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## HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN THE NEWS

### **St. Charles police arrest five people in connection with human trafficking enterprise**

ST. CHARLES, Ill. (CBS) -- Five people are now charged with multiple felonies after an international human trafficking ring was busted in Kane County on Thursday. The arrests follow a months-long investigation, and the victims are all women from South America.

### **Human trafficking remains a significant challenge in Canada, new data reveals**

TORONTO, July 27, 2023 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- The Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline has identified 1,500 human trafficking cases since its launch in May 2019. Newly released data show that the number of cases has fluctuated between 251 and 460 cases per year. During this time, the Hotline supported 2,170 victims and survivors of human trafficking. Victims/survivors comprised the primary group of callers – approximately 37% - reaching out to the Hotline's person-centered, confidential service.

### **Cuban nationals sentenced in relation to sex trafficking in area strip clubs**

HOUSTON – Three Cuban nationals have been ordered to prison for sex trafficking and related crimes. Rasiel Gutierrez Moreno, 38, Hendry Jimenez Milanes, 39, and Rafael Mendoza Labrada, 29, were sentenced to 210, 120 and 34 months in federal prison, respectively. Moreno was ordered to pay \$451,298 in restitution, while Milanes was ordered to pay \$359,108.

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## **TAT benefits from 5th Annual TA Charity Golf Outing**

*Freedom Drivers Project visits TA headquarters in August*

TravelCenters of America (TA) held its annual Charity Golf Outing on Aug. 11, raising money this year for Truckers Against Trafficking (TAT) and St. Christopher Truckers Relief Fund. One hundred forty-four players took part in the outing, held at Springvale Golf Course in North Olmsted, Ohio. This is the second time TAT has been recognized as a beneficiary of this golf tourney. Hillary Benanzar, TAT data analyst, represented TAT at the tourney, expressing gratitude for the fundraiser and TA's support at



*Daniel Walter, vice president of Fuel Supply, TravelCenters of America, finishes his swing at the golf tournament.*

a lunch at the tournament's conclusion.

“This golf tournament means a lot to me. I love it,” said Mary McPherson, vice president, Special Amenities, TA. “I think it’s a great partnership, and because of where our sites are located along major highways, our team members are able to help and really support the mission of Truckers Against Trafficking.”

Todd Schneider, vice president of Business Development, Mobility and Convenience Americas at bp, commented, “bp, TA, we’re all part of the same family now. It’s exciting to be here and meet more people, all while supporting these two organizations that are important to TA and bp! It’s been fantastic. Who can complain about a day at the golf course? It’s all about having fun and raising money for great causes and great people.”

Following the tournament, the Freedom Drivers Project (FDP) visited a TA location in London, Ohio. TAT FDP Specialist Micah Larsen had the opportunity to interact with a number of TA’s leadership team, including Debi Boffa, TA’s new CEO, as well as London’s mayor and a member of the Governor’s office, specializing in the fight against human trafficking. Together, they toured the trailer, discussed the work TAT is doing to combat the crime and enjoyed a special cake decorated with the FDP.

“We’re proud supporters of Truckers Against Trafficking and have a shared passion for its important mission,” said Tina Arundel, senior director for TA Communications. “The Freedom Drivers Project is an important educational resource that provides an up-close view of the heartbreaking situations so many trafficked men and women endure. We will continue raising awareness for our team members, guests and communities to ensure we can help combat this horrific crime.”



*(L to R) Micah Larsen, FDP specialist, has an animated discussion on trafficking intersections with TravelCenters of America CEO Debi Boffa.*

## **TAT presents human trafficking briefing to the FBI National Academy Associates in West Virginia**

Maggie Dawson, TAT Public Sector Engagement specialist, presented on the victim-centered approach and how law enforcement can identify human trafficking at routine interdiction and inspection stops at a training session for the FBI National Academy Associates (FBINAA) in West Virginia. More than 450 associates attended the training, representing law enforcement, other

emergency responders and prosecutors, among others.



*Maggie Dawson trained more than 450 members of the FBI Academy Associates in West Virginia.*

"The mission of the FBI National Academy Associates, Inc. is 'Impacting communities by providing and promoting law enforcement leadership through training and networking,'" explained Jeff McCormick, FBINAA executive director. "TAT's presentation on this important topic is exactly the sort of training the FBINAA seeks to share with law enforcement leaders. Improving awareness and sharing strategies to combat human trafficking with law enforcement leaders will empower them to effectively direct their agencies' efforts toward addressing this terrible criminal activity."

Dawson commented that in her conversations with attendees, many were interested in receiving more resources. One judge said he appreciated that she pointed out that many of these cases happen in rural, as well as urban, communities. Someone from the West Virginia Attorney General's Office related a story about a teenage runaway he encountered earlier in his career who was possibly a trafficking victim, and he wishes he could have had TAT's training back then, because he would have done a better job of identifying her actual circumstances.

## TAT law enforcement trainings in Florida help officers visualize victims more clearly

Traveling to three different cities in Florida during the first week of August, TAT Deputy Director Kylla Lanier and TAT Training Specialist and Survivor-Advocate Kelley Alsobrook trained 215 officers from the Florida Highway Patrol (FHP), as well as officers from local police departments and sheriff's offices. Trainings were held in Tallahassee, Orlando and West Palm Beach.

Chief Jeff Dixon from the FHP Office of Commercial Vehicle Enforcement shared, "The human trafficking awareness training Truckers Against Trafficking presents to law enforcement truly sheds a clear light on the subject of human trafficking that most law enforcement officers likely have never considered. I'm talking about the victim-centered aspect of human trafficking, as it relates to persons pressed into prostitution by force or coercion."

He continued, "Following a recent training session with TAT, a Florida law enforcement officer told me that he previously viewed prostitution as a 'victimless crime' and essentially viewed the prostituted person as an invisible person. The training gave this officer the clarity to understand how prostituted persons can be and often are one of the most victimized in our society. He stated the TAT training gave him knowledge and understanding to see a prostituted person as a real person who has hopes and dreams of a better life and someone who may simply need compassion, understanding and a helping hand."



"This type of feedback letting us know that attitudes and policing practices have been influenced by the trainings we're conducting is extremely encouraging," commented Lanier. "From its inception, our law enforcement training program has sought to both humanize those in prostitution as well as equip law enforcement officers with tools needed to engage effectively with victims of commercial sexual exploitation."

As a result of these trainings, FHP will conduct a structured outreach to all truck stops and bus terminals throughout the state. They are also working on adding TAT messaging to inspection reports. In addition, some local law enforcement agencies have plans to begin community policing in areas where prostitution/commercial sexual exploitation is taking place within their jurisdictions.

# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- Sept. 6** - Ohio State Highway Patrol law enforcement training, Columbus, OH
- Sept. 14-16** - Richard Crane Memorial Truck Show (FDP), St. Ignace, MI
- Sept. 17-21** - Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance Fall Conference, Grapevine, TX
- Sept. 18-20** - North American Transportation Services Association Conference, virtual
- Sept. 20** - Performance Food Service Grand Opening (FDP), Richmond, VA
- Sept. 25-26** - Prince Edward Island law enforcement training, Charlottetown, PEI, Canada
- Sept. 25-27** - TA Petro Managers' Conference, Sandusky, OH
- Sept. 26** - Missouri Department of Transportation Highway Safety and Traffic Conference, Columbia, MO



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