

HOW CAN YOU HELP THE FIGHT AGAINST HUMAN TRAFFICKING?

By Jennifer Mulligan, Marcello & Kivisto, LLC

Sometimes being a truck driver is a lonely life. You are on the road for extended periods of time, away from family and friends, and essentially isolated from the world in a small cabin. One night while at a truck stop you see a car pull up and a group of young girls get out. Suddenly, you hear a knock at the door asking if you want a date. At this point you have three choices: (1) totally ignore the knock and go about your business; (2) accept the young woman's or man's offer; or (3) call the police. If you were in this situation how would you respond?

In the 2008 blockbuster hit *Taken*, two young girls are abducted in Paris and placed in an Albanian human trafficking ring. Many people want to believe human trafficking only exists in the movies or in foreign countries. However, the reality is quite the opposite. Human trafficking is becoming a serious epidemic in the United States and is happening all around us. On Tuesday, October 9, 2012, Augustus Allen, 30, was indicted by a grand jury in Milwaukee for the sex trafficking of three girls and two women.¹ Allen, who was known as "King Gus," allegedly ran a prostitution ring from 2009 to present, which spanned from Milwaukee to Indianapolis.²

On August 1, 2012, a grand jury in California returned an 18-count indictment against seven defendants for "conspiring to engage in the sex trafficking of seven teen-age girls, six of whom were under the age of 18."³ The indictment alleges that "the defendants preyed on vulnerable victims, convinced them to become prostitutes, and verbally and physically abused them when they did not perform as required."⁴

Finally, in early June, Rances Ulices Amaya, 24, also known as "Murder" and "Blue," was sentenced to 50 years in prison for sex trafficking.⁵ Amaya, leader of the MS-13 street gang, recruited girls as young as 14 from middle schools, high schools,

and homeless shelters in Northern Virginia and forced them to engage in sexual activity.⁶ According to U.S. Attorney MacBride, Amaya "told these girls that he owned them and that he would hurt their loved ones if they didn't comply. They were his sex slaves."⁷ Evidence showed that Amaya prostituted five victims between the ages of 14 and 17 years old. The prosecution explained to the jury that the gang preferred underage girls for two reasons. First, many customers preferred the underage girls and second, the girls were easier to manipulate and control.⁸



On Thursday October 4, 2012, the Department of Transportation (DOT), the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and Amtrak announced a new effort to combat human trafficking.⁹ The new partnership stems from DHS's Blue Campaign, which was launched in 2010.¹⁰ The campaign was designed to combat human trafficking through enhanced public awareness, training, victim assistance, and law enforcement investigations.¹¹ Through the new partnership, Amtrak will utilize DHS and DOT materials to educate its employees on human trafficking and how to detect it.

Following Amtrak's announcement, on Sunday October 7, 2012, the American Trucking Associations chairman, Dan England, chairman of C.R. England Inc., announced at a press conference that the ATA will also be joining the sex trade fight.¹² "We are asking our motor carriers to include this important information in their training programs and to work with their customers and communities to help combat the problem."¹³ "There are over 3.1 million truck drivers who travel over 408 billion miles each year."¹⁴ "These professionals are the eyes and ears of the nation's highways and with knowledge and guidance they can make a big difference and save lives."¹⁵