

Experiential Exhibit Explores Human Trafficking

Slavery has been illegal in the United States for more than a century, but it still exists in the form of human trafficking. A new exhibit in the Northwest plans to bring light to this issue.

From May 11 to May 20, visitors to "SOLD: The Human Trafficking Experience," will have the opportunity to walk in the shoes of a modern-day slave as part of the experiential exhibit at Bethel Church in Richland, Wash.

Between 600,000 and 800,00 people are trafficked internationally each year, with as many as 17,500 trafficked into the United States. Nearly three out of every four victims are female; half are children.

Human trafficking is defined by the United States Department of State as, "the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, personage, debt bondage or slavery."

The SOLD exhibit combines technology with true stories to educate visitors about human trafficking locally and globally through the lives of victims in nine different parts of the world. From child soldiers in South Sudan and forced labor in India to the commercial sexual exploitation of children in the USA, the exhibit addresses many forms of human trafficking of men, women and children worldwide. The exhibit is appropriate for ages 13 and up.

The exhibit was conceived by friends Amber Bruce, Jessica MacFarlan and Krista Hanson. Bruce said the exhibit is designed to give a complete understanding of what human

trafficking is, motivate attendees to play their part in the fight against it and challenge people to grapple with the deeper issues of God's love, sovereignty and justice in the face of evil in the world and their part in God's plan of bringing justice.

As visitors travel through the 12 rooms, they will learn about the many types of human trafficking by "becoming" a slave in a particular situation. The exhibit is technology friendly, and visitors are encouraged to tweet and post to Facebook pictures of themselves as trafficking victims; at the conclusion of the exhibit they can blog live about their experience.

"Human trafficking is a pervasive evil that is largely unknown and misunderstood," Bruce says. "Shedding light on this issue is the first step in combating it. When we are aware, we can make a difference."

The trio of friends worked with more than 150 volunteers from all over the community to bring the exhibit to completion. When it closes on May 20, the exhibit will be available to travel to Northwest churches or events. SOLD is also placing all of their construction plans and information free online for any groups in other parts of the country that want to educate their local community by duplicating the exhibit.