

Thank you to our Emcee and Panel Members

Westmoreland County Commissioner Gina Cerilli serves on many boards including the Westmoreland County Human Trafficking Task Force and is also a practicing attorney.



Her goal is to bring awareness to the issue by speaking about trafficking in our region publicly at events. Gina shared with the audience a bone chilling story about a girl she met in high school at modeling event in New York City. At the age of 13, Alicia Kozakiewicz ran away from her home to meet with an individual she had been communicating with online. Alicia, her mom Mary, and the district attorney involved in Alicia's rescue share their nightmare story and stress the critical role every parent must play in protecting their children online.

Kristin Malone-Bodair is the Education Outreach Program Manager for the Blackburn Center in Greensburg. She currently trains all staff and volunteers in crisis intervention counseling that prepares the trainees to respond to victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and other crimes including human trafficking. Kristin shared the mission of Blackburn Center which is to "serve as advocates for the rights of all individuals to live free from domestic and sexual violence and other forms of violence by eliminating root causes and providing for the well-being and safety of survivors/victims." In addition, she addressed the supportive services they offer, their Red Sand Project and what you can do as a concerned citizen.



Dawn Hennessey is the founder and executive director of Faith Forward Inc./Angel Arms education and awareness family center. Dawn's passion is bringing awareness and hope to the children and families caught in addiction. Dawn started her presentation by showing a video of the unthinkable--parents accused of trying to sell their kids for drug money. Thankfully, they were caught before the crime was committed and the children are okay. The local advocate of children affected by the drug epidemic shared that not all cases like this end that way. Dawn shared many stories and ways to help stop trafficking.



Sarah Medina is the Regional Coordinator for the Salvation Army's anti-human trafficking program, overseeing 28 counties in western PA. She is also a licensed social worker. Throughout her work she is able to show the people she encounters that they are respected, loved, valued and seen. She works very closely with victims of human trafficking. Sarah shared some staggering statistics at the symposium. In Pennsylvania alone in 2018, there were 275 cases reported of human trafficking--213 of those cases were sex trafficking. The majority is occurring in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. It is also happening in Westmoreland County.



Laura Mancuso is passionate about her city and ending human trafficking around the world. She has organized and led the Walk for Freedom for five years in Pittsburgh. At the symposium, Laura shared information about the walk and why she was called to action. Laura firmly believes that every step we take locally leaves footprints globally. Every dollar fundraised, every poster seen, every person made aware of the issue of human trafficking, add up to one global impact - a world where everyone is free.



Thank you to the nonprofit organizations who shared valuable information at the symposium:



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