshire. RAC Posanka developed the Human Trafficking course presented at the Recruit Academy at the NH Police Standards and Training Council. RAC Posanka has presented to numerous cross-disciplinary audiences throughout New England. These audiences include medical professionals, substance abuse counselors, law enforcement, social services, and faith-based organizations.

Danielle Nichole, LICSW: Danielle is a licensed social worker with training in complex trauma psychotherapy. At RIA House, she provides assessments, mobile accompaniment services, advocacy and supportive therapy to survivors of commercial sexual exploitation in the MetroWest and Central regions of Massachusetts. In addition, she serves on the Board of the Bakhita Safe House for adult female survivors, and she is a member of the Massachusetts Coalition to End Human Trafficking.

Stacy Reed, MSW: As a survivor of commercial sexual exploitation and substance abuse, Stacy can relate to other survivors. She is passionate about helping other survivors recover. Stacy has been working in the substance abuse field for over twenty years, and she obtained a Masters Degree from Wheelock College in May 2017. Working for RIA House, she is honored to help people that share some of the same experiences. She looks forward to sharing her experience, strength and hope to make a positive impact on women seeking recovery.
About RIA House, Inc.: "It all started in December 2012 when we were invited by RIA House Founder to attend an Advisory team meeting of women from across the community to learn more about the buying and selling of people for sex and how we might organize to help. As a first step in understanding the experiences of adult women and the services available to them, we conducted a community readiness assessment from January through May 2013 which identified the dramatic needs and gaps in services across the regions of MetroWest and Central Massachusetts.

One year later, RIA House, Inc. - Ready. Inspire. Act. - was born as a 501(c)3 public charity organization.

In August of that year, we invested our fundraising from local individuals, clubs and churches into hiring our first part-time staff person to lead women's support groups in downtown Worcester and downtown Framingham. What a fantastic moment that was in the birth of an organization! We remain grateful to the General Federation of Women's Clubs of MA, First Parish Church of Acton and Stow, The 200 Foundation, Pathways for Change, The United Way of TriCounty, our Board, Advisory Team and so many other special individuals and families that made our work possible back then.

Since then we have grown our fundraising and strengthened our service delivery model by launching our signature program, Sisters Leading Sisters the latter part of 2015. By mid-2016, we opened our first office space in MetroWest and then through a generous donor, our second office space in the Central region. Our work continues to be made possible through the awesome giving of individuals, families, churches, local and private foundations, and some federal funding as well.

We are a passionate group of women with powerful lived experiences, clinical and other specialized training, and allies to the cause.

Our vision is a world where people are not victimized, exploited, bought or sold for the sexual gratification of another person. Our mission is to stand with and support women with experience in the commercial sex trade, and its associated exploitation, trafficking and prostitution, by providing a range of community-based services."

For more information, visit our website: http://riahouse.org/index.html