Conference on Human Trafficking

Report by Don Presland

The two-day conference on human trafficking was very interesting and at times overwhelming. There is no easy solution to the problem; the world of trafficking is very complex and quite organized.

The main thing I left the conference with was just how important it is for the various agencies in our communities to come together to try to put a stop to this massive problem. I believe that education is key. Its the non-government organizations (NGO'S), the people on the frontline that come into contact with this population that need to be educated on the scope of the problem. The speake's spoke a lot about the identification of the victims, and they need to be protected as victims of human trafficking. There is a lack of communication between the agencies. One woman who spoke asked the audience how many NGO's were present. Only a handful of hands went up and she went on to say that most NGO's cannot afford to send their staff to these events, so I asked myself how do we most effectively spread the word on human trafficking and get the proper information out there the to proper organizations? It's my belief that we go to the NGO's.

Human trafficking takes many forms. There are the girls and boys being bought and sold from many of the poorer countries. Their own families are selling some of these kids. The families and victims are being lied to, they are told that they will be actresses, hostesses and promised an education, marriage or big money. These people come for nothing and are an easy target because they are so vulnerable.

The trafficked victim, once in their new country, such as Canada, are usually beaten, raped, forced into the sex trade, or put to work in sweatshops with little or no pay. The victims are manipulated, conned and lied to. They are isolated and are told the law will throw them in jail because they are criminals. Most victims don't speak the language and all their identification is taken away, leaving them at the mercy of their captors.

Trafficking in humans is always changing. The organized crime groups are smart and will go to any length to protect their investment. This is exactly what these kids are to them. There is a lot of money to be made off these victims and a lot of exploiters out there ready to exploit.

There is no quick solution to this problem. But if we can continue to communicate, then we will be able to start combating this epidemic.

Human trafficking is a global problem and it is well run, penetrating the trafficking rings is something that will take time, money and resources. Working together is the only way out of the maze.