



## 2016: The First Half

We have been quite busy at RAASE, and we are so excited to share our progress with you all!

First things first. We have two new interns helping us along for the summer of 2016. We are happy to introduce to the RAASE family Hayley Botts, a law student from Northern Illinois University. Hayley's concentration in law school is domestic violence and violence against women. She is passionate about ensuring survivors get the justice they deserve. At RAASE, in particular, she will be helping us with fundraising and the budgeting of an upcoming project for which we are researching and in early planning stages. We are so excited to have Hayley on our team and look forward to the progress she will help to facilitate in her time with us. We have another intern joining our team this summer by the name of Meghan Peper. Meghan is an English major at Rockford University and will be scribing our newsletter. She will ensure that we continue to keep our supporters up to date on the goings on of the organization, and she hopes to help establish a recurring piece for the Rockford Register Star regarding sexual exploitation in our community and how we can combat it. We welcome them with open arms and look forward to working with them over the coming months.

The spring months were rather busy for us in terms of presenting our material to a number of organizations around the city of Rockford and surrounding areas. On February 28<sup>th</sup>, we took part in an event that focused on human trafficking at the **Faith Center** in Rockford. This event allowed us to set up a booth and provide necessary information to the congregants who attended.

April found us working with the staff at the **Hope Domestic Violence Center**, ensuring they are prepared to look for signs of human trafficking among their DV survivors. These kinds of training sessions among those working in crisis centers are so very important to our cause as it allows us to educate the staff on recognizing signals that they maybe have otherwise been unaware to even look out for. Only a few weeks later we were excited to present at the Spring Fling Dinner for the **Stateline Nurses Association**. Again, this was a presentation that educated people in the trenches what to look out for when treating someone possibly involved in a trafficking case. Providing the necessary information on human trafficking to those working in fields that regularly work with DV cases is really what provides immense progress in our cause. Through these presentations, we are able to plant the seeds of awareness into their daily routine, which in turn creates a responsiveness which we are beginning to see grow right before our eyes.

We wrapped up the month of May with two congregational trainings, one at **St. Rita Catholic Church** and one at **Deliverance Outreach Center**. Speaking at faith-based organizations is important, realizing that many will have the hearts to want to do something to help victims and battle the issue. We know that even if a member of the congregation is unable to attend, it is likely they will hear about what the presentation had to offer through another member. Our own Vice President, Lori Johnson, is in many ways a product of this type of community outreach. It only takes a spark to create a flame and Lori's spark of passion started to blaze

within her church, among her fellow church goers. We can only hope continuing to spread our message through presenting our information to anyone who will listen will create even more sparks throughout the community.

June has also been a very busy and exciting month for RAASE. We took part in two presentations to help further community awareness. On June 15th, RAASE gave a presentation to the **Zonta Club of Belvidere**. The group resides in Boone County and took the initiative to contact RAASE to learn more about how they could focus their own organization's attentions on combating sexual exploitation in their own community.

We also met with the **17th Judicial Circuit Family Violence Council (JCFV)**, a coordinated court that focuses its efforts in domestic violence and ensuring the safety of the victim and accountability of the offender. Partnering with the JCFV will allow RAASE the opportunity to help promote new training tactics among probation officers in the court system. These new training tactics would ensure that probation officers are educated in monitoring for evidence of trafficking and hopefully helping to identify women who are possible victims of trafficking. We look forward to continuing our work with JCFV and believe that with the right advocacy training we can make massive strides in changing the preconceived misconceptions of sex work and human trafficking.

Humanizing our victims and survivors in the eyes of those who will listen is what will help to push forward the progress we need to see. We are hopeful that the network of nurses, local officials, law enforcement, members of the church, and a number of other groups we are seeing come together to combat human trafficking, will all play a role in ensuring our city not only recognizes human trafficking as a problem, but also that we are able to establish a system which will help to fight the problem itself.

In August, RAASE Board members will attend three days of meetings with various models of task forces, outreach organizations, and a specialized court in Chicago while attending a two day conference.

We appreciate your continued interest to advance the battle against human trafficking and sexual exploitation. We couldn't do any of this without your support. It's because of people like you our alliance grows stronger each day.

**from Rockford Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation**

written by: Meghan Peper