

Guelph lawn sign campaign aims to eradicate human trafficking



[Santana Bellantoni](#)
a day ago



An eradicate human trafficking sign on a lawn on Brighton Street in Guelph. | Submitted photo

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An education campaign aimed at eradicating human trafficking was recently launched by the Rotary Club of Guelph South.

Lawn signs are out in front of people's homes in Guelph and Wellington County as part of the campaign.

On Thursday of last week an eradicate human trafficking flag rose at Guelph city hall.

The Rotary Club was struck by a speaker they had who talked about human trafficking and members didn't realize how prevalent it was so close to home.

They decided they needed to do something about it and launched the campaign. Since then the club has had more guest speakers, screened a movie about human trafficking at The Bookshelf Cinema and reached out to leaders in Guelph to express its concerns.

"It's all about money and drugs and power. And I think that the perception when you think of human trafficking, you think of that happening overseas, is just so hard to picture having it happen in your hometown right on your doorstep," said Ann Caine, part of the Rotary Club of Guelph South's eradicate human trafficking committee.

She said a lot of education needs to happen around human trafficking.

"The idea is to eradicate and educate people, so educate our community, and work towards the eradication of it," said Caine.

Caine hopes the campaign will let perpetrators know they are being watched, make them uncomfortable and realize the public is aware of what they are doing.

Another lawn sign blitz is set for the fall.

A local CEO, Bill Hammond, has a sign on his front lawn and has updated the human resources policy for his employees at Hammond Power Solutions.

"I was completely surprised and alarmed with how serious an issue in our community and in the country and how little I knew as well as others about this. I decided to lead by example, so-to-speak," said Hammond.

His concern is the message around human trafficking isn't being spread enough and he would like to see Guelph's civic leaders addressing this issue.

The language in the policy used was "an environment free from human trafficking and slavery," said Catherine McKeown, chief people officer at Hammond Power Solutions.

"I mean, it's everything. It's the government, health care, education, every sphere needs to be doing something," said Luisa Krause, executive director of Elora House.

Elora House is a safe haven for women and girls who have been impacted by human trafficking.

There needs to be more support for restorative housing with programming for women who have been trafficked, she said.

“The importance of it is that if people don't know what they're looking for they're going to be ignorant,” said Krause.

Krause gave some examples of signs people can look for if they suspect a friend is being human trafficked.

If someone you know has a new boyfriend who is a lot older and is controlling. If they are all of a sudden staying out late, going to places they don't normally frequent, not hanging around they're friends and engaging with alcohol and drugs. Other signs are suddenly dressing provocatively, skipping school and meals.

Education around the topic is important and Krause has presented at schools to talk about what healthy relationships look like.

Parents need to step up and educate themselves, she said.

“And so I've come to understand and realize that if a child is isolated, angry, it's probably not because that child is a bad child, it's probably because something's going on, they could be bullied, they could be abused,” Krause said.

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Santana Bellantoni was born and raised in Canada's capital, Ottawa. As a general assignment reporter for Guelph Today she is looking to discover the communities, citizens and quirks that make Guelph a vibrant city.

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