

January 12, 2018

Boca West Children's Foundation Provides Grant to Help Combat Human Trafficking

Boca West Children's Foundation announced a grant today to Place of Hope for its Human Trafficking Prevention Model called "My Life My Choice" that will educate youths on the dangers of human trafficking. The Foundation recently established a Dream Maker Society, comprised of its largest benefactors, which voted on special grant applications submitted by the Foundation's granted charities. The goal was to fund a project that was not budgeted for and would not come to fruition without the special grant. The voting revealed Place of Hope as the winner for the Dream Maker Society's first \$25,000 grant.

"My Life My Choice" is in collaboration with the Human Trafficking Coalition of the Palm Beaches. The program curriculum will allow for quantitative data collection and subsequent analysis by the Justice Resource Institute.

Despite awareness campaigns, calls to action and state hotlines, human trafficking numbers continue to grow. Youth, who are in vulnerable positions, are being sold into forced servitude and prostitution, also known as 'modern-day slavery,' throughout Florida. Florida is ranked third highest in the nation for human trafficking.

The vision for this program is to change teens' perception of the commercial sex industry as glamorous and improve their understanding of sexual exploitation. The result will be an increased ability for participating teens to reduce their risk of exploitation. It will also increase the likelihood that participants would be better able to exit the human trafficking system should they become exploited.

"The tragedy of human trafficking is widespread here in our back yard and combatting this issue fits within the Foundation's mission to assist the underserved kids of Palm Beach County," said Arthur Adler, chairman of the Boca West Children's Foundation. "We are so happy to be able to support this program with our initial Dream Maker Society grant. This effort will save lives."

According to Charles L. Bender III, Founding CEO of Place of Hope, the nonprofit has seen more human trafficking referrals each week, and the number of referrals has increased exponentially over the past year.

"Most of the trafficking victims have been placed in the foster care system and the CBC (community based care) agency in the county of origin refers the child to us," Bender said. "Occasionally, we get calls directly from the FBI or ICE; however, they try to get the child into the dependency system before referring them to us."

In recent years, Place of Hope, Palm Beach County's largest children's organization, has expanded its services beyond foster care and adoption to respond to the need for more care for those who escape their captors.

About Boca West Children's Foundation

Boca West Children's Foundation was launched in November of 2010. It came about as a desire by members of the Boca West Country Club to give back to the Palm Beach County community. The Foundation's mission is to identify and fund projects to assist children and their families in need in the area. Since its inception, the Foundation has funded more than \$5 million for specific programs of 25 charities.

The partner programs include American Association of Caregiving Youth, Boca Helping Hands, Boca Raton Children's Museum, Boca Raton Police Athletic League, Boys & Girls Club, Caridad Center, Florida Atlantic University's TOPS Summer Band Camp, Florence Fuller Child Development Centers, The Gift of Life Bone Marrow Foundation, Jewish Adoption & Foster Care Options, JAFCO Children's Ability Center, Jewish Federation of South PBC Children's Services, Junior League of Boca Raton Diaper Bank, KidSafe, Nat King Cole Generation Hope, Place of Hope-Rinker Campus, Rotary Club of Boca Raton, SOS Children's Village, Summer Camp Opportunities Promote Education, Unicorn Children's Foundation, Viner Community Scholars, Wayne Barton Study Center, the Youth Activity Center, Sweet Dreams Makers, and Boca Raton Regional Hospital.

For more information, visit www.bocawestfoundation.org, call 561-488-6980 or email foundation@bocawestcc.org.

About Place of Hope:

With campuses in Palm Beach Gardens, West Palm Beach, Hobe Sound, Port St. Lucie and Boca Raton, Place of Hope is a faith-based, state-licensed children's organization that provides family-style foster care (emergency and long-term); family outreach and intervention; maternity care; safety for domestic minor sexually trafficked victims; transitional housing and support services; adoption and foster care recruitment and support; hope and healing opportunities for children and families who have been traumatized by abuse and neglect. Place of Hope celebrates its 16th anniversary in 2017 with the special recognition of earning the highest ranking of excellence for its work with youth from the nation's largest charity rating service, Charity Navigator, for the third year in a row. For more information, please visit www.placeofhope.com.

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