



'Truckers Against Trafficking' Educates Trucking Industry on How to Recognize and Help Victims

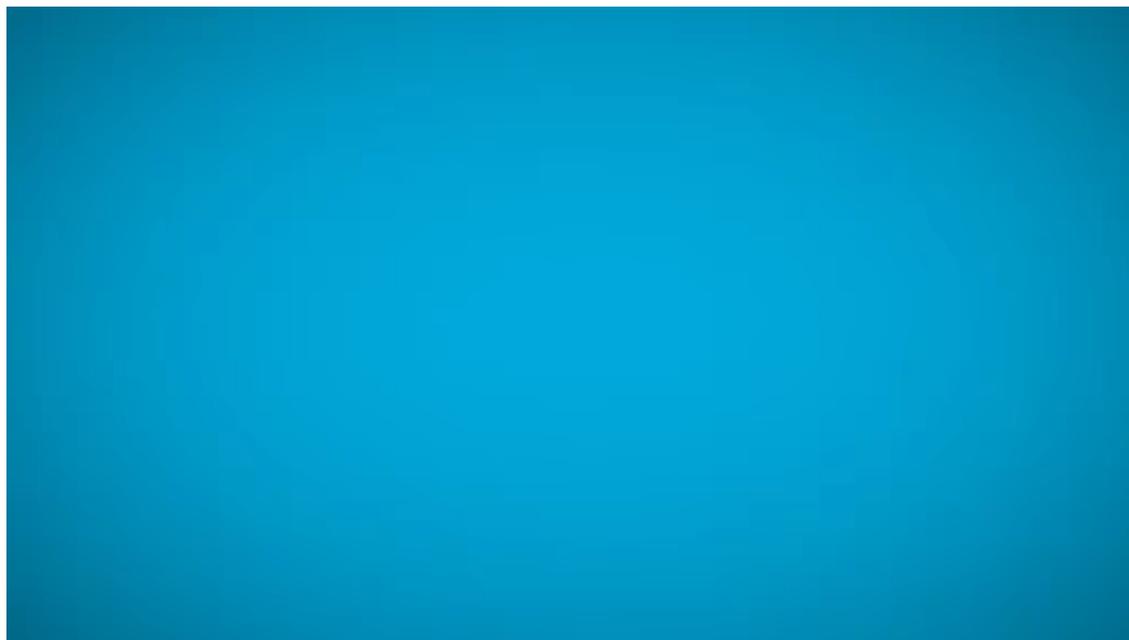
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'Truckers Against Trafficking' educated Texas trucking industry leaders, general managers of Texas truck stops and local law enforcement on issues related to child sexual exploitation and human trafficking Tuesday at the America Wind Power Center.

Jaime Wheeler, a sex-trafficking outreach worker at Voice of Hope, helped organize the session and said human trafficking is a growing problem in the South Plains.

"Our number is just about to 80 [victims] at this point and some days, I'm seeing a new person almost every single day in this area," Wheeler said. "That ranges from people as young as 12, 13 up to people in their 40's or their 50's."



House Speaker Paul Ryan 'Putting To Rest' Rumors Of Candidacy
"He's going to rule himself out and put this to rest once

By i.jsrdn.com/i/1_gif?

Wheeler said trafficking starts when traffickers pretend to be the victim's friend or partner, before using them.

"People at truck stops could be people who are seeing some of this going on and some of them are buyers as well," Wheeler said. "If we have people more educated who are managers, owners, as well as the truckers themselves then ideally they're going to report more."

Local law enforcement also attended the meeting. Brownfield Police Chief Tony Serbantez said truckers are the eyes and ears of the road. He said teaching those eyes and ears how to identify victims will help law enforcement put a stop to it.

"Recognition is probably going to be the primary thing right now," Serbantez said. "If you don't recognize, nothing gets done. If you recognize it, then you move on to the next step of how to approach it and how to deal with it."

Wheeler said the physical and emotional abuse makes it difficult for victims to get out of their situation and they rarely self-report. She said that's why bringing educational resources to Lubbock is important.

"If we don't have people out on the ground in the everyday context in life who know what to look for, what resources are available in the community, then we won't have people reporting," Wheeler said.

If you have a tip or know of someone who needs help [click here \(http://www.voiceofhopelubbock.org/\)](http://www.voiceofhopelubbock.org/).

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