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Sex trafficking victim shares her story

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Rochester, N.Y. - Innocent children and adults are lured into the dark underworld of prostitution every day.

Jacqueline said a piece of her died the day she met the young man who lured her into sex trafficking. "It's inhumane it really is," Jacqueline said she doesn't know how long or how many times she was sold-those are things she's tried to forget.

13WHAM ABC withheld her full identity to protect the local woman's safety. "I was exposed to evil," Jacqueline said, "I was abused in every way, verbally, sexually, and mentally"

She was just 16 when she ran away to escape her abusive home. Jacqueline slept in staircases and lived on the street, she said struggled to survive but it wasn't long before someone approached her. She said the man offered her shelter and promised her safety.

"You feel hope to be excited you're possibly....you know, that things will get better," Jacqueline said the man was a wolf in sheep's clothing. "It's so confusing because I can't understand why he would do that," Jacqueline said, "It leaves you in a place that you wouldn't even imagine doing."

"Well that's what they do, they go out and they hunt and they are always on the lookout and they are going to go where people are the most vulnerable," said Mary Jo Colligan, founder of Angels of Mercy in Rochester.

Colligan said sex trafficking is a growing problem-- it's happening right in people's backyard and it's not just troubled teens at risk. It could happen to anyone anywhere, Colligan said, "You can sell drugs but you can sell a human being several times a day so it really is all about the money".

Jacqueline said, "I don't think I went through what it is I've gone through for no reason-I want to put purpose to what I what I've gone through to raise awareness."

Drugs, alcohol, violence and threats are used to scare and control victims. "Fear holds them captive because many times they tell them they are going after their brother or sister, they know where they live - they will come and kill the family if they say anything," Colligan said.

"There are not a lot of choices, there are not a lot of options and there is not a lot of awareness," Jacqueline said she tried to find help, she looked for support but she didn't know where to go.

Jacqueline said she was able to escape and the road to recovery is a very long journey but she is a survivor. "There is life after trauma, there is life, there is hope, there really is," Jacqueline said she found hope at Angels of Mercy.

The non-profit organization runs the Stop Sex Trafficking, End the Cycle program. Colligan said the group just started a fundraiser to buy a home that can be a shelter for victims.

"Where they can come, stay as long as they need to that they can receive freedom dignity and they restoration that they need," Colligan said there are few places in the country to offer a variety of services for victims who escape sex trafficking rings.