

modern-day slavery

by Rick Jordan, CBFNC Church Resources Coordinator



According to the NC Department of Administration, “Human trafficking is one of the fastest growing crimes in the United States. The prevalence of human trafficking in North Carolina is due to many factors including the major highways (40, 85, and 95) that run through our state, a large, transient military population surrounded by sexually oriented businesses, numerous rural agricultural areas with a high demand for cheap labor, and increasing number of gangs.” The National Human Trafficking Hotline lists North Carolina as the state with the 10th highest call volume in the United States.

Human trafficking is a modern-day form of slavery. Innocent persons looking for work, freedom, or just fun are exploited through force, fraud, or coercion. Some of this has to do with the sex trade, but the vast majority involves labor trade. There are an estimated 313,000 victims of human trafficking in Texas alone, according to Nell Green, a CBF missionary in Houston. 234,000 of them are being trafficked for labor, not for sex. A major part of her ministry is addressing human trafficking. Labor trafficking includes manual-labor jobs, such as migrant workers or day laborers, but it also includes persons working in the hospitality industry, restaurants and food service, nail salons, spas, domestic work, construction industry, and manufacturing. There are even school teachers who are being trafficked.

Nell helped form the Coalition to Combat Human Trafficking (www.cbhtx.com). “Texas is an entry point for all the United States. This includes Latinos and even Asians as they cross the Rio Grande. Immigration, trafficking, and smuggling are all linked, so we have to address it all.” Nell is an advisor from CCHT to the mayor’s office which has devised a city-wide plan. The plan was active during the Super Bowl and also during Harvey’s flooding when construction-labor trafficking was high.

“Victims show up in convenience stores to shop or to use the restroom, so we put up signs with the hotline number,” Nell says. The mayor’s office developed “cot cards” – so named because volunteers would go from cot to cot in shelters with information and offers of help. Now, volunteers go door-to-door in the poorest neighborhoods giving them out. Nell will soon be partnering with the Faith and Justice Working Center

and United Against Human Trafficking. They will go into neighborhoods with health and safety training that will include information on sex and labor trafficking.

Green lists five ways to address human trafficking:

- Identify the victims where they work and live.
- Provide services for victims and advocate for laws.
- Provide training for volunteers and raise awareness.
- Care about the problem at the grassroots level. Call the National Human Trafficking Hotline at (888) 373-7888 to report a problem.
- Address the fuel of human trafficking, such as poverty, education, gender bias, and racism.

It is possible that you and I have been complicit in allowing human trafficking. It is also possible that you and I can address human trafficking in simple, daily choices. “Pay attention to what you purchase. Look for the Fair Trade seal on products or use the *Free2Work* app which allows you to scan product barcodes for information. It can be overwhelming, and we can’t worry over every product, so focus on one or two products at first,” says Nell.

She also has suggestions for churches. “Serve only Fair Trade coffee and display posters or leaflets explaining why this is important. If you are buying t-shirts, make sure the manufacturer is using ethically sourced cotton. Look for a statement on their website. Consider hosting an Equal Exchange fundraiser to help support small farmers around the world.”

Nell could also use help from CBFers in NC. “Come help us distribute ‘cot cards’ door-to-door. We could also use volunteers from a distance. We need help with social media, graphic design, and marketing/media campaigns.”

Find CBF resources at www.Cbfinternationals.org. Watch webinars, particularly one titled, “We Are A Fair Trade Church.” Two organizations in North Carolina that provide more resources and victim aid are the Triad Ladder of Hope (www.triadladderofhope.weebly.com) and Eastern North Carolina Stop Human Trafficking (www.enctophumantrafficking.org).