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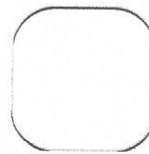
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"Unholy Tour" held in Savannah

Residents and elected officials in Savannah took a tour of areas where sex trafficking has occurred in the area on Tuesday night.

Updated: 2:24 AM EDT Sep 21, 2016



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Steve King  


Reporter

SAVANNAH, Ga. — Residents and elected officials in Savannah took a tour of areas where sex trafficking has occurred in the area on Tuesday night.


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Representatives from several nonprofit organizations spoke in front of the two busloads of people as part of the "Unholy Tour." The tour stopped by 18 locations in the Savannah area where this crime has happened before.

"Just going to the different areas knowing that you're going near hotels and driving by the truck stops and you might not think, 'Oh my gosh' this could have the potential for sex trafficking and there could be slaves that are in bondage here," said Kale Herndon, who lives in Savannah and went on the tour.

"Seeing it in person, there's just no substitute," said the Commissioner of the Georgia Public Service Commission, Tim Echols, who started this program two years ago.

The buses stopped by strip clubs, truck stops and hotels while people heard stories about human trafficking in our area and what can be done to stop it. State and local officials say education is the first step and adults need to know the red flags.

"The truancy, the unexplained cash, the chronic runaways, things of that nature just kind of give us red flags that there is something going on with the child," said Diane McLeoud, the Deputy Chief Assistant District Attorney for the Chatham County District Attorney's Office Juvenile Court Division.

Officials say catching the people running the trafficking rings will ultimately be difficult.

"These traffickers are clever. They are enterprising. They avoid capture, avoid detection and it's very difficult," Echols said.

That's why Echols says there should be programs for businesses to know the warning signs of sex trafficking.

"Where we get hotels to train other front desk personnel. Where we get limo and taxi companies to train other drivers," said Echols.

State officials say the only way to help victims here and around the country is for everyone to understand this problem and work toward solutions together.

Officials say there are millions of sex trafficking victims around the world and there has been a recent increase in reports of this in our area.

There is a toll-free, confidential hotline regarding this problem that can be reached at 1-888-373-7888.

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