

Human trafficking rescuer shares story with Canadians

BY SANDRA BOLAN
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Human trafficking is the second largest illegal industry in the world behind cocaine's black market, according to Kevin McKay, director of development for Partners International Canada.

The industry is valued to be worth between US\$32 and US\$58 billion, according to Mr. McKay.

"It's one of the fastest growing illegal trades in the world," he said in a phone interview with Smita Singh this week.

Ms Singh, clinical psychologist and director of Calcutta's Mahima Care Home, has spent the past three weeks in Canada raising awareness about the issue and money to help expand the program.

Partners International Canada, a Christian not-for-profit, operates the home.



SMITA SINGH: Operator of Calcutta home for girls will speak at Springvale Baptist Church tomorrow.

The presentation "Chai and Mishti with Smita" takes place at Springvale Baptist Church, 3885 Stouffville Rd., tomorrow from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Ms Singh originally got involved in the human trafficking issue by treating the rescued women, who range in age from eight to 18. Then she started rescuing them. Now, she helps rehabilitate the women at the Mahima Care Home, which she opened three years ago.

The home provides health care as well as individual and group counselling, education, vocational training and job placement assistance.

In providing these tools, the girls learn to become empowered and often end up testifying against those who abducted and forced them into the sex trade industry, according to Ms Singh.

Some of the 57 girls who have gone through the home so far have helped convict nine pimps, according to Ms Smita.

Tickets to the event are \$5 each and can be obtained by calling 647-981-4481.

Lake event precedes town-wide effort

Spring clean-ups begin today

Enter a team into today's Ward 2 neighbourhood clean-up challenge and you will be entered into a draw to win a pool party, tickets to the Whitchurch-Stouffville Museum or passes to its annual car show.

The clean-up, which runs from 9 a.m. to noon, is part of the town's Earth Day event.

The Musselmanns Lake Residents Association is hosting a community barbecue with entertainment at the end of the clean up in the parking lot of the Cedar Beach Park.

The day also includes bird house building and tree planting.

Gloves and garbage bags will be supplied and garbage pick up will be arranged.

For more information or to enter a team contact Councillor Phil Bannon at connect@philbannon.ca

The rest of the municipality's Earth Day clean-up takes place April 27, 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. rain or shine.

The Ward 2 event is being held a week earlier because a couple of the activities associated with it were not available the following week, according to Mr. Bannon.

"Perhaps by spreading out the number of days that we promote the clean-up, the message will sink in and residents will get engaged and clean up their own property," he told The Sun-Tribune in an e-mail.

For the townwide clean-up, residents can participate in two ways.

One is to go to one of four stations — the Stouffville Reservoir on Millard Street east, Byers Pond Way Park, Lehmanns Pond or Madori Neighbourhood Park on Millard Street west.

Garbage bags and gloves will be supplied. Volunteers will receive a tree sapling to take home and plant.

The other option is to register a group to clean up your own neighbourhood.

Supplies will be dropped off to you for the group and garbage pick-up will be arranged.

All participants will be entered into a draw for a free pool party at the Whitchurch-Stouffville Leisure Centre.

For more information or to register, call 905-642-7529 or e-mail leisure.services@townofws.ca



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