Compton coalition fights human trafficking

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(From left) Compton resident Benjamin Holifield, Los Angeles County Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas, Restoration Diversion Services founder Sinetta Farley, Compton Mayor Aja Brown, and former Compton Councilman Willie Jones, share in congratulations of RDS’s grand opening in 2016.
Large step by one concerned citizen fused a coalition effort to end human trafficking, locally

COMPTON — Human trafficking for slavery, sex, acquisition, and sale of body parts, is rampant in Los Angeles County and that includes Compton.

The city has wrestled with sex trafficking and prostitution for a number of years and appears to be gaining the upper hand credited in large part to the proactive efforts of local resident Sinetta Farley.

Farley, 75, was fed up with trafficking in Compton and took it upon herself to do something about it. In an interview with KNBC4News, Farley recounted that she was deeply disturbed by the large numbers of girls, some as young as 13, she witnessed soliciting sex on Long Beach Boulevard, one of the city’s major thoroughfares.

Farley, who founded Restoration Diversion Services to confront the problem, told KNBC, “I started walking the boulevard because I saw all these girls on the boulevard.”

KNBC reported that initially, Farley didn’t realize the girls she saw were prostitutes. Now, she helps them break free from the “control of pimps or sponsors” and offer advice and resources.”

Farley is not alone. The City of Compton, L.A. County Sheriff's deputies/Compton station, and churches have joined in a coalition to help Farley in her quest to help victims find better lives.

“As a part of our community’s ongoing efforts to combat human trafficking in the City of Compton, I was pleased to support Sinetta Farley and Restoration Diversion Services by voting to approve a $1 a year lease for her organization in 2013,” Mayor Aja Brown said. “Ms. Farley’s work along with the city approved citywide ban on hourly motel
rentals is all a part of our community’s efforts to not only end human trafficking but support the victims and provide options, resources and in the words of Ms. Farley, ‘a place of refuge.’

“I thank Ms. Farley for being a Compton Champion and dedicating herself to helping and empowering other women in Compton through her program. Restoration Diversion Services is evidence of the power of community mobilizing to help solve issues and improve the quality of life in the City of Compton,” Brown said.

Spurred by the prospect of enormous profit, human trafficking is an immense dilemma in the U.S. The International Labour Organization (ILO), says forced labor alone, a component of human trafficking, generates an estimated $150 billion per year. In 2012, the ILO estimated that 21 million victims were trapped in this modern-day slavery.

According to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), human trafficking is the trade in humans, most commonly for the purpose of forced labor, sexual slavery, or commercial sexual exploitation for the trafficker or others. This may encompass providing a spouse in the context of forced marriage, or the extraction of organs or tissues, including for surrogacy and ova removal.

Human trafficking is a crime against the person because of the violation of the victim’s rights of movement through coercion and because of their commercial exploitation. Human trafficking expressly targets women and children and does not necessarily involve the movement of the person from one place to another.

Homeland Security advocates for more people to get involved in combating human trafficking. DHS says recognizing the signs of human trafficking is the first step to identifying a victim. DHS offers a Resources Page providing materials for in-depth human trafficking education and a catalog of materials that can be distributed and displayed in your community.

DHS discourages attempts to confront suspected traffickers directly. Instead, individuals suspected illegal activity are encouraged to contact local law enforcement directly or call
the tip lines 1-866-DHS-2-ICE (1-866-347-2423) to report suspicious criminal activity to
the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations
(HSI) Tip Line 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days yearly. The Tip Line is
accessible outside the United States by calling (802) 872-6199.

Tips also can be submitted at www.ice.gov/tips. Highly trained specialists take reports
from both the public and law enforcement agencies on more than 400 laws enforced by
ICE HSI, including those related to human trafficking.

To get help from the National Human Trafficking Hotline (NHTH), call 1-888-373-7888
or text HELP or INFO to BeFree (233733). The NHTH can help connect victims with
service providers in the area and provides training, technical assistance, and other
resources. The NHTH is a national, toll-free hotline available to answer calls from
anywhere in the country, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, every day of the year. The
NHTH is not a law enforcement or immigration authority and is operated by a
nongovernmental organization funded by the Federal government.

By identifying victims and reporting tips, proactive parties help law enforcement rescue
victims, and you might save a life. Law enforcement can connect victims
to services such as medical and mental health care, shelter, job training, and legal
assistance that restore their freedom and dignity. The presence or absence of any of
the indicators is not necessarily proof of human trafficking. It is up to law enforcement to
investigate suspected cases of human trafficking.