

## OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

### NEW LEADERSHIP AGREEMENT JOINS NORTH STAR INITIATIVE AND F.R.E.E. TO FIGHT HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Lititz, PA | Reading, PA – June 30, 2024 – Freedom and Restoration for Everyone Enslaved (“F.R.E.E.”) will integrate their operations with North Star Initiative (“NSI”), a nonprofit that advocates for and supports survivors of sex trafficking by providing whole-person support and development through a Christ-centered focus. As part of this agreement, F.R.E.E. will dissolve and NSI will begin operating the Refuge Home and outreach programs in Berks County, PA. This agreement, initiated by the Reading-based 501(c)(3), has been approved by the boards of both organizations.

Robert Morrison founded F.R.E.E. in 2010 as a grassroots movement in Berks County to mobilize the community to end sex trafficking. In 2015, Andrea McHenry became the Executive Director and passionately advanced the vision of F.R.E.E. by providing relational, restorative care to women, to break the cycle of commercial sexual exploitation. Andrea expanded outreach initiatives, opening a Drop-in Center in 2019 and reaching and serving more than 100 women over several years.

NSI and F.R.E.E. share the same deep commitment to end sex trafficking by educating their communities with essential information to effect real change. Over the years, both agencies’ missions have led to the development of trauma-specific, long-term residential programs focused on the freedom and flourishing of survivors.

NSI opened The Harbor, a residential home focused on trauma healing in 2017, the first in Lancaster County. F.R.E.E. opened the Refuge Home in 2023, the first shelter in Berks County to serve this population. Following the transition, NSI will manage both residential programs. Andrea McHenry will join NSI’s leadership team as the new Director of Outreach and Advocacy, strengthening NSI’s core values of empowering communities to fight human trafficking and reaching survivors with relational resources. McHenry describes the change as “the next right step for F.R.E.E. North Star has experience that will allow the Refuge Home to be the best it can be from the beginning, and I could not be more excited.”

Melinda Clark, NSI’s Executive Director, envisions a future where “new and deeper alliances allow us to move the wheel in a significant way to end trafficking. Moving out of silos and joining forces will advance that mission further than any individual organization could go on their own. Bringing F.R.E.E. into North Star releases even more resources to serve trafficking survivors, and that is our primary focus.”

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## **About Freedom and Restoration for Everyone Enslaved**

Freedom and Restoration for Everyone Enslaved (F.R.E.E.) began as a community-driven initiative of volunteers dedicated to anti-human trafficking work. Education and awareness are critical to ending human trafficking and exploitation. F.R.E.E. has been committed to raise awareness in the community by helping thousands of people each year identify human trafficking and respond to victims. F.R.E.E. is dedicated to providing qualified, compassionate care to survivors.

## **About North Star Initiative**

Since 2010, North Star Initiative (NSI) has battled human trafficking in Lancaster County through education, advocacy and survivor care. In 2023, NSI provided more than 75 community presentations to raise awareness about trafficking warning signs and to educate schools, civic groups, businesses, and churches on the realities of trafficking. Their 12-month restoration program, the Harbor, has provided a trauma-informed restoration environment since 2017. Residents there receive individualized therapy, classes, and services necessary for holistic healing. To date, NSI has cared for more than 80 survivors, investing in their transformative journeys with comprehensive therapy, medical and dental care, legal aid, education, and vocational training.

