

Anti-trafficking efforts through Women of the ELCA

July 2016

The Oregon Synodical Women's Organization sent a memorial to the Ninth Triennial Convention of Women of the ELCA (2014), calling the organization into renewed efforts to increase awareness and prevention of human trafficking. (Women of the ELCA has been working on this topic in a variety of ways for more than a decade.)

The action of the Ninth Triennial Convention was:

RESOLVED, that each synodical board convene a committee, in which at least one but no more than half of committee members shall be board members. This committee shall be charged with reviewing resources and helping the synodical organization to promote resources that can help units to inform, educate, and mobilize their congregations and communities, through prayer, ministry and political action.

RESOLVED, that units use this committee and the resources they recommend to inform, educate, and mobilize their congregations and communities, through prayer, ministry and political action.

RESOLVED, that each synodical president report to the 2016 Conference of Presidents about how the

recommended committee has functioned in her synodical women's organization.

What follows is a summarized compilation of the reports submitted by synodical presidents at the 2016 Conference of Presidents, February 2016, with responses from approximately 65% of the synodical organizations. While there are similarities in efforts – newsletter articles, convention workshops, use of social media and support of local agencies, for example – there are some unique efforts as well. Information is presented by region, then synodical organization.

Links to URLs have been included when available. For additional information, contact the president of the particular synodical organization.

Praise be to God for the work that has already been accomplished. May the Spirit provoke and inspire us as an organization to so much more!

Linda Post Bushkofsky
Executive director

1B – Northwest Washington	Collected in-kind offerings and funds to support REST, Real Escape of Sex Trafficking at October 2015 convention, https://iwantrest.com/ . Also heard about the Peace Rehabilitation Center working in Nepal, http://peacerehab.org/ . Also heard from Stolen Youth and the Seattle Police department, http://stolenyouth.org/ .
1C – Southwestern Washington	<p>Newsletter articles. Sharing local organizations in those articles. Displays at SWO convention.</p> <p>Some CUs have hosted groups, such as Washington Engage, http://www.waengage.com/, with informational seminars, films and Q/A sessions.</p>
2C – Pacifica	<p>Letter writing campaign at spring 2015 event. Clusters have used this topic as a focus.</p> <p>At November 2015 convention collected love gifts for three safe houses. And had speaker from Operation Safehouse. http://operationsafehouse.org/</p>
2D – Grand Canyon	<p>Presented forums and events with guest speakers from the local areas.</p> <p>Having workshop at 2016 SWO convention</p> <p>Newsletter articles; posts on Facebook.</p>
2E – Rocky Mountain	<p>Fall gathering featured Sarah’s Home, a faith based, therapeutic home for underage girls who have been freed from sex trade. http://www.sarahshome.us/ Jill Cheetham spoke. Monetary offering, in-kind gifts and nine fleece blankets made and blessed during the fall gathering were given to Jill for Sarah’s Home.</p> <p>Women of Rocky Mountain SWO are praying for the girls at Sarah’s Home and this ministry. Sarah’s Home will be part of the 2016 fall convention.</p>
3A – Western North Dakota	Among various presentations at SWO-related events, representatives of Dakota Pearls, http://www.amyallender.com/2013/11/19/dakota-pearls-north-dakotas-strip-club-outreach (primary focus is strip clubs) have spoken.

3B – Eastern North Dakota	<p>Featured topic at 28th annual convention in September 2015. Kevin Wallevand, a local TV report, produced a half-hour program about sex trafficking rings operating in North Dakota; he was keynote speaker at the SWO convention, showing the documentary and addressing the topic. He spoke highly of a victim rescue and advocacy program begun by Windie Lasenko, CEO of http://4hernd.org/. One-quarter of convention offering was designated to this organization to fund counseling, safe houses, etc. Additional funds were given to the organization at year-end.</p> <p>Letter writing to Congress members, also encouraging state legislators to enact laws concerning human trafficking.</p> <p>Working to help with settlement of refugees and immigrants, to prevent the luring of these vulnerable persons into human trafficking.</p> <p>Some clusters addressing these topics again in 2016.</p>
3E – Northeastern Minnesota	<p>Supporting the building of the Center for Changing Lives in Duluth, http://www.lssmn.org/cfcl/.</p> <p>Keynote speaker at 2016 convention is program director of the Jacob Wetterling Resource Center, http://www.gundersenhealth.org/ncptc/jacob-wetterling-resource-center.</p>
3F – Southwestern Minnesota	<p>2015 convention included presentation by Heartland Girls Ranch, http://www.heartlandgirlsranh.org/. Conferences having local speakers. Offerings have been gathered for several agencies.</p> <p>Newsletter articles.</p> <p>Phone number cards distributed at 2016 convention, to place in public restrooms.</p>
3G – Minneapolis Area	<p>At 2015 SWO gathering, Cherish All Children had a display. http://www.cherishallchildren.org/home</p> <p>Have included articles in SWO newsletter.</p>
3H – Saint Paul Area	<p>2016 SWO Convention included presentation by Amy Hartman of Cherish All Children, http://www.cherishallchildren.org/home.</p>

3I – Southeastern Minnesota	<p>Working with Mission 21, http://mission21mn.org/. Many CUs have used Mission 21 resources; used, too, for SWO convention. In Spring 2016 three of the five conferences gave financial gifts/offerings to Mission 21. Mission 21 presented at four of the five conference meetings.</p> <p>SWO has had two all-day meetings using Mission 21 presenters; meetings included Bible study and communion service.</p> <p>Selling ABAN products, http://www.aban.org/, with profits going half to Mission 21 and half to ABAN.</p>
4A – Nebraska	<p>Presentation at September 2016 fall board meeting on human trafficking by Sister Rosalee Burke of the Nebraska Coalition on Human Trafficking, https://www.facebook.com/neagainstrafficking/.</p> <p>Newsletter articles.</p> <p>Seven clusters focusing on the topic in 2016.</p> <p>Exhibited on the topic at synod assembly, June 2016. Had four life size silhouettes that featured survivor stories that were placed near a labyrinth for voting members to read.</p> <p>Looking to connect with local agencies to provide in-kind gifts.</p>
4C – Arkansas-Oklahoma	<p>Poster boards up at gatherings and convention and at Advent Lunch Munch. Was topic for spring 2016 gatherings. Shared the issue at synod assembly.</p>
4D – Northern Texas-Northern Louisiana	<p>Fall retreat in 2015 had speaker from For the Silent, http://forthesilent.org/.</p> <p>A board member has gotten involved with Unbound, https://unboundnow.org/about/.</p> <p>Board members continue learning about the issue.</p>
4F –Texas Louisiana Gulf Coast	<p>Had Meena Haque from United Against Human Trafficking (http://uaht.org/) at 2015 SWO convention; provided three workshop on awareness and prevention. UAHT will provide a speaker at the 2016 SWO convention too.</p> <p>Using social media to share trafficking stories and news.</p> <p>Articles in SWO newsletter.</p>

5A – Metro Chicago	Two interest sessions at 2015 SWO convention, Chicago metro focus, included information about The Dreamcatcher Foundation (http://thedreamcatcherfoundation.org/).
5B – Northern Illinois	<p>Sponsored a session on trafficking at synod’s Congregational Resourcing Event in 2015.</p> <p>Presented a human trafficking resolution at a conference level.</p> <p>Chair continues to educate herself through workshops, books, films, e-blasts, etc.</p>
5D – Southeastern Iowa	<p>SWO board gave Human Trafficking Committee \$1,000 for its work. Committee members attending events across state to further learn about the issue in context.</p> <p>At 2015 SWO convention, had a speaker on human trafficking. Part of in-kind gifts at convention went to a domestic/sexual assault outreach center that works on trafficking issues.</p> <p>At 2016 SWO convention, two social groups working on issue will present breakout sessions.</p> <p>Distributing cards with the hotline telephone numbers.</p> <p>With aid of Thrivent, purchased 10 copies of the film MissRepresentation, given to each cluster to use.</p>
5E – Western Iowa	<p>June 2015 SWO convention, workshop held. Member of the governor’s task force attended.</p> <p>One cluster had April 2015 presentation from a speaker from Wings of Refuge, http://wingsofrefuge.net/.</p>

<p>5F – Northeastern Iowa</p>	<p>Working cooperatively with synod, created an email committee that consists of members of the SWO board, synod office staff, the Iowa State patrol, a representative of the Attorney General’s office and other community members.</p> <p>SWO was part of the first training of hotel, casino and convenience store staff members on how to spot human trafficking victims and other signs to look for.</p> <p>Workshops at June 2015 convention; also in 2016. Wings of Refuge staff and residents will be present, and SWO is supporting them with cash and in-kind donations. http://wingsofrefuge.net/.</p> <p>Three different events in September 2015, synod-wide, to hear the stories of survivors from Thistle Farms.</p> <p>Newsletter articles.</p> <p>At least 8 of 11 clusters had 2015 spring and fall gatherings with human trafficking speakers; more to happen in 2016.</p> <p>As board, identifying human trafficking ministries in the state and how to best support them; compiling lists of speakers and contacts for unit and cluster leaders.</p>
<p>5H – Northwest Wisconsin</p>	<p>February 2015: hosted kick-off for the Safe Harbor Campaign, co-sponsored by Lutheran Office for Public Policy in Wisconsin, Cherish All Children and the ELCA.</p> <p>Writing letters to state legislators encouraging adoption of Safe Harbor act and related funding.</p> <p>A main project in 2015 was collecting toiletries, towels and appropriate clothing for the 55,000+ teens from Central America who are encamped near the southern border of the U.S. SWO worked with social workers and directors from Lutheran Social Services of the South and their three group homes near Mission, Texas. Collected three double size pallets 4’X4’X92” that were shipped south. Saw this as a preventive measure, helping so youth don’t end up trafficked.</p> <p>Worked with LOPP to provide a workshop at synod-sponsored workshop day, again relating to the Safe Harbor act.</p>

<p>5I – East Central Synod of Wisconsin</p>	<p>Encouraging conferences to have human trafficking as a focus for 2017 spring events; will have a breakout session at fall 2016 SWO retreat.</p> <p>Co-sponsoring Human Trafficking Awareness Event on Nov. 12, 2016 at Peace Lutheran in Kunes. Katie’s Circle at Peace had read the article in the Dec. 2015 issue of <i>Gather</i> entitled “St. Nicholas Worked Against Human Trafficking: So Can We” and were inspired to do something. The SWO board is funding up to \$2,500 and working to secure grants to assist for the event. Planning the event with Sister Celine Goessl, a leading expert on the topic and most passionate advocate against human trafficking in NE Wis. The keynote speaker is social worker and trafficking survivor Theresa Flores (theresa@traffickfree.com). Other speakers will include a local law enforcement representative who is a member of the newly created Wisconsin Anti Trafficking Task Force. Event will include informational booths with organizations such as Five Stones (http://5-stones.org/), Eye Heart World (https://eyeheartworld.org/) and Shared Hope International (http://sharedhope.org/). This event is free, extensive publicity is planned and women from nearby SWOs are invited.</p> <p>SWO is partnering with St. Norbert College Knights Against Trafficking and others to have the keynote speaker speak on the Friday before the Saturday event.</p> <p>SWO is encouraging reading on the subject, including <i>In Our Backyards</i> by Nita Belles.</p> <p>SWO is starting a week of prayer to end human trafficking throughout the state.</p> <p>SWO is approaching the Green Bay Packer public affairs director about what the National Football League is doing/could so to end the trafficking that often occurs in conjunction with NFL games and the Super Bowl.</p>
<p>5J – Greater Milwaukee</p>	<p>Workshop at SWO convention</p> <p>Connecting with Exploit No More, http://exploitnomore.org/.</p> <p>Approaching the topic of older generation males in the Hmong community who pay to bring 13-year-old brides to Milwaukee. Hoping to have Hmong women at next SWO convention speaking on this.</p>

<p>5K – South Central Wisconsin Synod</p>	<p>The committee is active in presenting information to women in the SWO on “what is human trafficking and is it in your community?” Including information in newsletters, synod and synodical.</p> <p>Let women know that the Lutheran Office for Public Policy in Wisconsin received a \$2,000 grant from Women of the ELCA for its project, “Safe Harbor Campaign,” for speakers, supplies, etc. as three workshops are presented.</p> <p>Looking into an organization, SlaveFree Madison, an anti-trafficking organization and ways in which they could partner, http://slavefreemadison.squarespace.com/.</p>
<p>6A – Southeast Michigan</p>	<p>Newsletter articles.</p> <p>Had Vista Maria staff present at board retreat, https://www.vistamaria.org/. Vista Maria also presented at March 2015 honoring women event (256 attended). Offering of \$3,331 at that event went to Vista Maria. In March 2015 a congregation hosted a rummage sale with proceeds donated to Vista Maria (\$5,225, including a Thrivent match of \$500).</p> <p>CUs involved with presentations, helped collect items for the churchwide exhibit at the ELCA Youth Gathering.</p> <p>CU had All Worthy of Love presentation, http://allworthyoflove.org/, provided honorarium.</p>
<p>6B – North/West Lower Michigan</p>	<p>Hoping to work with, learn from the Northern Michigan Coalition to End Human Trafficking, http://nmicoalitiontoendht.com/.</p> <p>Newsletter articles.</p> <p>Using theme “No one is for sale.” Have t-shirts with the National Hotline phone number.</p> <p>Praying at 6 a.m. at a local strip club on Monday mornings.</p>
<p>6C – Indiana-Kentucky</p>	<p>Speaker at August 2015 biennial convention.</p> <p>Sven Schumacher of Child and Family Services in Indianapolis attended first meeting of new board (Dec. 2015) to describe the IMPACT program and to enlist the interest and advocacy of the SWO.</p> <p>Developed plan for 2016 cluster meetings and for CU to build awareness and prevention locally. Plan includes prayer, programming drawn from resources shared by Sven Schumacher, ASCENT 121 training for volunteers (http://ascent121.org/), personal care kits, supporting caregivers, etc.</p>

6D – Northwestern Ohio	<p>SWO partnering with The Daughter Project, http://www.thedaughterproject.org/, to educate women and girls, as well as assisting with volunteers. Several CUs are providing monetary gifts and gift cards.</p> <p>SWO provided grant to a SANE project through its “women and children in trouble” grants. SWO is committed to telling the SANE story – Sexual Abuse Nurse Examiners, specialists in sexual assault cases. Several CUs are providing gift cards, financial assistance and dignity to SANE by having fundraisers and/or clothing drives.</p> <p>Learn more about SANE at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sexual_Assault_Nurse_Examiner</p>
6F – Southern Ohio	<p>Presentations at 2015 fall meetings of five conferences, with one person from each conference now working with SWO coordinator.</p> <p>At its September 2015 synodical convention, workshop presentation; attendees wrapped individual bars of soap and added a sticker featuring the toll free human trafficking number (much like what is described in this news article from the Detroit Free Press: http://www.freep.com/story/life/2015/01/24/michigan-human-trafficking/22248107/). The soap is going to hotels throughout Southern Ohio.</p> <p>Daily prayer in January on all aspects of trafficking for the synod newsletter (January is anti-human trafficking month).</p> <p>Looking to possibly connect with Gracehaven, http://www.gracehaven.me/.</p>
7B – New England	<p>Workshop at 2015 biennial SWO convention; used Good Samaritan story as a reference point to emphasize Jesus’ call to help those in need. Workshop included education about human trafficking, signs to look for in victims, where trafficking happens and what we can do about it.</p> <p>SWO helped The Center for Wisdom’s Women, Lewiston, Maine, submit a grant application from Women of the ELCA. Grant received. Wisdom’s Women is a walk-in center providing a place where woman can heal, learn new skills and realize they are loved and do not need to turn to a life of trafficking, among other things.</p> <p>Executive director of Wisdom’s Women was the keynote speaker at the Maine Conference spring gathering. Wisdom’s Women is opening Sophia’s House, modeled after Thistle Farm’s efforts in Tenn.</p> <p>SWO made a \$500 donation to support a daylong conference in Brunswick, Maine, Love Heals with Becca Stevens, of Thistle Farm.</p> <p>Congregational units have held local anti-trafficking programming.</p>

7C – Metro New York	Speaker at 2015 fall convention: from My Sister’s Place, http://mspny.org/ . Had an in-gathering offering for My Sister’s Place and provided an honorarium for speaker.
7D – Upstate New York	<p>SWO had already become active with Cherish All Children (2011). Now have over 100 participants in 30 churches actively involved. The national director of CAC came to the SWO in 2015 and met with supporters at four different sites, offering encouragement.</p> <p>At 2015 synod assembly, the SWO coordinator spoke about the anti-trafficking efforts.</p> <p>Intentional acts of praying, meeting for book reviews, hosting guest speakers and other things are happening in congregations, hosted by the CUs.</p> <p>Publishing newsletter articles, content on synod website.</p>
7E – Northeastern Pennsylvania	Topic at 2016 convention.
7F – Southeastern Pennsylvania	<p>Newsletter articles.</p> <p>Offered a workshop at 2015 Gathering on the work done by Dawn’s Place, a residence located in Philadelphia dedicated to improving the lives of women who have been trafficked, prostitute or pimped. http://ahomefordawn.org/ Provided tied blankets, in-kind donations of personal hygiene products and a port of offerings to Dawn’s Place.</p> <p>Workshop at 2016 SWO convention using the <i>Understanding and Responding to Trafficking</i> resource from churchwide.</p>
8A – Northwestern Pennsylvania	<p>Topic of discussion at conference gatherings.</p> <p>“People are just now starting to understand what this really is about and need more help in understanding this problem and how they are needed to help to do something about.”</p>
8B – Southwestern Pennsylvania	<p>At 2015 SWO convention, present pre-convention workshop.</p> <p>Planning on raising funds to have 500 bars of soap to be put into hotel rooms, with information about how to seek help.</p>
8D – Lower Susquehanna	The synodical president met recently with Lutheran Advocacy Ministry in Pa. to work with Senator Greenleaf in sponsoring legislation to support victims of trafficking through social services instead of condemnation through incarceration.

8G – Metro DC	<p>2015 annual SWO convention hosted a human trafficking forum that included a survivor’s poignant yet instructive personal testimony.</p> <p>Committee members publicized and attended presentations and discussion hosted by anti-trafficking organizations – “an excellent way of education ourselves, highlight resources about the severity of the issue and determining ways to get engaged and involved.” Groups included American Association of University Women, a “JustAsk Prevent Program” used in middle and high schools; and Kids Are Not For Sale.</p> <p>Send letters to active CUs, inviting them to have general introductory programs on the topic. Committee conducted three human trafficking events.</p> <p>Newsletter articles, social media. Included suggestions to provide needed items for local trafficked survivors, monetary donations, etc.</p> <p>Encouraged their youth to visit the WELCA anti-trafficking exhibit at the 2015 ELCA Youth Gathering.</p> <p>The synodical organization joined other faith-based organizations in January 2016 at a proclamation ceremony held by the Board of Supervisors of Fairfax County to recognize their efforts to eliminate trafficking and to support victims. In April 2015 Virginia passed its first standalone sex trafficking law; more works remains to be done and a letter writing campaign to state lawmakers will happen during their April 2016 spring convention.</p>
8H – West Virginia – Western Maryland	<p>Newsletter articles, social media.</p> <p>Encouraged cluster programming.</p> <p>Ask members to support Equal Exchange, Thistle Farms, Freedom Fighters of the Eastern Panhandle, https://www.facebook.com/FreedomFightersoftheEasternPanhandle, etc.</p> <p>Some board members saw documentary, In Plain Sight. http://www.inplainsightfilm.com/#sthash.C7BxZAhE.dpbs Planning to screen it themselves at a local church.</p> <p>Using Community Lutherans Partners S.T.U.F.F. (sheet, towels, utensils for families) to help victims get started in the own living space, http://www.clp-online.org/html/contribute.html.</p>

9C – South Carolina	<p>Added an anti-trafficking page to SWO website, keeps it up-to-date with information and resources.</p> <p>2015 SWO convention, hosted workshop led by Switch representative, an anti-trafficking agency (http://switchsc.org/). Also presented at a fall 2015 conference.</p> <p>2016 SWO convention, another workshop led by Switch representative.</p>
9D – Southeastern	<p>Newsletter articles.</p> <p>Workshop at 2015 convention and cluster meetings; another workshop at 2016 convention.</p> <p>2016 in-kind gathering of gifts will go to Wellspring Living, https://wellspringliving.org/.</p> <p>Several women participated in the <i>Your Voice Makes a Difference</i> advocacy event sponsored by the synod, Feb. 2016.</p>
9E – Florida-Bahamas	<p>SWO committee’s goal is to share the resource and information and encourage prayer, ministry and political action</p> <p>Each SWO board member and conference president has received USB with resources.</p> <p>Newsletter articles.</p>