

AAUW Santa Maria Branch Blog – November 2019

CASA of HOPE – Connie Logeman, Founder and Executive Director

Casa of Hope, Our Fight Against Human Trafficking

Our November program was co-sponsored by the Santa Maria Library and held at Shepard Hall on Saturday Nov 9th from 1:30 to 4:00.

The speaker was Connie Logeman, founder of Casa of hope who discussed human trafficking in the Central Coast and her effort to provide shelter for trafficked victims.

There was no cost to attend the program. However, a voluntary donation of household cleaning products or feminine bathroom items will be much appreciated.

Connie Logeman retired out of LA in 2004, moving to Santa Maria to become involved in Carenet Pregnancy Center, leading her to Juvenile Hall where she set up a Bible Study group for the girls, then, 7 yrs later, a life skills program for boys. She privately mentored several girls, fostering one 16 y/o girl for 6 months. She visited Thailand three times, working intermittently with prostitutes, and Human/Sex Trafficking near the Cambodia border. Eight years later she joined a Trafficking Task Force to set up a long term Safe House in the Santa Maria Valley.

Human Trafficking and Sex Trafficking are the fastest growing industries in America at this time. Human Trafficking started in China, came to New York many years ago. It is only in these past 15-20 years that the industry has grown so much. California is the #1 State, with Santa Maria-Santa Barbara being the #3 cities in the state. 95% of the victims are female ... 25% are less than 18, 75% are 18 y/o or older.

Why Trafficking in our community, what are we going to do about it?

Santa Maria is the 1/2 point on 101 corridor, an Ag community with undocumented workers which facilitates the industry.

Casa of Hope was established to provide a location where victims of sex trafficking can be connected with important resources such as medical services, educational resources, and social services. The organization also provides these victims with a secure home-based location in which they can regain their confidence and dignity in a healing environment.

Some of the Needs of the home include clothing, hygiene supplies, food, shelter, furniture. Home houses 6 women for 1 yr. They must be “clean” of drugs for 45

days before entering the program. They will have a House Mother beginning January 2020. Programs are designed to help the girls get better, healthy, gain strength and confidence to stand on their own. The program is funded by donations only, no fed/state funding.

Two women joined Connie in her presentation, Shanda and Collena, twins who had been recruited into sex trafficking before they were 16 yrs old. These 34 y/o women shared their story, telling how their home environment, lack of school support, and much more made them vulnerable to being recruited. They were failed by parent, teachers, neighbors, social service people resulting in being trafficked around the US for many years. They described recruitment techniques, and the resulting abuse, physical, mental, emotional, the manipulation by isolation, alcohol, drugs, shame, fear. When asked how they got recruited, they quoted the saying, "You Promise them Heaven and Lead them to Hell". Seeing these young women, hearing the story, bringing this crime to life had a major effect on their audience. They are now working with Casa of Hope and Connie, in hopes of helping others.



Prevention requires education, observation, connection.
How can we help if we see something?

Working/Partnering with Freedom Calling ...

Goal: trying to partner with organizations throughout US for greater development of programs