

SEX TRAFFICKING

Exploiting the vulnerable

Seaside resident seeks to halt spread of sex-trafficking industry

By **KATHERINE LACAZE**
EO Media Group

SEASIDE — Jay Barber is on a mission to promote Shared Hope International, a nonprofit organization trying to eradicate sex trafficking at home and abroad.

The Vancouver, Washington, group seeks to raise awareness and influence federal and state laws that strengthen the response to trafficking.

Barber, a Seaside Council member, first became aware of Shared Hope International while leading a training program called the Essentials of Development for the MJ Murdoch Charitable Trust. Barber is a senior fellow for the trust, which was founded by former U.S. Rep. Linda Smith of Washington in 1998. The trust annually trains about 15 nonprofit organizations in resource development.

Barber became a consultant to help Shared Hope manage its finances. He described his role as an “executive coach,” who advises Smith and helps with staff and finance development. He helps with fundraising, pursuing grants and expanding the board of director’s reach and efficiency.

While Barber’s job responsibilities remain constant, his motivation for serving the organization has changed since he first got connected to Smith.

“I started out as a consultant, but now I’m passionate about the initiative,” he said. What triggered his interest, he added, was “actually meeting face to face with some of the young women who were survivors.”

Barber, who has two daughters, considered the survivors, and those still being abused, are other people’s daughters, granddaughters, sisters and friends. There was only one course of action in his mind: “This can’t continue to happen in our country,” he said.

Driven by demand

Smith founded Shared Hope International after a trip to the brothel district in Mumbai, India, where many of the people prostituted were girls trafficked from Nepal; boys also are victimized, but it is less common. The organization established a safe house in Nepal to help restore and rehabilitate rescued survivors.

Smith and her staff then became aware of the child sex-trafficking industry taking place in the United States, which is the focus of Smith’s book “Renting Lacy: A Story of America’s Prostituted Children,” co-authored by Cindy Coloma. Shared Hope started spreading awareness about the issue. In the Pacific Northwest, Interstate 5 is a major artery for the sex-trafficking industry.

“The biggest disservice someone can do to the issue is to believe it’s not impacting them or their community, because it hasn’t happened to them,” Taryn Offenbacher, Shared Hope’s director of communications, said. “We know it happens in small communities all across the states.”

Shared Hope works to correct misrepresentation of victims, who sometimes are wrongly portrayed as promiscuous or somehow to blame for their situation. Rather than dis-



Submitted Photo
Jay Barber at Shared Hope International’s annual JuST Conference in Washington, D.C.

crediting or blaming the children, people must be willing to look deeper, Offenbacher said. The men and women who traffic and pimp out children are often master manipulators, preying on those who are physically and emotionally vulnerable. The industry only thrives because a demand perpetually exists — people are willing to pay a lot of money to sexually exploit a child who was forced or coerced into prostitution.

Decriminalizing the victims

In the ‘90s, many laws were set up to criminalize prostitutes but not so much the people buying, selling and using them, Barber said. Shared Hope began to focus its resources to change state laws across the country, he said.

Shared Hope started the Protected Innocence Challenge, a strategy to promote zero tolerance for child sex trafficking.

The organization releases 51 individual report cards each year — one for each state and Washington D.C. — that ana-

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Shared Hope’s director of communications

lyze 41 key legislative components in state laws that respond to domestic child sex trafficking crimes. The report cards, according to the organization, provide a blueprint for policymakers to establish policies and laws creating a safe environment for children.

“We believe advocates and legislators are willing to strengthen laws to protect children, but they’re busy or they don’t know everything about the issue,” Offenbacher said. The report cards provide “a

very quick summary of the areas their states are doing well,” in addition to ways to improve and language to incorporate into legislation, she added.

In 2011, the first year the cards were released, 26 states had failing grades. More than 40 states began changing their laws based on the initiative. In the 2015 report, no state received a failing grade and six received A grades. Oregon went from a D in 2011 to a B in 2015.

The next challenge is to make sure the laws are enforced, Barber said.

Spreading the hope

In addition to conducting research to inform policy and practices, Shared Hope focuses on training service providers, law enforcement personnel, community advocates and others; offering mental health services and counseling to survivors; funding and providing technical assistance to shelters and service providers. The organization also has a shel-

ter in the Pacific Northwest for survivors, ages 18 to 26, who are interested in pursuing a GED diploma, vocational training or college. The organization allows them to live at the shelter, free from financial barriers and fear of being found, Offenbacher said.

As for international work, in places such as Jamaica, India and Nepal, the organization has shifted toward partnering with and supporting indigenous groups and agencies that provide services.

Shared Hope sponsors the annual Juvenile Sex Trafficking (JuST) Conference in Washington, D.C. The conference is attended by several hundred people from various organizations and agencies, all dealing with child sex trafficking from different perspectives. The goal of the conference, said Barber, who has attended each year on behalf of Shared Hope, is to “bring all that energy to a focal point.” During last year’s three-day conference about 70 survivors attended to share their testimonies.

This April, Shared Hope is sponsoring the first JuST Faith Summit, which is similar to the conference but designated for churches and other faith-based organizations. The church has “a mighty role in addressing and stopping the tragedy” of sex trafficking, according to the organization’s website. Some churches across varying denominations have neglected the issue, and Barber said he suspects it might be because it prompts the question, “Are we practicing what we preach about the value and validity of every person?”

“As we consider that men in the churches are abusers, what does that say about how we practice our faith?” he said.

Coast Guard rescues three adrift near Grays Harbor

The Daily Astorian

GRAYS HARBOR, Wash. — A helicopter crew from the U.S. Coast Guard Air Station Astoria hoisted three people near the entrance to Grays Harbor, Washington, Saturday.

The Coast Guard launched two 47-foot motor lifeboats from Station Grays Harbor and an MH-60 Jayhawk helicopter from Air Station Astoria after receiving a call from local dispatchers about two surfers caught in the current who drifted south of the northern jetty at the entrance to the harbor, and a third person who tried to help but also got stuck.

The helicopter eventually found and hoisted two females and one male, while the lifeboats provided backup. All three people were reportedly in good condition.

“Our crews and local partners did an outstanding job in their combined efforts and effective communication with the response today,” Mark Dobney, command duty officer at Sector Columbia River, said in a release. “Often the key to a positive outcome in a case like this comes down to maintaining visual contact and relaying the position of people in the water.”

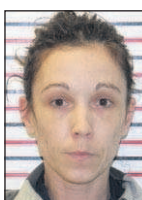
Warrenton woman accused of stealing \$26,000 from father

By **KYLE SPURR**
The Daily Astorian

A 34-year-old Warrenton woman pleaded not guilty Friday in Clatsop County Circuit Court to allegations she stole about \$26,000 from her father while he was in the hospital.

Kailli Jo Roberts is accused of aggravated first-degree theft, two counts of first-degree theft, two counts of second-degree theft, four counts of first-degree criminal mistreatment and first-degree forgery.

The alleged crimes occurred between January and April 2015.



Kailli Jo Roberts

According to the indictment, Roberts reportedly stole her father’s money and 2005 Dodge Dakota. The total amount stolen is estimated at about \$26,000.

The criminal mistreatment charges claim Roberts had

assumed the care, custody and responsibility for the supervision of her father, described as an elderly person, and she violated that duty by stealing from him.

The aggravated theft charge claims Roberts stole more than \$10,000 from her father in March. The other theft charges ranged from her stealing more than \$100 to more than \$1,000.

The money was taken out of various bank and credit card accounts, according to the District Attorney’s Office.

Roberts appeared in court Friday for an arraignment on the indictment. She was ordered to have no contact with her father.

She is due back in court next month for a final resolution conference.

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