

Forum Fights the Darkness of Human Trafficking

By Marion Stephan
McDowell County

On July 1, early risers in Morganton and Hickory were opening their copies of the News Herald of Morganton and the Hickory Daily Record. They were jolted awake by headlines announcing the arrest of an alleged human trafficker in Morganton.

Yes, Virginia, there is human trafficking in America – and in North Carolina. And even locally.

For this reason, around 50 Christian men and women filled the tables at Highland Avenue Restaurant in Hickory on August 13 for an “Anti-Human Trafficking Community Action Forum.” They were there, in the words of forum speaker Debbie Hancock “to hear about human trafficking and be a part of the solution.”

Hancock is co-founder and executive director of Compassion to Act (CTA) in Charlotte. CTA, per the organization’s website at compassiontoact.empirepages.com, connects trafficking victims to resources within the Charlotte area. It also operates Compassion Cottage, a long-term residential program for women 18 and over who have been victims of human trafficking and exploitation. The forum was organized by the Hickory chapter of Aglow International, with its president, Pat James, at the helm. Aglow International is a worldwide collaboration of “lighthouse” groups seeking to spread the kingdom of Christ.

In addition to Hancock, speaking at the forum were: Jana Comer, Aglow International’s mid-Atlantic regional coordinator for abortion recovery; Eileen Miller of “Let Freedom Ring,” a prayer ministry against human trafficking; and Bo Quickel, founder of Vigilante Truth, an organization dedicated to ending sex slavery in the USA.

Continuing her speech, Hancock described the steps by which traffickers in America recruit young girls in order to market the girls as prostitutes. The trafficker begins by using “thoughtful lines” to lure a girl who feels unloved and unappreciated. These lines include: “you’re so beautiful”; “your mom just doesn’t understand you”; “let me buy you something.” Through this process, “he keeps molding her, and he’s making her think that she loves him. ... Most of them believe that her trafficker is her boyfriend, and that he loves them.”

Minors are naive,” she noted. Many recruits are “girls who have never been told they are pretty before.” They often have an absent father and feel “these men can be fathers to them.”

Traffickers recruit girls in schools, restaurants, homeless shelters, and other places minors might be found, she said. “We had a girl who would meet her John in the library.”

“So how in the world do we stop this?” she asked the forum attendees. “Here’s what we do at Compassion to Act. We love to talk about it, because so many people don’t know.” As a result of her speeches and conversations, “people will come to me, and they were trafficked, and they never realized what it was.” Or a listener might see a sign of trafficking at a public area such as a restaurant.

Hancock shared how her conversation with a waitress led to a trafficking tip. A month after the conversation, Hancock reported, the waitress called her and said, “I think I saw a girl that’s been trafficked.” The girl, dressed in old clothes, had come into the waitress’s restaurant with an older man who called her his daughter. The girl avoided eye contact, let the man do the ordering, and “didn’t say anything except what she wanted to eat.” The man asked about the closest airport, the distance to Raleigh, and other information that indicated “he was trying to ship her somewhere.” Armed with credit card information obtained from the waitress, Hancock was able to alert authorities to the potential trafficking.

Hancock urged forum participants to watch for the signs of human trafficking. (These include, according to the National Human Trafficking Resource Center, evidence of being controlled, signs of physical abuse, not speaking on her own behalf, and no form of ID.)

She urged attendees to take the number of the National Human Trafficking Resource Center hotline “and put it in your phone. And any time you see something that isn’t right, call, ... because that might be the one thing law enforcement is wanting to know.” (The trafficking hotline number is (888) 373-3888.)

CTA is also launching a “Give 8” program that asks supporters to commit themselves to \$8 a month to support the agency’s work. Many organizations, noted Hancock, depend on “big investors and big money.” But through the “Give 8” program, CTA is seeking to empower “all of us to do it together.” Supporters can sign up for the program on the organization’s website, compassiontoact.org.

“This can change our world. This can change our nation,” she asserted.

Within her speech, Hancock described the stressfulness of fighting human trafficking. “We want to quit sometimes, ... because we are fighting darkness.” And the next speaker, Eileen Miller, introduced a prayer ministry formed to fight the darkness of trafficking through prayer.

The ministry, “Let Freedom Ring,” sponsors prayer from 7 am until midnight on the 11th of each month. Participants pray for trafficking victims, against traf-



Bo Quickel, CEO of Vigilante Truth, urges men to protect and cherish women and women to consider themselves priceless.

fickers, and for the community, Miller explained.

“The enemy likes to keep people in the dark. We say, ‘No more,’” Miller said. Participants pray that “God shines the powerful light of truth upon this subject.”

The closing speaker, Bo Quickel, affirmed the role of Miller’s prayer ministry in helping anti-trafficking ministers fight the darkness. “I can tell you from someone who’s in the trenches: We are in the darkest places that Satan’s playground has ever put together.”

“The reason we want to quit,” he elaborated, “...is that we come under attacks that are so supernaturally demonized, that if you’re not a believer that Satan wants you dead, you will be. ... So we need people like Eileen with angel’s wings on their backs to stay steadfast for us.”

Quickel is founder of Vigilante Truth, an organization dedicated to ending human trafficking by tearing away at the cultural roots that form men into predators and women into sex objects. Men, he asserted, become natural predators. They tell “trophy stories” about sexual conquests and in other ways dehumanize women. This behavior is reinforced by television, and movies such as *Pretty Woman*, which assumes that a man has a right to buy a woman for a week.

Women and girls, influenced by media and the culture, value themselves only in terms of beauty and sexual attractiveness, he said. This is demonstrated by the clothes high school girls wear. “Why does the volleyball team at your high school wear, like, nothing. Are you telling me they can’t wear basketball or gym shorts?” And “a mother of 45 can be seen wearing the same things her 16-year-old daughter wears,” he continued. “Why, Lord, why? Because the only value that a young girl recognizes – and the mother recognizes – is the sexual value that has been indoctrinated into her heart.”

Men, Quickel asserted, need to assume their God-given role as protectors of women, rather than as predators. Men also need to view women, and women need to view themselves, as priceless. To accomplish this, Quickel promotes this concept on the Vigilante Truth website and the speeches he delivers, at no charge, to local organizations.

Quickel has also begun speaking to groups of high school promoting Value of Women – or VOW – clubs. He tells the girls that God has placed into females “a special anointing, a special gifting, a piece of His image; and it’s different in all of you.”

He said he is pleased to see that “the males are starting to go, too, because there are females there.” Quickel seizes the opportunity to tell them that “protecting the girls is the awesome thing to do, because you are protecting something that is priceless.”

“I want to end trafficking, so if I can get the females to understand they’re priceless, they will not be easily manipulated by ... all these things these guys will get on social media and promise your 14- and 15-year-old daughters.” When men learn women are priceless, then when the men relate to women, the men “see their [the women’s] pricelessness.”

Quickel also described his undercover efforts to reduce the “demand” side of the human trafficking equation. He does this by working on the hearts of the customers who purchase the services of a prostitute. To accomplish this, “I like to pose as a female prostitute online on a website that is most prolific for prostitution and trafficking.”

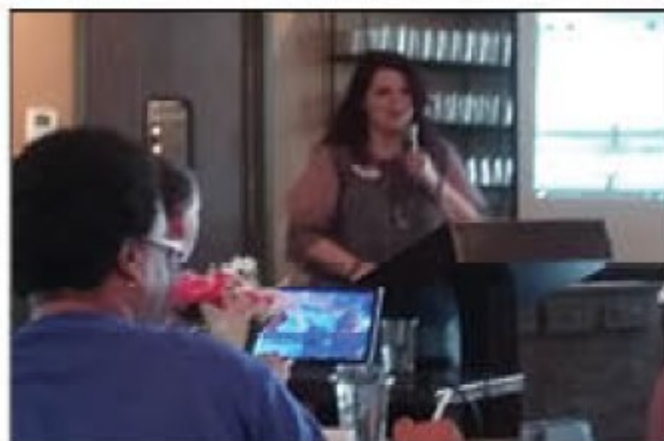
Quickel said that through the website, he sets up appointments in motel rooms. When the customers enter, “I tell them that I’m not law enforcement, and they’re not being detained. They’re free to leave any time. And then I explain to them that they’re actually coming to rape a girl, which they don’t understand.”

Prostitution through a trafficker is rape, Quickel explained, because the pimp, not the girl, receives the money. The girls “are being forced to commit a commercial enterprise for free. That’s what slavery is.”

“In all the time I’ve been doing this, only two men got up and left. Some of them stay for hours.” His purpose, he explained, is to heal. “We’ve got to change the men in there, because each one of these men are broken.”

“We all want to end trafficking,” Quickel asserted, in closing. “This is the way we want to do it: Men, change your hearts, get healed, and start protecting. Realize women are priceless. Women, realize the same thing. That’s God’s heart for this.”

(Author’s note: I apologize that I was unable to include the remarks of Jana Comer in this article. I am GPS-less, and failed to maneuver successfully the tangle of similarly-named streets in Hickory. I was, therefore, late to the forum, and missed Comer’s speech.)



Debbie Hancock tells about Compassion to Act’s efforts to rescue trafficked women in Charlotte.



Eileen Miller describes how Let Freedom Ring battles the dark world of human trafficking through prayer.

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