



Man walks to D.C. to raise awareness of human trafficking

By LAUREN MCDONALD
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Certain tragic stories can elicit two kinds of responses — anger or motivation to create change.

Roger DeHart chose the latter.

The Ft. Lauderdale, Fla., resident is currently on an on-foot journey from his hometown to Washington, D.C., to raise awareness of human trafficking.

“My whole goal on this walk is to really bring out more untold stories,” said DeHart, who stopped in Brunswick this weekend. “Hopefully, through people seeing my sacrifice, they’ll feel like ‘You know what, if he’s doing this, let me at least talk about what I’ve gone through.’”

Sex trafficking is a billion dollar industry that affects millions of people, worldwide and in the United States.

As DeHart learned more about this international crisis and the stories of manipulation and entrapment that exist in his own community — and in communities across the country — he felt compelled to bring those stories to light and make more people pay attention.

“It wasn’t being talked about. That bothered me,” he said Saturday, while he took a break from walking to have dinner at Topsy McSway’s restaurant in downtown Brunswick. “The first thing I thought about was I remember back in the days when they had a ‘war on drugs,’ and you saw billboards and there were all types of campaigns going. And with this,

it’s such a battle to get it exposed.”

In Broward County, where DeHart works at a court bailiff, he said human trafficking isn’t an issue that gets enough attention.

“It’s an ugly topic. People don’t want to talk about it in schools down there,” he said. “But I want my kids to recognize the red flags and see what could be a potential harm for them.”

So about seven months ago, DeHart founded the nonprofit ‘First S.T.O.P.’, which stands for ‘saving teens and others from predators,’ and he began preparations for his walk, which he’s dubbed the ‘No More Miles Walk.’

“It’s to bring awareness to human trafficking and find ways to prevent it, and really to help survivors,” he said. “My goal is to start a safe house in Ft. Lauderdale, because there aren’t any there.”

DeHart began his walk March 31. He’ll need to be in Washington, D.C., by May 19 for a rally his nonprofit has organized outside the U.S. Capitol in Union Square.

He’s reserved the space for 1,000 people, and the event will include survivors and politicians who will make a call for action to address sex trafficking.

In total, his walk will be 1,065 miles long.

“Man, that hurts,” he joked Saturday.

Because of his walk, DeHart said he frequently receives message through social media from sex trafficking survivors who thank him for his effort and who share their own harrowing



Lauren McDonald/The Brunswick News

Roger DeHart, a Ft. Lauderdale, Fla., resident walking from home to Washington, D.C. to raise awareness of human trafficking, stopped in Brunswick this weekend. While in town, he met with Darcelle Burandt, founder of House of Hope, a residential therapeutic program from sex trafficking survivors younger than 18.

stories of their experience being trapped in the industry.

“Hearing form them personally, just what they’ve gone through, it really makes you have a passion and makes you want to do something,” he said.

The stories are out there but often aren’t shared, he said. His walk aims to change that.


Through every community he walks through on his way, he said he’s trying to bring people’s attention to these atrocities happening in their own backyards.

“Everywhere, even in the smallest of towns, this is going on,” DeHart said. “My goal is just to run my mouth in every town I go to.”

These stories demand a reaction, he said. And he hopes people will choose to react by helping to create change.

“It makes you want to do one of two things — it makes you want to do something about it, or you get angry and do nothing about it,” he said. “It causes for a reaction, either way.”

DeHart’s journey can be followed on his Facebook page, at facebook.com/roger.dehart.92.



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Island troop names 125th Eagle Scout

By TAYLOR COOPER
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Boy Scouts of America Troop 248, St. Simons Island’s only Boy Scout troop, welcomed its 125th Eagle Scout into its ranks Sunday.

“It feels kind of strange. Besides graduating high school, it’s strange in that you worked so long to achieve it. You never thought it would happen until it does. It feels good to be in a group of my peers I really respect,” said Alastair Campbell, 248’s newest Eagle Scout.

Campbell said he rose through the ranks in the troop, which is chartered with St. Simons United Methodist Church, surrounded by Eagle Scouts.

“We’ve had a ton of Eagles, and that really pushed me to get it. Nearly everyone I grew up with in the troop got Eagle, and they helped me to earn mine,” Campbell said.

Earning Eagle Scout requires hours of community service along with a minimum of 21 merit badges and months of active participation in a troop. Only four percent of scouts earn the award.

Campbell’s project was to the benefit of St. Simons Presbyterian Church. He worked with church leaders to decide on a project, first settling on garden beds, then a prayer labyrinth, finally deciding to construct two benches. He positioned them outside the sanctuary.

The project cost \$615, Campbell said. Finding help wasn’t difficult, he added.

“It’s nice because coming up in the troop you get to help with (other scouts’) projects, and when its yours they all return the favor,”

Campbell said.

The church donated money to cover the cost, and church leaders promised to cover the difference if necessary, he said.

Campbell had been in the program since third grade, when he started as a Bear Cub Scout in Cub Scout Pack 227. After six years in the Boy Scouts, he doesn’t plan on dropping out. Campbell plants to earn Palms, which are smaller awards given for continued achievements after reaching the rank of Eagle.

“(I want to) be able to enjoy some campouts without any requirements to fulfill. And help out with some younger scouts, because we just got some new ones coming in,” Campbell said.

He said he recently took the junior assistant scoutmaster position and intends to learn the ropes of being a leader before he turns 18.

Scoutmaster Jay Torbert had no shortage of praise for Campbell.

“When speaking about today’s youth, I tell folks all the time (that) character counts. Scouting is one of the few organizations that still promotes, and expects, quality character in our youth. Alastair Campbell truly exudes all twelve character points of the Scout Law,” Torbert said. “Alastair is a leader. It seems to come naturally to him. The other scouts in our troop look up to him, even the older scouts and us adults.”

Torbert also recited the Scout Law, which states that a scout is “trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean and reverent.”

“A big thank you to everybody who’s helped me out, especially the church, (Co-pastor) Alan Dyer, my scoutmaster, Jay Torbert, and my project mentor and coach Freddy Stroud,” Campbell said.



Alastair Campbell

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