



**From the Director**

by Ann Dugger

# The escalating danger of human trafficking

As you know, one of my greatest concerns is the safety of our children in today's culture. Last month we addressed the danger of Cyberstalking and "sexting," and I am learning even more about how the Internet is a major tool being used to market children to predators. Underground enterprises driven by greed are taking human beings and selling them to the highest bidder in the multi-billion dollar industry referred to as **human trafficking**.

On September 9, I had the opportunity to attend a training seminar hosted by the NE Florida Human Trafficking Task Force. Representatives from various law enforcement agencies, faith-based organizations and other interested, involved citizens of our community attended the all-day session where retired FDLE Special Agent Floy Turner and Tom Gillan, certified law enforcement and community trainer, taught us trafficking signs to look for. They kept us spellbound with true sto-

ries about this global disgrace, and no one could escape the feelings of anger for the traffickers who force their victims to do such unthinkable acts.

Mr. Gillan shared the case of a 16-year-old all-American high school girl, befriended on a social networking site by a "17-year old boy" who characterized himself as a soccer player from a neighboring school, even displaying photos that depicted him as such. After building her trust, he asked her out on a date. She agreed to have him pick her up outside the mall to go to a movie. When a car the "boy" had described pulled up next to her and stopped, she didn't give any thought to its tinted windows that prevented her from seeing the driver. She opened the door and jumped in, the doors were immediately locked, and this young girl found herself alone in a car with a 54-year old sexual predator.

Her nightmare had just begun. He took her to Birmingham, Ala., where for the next two years he kept her in a dog kennel and sold her for sexual services. No telling how long her captivi-

ty in this hellish life would have continued if not for a man working on nearby cable lines. From his vantage point he looked down and saw a naked girl in a dog kennel behind a house and immediately called police. When they arrived and entered the home, they found this girl exactly as described, as well as two more girls, also naked, chained to the basement walls.

Stories such as this one are becoming more widespread. Human traffickers exploit and demean human beings for sex or forced labor while putting them in a situation where they cannot leave. Traffickers resort to a variety of abusive measures to instill fear and exert control over their victims.

Being educated about trafficking and realizing that it's occurring within our city is one preventive measure we all can take. Recognizing the signs of a

person or persons who are victims can play a major role in eradicating this crime. For instance, victims may live or travel with a large number of people. They may have a limited

knowledge about how to get around the community, possess injuries from beatings or weapons, be malnourished, and have someone else who insists on interpreting.

Some businesses may be the front for trafficking, and some buildings may be used as sweatshops. If you see a building that has bouncers, guards, and/or guard dogs, security that appears to keep people in more than keep others out, and shopping is allowed only at the

company store, you may be looking at a sweatshop. Or, buildings, houses, mobile homes and/or RVs with men coming and going frequently can be brothels. Human trafficking can be going on where you shop and even in your own neighborhood. I urge everyone in this community to learn more about human trafficking and to observe your surroundings.\*

Furthermore, our kids are at risk, and we need to be educated so that we can better protect them against the wiles of these vultures who prey on the weakest and most vulnerable. These traffickers are masters at disguises and manipulation. Observe who your children associate or communicate with. Give your children your attention because if you don't, then someone else will.

\*See tips on recognizing human trafficking, p. 5.



## Faith Corner

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### Inspirational Thought



Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the Lord, till He come and rain righteousness upon you.

*Hosea 10:12*

Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption, but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.


*Galatians 6:7-9*

  
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