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## Human Trafficking Coalition receives generous donation

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PHOTO/ Photo provided

Bri Lizzote and Brock Andreasen presented Mike McDonnell and Sally Kemp, Co-Directors of the LOSHTC, with a check for \$1,300.

On Friday, April 24 the meeting of the Lake of the Ozark Human Trafficking Coalition, at St. George Episcopal Church, featured Christine McDonald, a human trafficking victim and the author of Cry-Purple. Ms. McDonald's stirring presentation made very real the powerful messages of previous speakers from local law enforcement and social service agencies that human trafficking is tragically alive and thriving in America, even in idyllic locations like the Lake of the Ozarks. Human trafficking victims are not just immigrants or members of minority groups. Christine's painful childhood caused her to run away at 15, and this began her 17-year journey of homelessness, being sexually trafficked, addicted to drugs, having 103 arrests and 7 prison stints. Finally ready for a better life and barely able to read or write, Christine began a new journey of exiting the life of the streets. She still faced many challenges, including blindness, which was the result of an illness as she was trying to rebuild her life. Christine now uses her life experience and the college education she finally attained to work as an advocate for trafficking victims, the homeless, recovering addicts, ex-offenders and disabled populations. Those present when Christine spoke now have a very real picture of the effects of human trafficking.

Following Christine McDonald's talk, Bri Lizzote and Brock Andreasen presented Mike McDonnell and Sally Kemp, Co-Directors of the LOSHTC, with a check for \$1,300. These funds will help for the fledgling organization build awareness, develop school programs, train

members, and work toward building a safe home for victims of human trafficking. As a part of their International Baccalaureate program at Camdenton High School, Bri, Brock, Katie Bird, Mira Rao, Jacob Stauch, and Jenna Sims planned the recent I.B. Against Human Trafficking Run/Walk in Linn Creek, which yielded the funds they donated. Bri Lizzote, now Student Advisor for the LOSHTC, stated “IB classes are very difficult and are taught very differently than regular high school classes. They're taught like college classes. The IB program that allows us to do projects like this one is called CAS, which stands for Community, Action, and Service. To complete the IB diploma we must have so many hours in each category.” She noted that human trafficking is an important global issue that that was concerning to the IB students. By planning the run/walk event from beginning to end, the students learned valuable skills and found that they were able to help fight the evils of human trafficking in their local area.