Embodying Presence: Awareness, Prevention, and Rescue

Human trafficking gets a lot of media attention, but it remains a major issue in the United States and around the world. Everyday people, many of them children and teens, are forced to work against their will in situations of slavery or prostitution. WMUV students have been working and praying to help their communities around the state to be more aware of human trafficking in Virginia. They have partnered with local law enforcement agencies to help teens, parents, and grandparents to know how to protect themselves when using various media devices. They are learning that human trafficking is not just an issue in other countries; it happens right here in Virginia.

At Linden Heights Baptist Church, for example, WMUV partnered with the youth to offer a Human Trafficking Awareness night. Students were exposed to an experiential activity in which they saw how their everyday choices can affect their vulnerability to trafficking. They also explored ways they could help rescue someone who has become a victim of trafficking.

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In partnership with Tipi Wakan and Barbara Robbins of Rocky Hill Stables, WMUV has launched an empowerment ministry on the Standing Rock reservation aimed at reaching at-risk teen girls who need to experience God’s presence. The ministry, Sunkakan Wicohan, works with the aid of horses to integrate spiritual truths into the lives of women and girls in a way that promotes both healing and hope. One participant said that she could “see an instant connection between a young girl and one of the horses,” which is a common benefit of equine ministries.

Horsemanship often provides young people with a sense of self-esteem, confidence, and compassion. This equine-assisted growth and learning experience fosters a stronger connection to self, to community, and to God. These connections increase resiliency by giving new coping strategies that will help protect against threats to happiness, hope, and quality of life such as drugs, alcohol, depression, and suicide. Strategic priorities include a summer horse camp, extended equine growth and learning opportunities throughout the year, construction of a facility to stable the horses, providing a place for the ministry, and developing leadership for the ministry.

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