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## Two teenage girls rescued in Racine County human trafficking investigation

By **Michele Fiore**. CREATED Mar 4, 2015 - UPDATED: Mar 4, 2015

RACINE - Two girls, ages 13 and 16, are home again, thanks to the efforts of the Racine County Human Trafficking Task Force and The Internet Crimes Against Children Unit. Details about what happened are vague, but we can tell you that human trafficking is a growing problem in Racine County.

Victims are often peddled to and from cities via the interstate. In the latest case, investigators had to look just west of I-94 to find them.

"We're proud that we have these two children back in the care that they deserve," said Sheriff Christopher Schmaling.

Investigators won't say how they located the girls who are from the Milwaukee area, but we know they found them in the Town of Yorkville. Sheriff Schmaling says right now, the investigation remains open. More victims and more suspects could follow.

"These are very disgusting individuals in my opinion, worthy of our best efforts. We commit a lot of resources to it," said Sheriff Schmaling.

Internet crimes against children and human trafficking cases in Racine County are on the rise, and you may be able to help. Officials say victims are often walking amongst us. So, do a little people watching.

"It's simple conversations, it's simple observations that people can make at a gas station, at a restaurant, that don't sound like a family conversation, that don't sound like a parent to a child," said Neal Lofy, human trafficking investigator for the city of Racine police department.

Neal Lofy says the trafficker often has control of the victim's i.d. and is in possession of multiple cell phones. The trafficker can be a woman or a man, and often dresses flashy and flashes a lot of cash. That can be attractive to a young person who ran away from home.

"We know that a lot of runaways or missing people end up being sex trafficked. Some statistics say that within 48 hours, one of every three runaways will be lured into sex trafficking," said Lofy.

I-94 is a huge corridor for transporting victims from Chicago up to Minnesota, and on to North Dakota's oil fields, where they are also seeing a human trafficking problem.



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