

ANTI-HUMAN TRAFFICKING SUB-COMMITTEE

Karen Pati, Chair

The district has been fortunate to have Nola Theiss assisting the anti-trafficking committee as a teacher, trainer, and expert source of information. One of the key communications sent to District 11 clubs was an invitation for a FREE human trafficking training course offered through the Florida Regional Community Policing Institute and taught by Nola. Courses were scheduled in Bradenton and Bonita Springs, with an offer to schedule additional courses as needed. Several Zontians did participate.

Numerous District 11 clubs have started a human trafficking program and/or contacted Nola for information to do such. This includes Birmingham, Bonita Springs, Fort Myers, Jacksonville, Melbourne, Myrtle Beach, Ocala, Punta Gorda, Sarasota, and Savannah. Outside of District 11, Nola has also presented to the District 6 Conference and worked with the club in Glens Falls, New York.

We also disseminated the US Department of State's updated Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000: Trafficking in Persons Report 2007, including a summary and links to specific chapters.

The Sanibel Club's 'Next Steps' being considering in our work on human trafficking and through our strategic planning process were also provided. This detailed three projects; one, MIRACLES IN ACTION, is a non-profit that we hope Area 6 will shape and adopt as an area project. We originally heard from Founder Penny Rambacher at our Area 6 Meeting in April. Penny is also the woman that helped deliver the 'birthing kits' (an area 6 project), to Guatemala. MIRACLES' mission is to change the lives of the extreme poor by supporting sustainable development. One project is an innovative combination of micro-credit and human trafficking awareness. The second is GRACE, Guatemalan Rural Adult & Children's Education, whose goals include preventing violence and trafficking of girls and women and encouraging girls to envision educated and successful futures in their own countries. Third is the creation of the ESPERANZA Center For Human Trafficking Research, Policy, and Community Initiatives at Florida Gulf Coast University. The proposal is unique, as the Center would be the only one in the United States to focus solely on human trafficking.

Most recently a news release was disseminated that told a current story of domestic trafficking. Given all of the news and confusion surrounding human smuggling vs. human trafficking, we thought this story about 2 domestic children would cut through the propaganda and keep the issue close to home. It was a good reminder that our fight against human trafficking is about protecting the rights of all people and that children are often the most vulnerable.

My email distribution list includes several Zontians we have met beyond District 11 that have expressed interest in the subject of human trafficking. In that regard the latest communication brought a question from Kirsten Theisen, ZIF Vice President 2007-2009. She was preparing for a site visit to the Zonta/STAR/World Learning Anti-Trafficking Project in the Balkan countries, and inquired "Is there anything you would like me to ask/find out or anything you think I should look for specifically?... I know you are busy, but I thought I needed to find out how I can do the best job possible at the site visit, without being an expert in trafficking." We are thus helping our Zonta family beyond District 11. Thank you for the opportunity to provide this service.