



January is Human Trafficking Awareness Month

Human Trafficking Awareness month is a time that allows communities to bring additional awareness to this issue through educational events and service projects. The Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services wants to support our survivors in a tangible way and coordinated a statewide effort to collect a variety of hygiene items, clothing, and other necessities to create Hope Bags. This project has been coordinated by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) for many years. NCMEC now encourages communities to coordinate these efforts in their local areas.



Hope Bags are backpacks that contain a full set of clothing, hygiene items, a towel, blanket, a small journal, and snacks. The bags are provided to professionals that are directly

involved in the recovery of these survivors. This includes a variety of law enforcement partners, forensic exam teams, and Children's Advocacy Centers. These professionals present the bags to the human trafficking survivor at an appropriate time during the recovery process. It is common for the survivors to not have personal belongings with them at the time of recovery and these bags provide tangible support for them during the first days following their recovery.

The collection phase of this project began in October and continued through November. The collected items were picked up by the State Trafficking Response Coordinator in December from community partners throughout the Commonwealth. The bags were assembled in December and are being distributed to the appropriate professionals throughout Virginia in January in observance of Human Trafficking Awareness month.

Our collaborative efforts are providing over 350 Hope Bags to directly support survivors within the *Commonwealth of Virginia*.



We would like to thank everyone who participated in this collaborative project. Organizations and volunteers throughout the Commonwealth collected items and

assembled bags with the desire to help provide physical comfort and relief to our human trafficking survivors. We cannot thank each of you enough for your assistance in this project.

Special thanks to:

- Bill Gosling Outsourcing
- Chesterfield County Victim Witness
- Bridgewater Church of the Brethren
- Center for Improving Women's Lives
- Collins Center, Harrisonburg
- Department of Criminal Justice Services
- Dom Mason Group
- Family Preservation Services, Winchester
- ImPACT Virginia, Richmond
- Mary Washington Hospital, Fredericksburg
- Move Church, Lake Ridge
- People Places, Inc., Staunton
- Prince William County Department of Social Services
- Prince William County Government
- Prince William County Public Schools–Department of School Social Workers
- Project Horizon, Lexington
- Shenandoah Valley Department of Social Services
- Straight Street, Roanoke
- Villages of Piedmont Community, Haymarket
- Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Incorporated the Sigma Delta Zeta Chapter of Henrico
- Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Incorporated the Archonettes Chapter of Manassas
- Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Incorporated the Archonettes Chapter of Woodbridge

Many anonymous and individual donations were also sent to the State Trafficking Response Coordinator and are genuinely appreciated. Thank you to everyone who contributed to this effort!

