

ROTARY ACTION GROUP AGAINST SLAVERY

RAGAS NEWSLETTER

<https://ragas.online/>

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RI CONVENTION 2022 - JOIN US AT THE HOUSE OF FRIENDSHIP!

Dave McCleary - RAGAS Board Chair

RAGAS has BIG plans for the Rotary International Convention in Houston June 4th - 8th.

This is RI's first in-person convention in two years we can't wait to meet you in person! As you know our RI President Shekhar initiative is Empowering Girls and RI PE Jennifer Jones will continue working to empower girls next year at RAGAS we work to empower girls/women every day.

We are also excited about next year's theme "Imagine Rotary" because we at RAGAS strive to **Imagine a world without human trafficking/modern-slavery.**

JOIN US FOR THE RAGAS BREAKOUT! YOU CAN STOP HUMAN TRAFFICKING WITH EDUCATION/PREVENTION

Dave McCleary - RAGAS Board Chair

Inside every Rotarian is a Superhero - All You Need is a CAPE!

Calling all Rotary superheroes! Join the Rotary Action Group Against Slavery (RAGAS) as they share their new Community Awareness & Prevention Education (CAPE) strategic action plan and how every day Rotarians can be superheroes with a CAPE.

Join us for a panel including: RAGAS Global Chairman, Dave McCleary; a survivor of sex trafficking; Bill Woolf of Anti Trafficking International; Ashley Bryant, 3 Strands Global Foundation; and our own superhero, Amelia Stansell, as we share this actionable plan.

The CAPE plan provides a roadmap to help Rotarians navigate from sparking a passion through how to implement a successful anti-human trafficking/modern slavery community awareness project as well as how to implement prevention curriculum.

You will hear examples of successful programs and have the opportunity to ask questions. Not every super hero has a mask – but they all have a CAPE! Do you have yours?

Breakout: Monday June 6th, 2:00pm-3:00pm

Location: George R. Brown Convention Center (GRB), Room 372

We are expecting a large crowd, so get there early to secure your seat.



WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT LABOR TRAFFICKING: WITH PROF. MARY GRAW LEARY

Anti-Trafficking International; shared by Malcolm Baird

Mary Graw Leary, former prosecutor and now Senior Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Professor of Law at The Catholic University's Columbus School of Law, provided a recent webinar in which she outlined the ways in which Americans may unknowingly use products and services produced by forced labor.

The webinar leverages Leary's expertise in the areas of criminal law and procedure, exploitation, human trafficking, missing persons, technology, and the Fourth Amendment. She defines what constitutes labor trafficking and what it looks like regionally in the U.S, as well as globally.

Watch the full webinar [here](#).

Think you can't make a difference? Find out your own labor trafficking footprint.

Visit:
slaveryfootprint.org
responsiblesourcingtool.org



UKRAINIAN REFUGEES AT RISK OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING; ROTARY SENDING \$9 MILLION IN HUMANITARIAN AID

Dr. George Belitsos, RAGAS Board Member

Nearly five million desperate refugees have poured over the Ukrainian border to escape the ravages of war. These displaced people are primarily children, mothers, and grandparents. **Human traffickers see this refugee crisis as a major business opportunity.**



Before February 24th, when Russia invaded Ukraine, their lives looked very much like our own, work, school, and family. Today, shock and exhaustion are etched onto their faces. Their world has been turned upside down. A common desire unites the hearts of these desperate Ukrainians, safety. Safety from the bomb blasts and killing of civilians.

It is important to note that not all fleeing people are guaranteed safety upon reaching another country.

On the borders of host nations- amongst the officials, non-profit organizations, and genuinely concerned citizens trying to help- criminals are poised to prey upon the vulnerability of displaced people. Human traffickers recognize this humanitarian crisis as an opportunity to lure refugees with false promises of safety and security.



Women and children from Ukraine sleep in a makeshift shelter in the train station in Przemysl, Poland.

Innocent victims will be charged exorbitant fees for unsafe transport to an unknown place. Upon reaching supposed safety, they could fall into the hands of others who would exploit them further. Already traffickers have posted hundreds of fake job ads and offers of free transportation to other European countries.



The International Justice Mission (IJM), which works to identify and free victims of modern slavery- said it was preparing for “increased vulnerability and risk of trafficking persons” as a result of the war. A social media post by IJM’s Romania field office recently stated: “Hundreds of people are coming in every hour- and while many local people are offering genuine help, not everyone is necessarily there to be kind. There are risks of exploiters taking advantage of tired and vulnerable women and children.”

The EU estimates that the total number of displaced Ukrainians could eventually reach seven million. The EU is very aware of the human trafficking threat but the huge number of refugees has overwhelmed the truly safe resources, thereby giving traffickers exploitation business opportunities.



The nations of Europe are struggling to meet the needs of Ukrainians refugees. The Rotary Foundation has created an official channel for Rotary members around the world to contribute funds to help refugees and to secure their safety. Thus far, 9 million dollars has been raised. Rotary districts that border Ukraine may apply for grants of up to \$50,000 to offer support to refugees including safe housing, clothing, food, and medicine. RAGAS encourages all Rotarians to contribute to the Disaster Response Fund at the following link: <https://my.rotary.org/en/disaster-response-fund>.

ROTARY CLUB OF FALMOUTH, CAPE COD INTERNATIONAL ANTI-TRAFFICKING PROJECT

Robin Singer, Rotary Club of Falmouth, Cape Cod

The human trafficking subcommittee of the Rotary Club of Falmouth, Cape Cod, has been concentrating on preventing the trafficking of girls and women to brothels in India, from India and Nepal.

These countries have high rates of trafficking and re trafficking into brothels, mostly due to the lack of educational and job opportunities, and poverty. Thus we have been focused on Basic Education and Literacy for the underserved in these countries. This mission also is aligned with RI President Shekhar Mehta’s initiative on Empowerment of Girls and Women.

The work of the subcommittee has consisted of support for two institutions, a Learning Center in a red light district of Kolkata, India and a school in the mountains of rural Nepal.



Children with their first books. (Photo by Robin Singer)

We have financially supported the establishment of a tutoring room in the Kolkata Learning Center, a new center which has been built and outfitted by the NGO, Her Future Coalition, to provide education, counseling, job training, rights training, and education to hundreds of survivors of trafficking (to prevent re-trafficking) and at risk girls (to prevent initial trafficking). Our assistance has provided computers, furniture, and supplies for the tutoring room. We published an International Cookbook whose sales provide ongoing support to fund the programs of HFC.

We have also started a teaching tutoring program at the Hasta Memorial School in a rural mountainous village in Nepal. This village has a culture of trafficking and child marriage of vulnerable girls, who have little access to quality education. Over zoom, we teach English language classes to teachers at the school, and also to girls who live at the school's hostel. We also incorporate math and social studies into the English lessons as well as providing tutoring to the girls in math on a weekly basis. Guest readers cycle in to read English books to the children and guest leaders cycle in to lead games in English to help vocabulary acquisition.

In addition, our club has had multiple speakers to educate us on trafficking issues, including Dave McCleary, the chairman of RAGAS, the Rotary Action Group Against Slavery. We also had Anjali Tamang as a speaker. She is a former trafficking victim who was freed after 2 years and emerged from her trauma to found the Hasta Memorial school, to "stand in the way" of the trafficking culture in her village. We also heard a talk by a high school girl who founded Our Future of Change, a youth organization allied with the NGO Her Future Coalition, to tell us about the impactful work of HFC.

Our education by these speakers has enabled us to educate other Rotarians about this important topic and about Rotary's emphasis on these key issues, through presentations to clubs in the district. This educational mission will continue at the House of Friendship at the upcoming District 7950 conference in May.

Any Rotary clubs interested in participating in a Global Grant to help bolster the work of the Nepali school in the remote village, founded by a trafficking survivor, can contact Robin Singer from the Rotary Club of Falmouth, Cape Cod at msrobinsinger@gmail.com. Our club would love partners in this valuable endeavor!





ROTARY INTERNATIONAL BOARD OF DIRECTORS APPROVES HISTORIC HUMAN TRAFFICKING/MODERN SLAVERY RESOLUTION

Dr. George Belitsos, RAGAS Board Member

A historic vote was taken at the February 22nd-23rd, 2022 quarterly meeting of the Rotary International (RI) Board of Directors. The vote not only recognized the growing global humanitarian problem of Human Trafficking/Modern Slavery (HT/MS), but more importantly called on Rotary Clubs worldwide to become involved in projects to end this heinous crime against humanity.

Once RI approved resolution 21R-28, it became only the second time that the RI Board of Directors has taken a written policy stand in support of Rotary's engagement in the fight to end HT/MS. The first such anti-slavery statement took place in 2013 when Mark Little of the Rotary Club Norwich St. Edmund, United Kingdom, founded the Rotary Action Group Against Slavery (RAGAS) upon the approval of the RI Board of Directors. Since then, RAGAS and its many Rotary club allies have attempted to obtain anti HT/MS wording in the RI manual of procedures and the RI Code of Policies.

Past resistance by RI was primarily because some members of the board directors believed that modern slavery is a political or a cultural/social issue and not a humanitarian one. Thus, RI was reluctant to encourage clubs around the world to engage in projects which protect victims from all forms of exploitation and modern slavery. RI's recent approval of 21R-28 has now sent a strong message to all naysayers that such a political viewpoint on the issue of modern slavery is mistaken.

What became 21R-28 began its long journey to the RI Board of Directors in the summer of 2020. Dr. George Belitsos, vice-chair of Rotary Action Group Against Slavery (RAGAS) wrote the original resolution and submitted it to the Iowa, USA District 6000 Board of Directors. The district asked all of its 67 clubs to vote on the resolution which was followed by a vote and approval in January 2021 by the District 6000 Board. It was then submitted by District Governor, Alka Khanolkar to the RI Council on Resolutions (COR).



Dr. George Belitsos, Alka Khanolkar (Photo by Dr. George Belitsos)

On November 1st, 2021, after much study and deliberation, the RI Council on Resolutions voted in favor of resolution 21R-28. [Tap here to read the full resolution.](#) While RAGAS was pleased that the COR approved the resolution (318 in favor), RAGAS was disturbed that one third of the COR district delegates, (151 in opposition) voted against the resolution. It is believed that some of those who decided to vote no did so because they believe that modern slavery is a political issue not a humanitarian one. While other no votes came from countries that look the other way when it comes to forced child marriage and child labor.

Resolution 21R-28 recognized that 74 years ago the United Nations (UN) unanimously declared that no one shall be held in slavery or servitude. Long before the UN vote, slavery was outlawed and made illegal in every country in the world. Therefore, one could conclude that 74 years ago, it was no longer a political issue. Forced child marriage and labor are both considered HT/MS by the UN.

In December 2021, the COR 21R-28 was finally sent to the RI Board of Directors and placed on its agenda for an up or down at their February 22nd-23rd, 2022 quarterly meeting. In January RAGAS and District 6000 called on individual Rotary clubs worldwide to register their support for the Council on Resolutions 21R-28 resolution by sending a club petition to the RI Board of Directors. Only individual Rotary clubs are permitted to petition the RI Board of Directors.

This effort was led by Dave McCleary, chair of the RAGAS Board of Directors. The petition (which you can read [here](#)) was translated into several languages. An unprecedented number of individual club submitted signed petitions to the RI Board of Directors in support of the 21R-28 resolution.



Dave McCleary, RAGAS Board Chair

These petitions called the RI Board of Directors attention to the COR 21R-28 and the subsequent approval of the resolution on February 22nd-23rd, 2022.

RAGAS has long believed that Rotary is uniquely positioned to end human trafficking through its ability to pull communities together for a common humanitarian purpose. The historic February 22nd-23rd 2022 vote by RI will make a huge positive difference, not only to Rotary International, but to fighting HT/MS worldwide. (see attached RI meeting minutes).



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?
幫助您的方法 ¿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
or Text "iowahelp" to 20121

IT HAPPENS HERE IN IOWA

Iowa Network Against Human Trafficking & Slavery
www.iowanaht.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](#).

