



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Advisory

Local leaders to convene on child sex slavery

Summit to expose findings on prevalence of local children sold for sex – and call for action

ATTENTION: National, Child Abuse, Social Issues, Crime, Broadcast, Photo, and Assignment Editors

Vancouver, WA – March 2, 2009 – On Tuesday, March 3, leaders from the Greater Portland Metro and Southwest Washington area will convene in Portland for a leadership summit on child sex trafficking co-hosted by Shared Hope International and the Oregon Human Trafficking Task Force.

This invitation-only event comes just days after police and the FBI rescued over 45 child victims and arrested over 50 pimps in the FBI's nationwide Operation Cross Country initiative. In the Portland metro area, law enforcement partners rescued seven underage girls, and arrested six adult pimps, three "johns" and other adult associates.

Shared Hope International Founder and President Linda Smith comments, "We applaud the FBI and local law enforcement for their aggressive actions towards the rescue of child sex trafficking victims and their action to bring the perpetrators to justice – both the pimps and the customers. While we celebrate the rescue of these children, we know from our research that tens of thousands more are still out there, enslaved today. This is just the tip of the iceberg."

Shared Hope International's research has identifies demand as the driving force behind the recruitment, rape, and sale of children in America. The research also finds that a man buying a child for sex is rarely arrested. In fact, there has never been a conviction of a customer for buying sex with a minor during the nine years since the 2000 Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA). Shared Hope International is calling on leaders to not only encourage the arrest, but to demand the men be prosecuted for buying sex with a child.

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“The purpose of this summit is to galvanize leaders to immediate action,” Smith explained.

The Oregon Human Trafficking Task Force, together with Shared Hope International will provide information collected during field research, interviews with child survivors and front line workers on the exploitation of American children through commercial sex. The summit will also provide first responder training materials for the leaders of the Greater Portland Metro and Southwest Washington area to help them establish successful policy and response.

LEADERS CONFIRMED TO ATTEND INCLUDE:

Dan Saltzman – City of Portland Commissioner

Marc Boldt – Clark County Commissioner

Linda Smith – Congresswoman (1994-1999), Founder and President of Shared Hope International

Caroline Holmes – Victim Specialist, FBI, Portland Division

Karin Immergut – United States Attorney, District of Oregon

Kemp Strickland – Assistant United States Attorney, Violent Crimes Unit

Doug Justus – Portland Vice Sergeant

Patrick Kennedy – Major Crimes Division Sex/Kidnapping Offender Unit, Vancouver Police Department

Diane McKeel – Multnomah County Commissioner

Garry Lucas – Clark County Sheriff

Mike Evans – Chief Criminal Deputy, Clark County Sheriff’s Office

James McDaniel – Chief of Police, Battle Ground Police Department

Keith Bickford – Oregon Human Trafficking Task Force

Patrick Kennedy – Major Crimes Division Sex/Kidnapping Offender Unit, Vancouver Police Department

Michael Jones – Victim Specialist, FBI, Portland Division/Bend

Rick Jensen – Administrator, Juvenile Department, Multnomah County

Diane Wehage – Director, Victim Assistance Program, Clackamas County District Attorney's Office

Christine Herrman – Executive Director, Attorney General's Sexual Assault Task Force

Debbie Hansen – Oregon Youth Authority

Steve Duvall – Lieutenant, Oregon State Police, Major Crimes Section

Melissa Snow – Director of Programs, Shared Hope International (National research findings to be released in April)

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EVENT:

“Child Sex Slavery in our Community,” a Greater Portland Metro and Southwest Washington Leadership Summit on Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking

DATE:

Tuesday, March 3, 2009

TIME:

12:00-1:30 pm (This portion of the event is open to media)

1:30-3:00 pm (Closed session)

To request a one-on-one interview prior to the event, contact Katie Pitchlynn at 360.693.8100 or katie@sharedhope.org

LOCATION:

Sheraton Hotel, 8235 NE Airport Way
Portland, OR 97220

MEDIA CONTACT:

Katie Pitchlynn

Media Relations/Communications

Shared Hope International

Tel: 360.693.8100

Cell: 360.980.1244

E-mail: katie@sharedhope.org

About Shared Hope International

Shared Hope International exists to prevent, rescue and restore women and children in crisis. For a decade, Shared Hope International has worked around the world in partnership with local groups to prevent trafficking and to rescue and restore the victims of sexual slavery. Shared Hope International was supported by the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) to conduct field research in 10 U.S. locations aligned with DOJ-funded Human Trafficking Task Forces and issue assessment reports which examine two critical areas: the identification of U.S. children trafficked within the U.S. and the service delivery to this population. The assessments are serving as a springboard for action in each local community. Visit www.sharedhope.org

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