



**U.S. Catholic Sisters
Against Human Trafficking**

Ending Slavery Is Everyone's Work

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Wellness Weekend for Male Human Trafficking Survivors

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Columbus, Ohio – Twelve men, ages 27 to 57, got the chance to heal from their past trauma and practice some self-care techniques in the first Wellness Weekend for Male Survivors of Human Trafficking Dec. 9-11.

Girls and women are often the targets of human trafficking. However, beneath the surface, men and boys often go unseen and are underserved when it comes to this crime.

USCSAHT Program Director Theresa Flores, Lived Experience Expert and Founder of The SOAP Project, said it is believed that males make up 20-30% of all victims of trafficking in the U.S.

“Once a survivor is no longer being trafficked, his trauma doesn't end there,” Flores said. “It takes a lifetime of hard work to heal the scars and become thrivers. Many times, male survivors are left out of the trafficking narrative. While there are thousands of victims, there are very few resources to help them heal.”

Every year, thousands of boys and men fall victim to this abhorrent crime. Traffickers will prey on the vulnerabilities of victims such as homelessness and poverty. Estimates vary but boys made up 7% of child sex trafficking reported to the National Center of Missing and Exploited Children and 15% of online enticement cases involved boys. The percentage is even higher for labor trafficking with 556 males in labor trafficking reported to the National Human Trafficking Hotline in 2020 compared to 682 for females.

Once male victims escape their situation, limited resources make the road to recovery even more difficult. U.S. Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking partnered with Sisters of Mercy, The SOAP Project and Felician Services, Inc. to bridge the gap and help them on their healing journey.

“Mother Mary was with us providing these vulnerable, yet strong men with the feminine, motherly love that they needed so much,” said Flores. “And Jesus was walking right beside them, providing the male protector essence they needed to restore what was taken from them by other men.”

USCSAHT brought together volunteers from around the country who poured into them and helped them heal from what others have so brutally taken from them. They learned the importance of healing touch by getting massages and facials, came together in harmony with a drum circle, music therapy, and guided meditation, and worked on their physical and mental health with yoga, and sessions on men's, brain, financial, and chiropractic health. They worked on forgiveness, releasing shame, guilt, anger, and sadness. But most importantly, the retreat helped them create a support group and a sense of community.

The Wellness Weekend offered the retreat completely free to survivors of labor and sex trafficking. They were provided free plane tickets, luxury rooms, tasty and abundant food plus lots of goodies to take home.

"You are the sparkle to my wings," said the youngest survivor who attended.

"I came not knowing a single person, not getting the therapy I have needed, and am leaving with brothers and the tools on how to heal myself," said another.

To find out more information about survivor retreats, email theresa@sistersagainsttrafficking.org or visit sistersagainsttrafficking.org.

USCSAHT was founded in 2013 by a group of Catholic Sisters committed to ending human trafficking and supporting survivors. They dreamed of creating a national network of resources and support made up of many different congregations and other mission-aligned partners. Today, this member-based organization has grown to include more than 110 congregations of women religious and another 70+ individuals and groups spread throughout the United States. USCSAHT is also the U.S. member of Talitha Kum, an international network of consecrated life working to end human trafficking.

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