

SEX TRAFFICKING: THE DARK SIDE OF KANSAS CITY

OFFICIALS FROM AROUND THE METRO DISCUSS HOW SEX TRAFFICKING IS AFFECTING THE COMMUNITY

Story by Lindsey Young



Slavery. As eyes fall upon the simple word, Americans cringe remembering an unimaginable crime. People stripped of their voices and grasping at the strings of humanity. Fear-binding chains enslaving minds, bodies, and spirit as the beating of a new day comes down on their backs. Hope betrays them as they are forgotten and disgraced, hidden in a shadow world. Lured into a life of shame many vulnerable youth today find themselves terrified, alone, and without choice as they are sold against their will daily to the new slavery.

“Sex trafficking is often referred to as the modern form of slavery because much like in the past people are owned by a master or ‘pimp’. They are required to do a service for an amount of money that will all go to the ‘pimp’ or face physical consequences, causing them to be controlled. Survival is the only promise as force, fraud, and coercion are used to make women, men, and children engage in sexual acts for profit against their will,” creator of nonprofit organization Restore the Light, which aims to prevent trafficking through education,

“Sex trafficking is often referred to as the modern form of slavery”
Fuimaono said.

and assistant principal at Blue Springs Freshman Center Dr. Danica Fuimaono said.

The memory of slavery still sears in the minds of many Americans becoming more prevalent everyday.

“We thought slavery was over in the 1800s, but when slavery was at its peak there were about 5 million slaves, and now on a global level 35 million people are trafficked into

slavery,” Emily Russell, member of the Crime Victims Unit of the Missouri Sheriffs’ Association and Missouri’s Human Trafficking Task Force, said.

To unsuspecting youth the masked image of a future friend is welcomed unaware of the lurking danger and

deception that lies behind.

“The average age of a person forced into prostitution for girls is about thirteen years of age and boys it is a little bit younger, so even young kids need to be aware. These traffickers, especially when it comes to sexual exploitation, rarely use the kidnapping scenario it is far more likely that a teenager would be friended into ‘the life’ [prostitution],” Russell said.

Unsuspecting traffickers often conceal themselves, looking to prey on human vulnerabilities, making victims out of any person.

“When it comes to high school students, they should definitely know that there are people who are willing to come into your life be your very best friend or your true love and then flip the switch and cause a lot of harm to you that you’re not able to get out of,” Russell said.

It is easy to dismiss an issue seemingly far away from the reality of everyday lives, yet human trafficking is closer than it appears hitting home in Kansas City.

“[Kansas City] is ranked very highly for sex trafficking due to the fact that we are where major highways intersect from north to south and east to west. Many victims are trafficked at truck stops or in semi-trucks,” Fuimaono said.

To end sex trafficking, fellow neighbors of

victims on the streets need to take responsibility upon their own shoulders to look out and speak out against this crime.

“Victims of human trafficking don’t usually come forward for help because of fear or manipulation so this is where awareness is key because the burden lies on a community that is aware of this crime to be able to identify those red flags,” Russell said.

Education and awareness of sex trafficking in high school communities is key to its prevention.

“Prevention is really the focus of where high school students can help. To stop it you have to prevent it. It is a multi-million dollar industry and the fastest growing criminal industry in the country. Know that human trafficking is happening, know how people are lured, if you see something questionable, report it,” Fuimaono said.



SENIOR TAYLOR ROBERTSON

I think that sex trafficking is taking away girls’ rights and their ability for becoming independent in their future. They will always have that sense of being owned

SENIOR ALICIA BECKLEY

I think that sex trafficking is a huge problem worldwide. However, I do not hear about it at all in Kansas City, Missouri. It is dangerous and I think all students should be informed about this problem because it could happen to anyone, anywhere and it is important to be aware and cautious

JUNIOR MAC NEWTON

I think it would be fair to describe [sex trafficking] as the modern form of slavery. It makes a lot of sense because a lot of the time traffickers target primarily younger women and it becomes hard for them to break free of their captors

FRESHMAN BRIANNA WAGONER

I think sex trafficking is important to know about and it definitely makes sense that human trafficking would be described as the modern form of slavery because they’re just taking someone’s life and controlling it completely

