

AAUW Boston Branch
6 December 2011
6:00 – 7:45 p.m.
Human Trafficking: What Can WE Do About It?

This is a compilation of the “brainstorming” that occurred, grouped by themes. Attendees and others are invited to read through and comment back to Helen, who will share with the larger group.

For Tuesday, 17 January, Shapiro 10 Conference Room, Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, 6:00 – 8:00 p.m., has been reserved for us. A notice will be sent to all members/interested parties.

To email Helen: schwicky@hotmail.com or aauw.boston@gmail.com

Guiding questions that developed during the discussion: What can we, as a small group, do? Where can a small group have the most impact? What is our niche? What would meaningful lives look like? What would meaningful work look like? How can we make “IT” simple?

What is AAUW’s policy/platform on this topic, at either the National or State Level? Is this a bubble-up from grassroots? Does this fit with other awareness of violence against women policies? (Yes -- http://www.aauw.org/act/issue_advocacy/principles_priorities.cfm , mid-way down the page.)

The tutoring-mentoring-life skills kept coming up as critical issues.

CONNECTION

There is a real need for one-on-one relationships, knowing that there is someone to call if there is a problem (e.g., learning how to deal with conflict).

“Connection” is important. These women have left what “connections” and loosely defined “support systems” they had and need to learn how to trust and create new connections and safe support systems. Residential and group homes are difficult settings. Limited strong, caring adult role-models; no encouragement to think/discuss possibilities; peer pressure; lack of self control. These women can be doing something else if they receive the right support.

We need to understand how people get into a situation in order to understand how to help them get out of that situation.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Education as a ticket out of HT – what support systems can we provide?

Working with shelters and placements – need to work with women where they are. Often, these women are dealing with other issues (e.g., court involvement, etc.) and flexibility in receiving education/training is required.

To continue with education, there is a need to have tutors, assistance in finding grants, how to complete applications, someone to review written materials (e.g., application essays and papers). Many of these women have not had successful school experiences, sometimes due to learning differences. They need for someone to help them set higher goals for themselves; additional assistance on how to decide how to select a course, organize notes, start a paper, manage a course load, and understand deadlines. We need

to learn what resources our local community colleges are able to provide and how we can be of assistance.

Text books are expensive. How does one know which book is essential, which one can be shared? How does one develop the savvy to find less expensive or used books? Can we develop a “library” to help these students?

Working with local community colleges (Bunker Hill was frequently cited) – BHCC offers GED course work and offers a large catalogue to students. For students who do well, they might receive scholarship money to continue.

“Adopt” a young woman by an organization – one member might assist with essay writing, another might raise money for first semester books, scholarship support, provide “internship” possibilities (mentoring/shadowing in the business world).

Could we create a clearing house for volunteer tutors on a case-by-case basis [e.g., ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages), math, etc.]? Patience is needed to work with this clientele as many have had less than positive prior experience with education. Would we recruit volunteers from college students, professionals, graduate students, students in teacher education programs? Given the age of this population, working with undergraduate tutors might seem intimidating. Tutoring/matching with tutors who are patient, can explain the material without the student feeling inadequate. There is a need for more remedial courses. It is difficult to have GED courses taught in a group setting as many students may have had prior difficulty in school and feel “stupid” by asking questions in front of others. There is a need for case-by-case access to tutors, including practicing English speaking/writing skills for non-native English speakers.

Curry College’s learning center, which works with students who have learning differences, was cited as a wonderful resource (PAL Program – Program for Advancement of Learning). PAL also offers occasional training to professionals who work with students who have learning differences.

[http://www.curry.edu/programs-and-courses/undergraduate-programs/special-programs/ld-program-\(pal\).html](http://www.curry.edu/programs-and-courses/undergraduate-programs/special-programs/ld-program-(pal).html)

Would testing by professional teachers help identify strengths/challenges in learning? Is this something we can help facilitate?

There seems to be a push on poorer women to go into low-paying, low-skilled jobs, with little opportunity for additional training and advancement (e.g., “do hair”). We need to encourage women to set higher goals for themselves.

Collecting of second-hand laptop computers for this population? Johanna Crawford, founder of www.webofbenefit.org, donates used laptops to women moving from abusive situations. Not only do these women need computers, they also need training on basic computer skills.

Would a computer bank/skill center be helpful? People are spread all over the state – constant flux. Mobile resources – e.g., van with computer access, skill training, etc.

LIFE SKILLS, INCLUDING FINANCIAL LITERACY

There is a need for résumé writing, interview skills, basic office skills, building a bank of employees who might hire these women. Can we create “experience” (“internship” or “shadowing”) that will give these women employable skills to include on their résumés?

Many of these women need basic financial literacy when going from a cash-based life to learning how to open a savings or checking account, budget, avoid impulse spending, understand fees and interest, and develop a credit score (arranging for a secured credit card from a bank or credit union).

<https://www.massbankers.org>

A resource is Mint.Com, that links to one's bank account, shows how funds are being spent, helps set goals (e.g., how much needs to be set aside on a regular schedule to purchase a car?), and shows when goals are not being met. <https://www.mint.com>

OTHER RESOURCES/ORGANIZATIONS/LIAISONS

Compiling resources

Working with other organizations

All Hands In (Barbara Anderson) – building a network, educational awareness. Currently their niche is Free Trade awareness and larger issues around trafficking. Where is your product coming from?

Youth – it might be easier to get information related to HT into youth centers (e.g., YMCA programs, city agencies) rather than through school boards and into the curricula