Under the online heading, "Just Like ~Candy~ - 19," would-be johns, (or "Upscale Gentlemen" as the escort ad suggests) are promised a female who is "Eager ~N~Willing To Plea**E."

The "PIC Are [sic] Real" the ad proclaims, but please "NO PRIVATE CALLS OR TEXT!!!" and of course "DONATOINS [sic] ARE APPRECIATED."

On the right side of the webpage are three photos depicting what appears to be a young woman, brunette, barely clothed and awash in yellow incandescent motel-room light. In two shots, her obscured face peers over

her left shoulder as her body turns away from the photographer in a suggestive pose.

Over her right shoulder, the motel door is visible, with the required postings including a diagram of the fire escape plan. In the last shot, she stretches out on a dingy-looking floral bedspread, back arched, face cropped out of the photo.

The ad for "Candy" suggests she's 19. But another nearly identical ad - posted recently on consecutive Saturdays in the "Nashville escorts" section of Backpage.com - shows the same three photos plus another and claims this "Beautiful~ Princess~' is 20 years old.

None of her customers really knows Candy's true age. They might not know that she may be doing what she does because someone else forces her to. They might not

Ads like the one described are the new user-friendly interface for the world's oldest profession. But they're also the promotional tool of choice for those who ensnare others mostly females, some over 18, some just kids — and force them into the prostitution "game," driving them state to state, city to city, hotel to motel, pimping them out using threats or promises while profiting off their degradation.

Human sex trafficking isn't restricted to foreign countries. Some people estimate it's one of the fastest-growing crimes in the world, though it's hard to pin statistics on it due to the underground nature of the crime. One thing is certain, especially in Tennessee: Eyes are opening up to the crime — how to recognize it, and how to respond to it.

Last year, the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation released the report, "Tennessee Human Sex Trafficking Study: The Impact on Children and Youth 2011," a study conducted in conjunction with Vanderbilt Center for Community Studies.

In his introduction to the report, TBI director Mark Gwyn said it "shines a spotlight on a disturbing crime trend that little is known about and is rarely publicized."

Wrapping up his intro, Gwyn said prosecutors need "more serious consequences" to wield against sex-trafficking offenders. And victims should be allowed to sue those who

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ANTOINETTE WELCH

Davidson Co.

assistant district attorney

subject them to such crimes, under civil laws for damages, he added.

The Project Innocence Initiative has identified four primary policy issues to be addressed to combat domestic sex trafficking of minors: eliminating demand; prosecuting traffickers; identifying victims; and providing victims with protection, services and shelter.

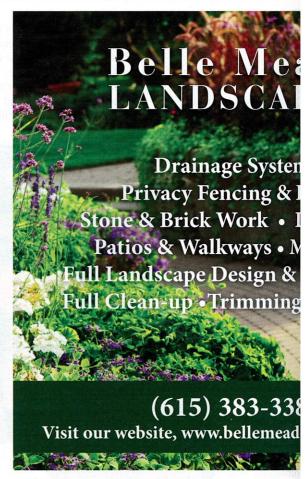
Derri Smith, executive director of End Slavery Tennessee, is one of those focused on training, aid and prevention involving human trafficking.

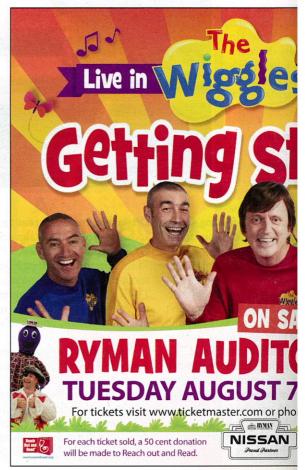
Through her organization, Smith trains professionals - juvenile judges, law enforcement officials, medical

professionals, social workers - on how to recognize trafficking victims. In teaching prevention, Smith enlightens young people on the common lures of sex traffickers such as "boyfriending" or "girlfriending" - romancing or befriending someone with promises of great things, only to entrap them into the "game."

When it comes to aid, there are "many, many complex, holistic after-care needs" that police don't have the funds or power to provide, Smith said. Those can include shelter, transportation, household needs, food, clothing and medical exams, or even something less obvious, such as removing a branding tattoo placed on a victim by a trafficker.

The problems are "huge" for law enforcement faced with policing and prosecuting sextrafficking cases, Smith said, and while she applauds the "phenomenal" efforts of local authorities working such cases here, "They're under-resourced. There aren't enough people specialized and trained."





Smith added, "Judges, jury, the public — everybody ly needs to be educated when they're working on cases this.'

Today, Tennessee is actually in better shape than most er states. "I think it was three years ago, we had three out 0 basic laws that we needed in place [to fight trafficking]," th said. "We've gone up to seven as of this year."

t's all still new, however, and a learning curve

Yvonne Williams, executive director of the fficking in America Task Force, said part of solution to the problem of sex trafficking lies ghting the demand heightened by the prevae of sexual content in pop culture.

Villiams described the trafficking cycle as a igle, connecting the victim to the trafficker to john — the john being the point of the trie where the demand is.

Our focus is on the demand side, because we eve if we can stop the demand, then we can the problem. It's a supply and demand issue, like any other business," Williams said.

But with ads, movies, TV, you name it, soaked x, how do you combat demand? The probis "huge, it's huge," Williams said, and the lenge includes finding ways to educate people resumably starting with johns — about the ts of viewing pornography, and how a person be compelled toward more and more viewuntil viewing leads to action.

he more immediate step, however, may bly be raising awareness, something Wils hopes to do next week during this year's ficking in America Conference. Coinciding May being designated "Human Trafficking reness" month by state officials, the conferis scheduled for May 24-26 at the Holiday Opryland, bringing together speakers from ss the country who work to eradicate trafng in both sex and labor.

hville, with its central location as a sroads of interstate traffic, finds itself firmly enched on the trafficking circuit, which links r nearby cities like Chattanooga, Knoxville, nphis, Clarksville and Birmingham, Ala.

n August, police charged Prontiss House-

h, who turned 19 this January, with trafficking sexual tude after a detective answered an Backpage.com ad for vo-girl special."

t the Knights End motel on Spring Street, police said found two women who told detectives that Houseworth taken them from Atlanta and driven them to Nashville, the safety locks on the car doors engaged so they couldn't be. They said Houseworth told them he was their pimp , they were in his "game," and threatened to use violence ast them or their families if they didn't do as he said.

grand jury indicted Houseworth in December on two its of aggravated kidnapping, two counts of trafficking exual servitude and one count of weapon possession. Anr woman, Ashley Harry, now 24, was also indicted along Houseworth for her alleged role in case. Police said Harry nally portrayed herself as a victim but they determined that she was involved in the criminal plot.

Smith, who worked closely with the victims, said the case involved a "girlfriending" scenario, in which Harry acted as a recruiter by befriending the women to lure them into the alleged sex-trafficking scheme.

Harry was charged in the indictment with three counts of aggravated kidnapping and two counts of trafficking for sexual servitude. The case is still pending.



Often, victims don't realize they're being exploited at first, according to Emily Fitchpatrick. She created the Ashville, N.C., nonprofit organization "On Eagles Wings Ministries," which operates the "Hope House" shelter programs aimed at restoring the lives of domestic victims of sex trafficking, ages 12-25. The shelters are long-term options for victims across the country, who are usually referred by law enforcement or juvenile detention centers. It's a model she hopes to spread nationally.

Fitchpatrick's organization operates a call center out of Asheville where trained volunteers reach out to those who post ads online by calling the "for a good time" numbers directly, and seeing if they can reach any girls who want help.

The call operations usually happen twice a month in different cities, sometimes organized around large sporting events that could attract those looking to buy and sell sex.

Volunteers explain to the girls the purpose of the call, ask

them how they are, if they need anything. sponse is a curt "f--- off," sometimes it's ar now" followed up by a call back later, or s just break down emotionally, thankful for encounter.

The outreach operation, Fitchpatrick said and available that night for any girls they read

the game. At the end of the nigh gleaned from conversations with law enforcement in that particul

According to her count from December 2011, volunteers coi 1,000 females, resulting in four than 30 referrals made.

As for law enforcement, I "They've been seeing these case just not identifying them prope

Though some consenting line classified ads like "Candy' so-magical connection, the ele lined with the hastily construct prostitutes and pimps.

In recent years the proliferat their use for promoting prost growing evidence that they su trafficking have led to organiz down or at least censor the "ad sections of ad sites.

Just last week, the U.S. Mayors addressed a letter to of Village Voice Media, urging the use of Backpage.com for u ficking by requiring in-person v prospective escort advertiser's Il of identity and age for anyon escort ad.

Backpage.com, owned by the latest purveyor of classified enforcement, a business it inher list after the free classified giant in the fall 2010 under pressur general from across the country

Antoinette Welch, an assista ney in Davidson County, said sex trafficking much easier beca net's anonymity.

"As far as the Internet goes," Welch said, ten more prevalent. It's not just Backpage or there are sites that have popped up all over th

Still, shutting down a single website, or a site - Backpage has hundreds of other listin — won't solve the problem, just like pushin off one corner won't stop drugs from reachi

Welch said that while local law enforcement sex trafficking has certainly risen over the pas "hard to say" exactly how the numbers of ca tions have trended in Tennessee, because bet last year's TBI study, those numbers weren't r

On top of that, a lot of the cases involve taken over by the federal government, espe tors believe the victims have been taken a such as in the Somali sex-trafficking trial that in Nashville two weeks ago.

Where Tennessee stands

In its 2011 Protective Innocence Challenge report card on states' existing laws to combat sex trafficking, Shared Hope International ranked Tennessee seventh out of all states including the District of Columbia. Tennessee received a grade of only C. but that's not as bad as it sounds considering there were no A's, four B's, six C's, 15 D's and 26 F's

Part of the mission of Operation Broken Silence, based in Memphis, is to strengthen laws in Tennessee against human trafficking, which includes sex trafficking. OBS lobbied the state General Assembly urging the passage of five laws this past legislative session, with all passing and expected to be signed into law soon. According to Ryan Dalton of Operation Broken Silence, here are some of the existing laws on Tennessee books used to fight trafficking:

Sex trafficking: It is a felony (trafficking for sexual servitude) to knowingly subject someone to sexual servitude or knowingly recruit, entice, harbor, transport, provide or obtain another person for that purpose.

Labor trafficking: It is a felony to subject or attempt to subject another person to forced labor or services by threatening physical harm, physical restraint or threat, abuse to the legal process, destroying and/or confiscating identification or immigration documents, or by blackmail and financial harm.

Asset seizure: allows law enforcement to take over any property subject to state forfeiture regulation, with the proceeds divided by the seizing agency and the remaining proceeds placed in a fund for nongovernmental anti-trafficking efforts.

Hotline Act: provides that the TBI maintain a hotline as a resource for victims of human trafficking or for those who suspect human trafficking, and strongly encourages that this hotline be posted on a flier throughout Tennessee in any commercial enterprise or business establishment licensed by the state. The TBI hotline (1-855-55-TNHTH) launched Oct 1

Decriminalization of minors: protects minors by stating that: (1) A person suspected to be younger than 18 shall be immune from prosecution of prostitution, and that person shall be provided with the National Human Trafficking Resource Center hotline; and (2) patronizing prostitution from a person younger than 18 is a Class E felony.

LAWS PASSED SPRING 2012

Civil remedies: provides victims financial remedies through civil litigation.

Amendments to sex trafficking and labor trafficking bills: These two amendments increase penalties for traffickers and protection for potential victims in school zones. Publishers of ads were also targeted. It would be unlawful to advertise a commercial sex act with a minor and publishers cannot claim that they were unaware of a victim's age.

Vacating convictions: Expunges the records of women who have been convicted of prostitution but were actually trafficked.

Victim assistance: Formalizes the state role in special rehabilitation services for trafficking victims. -James Nix

On Friday, May 4, after five days of deliberation, a federal jury convicted Idris Fahra, 25, Andrew Kayachith, 22, and Yassin Yusuf, 22, but acquitted six more in a massive case that, when originally unsealed in the fall of 2010, named 30 individuals, many associated with Somali gangs.

Fahra was found guilty on one count of sex-trafficking a minor and one count of sextrafficking another victim. Kayachith was found guilty on a sex-trafficking charge but not guilty on three additional charges. The jury found Yusuf guilty on a single sex-trafficking charge and deemed him not guilty on three other charges.

For cases involving adults, prosecutors must reach a threshold of proof that depends on the cooperation of the victims, who can often be reluctant witnesses. Fear and control often interferes with that cooperation.

Welch explained that the key difference between sex-trafficking cases involving juveniles and those involving adults is that prosecutors don't have to prove "force, fraud or coercion" is involved, just that the victim is a minor.

"The victims of trafficking are not forthcoming in the beginning, because they're scared," Welch said. "They're under a lot of control and a lot of fear, so a lot of times it takes several interviews with the police before they'll come forth.

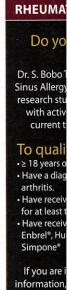
"And if they're victims of trafficking," she added, "obviously they're not charged with a crime, because if you're being forced to prostitute you're not a criminal, you're a victim."

Welch explained that no one under 18 can be charged with prostitution in Tennessee after the state's decriminalization of prostitution for minors last year. As she put



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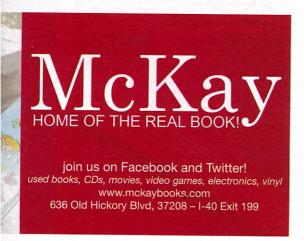
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it, "Technically, they cannot legally consent to have sex."

Detective Matthew Dixon said education is bringing the issue more to light for both police departments and the nonprofits that provide services for victims.

In 2005, Dixon started seeing the Internet used more and more for prostitution and, therefore, likely trafficking as well. On top of that, the ailing economy might have led more people — willingly or otherwise — into the commercial sex business.

The MNPD's "proactive approach" involves vice unit detectives calling up the

numbers listed in online escort ads and seeing what they find at the other end of the line.

"Sometimes even when you get there, you don't know until after you interview and then investigate a little bit that it is human trafficking," Dixon said.

Around noon on the Friday that the verdict in the federal case came down, 17-year-old Mary sat in a Davidson County General Sessions courtroom testifying about how she came to Nashville to work as a prostitute for Marcus Owens. ("Mary" is a fictitious name used to protect the identity of a minor.)

Mary sat on the witness stand in a state-issued orange jumpsuit, her black hair pulled into a large, loose braid that rested on her left shoulder. Straight bangs covered her forehead. Her answers to attorneys' questions at times rang chippy, tinged with teenage contrariness, yet intelligent.

Under oath, she told the court about meeting Owens, 33, a month earlier in an Atlanta hotel, where she said her "crack head" mother essentially traded her for a drug debt. She said she left with Owens because her mother asked her to, because Mary been a prostitute since she became a teenager. Because she knew her role as a prostitute versus his as a pimp. Because "I felt obligated to," she said.

At one point in her testimony, prompted by the assistant district attorney, Mary pulled back her bangs to show the judge a discoloration on her forehead, where she said Owens struck her with a crowbar for not performing a sex act. A mark on her neck, she said, was where he burned her with a cigarette after she tried to run away, asking her, "Are you playing with my pimping?"

"My role," she told the court, "is basically do as I'm told.'

Mary testified of how she traveled with Owens from Atlanta to Chattanooga, then on to Nashville, staying in various hotels for a few days, posting online ads and turning tricks. In Nashville, she said, they stopped at the Red Roof Inn on Donelson Pike on April 21 and then moved on to the Extended Stay America on Elm Hill Pike for the next few days, allegedly doing cocaine, shooting heroin and having sex with each other along the way.

She said Owens came up with the wording for the ads posted to Backpage.com, which

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DETECTIVE MATTHEW DIXON

read in part "last day in Nashville" and "specials all day." The ads included photos of her in which she apparently was shown depicting masturbation and partially exposing herself. Owens allegedly is the one who posted those images on the Internet for the ad.

The ads featuring Mary all included different ages — 19, 18, 22 - and when vice detectives responded to the ad and arrested the two on April 24, she told them she was 18. She said she lied because she assumed she and Owens would be out of jail and gone before authorities figured out she was 17. After determining

her correct age, however, police dropped the prostitution and simple possession charges against her. Owens now faces charges of promoting prostitution, trafficking for sexual servitude, contributing to the delinquency of a minor, aggravated sexual exploitation of a minor and aggravated statutory rape.

Depending on her testimony, additional charges may be added by the grand jury, where Owens' charges have been bound over. As for Mary, there's a small hope she may break the cycle she's in — following her appearance, she was placed in a free residential program that provides counseling and a place to stay for women who have been involved in destructive behavior. CP

Disclosure: Backpage.com has signed marketing agreements with a number of alternative weeklies around the U.S., including the Nashville Scene. The Scene and The City Paper are owned by SouthComm.