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## Amnesty International, partnering organizations raise awareness for human trafficking

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### *Amnesty International*

Rara Williams tables at Tate Student Center to raise awareness for human trafficking.

To bring awareness to human trafficking, the Amnesty International chapter at the University of Georgia hosted two events Wednesday that encouraged students to think about and realize the influence that human trafficking has in Athens and abroad.

“We are advocating for fair trade because when things are not fair trade they tend to not be regulated and use slave labor,” said Preethi Raja, a junior environmental health major from Acworth and a member of Amnesty International.

Nestle, Hershey, Girl Scouts of America and, until recently, Mars brands, all used sources of cocoa for their chocolates that were not fair trade, said Rara Williams, a member of Amnesty International.

“Right now their sources of cocoa are tinged with slavery,” Williams said. “Ghana and the Ivory Coast produce most of the chocolate that we eat, and they use a lot of child slavery.”

At the tabling event, the International Justice Mission at UGA represented its global organization which seeks to bring justice to victims of human trafficking.

“The organization hires lawyers, investigators and active care specialists and the investigators go into factories and rescue the women and children who have been enslaved,” said Rachel Denton, a sophomore Human Development and Family Science major from Waycross. “Then going through the judiciary systems of the country, they seek to bring the perpetrators to justice and provide the victims with active care and rehabilitation.”

RefUGA, a newer organization at UGA, participated at the tabling by providing a perspective on the need to help refugees of human trafficking.

“There are a lot of refugees in the Athens community and even more in the Atlanta community,” said Mugdha Joshi, junior biology and anthropology major from Alpharetta. “A lot of refugees have gone through a lot of trafficking problems whether they are labor or sex trafficking problems.”

In the evening, Amnesty International held a panel event at Caldwell Hall featuring three speakers who offered their perspectives on human trafficking.

Brian Johnston, special agent for the child exploitation and computer crimes unit of the Georgia Bureau of investigation, spoke about the investigation of child sex trafficking and the rescue of children from these situations.

In Georgia, the unit considers any person seventeen years of age or younger who has been involved in commercial sex a victim, he said.

“Traditionally, when law enforcement came into contact with a person who was sixteen or seventeen years old that was involved in commercial sex a lot of times they would charge them for prostitution,” he said. “We thought that wasn’t human and we wanted to change that mindset of law enforcement. That is one of our core missions in our child sex trafficking initiative.”

Now law enforcement officials are more focused on the rescue of victims and the prosecution of perpetrators, or traffickers, Johnston said.

After the victim is rescued, he said, law enforcement turns these refugees over to non-profits like Georgia Cares that work to provide care and treatment for the victims of child sex trafficking.

The second panelist, Abby Boldin, was the program director of Georgia Care.

“We offer a 24 hour hotline that anyone at any time of the day can call with a question, a referral or an emergency need for a youth and it will be answered by someone who is trained and knows how to respond,” Boldin said.

The main purpose of this is for when law enforcement is involved and calls late into the night or early morning needing a place for a victim to go for safety and for the start of rehabilitation, she said.

The final speaker was Diane Amann, the associate dean for international programs and strategic initiatives in the University of Georgia School of Law, who also spoke on the awareness of human trafficking.