FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Nonprofit's Campaign Takes Aim at Human Trafficking

Organization seeks 75,000 men to influence other men to oppose all forms of human trafficking. Campaign launch at the holidays is intended to raise awareness through difficult conversations.

MILWAUKEE (Nov. 23, 2026) – A small nonprofit agency that helps human trafficking survivors regain their lives is looking for a few good men – 75,000 of them – to take a public stand against the crime.

During a news conference this morning, a human trafficking survivor explained the economics of the $250 billion per year criminal enterprise.



"If one woman being trafficked for sex generates $500 per day, that's more than $150,000 per year. Five women being sex trafficked by the same trafficker generates nearly $1 million a year," said Sarah Demerath, a human trafficking survivor who works at Convergence Resource Center (CRC) helping women rebuild their lives after being trafficked.

Breaking the business model of human trafficking by eliminating the demand for commercial sex is the goal of HEMAD (**H**uman trafficking **E**ducators working with **M**en and boys to stand **A**gainst the **D**emand). HEMAD is a program of CRC a 22-year-old faith-based nonprofit organization working with justice-involved women and female survivors of human trafficking overcome trauma. CRC has offices in Milwaukee and Madison.

"Eighty percent of human trafficking cases in the U.S. involve sex trafficking. To stop sex trafficking, we need to address the demand – and that demand is driven by men," said Rev. Arnold Cifax, Executive Pastor of New Testament Church in Milwaukee and chairman for the HEMAD campaign.

Cifax showed a short video illustrating the issue of human trafficking and how men can play a key role in ending the demand for the commercial sexual exploitation of adults, teens and children. He then led those attending in a pledge to stand up against traffickers.

"People of all ages – but especially men – can take the lead and stop this crime from happening in their neighborhoods and communities," said Cifax. "We want men to go to the HEMAD webpage (https://www.convergenceresource.org/hemad), watch the three-minute video, register on the page and take the pledge, and then share the link on their social media. You can do this during a TV timeout of a football or basketball game or in between TV shows."

“We cooperate, collaborate, and communicate in law enforcement. It’s important we work together, but we need help from men to stop human trafficking,” said Dane County Sheriff Kalvin Barrett. “Dane County covers 1,200 square miles and has a population of 595,000 people, but there are only two detectives investigating human trafficking, one in my department and the other with the Madison Police Department. Two detectives are not enough. We need men to help us”

Barrett noted that law enforcement agencies are stretched thin and human trafficking investigations take time. By working together and sharing information with other agencies, they’ve been able to build human trafficking cases and make notable arrests in the past year, including:

- three men in Franklin that led to the closure of the On the Border strip club.
- two people who lived at the Milwaukee Soldiers Home and trafficked an 18-year-old woman who had aged out of the state’s foster program.
- a Johnson Creek man for trafficking an 18-year-old UW-Milwaukee student; and
- nine men in Oshkosh tied to a trafficking operation.

Nationally, the U.S. State Department’s Trafficking in People (TIP) Report shows federal human trafficking investigations in the U.S. continued to increase, as did the number of defendants, prosecutions and convictions.

Combined Federal Human Trafficking Statistics (Departments of Justice, Homeland Security, State, Labor, and Defense)	**2024**	**2025**
Human Trafficking Cases Investigated	2,692	3,171
Human Trafficking Prosecutions	146	163
Prosecutions Involving Sex Trafficking	136	149
Prosecutions Involving Labor Trafficking	10	14
Human Trafficking Defendants	223	302
Convictions for Human Trafficking	210	293
Convictions for Sex Trafficking	181	263
Convictions for Labor Trafficking	29	30

“I don’t have to look at the number of arrests or news coverage to know that human trafficking is increasing in Wisconsin. I know it from the number of women coming through our doors,” said Dr. Debbie Lassiter, CRC’s co-founder and CEO. “Between January and June, we saw a 38-percent increase in new clients over the same period last year. Unfortunately, state funding and grants supporting our work has declined. We have to do more with less to help these women.”

“We recognize we can’t arrest our way out of this. We appreciate and support the work law enforcement, government agencies, and our elected leaders are doing. But this is a change that has to begin in the heart,” said Cifax.

Lassiter noted the timing of the campaign launch is intentionally tied to the holidays.

“People who are being trafficked are enslaved. They are isolated from family, friends and those who could help them escape to freedom. What better time to reflect on our freedom, our blessings and with family and friends around the holidays,” she said. “We want you to be thinking about this and talking about it around the dinner table, during TV timeouts of football or basketball games, and at other social gatherings. HEMAD can be a life-changer – for you, and survivors.”

In its first year (2018), 3,000 men took the HEMAD pledge, and the number has grown each year since then. Approximately 60,000 men in 11 states and two foreign countries took the pledge in each of the past three years. Now in its ninth year, this year's goal is 75,000 men joining the movement.

"As a woman and as a survivor, hearing men take the pledge to stand against human trafficking is so important," added Demerath. "The HEMAD campaign has a real, positive effect on the people who have a lived experience of being trafficked."

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To report human trafficking, call local police at 911 or the National Human Trafficking Hotline (888)-373-7888 or text 233733.

About Convergence Resource Center

Convergence Resource Center (CRC) is a faith-based nonprofit community service organization providing support for women rebuilding their lives after trauma with an emphasis on justice-involved women and female survivors of human trafficking. To learn more, call (414) 231-3058 or visit www.convergenceresource.org.

About HEMAD

Human trafficking **E**ducators working with **M**en and boys to stand **A**gainst the **D**emand (HEMAD) is a program of Convergence Resource Center directed at men on the importance of ending human trafficking. To learn more, visit https://www.convergenceresource.org/hemad-campaign or contact HEMAD@convergenceresource.org.

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News media may use all or any part of the HEMAD video for editorial coverage. It can be accessed at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2FqkamS5SKI.