

Contact: Jennifer Bulotti
Telephone: (916) 955-1313
Email: jenniferb@modamedia.com

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**Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC) Funds Human Trafficking Education
& Training Program in 35 Rural Counties**

**“PROTECT: Prevention Organized to Educate Children on Trafficking to launch 2016-
2017 school year”**

(Sacramento, CA – April 26, 2016) California experienced the nation’s highest number of reported incidents of human trafficking in 2015 -- with one third being minors, according to the National Human Trafficking Resource Center. Today, three public charities, in partnership with the Office of the Attorney General for the State of California and the California Department of Education, joined to announce the launch of PROTECT, a new program designed to reduce the vulnerability of the state’s children to human trafficking.

PROTECT is being funded by a grant from the Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC), a local government advocacy organization representing 35 rural California counties.

PROTECT uses a three-pronged approach to fight human trafficking, by providing educational curriculum for students, training for educators and professionals, and providing reporting protocols and procedures to ensure victimized children receive the services they need to be protected. The PROTECT education program will also expand beyond the walls of schools to inform parents and the community.

"We need to do a better job teaching young people how to protect themselves and each other from being victimized by traffickers," said Deputy Attorney General Maggy Krell. "Identification, prevention, and early intervention initiatives are vital to decreasing the number of victims and empowering our youth."

The Federal Bureau of Investigation estimates that many victims are forced into the sex trade as young as 11-14 years of age.

"In classrooms all across the state, we have an opportunity to identify young victims, and prevent human trafficking from happening in the first place," said Gordon Jackson,

director of Coordinated Student Support Division of the California Department of Education. "We look forward to the day when all California children and teachers receive human trafficking identification and prevention education and thank rural counties for prioritizing this important work."

The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children estimates that at least 100,000 children are the victims of commercial sex trafficking each year in the United States. Additionally, the U.S. Department of Justice says that approximately 300,000 children are at risk of being trafficked each year in the U.S.

"This horrible crime is happening daily in our communities across the state. Education and training from qualified experts is critical to protect our youth," said Lieutenant Andre Dawson, a recently-retired Los Angeles Police Department officer. Lieutenant Dawson, a peace officer for 33 years, now trains others in his field on how to recognize and respond to potential incidents of human trafficking.

The RCRC program provides seed funding for up to three years. This type of funding for identification and prevention is necessary to truly have an effect reducing the vulnerability of our children. "The PROTECT program is critical for California's rural counties, and we are inspired by our partners for their foresight, and the RCRC Board of Directors for their courageous leadership in committing RCRC resources to human trafficking awareness, identification and prevention education," said Greg Norton, RCRC president and CEO.

The mission of PROTECT is to reduce the vulnerability of children to human trafficking. The program is a joint venture between three public charities: *3Strands Global*, *Love Never Fails* and *Frederick Douglass Family Initiatives*. All are 501(C)3 organizations. Cisco Systems is providing its Cisco Collaborative Knowledge platform for the PROTECT program. For more information about the PROTECT program, visit <http://protectnow.org/get-involved/getprotect/> email info@PROTECTnow.org or call (916) 365-2606. For information about the three public charities visit: www.3strandsglobal.com www.loveneverfailsus.com or fdfi.org.

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