



For Immediate Release

Vista Maria Unites with the Michigan State Police and their 276 Human Trafficking Survivors it has served on National Human Trafficking Awareness Day

(Dearborn Heights, MI) - Vista Maria stands with survivors on January 11, Human Trafficking Awareness Day.

Human trafficking is one of the fastest growing criminal enterprises in the United States. For several reasons, Michigan is one of the top locations for human trafficking. The FBI and Southeast Michigan Trafficking and Exploitation Crimes Taskforce (SEMTEC) estimates that there are over 1,000 persons being trafficked everyday within the Metropolitan Detroit area. Many of the youth served annually by Vista Maria's foster care, residential mental health treatment and educational programs are considered vulnerable to exploitation, by virtue of their socioeconomic status, previous victimization and association with systems of care. Due to these alarming statistics in our own backyard, Vista Maria's response was to provide a safe harbor treatment program for young survivors.

The Aaron and Helen L. DeRoy Freedom Center that opened to survivors in 2020 is home to the Wings Program. The Wings program provides intensive therapeutic treatment and housing for up to 16 victims as well as an emergency intake wing to serve up to three rescued adolescent females. Vista Maria provides treatment and restoration services to over 50 youth survivors annually and has worked with over 276 since opening the first dedicated treatment program in our state. Vista Maria views Human Trafficking Awareness Day as a day to stand with and empower the 276 adolescent female survivors we have served in our Wings Program.

Vista Maria's statewide leadership in the treatment of human trafficking survivors continues to grow. We advocate and build awareness to help people identify potential trafficking victims by providing training and education to organizations such as medical providers, teachers, faith-based groups and community organizations. Today, we are here to raise consciousness of human trafficking by acknowledging each and every one of them. Today on campus we have tied 276 blue ribbons on our survivor tree to honor each one of them, their courage, strength and ability to heal and move from a life a trauma to triumph. Today at noon, Vista Maria's, CEO, Angela Aufdemberge, Detective/Sargent, Jonathan Walden of the Michigan State Police and a representative from the SEMTEC will be speaking at a ribbon tying ceremony on the Vista Maria Campus. By empowering the voices of these young female survivors, we are taking steps to better recognize the variety of ways traffickers operate and the comprehensive services survivors require to restore their lives.





We ask you to join us in our fight to end Human Trafficking by bringing awareness to your community, your family, your friends by education, dispelling myths and by donating today to our RESTORE Campaign that directly impacts the services our survivors need.

About Vista Maria:

Our Mission: We foster restorative relationships and deliver innovative care, treatment, and education so that vulnerable youth and families believe in their worth, heal and build the skills for success.

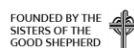
Our Vision: All children, families and communities achieve success through continuous learning and relationships that promote personal, professional and family well-being.

Visit www.vistamaria.org for additional information.

About SEMTEC:

The SEMTEC task force is one of three FBI sponsored CETFs in the State of Michigan. CETFs are also located in Macomb County and Grand Rapids, Michigan. These CETFs provide a rapid and effective investigative response to crimes involving the victimization of children. These task forces strive to reduce the vulnerability of children to acts of sexual exploitation and abuse. The task forces also strengthen the capabilities of federal, state, and local law enforcement through training programs and investigative assistance.

For more information or to schedule an interview with Vista Maria's President and CEO contact: Jennifer Golabek, Marketing Manager at (248) 914-0742 or jgolabek@vistamaria.org.



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