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Kern County Human Trafficking Task Force Holiday Donation Drive Underway

The Kern County Human Trafficking Task Force has teamed with Ascend Real Estate and Property Management to host a holiday donation drive benefitting the Kern County Family Justice Center Foundation by providing clothing, personal hygiene toiletries, and other necessary comfort items for local victims of human trafficking crimes. All too often, when men, women, and children are located and removed from their toxic environment to shelter, they only have the clothes on their back while waiting for relocation services. In an effort to make their transition easier, the District Attorney's Office is asking for the community's assistance with donations of the following items: Full sized toiletries, hygiene items, sanitary items, haircare, cosmetics, and cleaning supplies. Undergarments, socks, coats, and jackets of all sizes. Blankets, duffle bags, and towels are also appreciated.

Donations will be accepted beginning December 1, 2022 and continue through January 31, 2023 at the Ascend office located at 7606 Meany Ave., Suite 101, Bakersfield, CA 93308. All items will be donated to the Kern County Family Justice Center on February 1st, 2023. Donations are tax deductible, and tax information is available upon request.

Please visit <https://ascendbakersfield.com/holidaydrive> for a full list of items needed, and for more information on the Kern County Family Justice Center.

Information on The Kern County Family Justice Center Foundation

The Kern County Family Justice Center Foundation (KCFJCF) has partnered with the Kern County Family Justice Center (KCFJC) to raise, hold, manage, and distribute donations and other funds from individuals and organizations to foster and support the KCFJC in its work to provide services to victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse, and human trafficking.

Donations support client services such as transportation, onsite childcare, emergency needs such as groceries or diapers, locksmith services for victims, and other auxiliary services to help adult victims and children. We are also seeking donations to support the Family Justice Center's mission to assist victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse, and human trafficking.

Information on Human Trafficking

California has the notorious distinction of being one of the nation's top destinations for human trafficking. California consistently ranks number one in the nation in the number of human trafficking cases reported to the National Human Trafficking Hotline. The California Attorney General has described human trafficking as "pervasive" within the State of California. In recent years, cities across the state have seen an alarming spike in the number of human trafficking cases.

Human trafficking is the fastest-growing criminal enterprise in the world. Traffickers have learned that trafficking a person is much more profitable than trafficking other items of property, such as guns and drugs since human beings are reusable commodities. The highly profitable and reusable nature of trafficking victims has resulted in a rapidly growing criminal industry on our city streets and online. Traffickers can make upwards of \$2,500 a day forcibly selling victims in the sex trade.

In California, sex trafficking victims are forced to have sex with hundreds of strangers a year. Trafficking victims are not allowed to eat, sleep, rest, or receive other basic life necessities until they meet the daily demands of their traffickers. Every aspect of their life is controlled by the trafficker, and victims are forced to live in an isolated world where terror and abuse reign. Traffickers thrive in a culture that reduces human beings to mere property to be sold and exploited at the trafficker's will.

The trafficking of children is particularly rampant in California, with traffickers forcing kids as young as 11-12 years old to have sex with upwards of fifteen people a day or more. The average age at which a child is forced into the sex trade is between 11-14 years old. Traffickers will often threaten to kill the children they enslave if they do not meet their daily sex quota demands. Traffickers will also threaten to hurt or kill the enslaved child's family if the child does not submit to the trafficker's demands. Besides verbal threats, traffickers will often burn their victims, beat them, and force them to have sex with them. Traffickers will also often brand their victims by forcing their victims to get the trafficker's name tattooed on their faces or body.

Labor trafficking is no less insidious, as victims of labor trafficking are forced to work long hours in unsanitary and inhuman working conditions for little or no pay. Labor traffickers will often tell their victims they will not be believed if they try to report the crime, and the authorities will deport them. Like sex traffickers, labor traffickers keep total control over their victims by using a combination of physical force and psychological manipulation.

Both state and federal law enforcement agencies, including the California Attorney General, define human trafficking as "modern-day slavery". This label is well-deserved as traffickers control every aspect of a victim's life. Traffickers are exploiters of the worst kind, often targeting the most vulnerable and abused of society for their own financial and sexual exploitation. Women, children, and minorities are particularly vulnerable to exploitation, as well as members of the LGBTQIA+ community.