

## **January 10th NAHT Board Meeting Minutes**

Present: George Belitsos, John Chessser, Maggie Tinsman, Kim Smith, Tom Barr, Deanna Jensen, Stephanie Olson, Linda Harrell, Lyna Debner, Bernadette Rixner, Alyse Hardin, Alka Khanolkar, Shirley Fineran, Jessica Hagin, Mike Tupper

Excused Absence: None

Absent: None

Guests: Aaron Seydell (Technology Consultant), Chelsea Hoye (Advocacy Iowa), Gretchen Brown-Waech (Attorney General's Office), Rich Westphal (US Attorney Southern District), Jacqueline White (Human Trafficking Trainer at Iowa Law Enforcement Academy), Ray Fiedler (Coordinator at Office to Combat Human Trafficking), Pat Waymire (Department of Public Safety)

### **I. Call to order. (Belitsos)**

Meeting was called to order at 2:31 pm. Belitsos had new members Kim Smith and Deanna Jensen introduce themselves. Smith noted that she is a resident of central Iowa and has been involved with Shared Hope International for over five years as their online safety expert creating curriculum and doing training in classrooms across Iowa and for parents. Jensen noted that she is a resident of eastern Iowa and got involved with anti-trafficking around seven years ago when she reached out to Braking Traffick for an event and now serves on their advisory board. Jensen also noted that through her North Scott Rotary Club auction, they were able to give Braking Traffick a \$15K grant last year.

### **II. Preparation for Thursday, January 12th, 11:00 am Governor's Proclamation of January 2023 as Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month and presentation of Outstanding Anti-Trafficking Service Awards. (Belitsos)**

Belitsos noted that there was a major change to the itinerary. The Governor and LT. Governor have their inauguration the day after the proclamation signing and will not be able to attend the proclamation signing as a result of preparing for the inauguration. The Secretary of State (SOS), Paul Pate, will be stepping in to represent the Governor at the proclamation signing.

Belitsos noted that he will start the event with a kickoff review of past year's accomplishments. He will introduce the SOS who will speak about IBAT. Then he will take a photo with the signed proclamation and the board members in attendance. Next

Belitsos will introduce the awardees one by one. The awards will be followed by Tinsman reviewing the legislative priorities for the Network in 2023 and Chesser will do closing remarks. Following the event there will be a reception in the SOS's office along with a press conference.

Belitsos also noted that the Governor and SOS have signed six separate proclamations and that each awardee will receive a proclamation along with their award plaques.

### **III. Update from the US Attorney's Southern District Office. Number of human trafficking federal investigations, arrests, and convictions (Virginia Brunner)**

Westphal reported that the Southern District of Iowa has been very involved and successful in the investigation and prosecution of sex trafficking cases. Westphal shared the following national statistics: the Bureau of Justice published a report in 2022 showing a 10-year period of criminal prosecution regarding human trafficking. Criminal referrals and criminal prosecutions rose dramatically and showed that 92% of defendants were male, 63% white, 18% black, 17% Hispanic, 95% US citizens, and 66% of defendants did not have prior convictions beforehand.

Westphal also reported that the last federal human trafficking report that came out for 2021 showed that in that year there was a decrease in the number of cases nationally due to Covid. The average prison term for federal defendants was shown to be 160 months. Westphal noted that in the Southern District they are number five in the nation for new cases and convictions, number four for new cases of sex trafficking involving minors, and number three for forced labor cases. Westphal also said that they still feel they aren't prosecuting enough cases.

Belitsos commended the U.S. Attorney and his office for the national recognition of trafficker convictions and reminded the board that Westphal was recognized previously with an Outstanding Anti-Trafficking Service Award.

Westphal noted that they have a team of victim-witness advocates who work with both the victims and prosecutors. In the last three years, they have prosecuted 23 defendants on sex or human trafficking cases and all have ended in prison sentences. Hardin asked if Westphal could send out the statistics that he shared during the

meeting. Westphal agreed to send the statistics to Dr. George to disperse. White noted that all of this information is on the Department of Justice website and that she could help distribute the information.

Brown-Waech noted that she has finished updating an Iowa map that shows where all the major offenses of trafficking, arrests, and prosecutions have occurred.

#### **IV. Progress report from the Coordinator of DPS Office to Combat Human Trafficking (Ray Fiedler)**

Fiedler noted that as of today's meeting there were 624 hotels/motels that had been certified as trained with more places requesting training. There have been about 22,000 employees trained through the program. Their goal this year is to continue reaching out to hotels/motels and letting them know about the training program. Fiedler also noted that they are starting to get more tips and information coming in as a result of the program. Fiedler noted that one of the hotels that had done the training was able to identify and report a trafficker to the police who led an investigation and made an arrest of a 21-year-old trafficker. Belitsos noted that it was the NAHT Legislative Advocacy Committee that got the training bill passed. The Network then entered an MOA with DPS to assist in developing the training program

Waymire noted that they are looking to continue and strengthen their relationship with anti-trafficking organizations and other state departments. Belitsos asked when DPS's annual report to the legislature would be ready. Waymire responded that it was already done and that they would be willing to talk about it at a future meeting.

#### **V. Progress report from Human Trafficking Instructor for the Iowa Law Enforcement Academy (Jacqueline White)**

White reported that one thing she is working on currently is adding scenarios to law enforcement training that would prepare officers for a wider range of encounters for things such as sexual abuse and domestic violence where human trafficking can evolve out of these cases. White also noted that they are looking to have Joy Friedman, a survivor, out for a community based event to speak. They are also looking to get a human trafficking operation course together that would include things such as sting operations, contacting advocacy, and being trauma-informed. They will also do case law reviews.

White noted that she will be speaking about human trafficking at Des Moines University in a community and student event to about 60 people. Other trainings White is scheduled or looking to do include ones with local police departments, Iowa State Patrol, and Hy-Vee security workers.

Fineran asked if White was planning on doing training in western Iowa. White responded that she is currently scheduling out only two months in advance but is planning on having training for western Iowa communities.

**Review and approval of Consent Agenda. Reminder: If you wish to remove any motion from the consent agenda for additional information or debate you may do so. No second is required. (Belitsos)**

- a. Motion to approve December 13th minutes of the NAHT Board of Directors. (see attached)
- b. Motion to approve the December Acting Treasurer Report. (see attached)
- c. Motion to elect John Chesser as Board Chair, Maggie Tinsman as Secretary, Vice-Chair vacant, Treasurer vacant for a one-year term starting February 2023.
- d. Motion to endorse and promote Iowa Anti-Trafficking Day of Prayer scheduled for January 18th

**The consent agenda was approved unanimously.** Belitsos noted that he will continue to serve as acting Treasurer but urged the board to secure a new Treasurer, Vice-Chair, and four committee chairs. He thanked Chesser for moving into the Chair position. Belitsos will also continue the blog post/newsletter but would also like to be relieved of this responsibility.

**VI. Report from the Legislative Advocacy Committee. Review and approve 2023 NAHT legislative priorities (see attached) Day on the Hill January 12 visits with legislators (Tinsman)**

Tinsman noted that people who had not gotten in contact with Chelsea about visiting with their legislators on January 12th need to do this today.

Tinsman reported that during the interim safe harbor work group, they learned so much about the child welfare state system, how it operated, and the lack of resources available for minor trafficking victims. Perspectives may have differences on how best to get child victims into trauma-informed services there was clear agreement that

improvement to the infrastructure is needed. As a result of the workgroup, the Networks main goal for 2023 is to establish a strong Safe Harbor law to ensure that minors are not obtaining criminal records associated with prostitution and other minor offenses, and to ultimately get them the critical services they need. Tinsman noted though that there is currently not a coordinated system in place, nor the services available statewide for a strong Safe Harbor law to be established.

Tinsman noted that she would like to start a task force to help put together a coordinated system for trafficked youth to ensure consistent services and housing be available across the state. Tinsman also noted that other states who have implemented Safe Harbor laws have had these coordinated systems in place. Tinsman said the task force would do the following:

1. Identifying which state agencies are responsible for oversight and implementation.
2. Determining a program of trauma-informed services.
3. Creating a specific process of when law enforcement encounters a young person whom they suspect is a victim of human trafficking.
4. Creating a pathway to implement a Safe Harbor law in Iowa on implementation of a statewide support system requiring human trafficking training for county attorneys, law enforcement, and juvenile services.

Tinsman noted that other NAHT priorities include increasing victim service funding by \$5M and expungement for trafficking survivors who are over 18 and forced to commit illegal acts while under the control of a trafficker.

Other things the NAHT is supporting includes exceptions for the \$150K restitution law, legislation that requires schools to provide child sex abuse awareness and prevention education to students, parents, and school staff, and legislation that prevents technology from accessing or displaying material that's harmful to minors.

## **VII. Outcome of Giving Tuesday fundraising campaign. Did we reach goal of 100% board member participation? (Belitsos)**

Belitsos noted that the total amount of money that came in as a result of Giving Tuesday campaign was over \$3K as well as a large gift that totaled to \$7,305 that was deposited into the Networks savings account. Belitsos also noted that 60% of the Network board members donated in 2022. This marks the first of the last six years that we did not reach our goal of 100% of board members donating.

Belitsos thanked Seydell for his help in preparing monthly financial reports and thank you letters. He concluded by reminding the board that we need a Chair to re-establish the NAHT Fundraising Committee.

**VIII. Plans for in-person Board training on victim systems approach and trauma-informed care. (Hardin and Chesser)**

Chessier noted that he and Hardin have not been able to get together to make plans since the last meeting.

**IX. Adjournment. Upcoming Board Meetings: Tuesday, February 14, March 14, April 11, May 9, and June 13**

Meeting adjourned at 4:03 pm.