

ROTARY ACTION GROUP AGAINST SLAVERY

RAGAS NEWSLETTER

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BUILDING FUTURES TOGETHER: ROTARY DISTRICT 5170 VIETNAM PROJECT AT PACIFIC LINKS FOUNDATION'S 2024 CAMPCONNECT

The [Rotary District 5170 Vietnam Project](#) (RVP), led by Interact, fights one of the world's global atrocities: human trafficking, also known as modern-day slavery, by raising awareness, conducting service trips to trafficking hotspots, and providing access to education and workforce readiness training for at-risk youth to safeguard themselves from trafficking. Since 2015, RVP has partnered with [Pacific Links Foundation](#), including leading impactful workshops at their annual CampConnect.



CampConnect boosts scholarship recipients' confidence and skills for academic and professional success, advancing economic opportunities to prevent trafficking and foster community engagement. 2024 CampConnect was held virtually from July 5th-8th and in-person from July 25th-29th, connecting students with positive role models, and enhancing skills for the modern workforce ([see Opening Ceremony video, photo album](#)). Both camps featured workshops on life skills, self-awareness, career exploration, and networking.



2024 Virtual CampConnect reached 900+ students (78% of whom are girls) across Vietnam, offering 220+ workshops ([see recap video](#)). Rotarian Vidhya Srinivasan from the Rotary Club of Madras Temple City led a workshop on menstrual health and hygiene, while Rotarian Diane Truong from the Rotary Club of San Jose East/Evergreen conducted workshops on using Canva. At the 2024 Danang CampConnect, 160 students (80% of whom are girls) participated in 78 workshops ([see recap video](#)). Rotarian Nick Leon from the Rotary Club of San Jose East/Evergreen and Interactor Cathy Luong led workshops on

BUILDING FUTURES TOGETHER:



Students also engaged in team-building activities and several contests, including English debates ([see highlight video](#)), talent shows, and photo contests, fostering teamwork and creativity. Rotarians Paul Ellis from the Rotary Club of Milpitas and Diane Truong served as judges for the virtual English debate.

You can support [RVP's](#) efforts to prevent trafficking and keep Vietnamese youth in school by joining or donating to the project. RVP is also seeking volunteers to tutor English - [sign up here!](#)



Rotarian Nick Leon & Interactor Cathy Luong taught students self-defense during their "School Warrior" workshop



SIGN UP



BUILDING FUTURES TOGETHER



Campers attended life skills & career orientation workshops, topics included STEM, leadership, and trafficking prevention



English Debate contestants provided thought-provoking arguments in their presentations



Bond Fire and Talent Show were highlights for many campers as they danced and sang together

EMPOWERING WOMEN AND EDUCATING CHILDREN: RAGAS CAPE GRANT TRANSFORMS LIVES IN KOLKATA, INDIA

In the bustling streets of Kolkata, India, where the fight against human trafficking and exploitation is ongoing, a beacon of hope shines brightly through the efforts of the Rotary Action Group Against Slavery (RAGAS). Recently, their Community Assistance Program and Education (CAPE) grant made a significant impact on the ground, particularly through the partnership with the Missing Trust foundation. This collaboration aims not only to empower women but also to educate children, crucial steps in breaking the cycle of vulnerability that leads to human trafficking.



The heart of the initiative lies in empowering women to gain economic independence and thereby reduce their susceptibility to exploitation. Through the CAPE grant, RAGAS facilitated the purchase of sewing machines for the Missing Trust foundation in Kolkata. This practical support enables women to learn tailoring skills, providing them with a sustainable livelihood. By equipping these women with tools and skills, RAGAS and the Missing Trust foundation are offering them a pathway out of vulnerability and into self-sufficiency.



EMPOWERING WOMEN AND EDUCATING CHILDREN:

Virginia McKinsey, alongside Dave McCleary, Chairman of RAGAS, visited Kolkata in May to witness firsthand the transformative impact of their support. Their visit underscored the dedication of RAGAS to not only provide financial assistance but also to engage directly with the communities they aim to uplift. Speaking of their experience, McKinsey emphasized the inspiring work being done by the foundation and expressed gratitude to Leena Kejriwal, the founder, for her unwavering commitment.



Furthermore, the CAPE grant did not stop at economic empowerment. Recognizing the importance of prevention, especially among vulnerable children, the grant also supported educational initiatives. By educating children about the dangers of trafficking and providing them with essential life skills, RAGAS and its partners are laying the foundation for a safer future. Education serves as a powerful tool in preventing exploitation, equipping children with knowledge that empowers them to make informed decisions and protect themselves.

Leena Kejriwal, founder of the Missing Trust foundation, welcomed the support from RAGAS and highlighted the profound impact it has had on their efforts. Kejriwal's dedication to combating human trafficking is matched by her vision of a Kolkata where every woman and child can live free from fear and exploitation. The collaboration with RAGAS has not only bolstered their resources but has also amplified their outreach, touching the lives of many in the community.

As RAGAS continues its mission to combat slavery and exploitation globally, the success of their partnership with the Missing Trust foundation in Kolkata stands as a testament to the power of collective action. By empowering women through economic opportunities and educating children on the importance of vigilance and awareness, they are fostering resilience and hope in communities where vulnerability once prevailed.

In conclusion, the Rotary Action Group Against Slavery's CAPE grant has not only provided tangible support but has also ignited a spirit of resilience and empowerment in Kolkata. Through partnerships and dedicated efforts, RAGAS, alongside inspiring individuals like Leena Kejriwal, is making strides towards a world where exploitation and trafficking are relics of the past, and every individual can live with dignity and freedom.

MEKONG CLUB-DANCING IN THE LIGHT OF THE MOON -BOOK BY MATT FRIEDMAN

"Dancing in the Light of the Moon" follows the story of four middle-class children from Pune who become orphaned after their parents are killed by the Mumbai mafia. Over twelve years, they worked hard to rebuild their lives after this tragic event. The novel portrays the children's resilience as they strive to take charge of their destinies. It's a heart-wrenching story of love, life, overcoming adversity, corruption, and evil, shedding light on the underworld of organized crime in South Asia. The book celebrates the human spirit's perseverance against overwhelming challenges and sheds light on the issue of human trafficking.

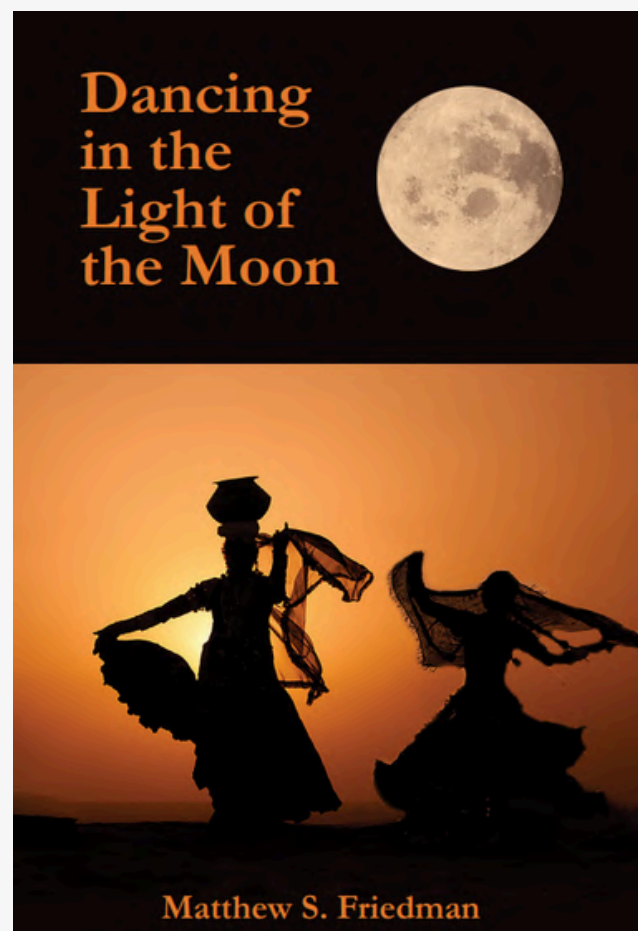
I wrote this book based on ten years of research I conducted in India. My main aim in writing it was to educate and inform. Since I have not been able to achieve this goal by listing the book on Amazon, I wanted to give copies of it as a gift to Rotarians or anyone else who might be interested.

I have attached the book. Can you help share this free version of the book with your community? I only asked for one thing - if they decided to read it, to have them please consider offering a brief review on Goodreads. This helps to further amplify the book. I'm also happy to have people contact me directly if they have any questions or comments.

Anyone who receives a copy is also welcome to pass it on to anyone in their networks. By doing this, I'm making the book "open source."

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DOING OUR PART TO RAISE AWARENESS AND PROVIDE SUPPORT BY LANA AL-AMIN, MSOL EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, INDEPENDENT ELECTRICAL CONTRACTORS FOUNDATION

When tragedy struck a member of our association family, our eyes were opened to the overwhelming problem of child sex-trafficking. Readers of this newsletter are well aware of the statistics - and the many efforts worldwide to take action and advocate for basic human rights by working together to abolish modern slavery.

In addition to providing support for our member's family, the [Independent Electrical Contractors Foundation](#) (IECF) wanted to do more. Through its research and its ongoing connection with Rotary, IECF landed on a unique opportunity to be of service.

“Over the past three years, IEC Foundation has been intentional about supporting the communities we serve,” says Tom Alexander, Atkins & Stang and IECF chairman. “For our 2024 IEC Foundation Partner Community Service Project, we are proud to work with the local IEC Florida West Coast chapter, Tampa’s nonprofit Bridging Freedom, and the Rotary by raising money, donating time, and elevating awareness to help end the abhorrent crime of child sex-trafficking.”

Zoey's Room

The IEC Foundation intends to construct Zoey's Room - an art therapy room at [Bridging Freedom](#), a therapeutic safe home campus that provides long-term, comprehensive survivor care for victims of child sex-trafficking. The Foundation also plans to construct a walking path.



DOING OUR PART TO RAISE AWARENESS AND PROVIDE SUPPORT

Bob Hamilton, director strategy and sustainability at Bridging Freedom, explains the monumental work already accomplished on the campus since its groundbreaking in 2017. Presently, they operate two homes with a dedicated team and ambitious visions.

“Bridging Freedom aims to create a nurturing, comforting environment for vulnerable children who have enduring immense trauma,” Bob says. “We ensure that each child receives security, safety, and privacy in our campus homes, as well as individualized and interdisciplinary care.”

Bob says that through a step-wise program that lasts approximately a year to 18 months, Bridging Freedom helps children to stabilize, trust again, heal emotionally and physically, and adjust to being kids again.

After hearing a presentation by Bridging Freedom at a 2020 Rotary District Conference, the Rotary Club of Wesley Chapel committed to raising \$500,000 over three years to build a third home at Bridging Freedom to help more victims. This was far beyond any project undertaken by the group in the past and is being accomplished by collaboration with numerous Rotary clubs.

“Our Rotary members became passionate about doing our part to take care of victims of child sex-trafficking,” says Alison Lucien, Rotary District 6950 human trafficking chair. “Since we launched our [Build That Home initiative](#), we have raised more than \$380,000 for Bridging Freedom. And, importantly, we have made more and more people aware of this tragic crime against our children.”

One of those Rotary clubs jumping in to help Wesley Chapel is the Turtle Creek Satellite Rotary Club, District 7305, of which IEC Foundation is a member and Foundation staff serve on the Board of Directors.

“Along with the IEC Foundation, we want to raise awareness about the horrors of human trafficking and educate the community on how to combat it,” says Dee Lanier, club president. “The work of this project is inspired by personal experiences of Rotary Club members who have been impacted by human trafficking. I lost my great niece Kamarie, and my hope is to make more people aware of the signs so they can help prevent sex trafficking. We want to bring attention to this critical issue and build strong partnerships with local organizations, enhancing efforts to combat human trafficking across the nation and make communities safer for all residents.”

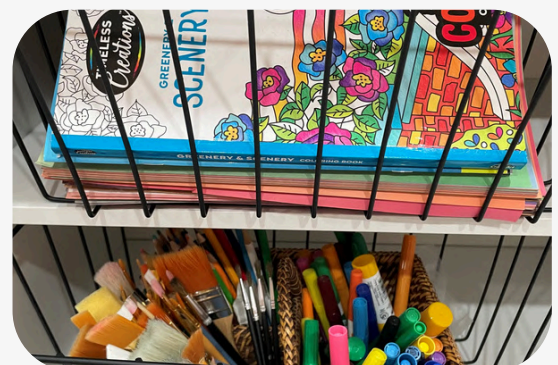
To best inform and encourage their advocacy, IEC Foundation partners, IEC members, and Rotarians are being given the opportunity to visit the Bridging Freedom campus during their time at SPARK: The Electrician’s Expo, October 14-16, Tampa, FL. Also, they are being asked to [donate funds or to donate ‘wish list’ art materials](#) like glue, paint, fabric, ribbon, clay, pipe cleaners, twine, wet wipes, and more. We invite RAGAS Newsletter readers to contribute as well.

A YOUNG AMERICAN GIRL SCOUT AND HER QUEST TO EMPOWER SURVIVORS

I am writing to share my appreciation for the inspiring work of a young high school student, whom I first met when she was just in middle school. I will identify her as Madison from Los Angeles. She was just in the 8th grade, a Girl Scout, looking to see how she could help survivors of human trafficking, while incorporating her efforts into a tangible Girl Scout project. Someone suggested she contact me, as I am a Past District Governor for the Los Angeles Region of Rotary International (District 5280) and have focused on this issue primarily through the world of Rotary www.RotariansFightingHumanTrafficking.org. Madison did reach out to me, and that was just the beginning.



At the time she took on this initiative, CAST's facilities had a spare room, which was not being used. Already recognizing the trauma experienced by young girls and women seeking help, Madison decided to transform this space into a therapeutic room. The goal was to create a safe haven where these women could relax, meet friends, and engage in activities like reading, and arts and crafts, while feeling safe and at peace. Collaborating with Rotary and the Department of Homeland Security, she also pursued and received generous donations of art supplies, books, and brain puzzles. I quote her recent comment to me ... "My mission to empower survivors has been an incredible journey." Madison will be soon be entering her Junior year in high school. I cannot wait to see what happens next, as I follow her inspiring leadership.



SECRETARY OF STATE ANTONY BLINKEN THANKED THE THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE & ORGANISATIONS AROUND THE WORLD WHO HAVE ASSISTED IN THE FIGHT AGAINST HUMAN TRAFFICKING,

He added “The courage and persistence of survivors and advocates like these humble and inspire us all as we continue working to build a safer and more just world.”



Cindy Dyer, Ambassador-at-Large at the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, focused in her speech on the importance of digital technologies in both the facilitation of human trafficking and the work to stop it. She also spoke about the role survivors play in prosecutions, reiterating a point made often by Hope for Justice about the need to avoid retraumatisation and blame. She explained: “Utilising strategic investigative processes can effectively shift the burden of proof away from a reliance on victim testimony, which can endanger and retraumatise victims, and onto the prosecuting authority to both strengthen criminal justice procedures and better facilitate the safety and long-term well-being of victims and survivors. Strengthening partnerships with survivors and innovating for greater inclusion of historically marginalized communities such as those with disabilities, are crucial to the anti-trafficking movement. Survivors must continue to be consulted early and often in the development and implementation of anti-trafficking work.”

[CLICK HERE >](#)

[2024 Trafficking in Persons Report](#)



RAGAS SOCIAL MEDIA

RAGAS communication

You can receive the information by following us on social media!

- [RAGAS Facebook](#)
- [RAGAS LinkedIn](#)
- [RAGAS Twitter](#)
- [RAGAS Instagram](#)
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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 to talk about modern slavery.
- Initiate a Global Grant project to fight against modern slavery.

Engage with Rotary District and clubs that are dedicated to ending modern slavery, including:

- District 5950 [Rotary eClub to End Human Trafficking](#),
- District 5710 [Rotary eClub of Community Action Against Human Trafficking](#),
- District 5280 [Rotarians Fighting Human Trafficking](#)
- District 5810 [Rotary Satellite Club of Greenville to End Human Trafficking](#)
- District 1260 [Ware Rotary Satellite Club Rotary for Slave Free Communities](#)
- District 5030 [The Pacific Northwest Ending Sex Trafficking](#)
- District 5840 [To Combat Human Trafficking](#)
- District 5710 [Ending Forced Organ Harvesting RSC of CAAHT](#)
- District 6000 [Prevent Human Trafficking Action Team](#)
- District 6420 [Task Force Against Human Trafficking](#)
- District 5170 [Rotary Vietnam Project](#)

To submit a potential article for for an upcoming newsletter. Please email the editor Ashley Aiken at: ashley.rotarytoendht@gmail.com

LOOKING FOR A WAY OUT?
帮助您找方法 ¿ESTÁS BUSCANDO UNA SALIDA? ¿NECESITAS AYUDA?
STOP HUMAN TRAFFICKING
NATIONAL HUMAN TRAFFICKING HOTLINE
888-3737-888
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IOWA VICTIM SERVICE CALL CENTER
800-770-1650
IT HAPPENS HERE IN IOWA or Text "iowaht" to 20121
Iowa Network Against Human Trafficking & Slavery
www.iowaht.org
Rotary

This is a sticker created by the Rotary District 6000 Prevent Human Trafficking Action Team. For more information or questions, contact RAGAS Board member Dr. George Belitsos at gbelitsos55@gmail.com