

VANTAGE POINT

TRUCKERS AGAINST TRAFFICKING

APRIL-JUNE, 2022



*To read about the new video telling
Nikki's story, go to page 6.*



LETTER FROM ESTHER

Dear TAT Friends,

At TAT, we talk about the “anatomy of an opportunity” and how one presentation, phone call or light-bulb moment can literally plant a seed that will yield incredible impact down the road. This is TAT’s work: to empower the partners we work with to use their skills, mind, heart and creativity to not only make an impact in the fight against human trafficking but to lead the way!

In this Vantage Point, we highlight the actions of brave individuals who put their training into action in the moment when it mattered most. You will read about TAT heroes in the bus and truck stop industries, whose direct actions led to the recovery of victims of human trafficking. In one scenario, we’re able to celebrate these individuals and their courageous, compassionate and coordinated efforts that certainly changed the course of someone’s life. In the other account, we may never be able to applaud the general manager who made all the difference in trafficking survivor Nikki’s life. He may never know the impact of his kindness and the respect he gave her, but as Martin Luther King Jr. said, “Not everybody can be famous, but everybody can be great, because greatness is determined by service.”

In this issue, we also learn about the individuals who have been so touched by the TAT message and cause that they transformed their work to become modern-day abolitionists. At the end of the day, TAT’s mission is to change hearts and minds on human trafficking in a manner which then leads to action.

From our vantage point, our work continues to both broaden and deepen as individuals, companies, law enforcement, government agencies and non-profits across North America open their eyes to the possibility of how everyone can make a difference right where they are. As you step back and read the report, I hope you will see the bird’s-eye view of all the steps along the way -- and of all the seeds planted -- that create incremental change and, ultimately, great impact. Every action we take makes a difference. Thank you for partnering with us in this work!



SHINING A SPOTLIGHT

*Dexavier Sturdevant, Law Enforcement Officer for the
Commercial Transportation Enforcement Division,
Mississippi Department of Public Safety*



Officer Dexavier Sturdevant hands out TAT materials to truckers as part of his duties.

Growing up in the small Mississippi town of Metcalfe, little Dexavier Sturdevant would get excited by the sirens or blue lights of the police cars he heard or saw. As he grew, he learned from a number of community leaders the importance of being a public servant and caring for his community. So, in 2014, he earned a bachelor's degree in criminal justice, with an emphasis in homeland security, at the University of Mississippi. That same year, he became a deputy sheriff with the Washington County Sheriff's Office in Greenville, Mississippi. Three years later, in 2017, he earned his master's degree in homeland security and emergency management from Kaplan University (Purdue Global). The following year, he joined the Mississippi Department of Transportation Enforcement Division, now known as the Mississippi Department of Public Safety Commercial Transportation Enforcement Division (CTED).

"I always wanted to give back to my community," Sturdevant said. "Even though my job duties are much different today than they were as a deputy sheriff, my goal is still to remain vigilant, save lives, provide service and make a difference in the lives I encounter daily."

As an enforcement officer, Sturdevant discovered that fighting human trafficking was one of the missions of CTED. One of the trainings he received in 2020 was the Truckers Against Trafficking (TAT) law enforcement training.

“When I first heard the presentation, I saw how passionate and knowledgeable Kylla Lanier, TAT’s deputy director, was when presenting,” he recalled. “During the presentation, I learned what indicators to look for during traffic stops and how to use a ‘victim-centered’ approach when speaking with victims of sex trafficking. When Ms. Annika told her story, it gave me chills and made me realize that this is someone’s daughter, sister and friend. I reflected on what if this were a member of my family. How many other women have been taken advantage of during times they are vulnerable? I began to reflect on some of the youth court cases where juveniles would run away, not knowing they could be trafficked. Some may have been victims of trafficking, but did law enforcement officers take the time to investigate or just write a runaway report?”

He continued, “You could feel the hurt in Ms. Annika’s voice when she told her story. She shared how she was groomed for months before things took a turn in her life she never would have expected. She shared how she was treated with disgust by law enforcement officers when she encountered them. There was only one officer who took the time to listen to her and build trust with her.”

Sturdevant decided he wanted to get more involved in anti-human trafficking work. Lanier connected him with Ashlee Lucas, the Human Trafficking coordinator for Mississippi’s Bureau of Investigation. He attended trainings and set up a virtual training in his community with the Mississippi Bureau of Investigation Human Trafficking/Special Victims Unit and Our House Inc. in Greenville, Mississippi. He also took the initiative to receive his state’s certification as a human trafficking investigator through the Mississippi Human Trafficking Operational Task Force Board.

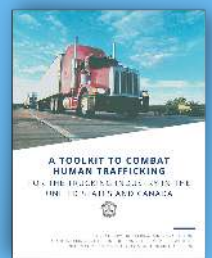
Lucas introduced him to Shared Hope International (SHI), and after checking out their website, Sturdevant decided to use his spare time to train to be a volunteer ambassador for SHI to prevent trafficking in his community by educating its members. In 2021, he also joined a volunteer organization called the National Child Protection Task Force, whose world-wide volunteer force use their skills to find missing children.

Sturdevant recently attended TAT’s law enforcement training for the second time, and this time, he said he learned even more. He’s determined to be the best he can be at fighting human trafficking.

“Hearing that we inspired Dexavier through our TAT training to pursue all these additional steps to fight human trafficking is so exciting,” shared Lanier. “We trust all the law enforcement officers we train will put what they learn into practice, but his commitment to go the extra mile in this fight is inspirational to us and makes what we do worth every minute of the effort we put into it.”

TAT MATERIALS

Order our free resources on our website [here](https://www.truckersagainsttrafficking.org).



SHINING A SPOTLIGHT

Three transit workers honored with TAT Harriet Tubman Award

Three employees of EMBARK, the Oklahoma City transit authority, are the 2022 honorees of the TAT Harriet Tubman Award presented by Protective Insurance. Kirk Rayner, Nicole Cavicante and Laura Figueroa received the award at the Protective Insurance Indianapolis 500/Harriet Tubman presentation celebration weekend in Indianapolis, Indiana May 27-29.

The Harriet Tubman Award presented by Protective Insurance, which carries with it a \$2500 check, is named in honor of famed abolitionist Harriet Tubman, whose courageous personal actions resulted in the transportation of 300 slaves to freedom through the Underground Railroad and whose overall role in the freedom movement was instrumental in the freeing of thousands more. Born into slavery in 1820, Miss Tubman was the first African American woman buried with full military honors and the first to have the inaugural Liberty ship named after her – the SS Harriet Tubman – by the US Maritime Commission. The award was created to honor a member of the transportation industry each year, whose direct actions help save or improve the lives of those exploited or prevent human trafficking from taking place.



Kirk Rayner, Laura Figueroa and Nicole Cavicante

In early 2021, EMBARK trained all its staff and drivers with the Busing on the Lookout (BOTL) materials. Later that year, while driving his regular route, Rayner, an EMBARK bus driver, picked up a passenger in distress and turned his BOTL training into action. As the woman boarded the bus, she was crying, and Rayner could see she seemed frightened. She was dirty, disheveled, and had cuts and bruises on her body. She kept looking around as if she were afraid someone was watching her. When Rayner engaged her in conversation, she told him he couldn't help her ... she was running away from "bad people" and believed they were tracking her.

When he arrived at the transit center, Rayner contacted his route supervisor, Nicole Cavicante, and told her it was urgent. Cavicante spoke with the woman, who was trembling as she described being transported state-to-state by people who were controlling her. She was confused about her whereabouts and said that when she boarded the EMBARK bus, she was trying to get somewhere safe. Thinking about a transportation contract EMBARK has with the Palomar Family Justice Center, an Oklahoma City-based organization serving victims of domestic violence and sexual assault, Cavicante enrolled the aid of Laura Figueroa, the bus driver dedicated to the Palomar contract. Figueroa helped make the woman feel safe, and the woman confided additional information indicating she was likely a victim of sex trafficking. Figueroa transported her to Palomar, where the staff gave her food, conducted an intake and coordinated next steps with law enforcement and a shelter.

"We really appreciate you acknowledging all of us," shared Cavicante. "It's a blessing. We have hearts of gold, and just to know that there is someone out there noticing and that you all want to recognize and include us means so much. We are so proud that we helped potentially save a life. That's the most important part. It makes us want to keep doing this work and keep serving our community in as safe a way as possible."

Annie Sovcik, BOTL director, emphasized, "It's an honor to recognize these three extraordinary EMBARK employees for the quick and thoughtful actions they took to support a woman in distress on one of EMBARK's buses. Through engaging the woman in conversation and helping to connect her to local resources, these employees exemplified what a difference frontline transit employees can make in the recovery of suspected human trafficking victims. Beyond that, the kindness and sensitivity they showed is a beautiful example of transit employees taking a victim-centered approach."

HAVE YOUR DRIVERS MADE THE CALL?

Ask your employees/drivers every quarter if any of them has made a call on behalf of a victim of human trafficking.

- If yes ...
 - Let TAT know about their good work or potentially nominate them for our Harriet Tubman Award.
 - Provide a certificate of recognition or employee-of-the-month award in honor of their efforts.



SHINING A SPOTLIGHT

Wayne Ponschke, UPS driver

"My name is Wayne Ponschke, and I am a Trucker Against Trafficking."

With that statement, Ponschke summed up what he considers to be one of the consummate identifiers of his driving career.

A UPS employee for 35 years, Ponschke has never lost a day of work to injury. He started driving for UPS in 2004 and is one of their Circle of Honor drivers, having driven for 25 years accident-free. A happily married man and father of two boys, he was recently chosen by UPS to haul TAT's Freedom Drivers Project (FDP) exhibit to a UPS Rodeo event.

"I am very proud of my accomplishments," he shared, "but nothing shy of getting married to Jackie and the birth of my boys has made me prouder and made me feel more humble than to travel across the country and spend four days in California (at the UPS Rodeo) with TAT's trailer. When I sit in that driver's seat, knowing I literally have the blood, sweat and tears of someone's passion to bring awareness to human trafficking, and you entrusted that with me? Honored, humbled, proud."

*"My name is
Wayne
Ponschke,
and I am a
Trucker
Against
Trafficking."*



Wayne Ponschke

He continued, "Have you ever watched a scene in a movie where a beautiful woman or a handsome man walks into a room and everyone turns to look and clears a path for them? That's the impact the Freedom Drivers Project had in every truck stop and rest area we stopped at on our way back to California. The FDP trailer is that beautiful girl, that handsome man in the room. The FDP trailer is the one everyone wants to be seen with. I experienced that feeling because of TAT's passion, commitment and desire to share a message about human trafficking. I can never thank you enough for the feeling I have in my heart from the first day I watched that training video. The importance that the Freedom Drivers Project has when you approach someone to talk about human trafficking and the purpose of this message becomes very personal to me. Every child I see has a name, and the name is 'Shari' (the survivor in TAT's training video), and I would do anything to save 'Shari' from the threat of abuse, torture and enslavement for monetary gain. It takes one minute to leave a wallet card at a truck stop, rest area or bus station. That wallet card can bring home a survivor of human trafficking to their family."

Ponschke said his best memory of the FDP is the engagement of his fellow UPS drivers and their families as they exit the FDP trailer with the knowledge of what is going on in the world today. To him, that is priceless.

"Getting more eyes on this exhibit is of the upmost importance to me," he shared. "But to have it on my back to share the hard work of what you do, that meant the world to me."

OPPORTUNITIES

TAT unveils new ELD app

Designed with ELDs in mind, eTAT is a new app to help drivers identify and report labor and sex trafficking in their everyday work. Drivers can view human trafficking red flags and examples, as well as scan QR codes with their personal mobile devices to access training videos, podcast episodes and more. Additional benefits include:

- Available in English and Spanish
- Uses no cellular data
- Easy to add to existing driver devices
- Great for over-the-road drivers, local drivers, van line operators and in-home delivery professionals
- Gives drivers the tools to identify and report labor and sex trafficking

[Click here](#) for more information or get the eTAT app at the Google Play store.



Become inspired by TAT's newest survivor success video



Nikki's story is only six minutes long, but it shows the life-saving impact TAT training and a victim-centered approach can make in the life of a trafficking victim. Hear Nikki share how a truck stop manager helped her escape her trafficker and begin a new life of freedom. [Click here](#) to watch her story. To become a TAT-trained employee like the manager mentioned in the video, you can find all the free, truck stop-specific training materials [here](#) or email us at tat.truckers@gmail.com and request truck stop-specific training.

ADDITIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

Canada:

From a Coalition Build in Toronto to presentations and tours through the Freedom Drivers Project (FDP) at Canadian companies and a First Nation's event, TAT staff educated and equipped people to fight human trafficking in Canada in April.

Additionally:

- Two hundred officers attended TAT's first four-hour law enforcement training in Canada in Fredericton, New Brunswick province, resulting in an invitation for TAT staff to return.
- TAT staff handed out 4000 English wallet cards, 500 French Canadian wallet cards and 3000 decals at Truck World, with more than 613 individuals touring the FDP.
- TAT staff provided a presentation and booth at the Private Motor Truck Council of Canada Annual Conference in Niagara Falls, Ontario and showed the TAT training video during the Chairman's luncheon.



More than 100 people watched the TAT training video at the Chairman's luncheon at the Private Motor Truck Council of Canada Annual Conference.



Attendees heard from a panel of private and public partners about their experiences with TAT.

Empower Freedom:

In June, Empower Freedom made four 30-minute presentations for TC Energy, reaching 315 employees; a one-hour virtual informational event for ConocoPhillips Canada; and an Alberta-based digital primer for the energy sector, hosted alongside ConocoPhillips Canada.

Of the 28 organizations represented at the digital primer, there were 15 energy companies, five First Nations/First Nations-owned corporations, four NGOs, two trucking companies, and two law enforcement/ government agencies. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police had four attendees.

Busing on the Lookout:

Recognizing that Black girls are victimized in the crime of human trafficking at disproportionately high levels, the BOTL team is leading TAT's partnership with the MEASURE Innocence Initiative to explore the connection between adultification bias and human trafficking. TAT and MEASURE will strategize how addressing this adultification bias within the transportation ecosystem could help to better protect Black girls from exploitation and contribute to human trafficking prevention efforts.

On June 9, TAT and MEASURE co-hosted a virtual workshop titled *6 Ways to Protect Black Girls*. "This workshop is the first of its kind in combating adultification bias," explained Angel Carroll, MEASURE Advocacy director, "which sees Black girls as being more mature than they are. It provides a fundamental first step for anyone working with vulnerable populations and tangible ways attendees can protect Black girls immediately."



Over four days, Lanier and Alsobrook trained 547 Alabama law enforcement officers.

Law Enforcement

In addition to the 200 law enforcement officers trained in Canada in Q2, TAT staff trained 38 officers in Anchorage, Alaska, 51 officers in Laredo and McAllen, Texas and 547 in Alabama.

Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance (CVSA) results: The Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance (CVSA), through its Human Trafficking Prevention Program and its partnership with TAT, held its first Human Trafficking Awareness Initiative for all of North America with the following results:

- 35 jurisdictions participated, involving 2,460 individual law enforcement officers/troopers/inspectors
- 163 incidents reported (possible indicators of human trafficking or documented cases)
- 13,274 wallet cards and 6,355 window decals distributed
- 1,818 presentations delivered
- 640 media contacts



TAT SPONSORS

While TAT is extremely thankful to all of our supporters, we want to give special recognition to our North Star, Freedom Driver, Diamond, Platinum and Gold sponsors.

NORTH STAR



FREEDOM DRIVER



DIAMOND



PLATINUM



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