

# The HOPE Connection

~a quarterly publication from Hands of Hope Resource Center  
~WINTER 2023~



## **A message from the director ~ Stephenie Och**

2022 has been a year of growth for Hands of Hope Resource Center. New funding from the Initiative Foundation and Otto Bremer Trust allowed us to expand our Long Prairie office to include a bilingual Spanish-speaking advocate.

As we head into 2023, we'd like to announce that our Long Prairie office will once again be growing due to a new funding opportunity. Stay tuned for more information and a job posting for a full time Project Coordinator to oversee our work collaborating with the Todd County Attorney's Office, Todd County Sheriff's Office, Long Prairie Police Department, Todd/Wadena Community Corrections, and others involved in the work serving victims/survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking.

Thank you for your interest in Hands of Hope Resource Center. Feel free to reach out at any time - I would love to tell you more about the great work we are doing in the community!

## **Peace and Hope by Connie Nelson**

As we enter this new year we are consumed, hopefully, with thoughts of hope and new possibilities as we should be, right? Some folks, however, who are trapped in an abusive relationship are perhaps not so filled with that positivity. Why? Because to a victim of abuse hope is not always a present feeling.

Folks on the outside looking in on someone that is dealing with abuse often ask, "why doesn't she just leave?" It is a difficult position for someone that has



never been abused to understand. The list of reasons for staying is quite long, and I will only list a few here. Fear is obvious, shame that they have allowed these behaviors and that no one will understand or they will criticize, no options or nowhere to go, and love. Yes, I said love. Victims most often have deep emotional and loving connections to their abusive partners. My concern about this question of why victims stay is that we all should be asking, “why does he do that” and put the accountability for these behaviors on the abuser. If you would like to know more about domestic violence, I would encourage you to check out the domesticshelters.org website for a much more comprehensive list that will give you a new sense of why victims stay, as well as other helpful information.

So, our New Year’s wish for everyone is for safety and peace in your relationships.



### History of New Year’s Resolutions by Taylor Hernandez

Did you know that New Year’s resolutions are about 4,000 years old? The ancient Babylonians were said to be the first to make New Year’s resolutions and to hold recorded celebrations in honor of the new year. For them the year began in mid-March when the crops were planted. New Year’s resolutions were promises, debt repayments and returns of any borrowed items to gain favor from their gods.

The New Year’s resolution again evolved closer to what we know it to be today during ancient Roman times. Julius Caesar modified the calendar and added January 1<sup>st</sup> as the beginning of the new year after one of their gods Janus in circa 46 B.C. The Romans offered sacrifices to the deity and made promises for the coming year.

In more current times “*despite the tradition’s religious roots, New Year’s resolutions today are a mostly secular practice. Instead of making promises to the gods, most people make resolutions only to themselves, and focus purely on self-improvement (which may explain why such resolutions seem so hard to follow through on). According to recent research, while as many as 45 percent of Americans say they usually make New Year’s resolutions, only 8 percent are successful in achieving their goals. But that dismal record probably won’t stop people from making resolutions anytime soon—after all, we’ve had about 4,000 years of practice.*”

<https://www.history.com/news/the-history-of-new-years-resolutions>

### National Stalking Awareness Month By Rocio Fernandez Lugo

National Stalking Awareness Month in January was launched in 2004 by the National Center for Victims of Crime. The aim was to increase the public’s interpretation of the crime of stalking. Stalking is a course of conduct directed at a specific person that would cause a reasonable person to feel fear. Unlike other crimes that involve a single incident, stalking is a pattern of behavior. It is often made up of individual acts that could, by themselves, seem harmless or noncriminal, but when taken in the context of a stalking situation, could constitute criminal acts. Stalking is a crime under the laws of all 50 states, the District of Columbia, the U.S. Territories, and the Federal government. Stalking is serious, often violent, and can escalate over time.



### WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- **Call 911 for Immediate Assistance:** You know yourself and your situation better than anyone. Trust your instincts and call for help if you feel you are in danger.
- **Alert Others:** Tell trusted friends, family, neighbors, coworkers, and/or your HR department to keep an eye out for suspicious activity and so they don’t mistakenly give out information to someone pretending to be a loved one.
- **Connect with an Advocate:** Advocates can often be found at local domestic violence and/or sexual assault agencies, police departments, and district attorney’s offices. Advocates can help explain local stalking laws, walk you through filing a protective order, connect you with local services, and help you develop a safety plan.
- **Document Every Incident:** Make a log of encounters with the stalker, hang-up calls, and public sightings. Save all messages, emails, and your call history.

- **End All Contact/Block Stalker From Your Social Media:** Sometimes this is easier said than done, but try not to answer calls or messages, even if you are requesting that the stalker stop. Any contact may encourage the stalker to continue the stalking behavior.
- **Take Threats Seriously:** A direct threat against you is an obvious sign of danger. A stalker can also use threats of suicide or self-harm to manipulate you into staying in contact or a dangerous situation.
- **Create a Safety Plan:** Develop a personalized plan to keep yourself safe. You can connect with an advocate for assistance.
- **Prepare Your Children:** Teach your children what to do if there is an emergency, like where to hide if there is danger in the house, or how to call the police or a trusted person for help.

### INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT STALKING

1. Around six to 7.5 million people are stalked per year in the United States.
2. Only 25% of the victims were stalked by strangers.
3. Young people are most at risk. 50% of victims said they were stalked before the age of 25.
4. Nearly one in six women and one in 17 men are victims of stalking at least once in their life.
5. Stalkers harm victims with weapons in one out of five cases.
6. Yellow is the official stalking awareness color.

If you or someone you know is the victim of stalking, please contact an advocate at Hands of Hope Resource Center by calling 320-732-2319 (Long Prairie office), 320-632-1657 (Little Falls office) or the 24/7 hotline 800-682-4547.



### Tips On How To Stay Safe When Using Social Media

*by Kim Cook*

Each time you log in to your social media account you are sharing your detailed personal information with other users. Your name, age, location, educational background, employment, and your status. Status updates allow users to update their posts to communicate with other users quickly. Users often post pictures of their family or friends which can show their location and activities.

All this sharing reveals information about you, including contextual information you may not even be aware of. By

sharing this information online, you may be providing enough information to allow advertisers to track you or hackers to take advantage of your online identity.

Some social media networks provide certain public information by default. Users do not have an option to restrict access to it, such as your account name. A social media network can change its privacy policy at anytime without a user's permission. Third party applications that have been granted access may be able to view information that a user or user's contacts post privately. Keep in mind that social media networks do not necessarily guarantee the security of the information that has been uploaded to a profile, even when those posts are set to be private.

Before you post or share something on social media ask yourself:

- Could someone use this information to hurt me?
- Would I be upset if someone shared this information with others?
- What's the worst thing that could happen if I shared this information?

**Always remember that the things you share with your friends can end up being shared with others.**

Below are some tips that can keep yourself safe while using social media:

- Adjust your privacy settings for all your social media platforms, especially Facebook, Snapchat, and Twitter. Each platform provides information on how to do this, usually under a help section.
- Use two-factor authentication. After you sign in with your password and username you can have a code sent through your SMS on a registered device.
- Never post location or whereabouts.
- Do not use your social media credentials to sign in on third party sites.
- Be wary of friend requests. Do not accept a friend request from someone that you do not know.
- Do not click on shortened URLs or website links. These are often used as vessels for malware.
- Always use a strong password and change your passwords regularly. Never reuse passwords. Include numbers and symbols, including uppercase and lowercase letters.

## National Law Enforcement Appreciation Day

*by Barb Goodrich*

On January 9, 2023, individuals and organizations in support of law enforcement officers nationwide will promote National Law Enforcement Appreciation Day (L.E.A.D). Due to the continued negativity directed towards law enforcement officers there is a need to show them that we, as citizens, recognize the difficult and sometimes impossible career they have chosen. They have answered a call to public service that puts their life on the line every day for their communities and is demanding and often unappreciated.



National Law Enforcement Appreciation Day was founded in 2015 after an officer involved shooting in Ferguson, Missouri in 2014. The violence and negativity that occurred over that event led to the organization, Concerns of Police Survivors (C.O.P.S.), to take a stand to discourage the negative attention that law enforcement officers had been getting in the hopes of turning this image into a positive one.

Therefore, in appreciation for everything law enforcement officers do, let's take time on January 9, 2023 and show our respect by thanking them for their service, dedication, and commitment in protecting us and the communities we live in.



## January is National Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month

*by Lyndsey Dimateo*

removal of organs. These crimes affect adults and children of all ages, genders, races, religions, and economic classes. At any given time, there is an estimated 24.9 million victims of human trafficking worldwide! Forced labor and sex trafficking combined earns a global profit of about *\$150 billion* dollars each year.

This month is dedicated to bringing awareness to the slavery and human trafficking that is happening all around the world. According to the U.S. Department of Defense, human trafficking "is a crime in which force, fraud, or coercion, is used to compel a person to perform labor, services, or commercial sex." Different types of trafficking include forced labor, forced criminal activities, sexual exploitation, debt bondage, people smuggling, and trafficking for the

The National Human Trafficking Hotline explains that while trafficking can happen to anyone, some people are more vulnerable than others. Statistics show that LGBTQ+, people of color, women and girls are more likely to experience trafficking than other demographic groups. Other significant risk factors include individuals in an unstable living situation, substance use and abuse, migration or relocation, undocumented immigrants, those facing poverty, mental health concerns, have past experience with domestic violence or sexual abuse, have run away, are involved in the juvenile justice or child welfare system, or have a caregiver or family member who abuses mood altering substances.

In addition, the National Human Trafficking Hotline states, "Traffickers employ a variety of control tactics, the most common include physical and emotional abuse and threats, isolation from friends and family, and economic abuse. They make promises aimed at addressing the needs of their target in order to impose control. As a result, victims become trapped and fear leaving for myriad reasons, including psychological trauma, shame, emotional attachment, or physical threats to themselves or their family." The most common venues for trafficking and forced labor take place within pornography, illicit massage/spa businesses, hotels and motels, residence-based commercial sex, online ads that lure victims in, domestic work, street-based venues, construction, agriculture/farms, and restaurants.

Everyone has the potential to discover a trafficking situation. Some victims may be kept hidden, while others are in plain sight. There are many red flags and indicators you can look for to help identify whether trafficking may be taking place. Some of these are:

- Inability to speak alone
- Has little property/ wears the same clothes over and over
- Carries belongings in a trash bag
- No control of their money and/or things mostly paid in cash
- They are submissive or fearful
- Shows signs of physical abuse or injury

- No control of their own identification/employer is holding their identification documents
- Living with employer
- Refusal to make eye contact
- Their interactions appear scripted or rehearsed
- Tattoos that indicate ownership
- Are isolated and cut off from interactions with their support system
- Appear to be monitored by another person when talking or interacting with others
- Are being threatened by their boss with deportation
- Concerned about being arrested or jailed
- Concerned for their family's safety
- Is not free to leave or come/go as they wish
- Are unpaid or paid very little cash under the table
- Work long and unusual hours
- Has a large debt that cannot be paid off
- Exchanging commercial sex acts for needs like shelter, food, or other means of survival
- Lack of personal care or appear malnourished
- Living in cramped, dangerous, or inhumane conditions
- Has unexplained absences

If you believe you have identified a victim of trafficking and are able to speak to them alone, without the trafficker watching and putting the victim in harm's way, here are a list of questions you can ask:

- Do you have your passport/identification? If not, who has it?
- Are you in debt to your employer?
- Do you live with your employer?
- Can you come and go as you please?
- Have you been hurt or threatened if you tried to leave?
- Can you leave your job if you want to?
- Where do you sleep and eat?
- Has your family been threatened?

If you are unable or uncomfortable to speak with the victim, call 911 and notify law enforcement immediately! It may be unsafe to intervene and rescue the victim yourself. You never know how the trafficker will react or if they will retaliate against the victim or you. If you have identified a victim who has escaped their situation, call law enforcement or your local victim services, notify the National Human Trafficking Hotline and/or report a tip to the FBI.

Human trafficking is a global problem and a frightening reality. There are many tips and things you can do to protect yourself and your loved ones against human trafficking. These include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Buy goods that are made with fair labor standards
- Educating yourself on trafficking and know the warning signs
- Learn self-defense skills
- Don't overshare personal information
- Set strict privacy settings on all social media for yourself and your children
- Do not friend or follow people online that you do not know personally
- Beware of advertisements that seem too good to be true
- Encourage healthy behaviors in relationships
- Build and maintain healthy relationships with your children
- Be aware of your surroundings and do not let children be unattended in public
- Avoid walking or going places alone
- Reduce the demand for commercial sex
- Act swiftly if suspicious
- Do not touch anything that someone put on your vehicle – walk to safety and call the police immediately
- Carry self-defense tools such as pepper spray
- Be prepared to make a scene – scream as loud as you can if something happens
- Don't trust easily
- Share your location with a trusted friend or family member
- Meet strangers in public places, not in secluded areas or your own home
- Create a safety plan for yourself and/or your children by creating strategies to avoid or reduce the threat of harm
- If your employment requires travel, make sure you obtain the appropriate visa

- Maintain access to all your documents and personal accounts, including bank accounts, driver's license, ID card, birth certificate, passport, and visa
- Make copies of important documents for yourself and share with a trusted family member or friend
- Notify a trusted friend or family member of your whereabouts and when you arrive to your designated destinations
- Get clear information on the terms of your employment
- Ask to speak with former employees about their experience with a new employer
- Verify a business is legitimate by asking for the Employer Identification Number (EIN). This information can be checked by calling the IRS at 800-829-2933 (for U.S. businesses only)
- **Trust your instincts!**

If you or someone you may know is in danger, please call 911. To report any suspected trafficking in the state of Minnesota, call the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension at 1-877-996-6222 or email [bca.tips@state.mn.us](mailto:bca.tips@state.mn.us), contact the National Human Trafficking Hotline at 1-888-373-7888 or text HELP to 233733.

### **Do You Get the Winter Time Blues?**

*by Johanna Klinkner*

When the cold starts creeping in on us and we can't get out of the house like we do in the spring, summer, and fall, do you feel isolated and blue? Just what is the winter time blues? What causes this? It could be several things:

- Are you eating more unhealthy foods, such as holiday goodies, cakes, candies, cookies, comfort foods, or foods high in sugar and salt?
- Has your appetite changed?
- Are you experiencing weight gain?
- Are you unable to get outside and get sunshine?
- Have you had a lack of social activities?
- Lack of motivation?
- Have you had trouble with your sleep pattern?
- Have you had a change in your moods?
- Have you had a mood disorder in your past such as depression, or the more serious Seasonal Affective Disorder (S.A.D.)?



If you said yes to any of these, then you may want to try some things to beat this. Here are some things you can try:

- Have protein with your meals. Protein can enhance your mood and can prevent sugar and carb cravings in the evening.
- Include foods high in Vitamin D such as fatty fish, milk, orange juice, breakfast cereal, and yogurt in your diet. Talk to your doctor to see if you need a Vitamin D supplement.
- Try getting sunlight every day. If that is not possible, consider getting a "Light Box" or sitting in front of a sunny window for 20-60 minutes first thing in the morning.
- Do some physical exercise. Start slow and work up to 30 minutes. If exercising isn't your thing, put on some upbeat music and dance.
- If you do not have a support system, try to get one. If you have a support system, give them a call! One thing we learned through COVID is that human contact is very important for our mental health.

If your symptoms seem more severe, please seek professional help. You are not alone, many people deal with this very issue every year.



### Holiday Donations *by Taylor Hernandez*

We had an amazing outpouring of support from the community this holiday season. We had six families that were adopted by organizations and individuals from Morrison County. We would like to do a shout out to Upsala Church, Kiwanis Club and Centra Sota Cooperative for reaching out and adopting families this year.

A big thank you to St. Joseph's Catholic Church in Clarissa and Todd County Health and Human Services for adopting our Todd County families. We are forever grateful for the generous hearts that

come from our community.

SAVE THE DATE!



2ND ANNUAL  
DENIM DAY  
RAFFLE



Thank you for your support! The Community Support Campaign is off to a great start! For more information about the campaign, click [here](#).

The link to our online giving platform can be found [here](#).

