



Madison County Youth Bureau

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PRESS RELEASE

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Madison County Youth Bureau Director Joanne Eddy Announces Campaign to Raise Awareness of Human Trafficking and the Sexual Exploitation of Youth

Human Trafficking and the Sexual Exploitation of Youth Fuel Launch of 'Look Beneath the Surface' Campaign

The Madison County Youth Bureau recently received a \$35,000 grant from the New York State Office of Children and Family Services to launch a 'Look Beneath the Surface' campaign to help raise awareness about human trafficking and the sexual exploitation of youth in the county. The grant will pay for professional development training, education, public awareness and outreach related to the issue and to develop strategies for agencies serving victims of trafficking.

The Madison County Youth Bureau is partnering with Catholic Charities of Oneida/Madison Counties on this initiative.

"Catholic Charities operates the Interim Family Home program for runaway and homeless youth in Madison County and is a natural partner on this grant," said Madison County Youth Bureau Director Joanne Eddy. "Although all children are vulnerable, those at higher risk of being trafficked are runaway and homeless youth, along with children within the foster care system or with histories of abuse or substance abuse, children with disabilities, youth in the juvenile justice system, and LGBTQ youth. It is important that we raise awareness about the services available, especially safe housing to successfully transition victims from these dangerous situations."

"There is nothing more important than the safety of our children," said Denise Cavanaugh, executive director of Catholic Charities. "Catholic Charities is thrilled to partner with the Madison County Youth Bureau on this effort. No one wants to believe these crimes happen in our area; we know they do, and youth can be vulnerable. Awareness, education and services to children are the best tools to combat trafficking and sexual exploitation. We hope everyone will become more educated and help stop the abuse of children."

Human trafficking is prevalent in the U.S. and is not limited to any specific demographic or area. Under U.S. law, victims of human trafficking can be divided into three populations:

- * Children under age 18 induced into commercial sex;
- * Adults aged 18 or over induced into commercial sex through force, fraud or coercion; and
- * Children and adults induced to perform labor or services through force, fraud or coercion.

Between 100,000 and 300,000 U.S. children are involved in sex trafficking. In 2014, the National Human Trafficking Resource Center hotline, operated by Polaris, received 5,042 cases of human trafficking in the United States. Victims include girls, boys, and LGBTQ youth.

The ‘*Look Beneath the Surface*’ public awareness campaign will be launched Aug. 25. Two billboards will be installed on Route 5 west of Canastota and Route 20 west of Bouckville; professional development training is scheduled for the fall.

“These trainings will provide health care professionals, law enforcement officers, teachers, counselors, social workers, and others with the tools they need to recognize potential victims, report cases, and connect victims with resources and services available to help them,” Eddy said.

For more information:

If a child is in immediate danger, call 911. For more information about human trafficking and the signs of trafficking, visit polarisproject.org or ocfs.ny.gov/main/humantrafficking/default.asp.

To request help or report suspected human trafficking, or for more information about services and support for victims of trafficking, contact the National Human Trafficking Resource Center at 888.373.7888 or text INFO or HELP to BeFree (233733).

Look Beneath the Surface awareness campaign, contact the Madison County Youth Bureau at 315.366.2574 or Catholic Charities of Oneida/Madison Counties at 315.363.5274.



Pictured is one of two billboards that will be placed in Madison County to raise awareness about human trafficking.