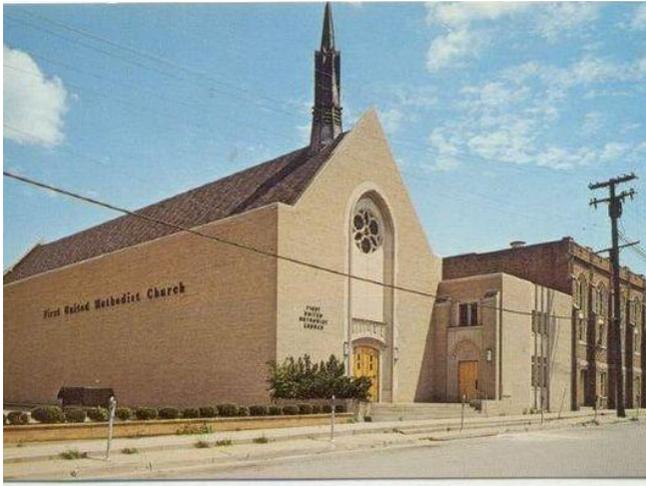


<http://www.hometownlife.com/story/news/local/wayne-county/wayne/2015/06/21/concern-kids-program-human-trafficking-wayne/28999063/>

Concern for kids prompts program on human trafficking

Sue Mason, smason@hometownlife.com 12:11 a.m. EDT June 21, 2015



Linda Maylone can't stand the thought of any child being caught up in human trafficking.

United Methodist Women groups around the country have taken a strong stand against human trafficking and, as president of UMW at the First United Methodist Church of Wayne-Westland, Maylone is bringing it to the forefront in the local community.

She's on a mission to make people – from parents and first responders to emergency room personnel – aware of who the victims are and how they can help identify them and put an end to such a “horrific condition.”

To get the word out, she and Carol Thomas are hosting a program on human trafficking 6-8:30 p.m. Tuesday, June 23, at the First United Methodist Church, 3 Town Square, west of Wayne Road, in Wayne.

“I did some reading about it and I was so appalled that so many children are missing or have been lured into it,” Maylone said. “It's not just the sex trade; they can be forced to work for no or little wages. It's a fair trade issue.”

Children at risk

Human trafficking is the fastest growing branch of organized crime in America today. The U.S. government estimates 400,000 American children are currently at high risk of sexual exploitation. According to Maylone, the Detroit area is No. 2 in the nation when it comes to human trafficking and it's in close proximity to Toledo, which is a “hot bed” for it.

Maylone teamed with Thomas after talking to Wayne Police Chief Al Maciag at community meeting he held at the McDonald's in Wayne. Thomas is in ministry with a group called Turn 180 that works to stop the tragedy of human trafficking. She will be the guest speaker, along with representatives of the FBI and local police.

Handmade jewelry and accessories made by women who have been rescued from human trafficking will be available for purchase at the event. Proceeds will benefit Women at Risk programs.

Maylone is concerned that middle school and high school students are at risk of being dragged into human trafficking. The event will explain how human traffickers are able to infiltrate schools and single out individuals who may need someone to listen to them.

“They lure them in differently in the United States,” she said. “It is especially important that our middle school and high school students, both males and females, understand how recruiting for prostitution rings can happen so easily in the school, with a ‘new friend’ who befriends them and starts giving them things and slowly asking for small ‘favors’ in return.”

A church in Texas has set up a curriculum, Traffick911 that educates adults and youth about the plight of sex trafficking in America and equips them with practical ways to keep themselves safe. Down the road, Maylone would like to bring the curriculum to the metro area and run classes.

For now, she wants young people to be aware of their surroundings to avoid problems.

“I see so many young people out walking by themselves, headphones in, hoodie up, not aware of their surroundings. That really concerns me,” she said.

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