

ROTARY ACTION GROUP AGAINST SLAVERY

RAGAS NEWSLETTER

<https://ragas.online/>

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George Belitsos, RAGAS Board Member



FOUNDER OF RAGAS, MARK LITTLE, HONORED BY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

George Belitsos, RAGAS Board Member

Mark Little, the founder of RAGAS, has received the Member of Order of the British Empire Award as announced on her Majesty the Queen's 2022 New Year's Honors list.

The award recognizes Mark for his tireless service fighting human trafficking and modern slavery for the past two decades. For those of us Rotarians who reside in nations outside the UK, we cannot fully recognize the size and meaning of this very exclusive honor bestowed by the UK Cabinet Office and Queen Elizabeth II. In Mark's own words, "It was a shock, but a very pleasant one because the award also publicized the fact that modern slavery exists and that there are activists who are attempting to do something about the situation."

While the MBE Award recognizes Mark Little's volunteer work supporting organizations that are fighting the scourge of HT/MS, it also recognizes his work in driving this global issue within Rotary. Mark began his HT/MS battle in 2001 after watching a TV documentary. Within four months, he traveled to India to visit two of the child slave rehabilitation centers featured in the documentary.

Over the next few years, Mark made similar trips to India, Nepal, and Thailand. Mark described his early volunteer work as follows. "I have visited numerous child slave rehabilitation centers, safe houses and trafficking shelters to ascertain what is needed at those centers and initiated many anti-slavery projects which involved prevention, rescue, rehabilitation and reintegration of survivors back into their own homes."

The photo below shows Mark Little riding on a bus purchased with money he raised to transport victims from safe houses to job training, schools, and medical clinics.



As a member of the world's largest service organization, Mark recognized that Rotary, (with clubs in over 90 nations), had the potential to organize and lead the global fight against human trafficking/modern slavery. Mark began to champion the HT/MS issue within Rotary.

Despite five years of pushback (2004-2009) and several significant roadblocks as a result of trying to promote modern slavery as a major humanitarian problem to be tackled by Rotarians, Mark was not deterred. Mark said, "On the advice of former RI President Bhichai Rattakul, the only course of action left was for me to set up a Slavery Action Group within Rotary, with a view to eventually gaining the approval of the RI Board as a Rotarian Action Group.

Consequently, an Action Group of Rotarians Against Child Slavery was formed just before the RI Convention in Birmingham in 2009. The very first signature of support which we received at that Convention was from former RIBI President Gordon McNally, who will be RI President in 2023/24."

Mark believes that McNally will be a great supporter of the RAG when he takes office. Unfortunately, in the earlier years of this millennium, Mark was often advised by senior Rotarians that grappling with modern slavery was a social and political issue, not a humanitarian one to be taken on by Rotary International.



Mark served as RAGAS founder and board chair for ten years when he was succeeded by the current chair, Dave McCleary.

Mark continues to contribute as an emeritus member of the RAGAS board.

Mark recently wrote, "I will still be doing my best to continue to help RAGAS to persuade RI to consider "modern slavery" as an important humanitarian issue for Rotarians to consider combating. Indeed, in the next few weeks, I shall be persuading my own Norwich St. Edmund Rotary Club to once again agree to a Petition which will support Resolution 21R-28 which was submitted by District 6000 (Iowa, USA) to the Council on Resolution last year. On November 1st, 2021, that Resolution was agreed by the Council that it should be forwarded to the RI Board for consideration and hopefully approval at its February 22nd-24th 2022 meeting. Have you seen a copy of George's specimen draft Petition? I plan to persuade other Rotary clubs to also agree to submit a Petition directly to the RI Board. The more Petitions, supporting Resolution 21R-28 and pressuring the RI Board to approve the Resolution, the better."

Mark was recently interviewed by a journalist from an East Anglia magazine about his MBE award, and you may read that interview in its entirety [here](#).



RAGAS OUTSTANDING HUMAN TRAFFICKING/MODERN SLAVERY SERVICE AWARDS

George Belitsos, RAGAS Board Member

The RAGAS Board of Directors has established an awards program to recognize individuals and organizations who deserve to be acknowledged globally for their great impact on fighting human trafficking/modern slavery. Nominators must be Rotarians, however, they may nominate not only other Rotarians but any individual or organization who has made outstanding contributions to ending human trafficking/modern slavery.

A fillable PDF award nomination form is linked [here](#). You can also find the nomination form on the RAGAS website under the heading "Resources". Nominations may be submitted at any time for consideration by RAGAS. Award criteria can be found on the nomination form. There are also eight different award categories to choose from.

The first-ever awardee to be nominated and selected for a RAGAS award is Karen Walkowski. On January 13th, 2022 Dave McCleary, chair of the RAGAS board, presented the "Rotarian Inspiring Hope Award" virtually (during her club zoom meeting) to Karen Walkowski.



The award will be framed and re-presented in person at the Tri-District Rotary Conference in St. Cloud, Minnesota USA on April 21-23, 2022.

The award shines a light on Rotarians such as Karen, who have had made a tangible impact on human trafficking/modern slavery. It is also an opportunity for the global Rotary movement to take inspiration and encouragement from what Karen and other Rotarians have accomplished.

Karen Walkowski founded the first-ever Rotary cause-based e-club which has grown rapidly with members from across the globe. She has served as the Founder and President of the Rotary Club to End Human Trafficking for the past 2.5 years.

HT/MS advocates have been enticed to become Rotarians not only because of their desire to get involved with a club focused on eradicating this global crime against humanity, but also the convenience of not needing to travel to attend Rotary Club meetings.

An example of this is that past RI President, Mark Maloney's sister was moved to join Rotary and the e-club because of her passion to join with others to fight human trafficking/modern slavery.

Prior to Covid-19 and founding the Rotary Club to End Human Trafficking, Karen worked tirelessly to educate Rotarians about the growing problem of HT/MS. She traveled throughout midwestern US states to speak to over 100 clubs.

Following her lead, five new HT/MS cause-based Rotary e-clubs have been formed in the United States. Karen continues to speak about HT/MS and recently lead a panel discussion for RAGAS at the Rotary Zone meeting in Houston, Texas.

Karen was nominated for the RAGAS award by Michelle Seats of Austin Texas, President-Elect, Rotary Club to End Human Trafficking.



RAGAS COMMUNITY AWARENESS & PREVENTION EDUCATION STRATEGY

Malcolm Baird - RAGAS Board Member

RAGAS has developed a **Community Awareness and Prevention Education (CAPE) Plan**, which will **equip** and **empower** our members to execute local Community Awareness & Prevention Education projects in their communities – and around the world. RAGAS will assist members to connect with other like-minded Rotarians to take action to end human trafficking/modern slavery.

For more information on the CAPE strategy, [click here](#).



RAGAS TOOLBOX IS NOW ONLINE

Malcolm Baird, RAGAS Board Member

The **RAGAS Toolbox** is now available as a resource for Rotary clubs interested in projects combatting modern slavery/human trafficking.

This toolbox lists **organizations and resources** to help clubs find ways to support on-going anti-trafficking work. The toolbox includes **information on the many types of modern slavery and also the many ways in which organizations are taking action**.

There are **links to Rotarians** who are already working to combat these unacceptable practices, **who can help provide information** to your club. See **Section E on page 19** to find the work that other Rotary clubs have already done on these issues and some contact emails.

Click [here](#) to access the toolbox.

Direct Links are also available on the RAGAS website: <https://ragas.online/>.

HOW YOUR CLUB CAN REGISTER SUPPORT FOR A HUMAN TRAFFICKING/MODERN SLAVERY RESOLUTION 21R-28 THAT HAS BEEN SUBMITTED TO THE ROTARY INTERNATIONAL BOARD OF DIRECTORS

George Belitsos, RAGAS Board Member

The Rotary Action Group Against Slavery (RAGAS) is calling on all Rotary clubs worldwide to register their support for an important human trafficking/modern slavery resolution, which will be voted up or down at the April meeting of the Rotary International Board of Directors.

RAGAS asks your club's President to sign [this petition](#) to be submitted to the RI Board of Directors.

Only those petitions that are submitted as a result of a club board meeting signed by the club president and submitted on the club's letterhead will be recognized and considered by the RI Board of Directors. Below is a copy of the wording that we would suggest.

[Click here](#) for a Word document version so that your club can easily fill in the blanks and make any changes or additions.

[Click here](#) for more information on RI Resolution 21R-28.



ANTI-TRAFFICKING, VICTIM REHABILITATION

Carol Acosta, Rotary Club of Mae Cham / TRAGAST Member

In the first two articles of this three-part series on human trafficking, we discussed the reality of trafficking world-wide and what we personally, or as clubs, can do to help alleviate the problem and make it more difficult for profiteers to ply their trade.

Nowhere in those discussions was there a major financial cost to any of us. Awareness and responsible purchasing are basic, but not costly.

In this final article we will be discussing the needs of those rescued from trafficking. Rehabilitation is often difficult and requires cooperation between individuals, NGOs, communities and the government, both local and federal.

Victims of trafficking, especially in the sex trade, are often shunned by their families and communities. They are often not seen as victims but as willing participants and, as such, bring shame to their communities. The responsibility of rehabilitation is incumbent upon us all.

The first step after rescue is to relocate the individuals or groups to safe houses until they are able to reenter regular society. These homes must be staffed by people trained to counsel the rescued so they fully understand what they have endured and to begin to regain their sense of self-worth. For some, that process may take time. They may have set such low standards for themselves that it will take considerable work to reverse the process. Their lack of self-worth may well have led to their vulnerability and the ease with which they were lured into being trafficked.



The victims will need to be educated and trained with marketable skills so as to successfully transit to outside lives. Some may require academic education along with vocational training. We do no service to anyone by rescuing them and expecting them to survive without providing assistance to them.

Safe houses should be maintained throughout the country. There will be a cost to building, maintaining and staffing them but, with preparation, the residents can help to support themselves through their own efforts. That simple act might well be the thing that helps restore their faith in themselves. The original outlay of money could come from a combination of grants and government funds.

The stateless are among the most vulnerable. There are many needless restrictions placed on their employment opportunities. Driving a delivery truck should not be restricted to citizens. It is not a security risk in the vast majority of cases. The majority of jobs restricted to citizens are just as easily performed by non-citizens and the country would be better off taking advantage of those available workers.

The number of stateless people could easily be reduced considerably if the government followed its own policies. At one point the policy was that anyone showing attendance in a Thai school for 10 years could have their Thai ID papers. Now students are told they can have their papers upon graduation from a university.

That still isn't happening and while they may get their papers eventually, it may still be a matter of years. In the meantime, they have the training, but still are denied many jobs.

Not everyone had the ability or the desire to attend a university and there is no logical reason for these people to be denied citizenship and full participation in the society in which they live.

Even the government has admitted that there is a large percentage of the undocumented who qualify for citizenship. If that is an admitted fact, why are they not just granted papers immediately? The pandemic has been used as an excuse but one cannot help but wonder how the use of a computer involves the dangers of Covid? It should not be a difficult task.

Let those qualifying for citizenship have their papers immediately. Lessen the work restrictions for non-citizens and work together to save and rehabilitate the trafficked and the result will be a better nation for all.



RAGAS MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: SUSAN BURKHOLDER

Susan Burkholder worked in the healthcare industry in sales, marketing, consulting, coaching, and executive management roles for 30 years. In 2013, Susan felt called to get involved in the fight against human trafficking. She served as an ambassador for Shared Hope International and became an active member of the Alamo Area Coalition Against Trafficking.

Since 2015, she has served as a volunteer with Ransomed Life. Susan currently serves as Ransomed Life's Director of Community Awareness. The Ransomed Life Community Awareness Team has presented to more than 35,500 community members to include school staff, counselors, medical professionals, parents and students ages 11 and up.

Susan serves as co-chair of the Satellite Club of Fair Oaks Ranch Rotary, who recently conducted a presentation on combating human trafficking for the 55+ clubs of District 5840, which is viewable [here](#).

For more information on Ransomed Life, and to view on-demand training videos, click [here](#).

HUMAN RIGHTS - A POLITICAL OR A HUMANITARIAN ISSUE FOR ROTARIANS ?

Mark Little, RAGAS Founder

Rotarians should never be afraid to declare an abhorrence for inhuman practices and to always fight for the rights of those who are enslaved, discriminated against, marginalized and largely unprotected by their own national laws. In short we needed to be aware of Archbishop Desmond Tutu's contention that **"If we are neutral in situations of injustice we have already chosen the side of the oppressor"**

Click [here](#) to read Mark's poignant comments in full.

RAGAS SOCIAL MEDIA

RAGAS communication

You can receive the information by following us on social media!

- [RAGAS Facebook](#)
- [RAGAS LinkedIn](#)
- [RAGAS Twitter](#)
- [RAGAS Instagram](#)
- [RAGAS YouTube](#)



LOOKING FOR A WAY OUT?
帮助您方法 ¿ESTÁS BUSCANDO UNA SALIDA? ¿NECESITAS AYUDA?
STOP HUMAN TRAFFICKING
NATIONAL HUMAN TRAFFICKING HOTLINE
888-3737-888
or Text "Help" to 233733(BeFree)
IOWA VICTIM SERVICE CALL CENTER
800-770-1650
IT HAPPENS HERE IN IOWA or Text "iowahelp" to 20121
Iowa Network Against Human Trafficking & Slavery www.iowaht.org Rotary

TAKE ACTION

We are not defined by who we are, but by our actions. To contribute to ending modern slavery, you can:

- Become a RAGAS member from [here](#).
- Donate to RAGAS, or organisations working on ending modern slavery.
- [Contact your local Coordinator](#) to volunteer for RAGAS.
- Invite a RAGAS speaker to your local club meeting talking about modern slavery.
- Initiate a Global Grant project to fight against modern slavery.
- Engage with Rotary clubs that dedicates to ending modern slavery, including District 5950 [Rotary eClub to End Human Trafficking](#) and District 5710 [Rotary eClub of Community Action Against Human Trafficking](#).

