

treatment are important, too. “The preventative efforts on the front end — that’s how we’re going to end this problem,” Holton says.

No Funds

Ness and Looking Glass CEO Craig Opperman say that Looking Glass’s Station 7 is the only Eugene facility they’re aware of that has specialized care to address the needs of minors who have been trafficked for sex. Looking Glass also has facilities that work with young adults.

Opperman says that while Looking Glass has many different funding sources, their money comes mostly from federal grants and the Lane County Human Services Commission. But as revenues to the federal and county government dwindle or dry up, that loss is passed on to local community services like Looking Glass, which now faces close to a 30 percent reduction in funding.

“We’ve got shelter spaces and trained staff that can really help to work with kids on letting them know they could and should find a way out and testify,” Opperman says. “But we don’t want to tell them that if we can’t follow through.”

Part of persuading sex trafficking victims that leaving their traffickers is a good idea is giving them alternative ways to meet basic needs like shelter and food, and also showing them that it’s safe to leave their traffickers. Looking Glass tries to provide these needs as well as offer safety, but it costs Looking Glass money that is getting harder to come by.

Opperman says, “There can be people waiting to get in but we don’t have the resources

available. If someone comes to you three or four times and you don’t have spaces available, they can stop coming.”

Schwarz says that when people who have been trafficked for sex come to Looking Glass, the first priority is to immediately meet their basic needs and start building trust. After this, the goal is to introduce more support services, case management and counseling services. “It takes so long to build trust with that population because of the trauma that’s involved,” she says.

Schwarz says it’s difficult to keep track of statistics and emotional progress, because after their basic needs are met victims often leave town to ensure their own safety.

Just as laws have been changing to address those selling sex as likely victims, Schwarz says Looking Glass is starting to work with EPD to bring underage sex workers to its facility instead of lockup whenever possible.

She says that even though financial resources are tight across the board, funding help for sex-trafficked people under 18 is slightly easier than funding it for those who are legally adults. That’s a problem, Schwarz says, because sometimes people first trafficked in their early or mid teens don’t seek help until they are discovered by law enforcement or begin to believe, against the odds, that there might be a way out — at which point they’re too old to be considered child victims of trafficking.

“The ones that we’re able to ID well are the young adults,” in the 16 to 22 year-old age range, Schwarz says. “The 18 year olds we see started when they were 15 or 16.”

Young adults who have been sex trafficked often face a greater stigma, Schwarz says,

because there’s some sense that they must have been complicit in their trafficking. “Society is much more likely to think of them as a prostitute,” she says. “Society definitely looks at that differently, and their situations aren’t necessarily that different.”

A.K. was eventually arrested for prostitution in Portland, when she was still 15, and she agreed to testify in exchange for help from the police. In the interim, Jackson had made about \$45,000 by trafficking A.K. He didn’t allow her to keep any of the money, and he continued to beat her approximately three times a week, according to documents.

She moved to a safe house outside of Oregon and testified against Jackson, who received a 40-year prison sentence in June, three years after A.K. was discovered but only a short time after she became a legal adult.

Jackson’s record for assault on women goes back to 1992 — the year before his victim was born. Before his conviction for trafficking A.K., he’d been convicted of 26 crimes, including harassment, attempted unlawful imprisonment and multiple assaults against women. Although there’s no evidence he was trafficking the women he was convicted of assaulting, sometimes police do arrive at a situation that looks like domestic violence and later discover sex trafficking.

Schwarz says that despite media coverage discussing how trafficking works, people don’t realize that the crisis is local and constant. “It’s here, it’s happening here,” she says. “You see a lot of very sensationalized stories about sex trafficking, but there’s every day trafficking, and all youth are vulnerable.”

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