

NAHT Monthly Board Meeting September 9, 2025

Present: John Chesser, Tom Barr, Austin Stubbs, Sara Kellums, Karl Schilling, Teresa Davidson, Stephanie Olson, Maggie Tinsman, George Belitsos, Sister Shirley Fineran, Kim Hilby

Excused absences: Heather Brown, Linda Harrell, Bernadette Rixner, Chief Tricia Thein, Brittany Sowder, Lyna Debner

Guest: Threase Harms

Approvals and key takeaways

- The board unanimously approved the legislative agenda for 2026, focusing on securing \$1 million for human trafficking survivor services (moved by George and seconded by Maggie).
- Two new board members were elected unanimously: Sarah Simon and Chief Paul Sikorski (moved by George and seconded by Maggie).
- The board unanimously approved the August 2025 treasurer's report, noting very low monthly income of only \$18 (moved by Maggie and seconded by Tom).
- Fundraising efforts have reached nearly \$10,000 of the \$20,000 goal for the 20th anniversary campaign.
- The board discussed issues with the current \$150,000 allocation for human trafficking services, which was not distributed as intended.
- The board discussed the need for better screening tools for human trafficking victims and more accurate statistics.

Discussed topics

Board minutes and treasurer's report

Brief discussion of previous meeting minutes and financial status.

- Details
 - John: Noted Teresa Davidson requested a change to the minutes regarding the Red Sand project
 - George: Moved to approve the minutes as amended
 - Maggie: Seconded the motion
 - George: Presented the August 2025 treasurer's report, noting only \$18 in income and explained expenses including \$411 for monthly website/Facebook work and \$400 for annual web hosting

Conclusion

- Minutes were approved with the requested amendment
- Treasurer's report was approved

New board member nominations

Discussion and voting on two potential new board members.

- Tom: Presented Sarah Simon's qualifications, noting her community leadership, Rotary involvement, and fundraising experience
- George: Added that Sarah got her Rotary club to support NAHT and this triggered another club to do the same

- Maggie: Presented Chief Paul Sikorski's qualifications, noting his experience as former head of Davenport Police Department and current head of security for Rhythm City Casinos and emphasized his passion for fighting human trafficking and his approach of treating victims as survivors rather than criminals

Conclusion

- Sarah Simon was unanimously elected to the board
- Chief Paul Sikorski was unanimously elected to the board
- John noted that with these two new members the board will reach its maximum of 20 members

Legislative agenda for 2026

Extensive discussion about the legislative priorities for 2026, focusing on funding for human trafficking survivor services.

- Threase: Presented the legislative agenda including advocating for \$1 million for survivor services; explained issues with the current \$150,000 allocation that wasn't distributed as intended; discussed House File 1036 and the need to focus on Senate support

- John: Shared his conversation with John Gish about the \$150,000 allocation, which had been disbursed to Braking Traffik and another nonprofit. He asked what amount would be sufficient for an open grant process. John Gish said he didn't know but that this year "the lemon wasn't worth the squeeze," meaning the AG's office does not yet have the infrastructure for such a process. However, it might be possible next year. If the legislature specifies an open grant process, Gish said that the AG's office would follow the legislature's directives.

- George: Suggested that we should urge the legislature to establish a specific "Human Trafficking Survivor Service Fund"

- Teresa Davidson: Suggested language for "residential programs solely or primarily dedicated to providing comprehensive services to survivors of human trafficking"
- Shirley: Noted that the original intent was to fund organizations exclusively serving trafficking survivors
- Sara: Explained that Braking Traffik received \$75,000 which they will use for housing, utilities, and other direct survivor support

Conclusion

- The board approved the legislative agenda with revised wording for the \$1 million funding request (moved by George and seconded by Maggie)
- Threase will craft specific language for the funding request
- Board members will contact their legislators to advocate for the agenda items

House File 1036 and screening tools

Discussion about the importance of proper screening tools for identifying human trafficking victims.

- Teresa Davidson: Explained the importance of screening every child, not just those already showing signs of trafficking; noted that current screening tools are being misused by only screening children who already show signs; mentioned that juvenile courts and Department of Health and Human Services use different screening tools; shared that when she implemented universal screening at Mercy Medical Center, identified cases increased significantly.

- Stephanie: Offered to help add labor trafficking components to the screening tools

Conclusion

- Teresa Davidson will share screening tools with Stephanie
- Stephanie will share statistics from school studies showing high trafficking rates
- The board recognized the need for standardized, comprehensive screening tools

Statistics collection

Discussion about improving the collection and reporting of human trafficking statistics.

- John: Expressed disappointment that DPS is not collecting and

disseminating statistics as required by state law

- Sara: Noted that Braking Traffik alone had over 300 clients last year, suggesting official statistics are too low
- Teresa Davidson: Explained she collects statistics from various sources for her presentations
- George: Emphasized the importance of the NAHT statistical chart that many people request

Conclusion

- Teresa Davidson will share statistics she has collected
- Sara will share Braking Traffik's statistics
- The board will work to create more comprehensive statistics that better reflect reality

Fundraising update

Brief update on the 20th anniversary fundraising campaign.

- Tom: Reported on fundraising efforts and opportunities to promote NAHT; suggested using NAHT shirts as "billboards" to create awareness; mentioned Sarah Simon's idea to have Rotary clubs donate their "happy bucks" to NAHT; announced that as of the end of August, they were just \$18.18 short of reaching \$10,000 toward their \$20,000 goal

Conclusion

- The fundraising committee will continue efforts with 4 months remaining to reach the goal
- Board members are encouraged to wear/display NAHT shirts at events

Anti-trafficking awards nominations

Brief reminder about the upcoming deadline for award nominations.

- George: Reminded the board that the deadline for anti-trafficking award nominations is November 1; noted they currently have only one nomination submitted by John; mentioned Teresa is working on a nomination

Conclusion

- Board members are encouraged to submit nominations before the November 1st deadline

Teresa Davidson's September 5th event

- Teresa Davidson: Reported on the event which was attended by

numerous dignitaries including the Lieutenant Governor, Secretary of State, and candidates for Governor; mentioned that Gage West, special adviser for human trafficking to the President, was the main speaker; thanked board members who attended

Conclusion

- The event was successful with strong attendance and support

Action Items

1. Teresa Harms

- Craft specific language for the \$1 million funding request for human trafficking survivor services
- Check if House File 1036 includes language surrounding "venture"
- All Board Members
- Contact their state legislators about the \$1 million funding request for human trafficking survivor services
- Consider submitting nominations for anti-trafficking awards before November 1st
- Use NAHT shirts as "billboards" at events to create awareness

2. Teresa Davidson

- Share screening tools with Stephanie
- Send statistics from various sources to George
- Call the Attorney General's office for their human trafficking data

3. Stephanie

- Share statistics from school studies with the board
- Help add labor trafficking components to screening tools

4. Sara

- Send Braking Traffik's statistics to George
- Send Naomi's House screening tool to Teresa Davidson

5. John

- Contact Sarah Simon to welcome her to the board
- Contact Chief Sikorski about his election to the board
- Email DHS contact for human trafficking statistics

6. George

- Update the board roster with new members
- Compile statistics for the annual chart
- Include T-visa information in the next newsletter

7. Maggie

- Schedule the next Legislative Committee meeting