



OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY MARIN COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

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PRESS RELEASE

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MARIN COUNTY HUMAN TRAFFICKING TASK FORCE

For the first time, a partnership of major local stakeholders is gaining momentum to address and prevent human trafficking in Marin County, with the guidance of West Marin Advocacy and the Marin County District Attorney's Office.

The Marin County Human Trafficking Task Force, formed in the summer of 2013 by West Marin Advocacy and the Dominican Sisters of San Rafael, is an initiative aimed at addressing the numerous forms of labor and sexual exploitation affecting the lives of children and adults in Marin County.

Emily Sims, founder and director of West Marin Advocacy, is the Task Force co-founder and a survivor of commercial sexual exploitation which occurred in Marin County from 1999-2001. During this period Sims contacted Dominican Sister Kristin Wombacher, the founder of Safe House, a shelter in San Francisco serving survivors of sex trafficking. The Dominican Sisters remained a source of inspiration and guidance for Sims as she began work as an advocate for survivors of family violence, sexual assault and human trafficking.

In January of 2014, Sims contacted the Marin County District Attorney's Office to join forces on the Marin County Human Trafficking Task Force. Work has begun on creating a protocol for addressing and preventing labor and sex trafficking. "The goal is to pull together all groups, agencies and law enforcement to make sure we adequately address human trafficking issues on a systematic basis," says Charles Cacciatore, Deputy District Attorney. "Once we adopt and implement a protocol, everyone can follow it to ensure we're doing the best we can to protect victims and hold offenders accountable."

California is identified by the Federal Bureau of Investigations as a state that has experienced increased instances of forced labor and the sex trafficking of juveniles. According to District Attorney Edward Berberian, "Trafficking survivors often do not know where to turn for help and concerned community members do not generally know how to report suspicious activity. The Task Force will help bring exposure to our Victim Advocacy Unit and all the resources aligned to prevent human trafficking."

Thus far, in addition to county government and local law enforcement, the Marin County Human Trafficking Task Force includes Community Violence Solutions, Soroptimist International of Marin County and the Marin County Human Rights Commission.

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Soroptimist International of Marin County is organizing a major promotional event on September 14th to increase awareness of human trafficking. “We’re calling on community leaders to raise awareness and mobilize efforts to increase victim safety and to hold violators accountable,” Cacciatore said.

In order to sustain long-term advocacy and housing solutions for survivors, the Marin County District Attorney’s Office has created a trust fund to collect donations for specific use by the Task Force. Donations can be facilitated by Peggy Toth, District Attorney Administrator at ptoth@marincounty.org

Agencies and individuals interested in attending Task Force open to community collaborators are invited to contact Sims at emily@westmarinadvocacy.org or Chuck Cacciatore at ccacciatore@marincounty.org.