

Introduction

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Julia Jarema: Hi, I'm Julia.

Kirsten Barber: And I'm Kirsten!

Julia: And you're listening to the NCDPS Safety Scoop, a podcast sponsored by the North Carolina Department of Public Safety.

Kirsten: NCDPS is the largest department in the North Carolina state government with some amazing programs and resources...

Julia: ...as well as phenomenal personnel and volunteers.

Kirsten: Listen along as we take you behind the scenes and dive into how the people, programs and resources within this department enhance the safety of the people of North Carolina—give you the scoop, if you will, of all things NCDPS.

Julia: NDPS's mission is to safeguard the people of North Carolina through prevention, protection and preparation. As you listen to this podcast, we hope you'll learn something you may not have known about the ways the people of NCDPS are working to keep our state safe.

[Music]

Season 1 Episode 3

[Pause]

Julia: Welcome!

Kirsten: Today on the Safety Scoop, we're talking about human trafficking, and we'll hear from three DPS employees who are working to fight these crimes here in North Carolina. You may be surprised to learn that this form of slavery still exists in the 21st century, and it impacts women, children and men of all ages and races. People are sold, often for less than a pair of name-brand shoes, into slavery for sex, forced labor or domestic servitude. In fact, human trafficking is the largest criminal enterprise in the world next to the illegal drug trade, with about 20,000 women and children sold each year just in the U.S. Sadly, North Carolina is and has been ranked in the top 10 states for reports of human trafficking cases.

Combating human trafficking requires a multi-agency, multi-layered approach. Local, state and federal enforcement officials, teachers, healthcare workers, lawyers, judges, truckers, motorists, store owners, restaurant workers, really all of us can be on the lookout for victims to help fight human trafficking. To draw attention to the issue, January is National Human Trafficking Prevention Month. January 11th is nationally designated as Wear Blue Day, and Governor Cooper proclaimed January 2020 as Human Trafficking Awareness Month in North Carolina.

Julia:

Here today to talk with us about human trafficking and the Department of Public Safety's role in combating human trafficking are Chief Deputy Secretary Pam Cashwell, State Bureau of Investigation Special Agent in Charge Carl Wall, and State Trooper Donald Cuff. Deputy Secretary Cashwell was appointed in 2017 as a member of the Human Trafficking Commission and formerly served as a prosecutor in the criminal section of the Civil Rights Division at the U.S. Department of Justice prosecuting these crimes.

Special Agent in Charge Wall has been with the SBI for 20 years and was charged with creating a human trafficking unit for the SBI. Since then, they have trained agents across the state to identify and rescue victims, and last year were able to save 53 victims from human trafficking, and those victims ranged from teens into their mid-thirties.

Trooper Cuff joined the Highway Patrol in 2013 and is currently a member of their interdiction units and his unit's liaison for human trafficking. Trooper Cuff has attended multiple interdiction and human trafficking trainings and obtained his general instructor certification. So, let's get started. Deputy Secretary Cashwell, let's ask you the first question. Let's talk generally about what human trafficking is, and then we can talk about the Human Trafficking Commission. So, what is human trafficking?

CDS Pam Cashwell:

That—it's—human trafficking involves the illegal exploitation of individuals, and a specific element to it is that there's a use of force, fraud or coercion, except in the case of sex for one under 18 in which case force or coercion is not necessary. And so, there are three primary types of human trafficking: sex trafficking, forced labor and domestic or other types of forced servitude.

For sex trafficking, victims are forced to engage in sex acts for money. Forced labor takes on a number of forms. For example, victims may work in the agricultural industry which, as we know, happens here in North Carolina. They do so for little or no pay. Individuals also may work in factories, construction work, massage parlors, restaurants, any other type of business, really, where a person is being held against their personal will to be there. As for domestic or other—other types of servitude, that usually occurs where people are working in homes. It happens across this country where people serve as nannies or maids, just other types of—of servitude, but it's generally speaking in a home.

Kirsten: Can you take us through what the commission is and what it is doing to prevent human trafficking?

CDS Cashwell: So, the Human Trafficking Commission is legislatively mandated body that is basically, probably considered the leader in anti-trafficking initiatives for the state of North Carolina. It's charged with providing and soliciting funds. That usually occurs through grants. The commission has, um, solicited and received grants, for example, from the Governor's Crime Commission, but then also was given funds by the legislature and provided grants. It's also charged with facilitating research; educating law enforcement officers, social workers and the public; suggesting new policies, procedures and legislation; assisting in developing regional response teams and overall, just identifying gaps in our systems in North Carolina and then trying to recommend solutions to fill those gaps.

The commission has been particularly involved in the last couple of years in doing a lot of training focusing on weigh stations, truckers, also ABC outlets, rest areas, anywhere, really, where someone who may be a victim of trafficking or may be aware of someone who's a victim of—of trafficking may need that information. But citizens and advocates are critical to this, as well, because it takes all of us to sort of be on the lookout for what's happening and being aware of our surroundings.

Kirsten: So, take us through how is the Department of Public Safety specifically involved in the fight against human trafficking, and who is responsible for combating human trafficking in North Carolina?

CDS Cashwell: So, as I just noted, we're all responsible. Um, w—we're all-important players in combating human trafficking, but—but as it specifically rates to—relates to the Department of Public Safety, we are decisively involved by directly having representation on the Human Trafficking Commission and having a voice there in what is happening across the state. The Patrol has now included training on human trafficking as part of their Basic Training for troopers. And so—and then, as I noted previously, the SBI is, of course, the, uh, primary investigative entity for the state and has that statutory authority to investigate allegations. And finally, the—the Governor's Crime Commission has provided grant funding, not just to the Human Trafficking Commission, which they have, but they've also funded other, uh, entities within the state for human trafficking initiatives. So, that has been an area of particular focus for them to support human trafficking efforts. We actually have a new program that was funded by the Human Trafficking Commission within our prisons division to try to investigate, look more closely at whether we may have women within our prison system who are, in fact, being trafficked, and so that is an important new project that we have going right now through funding from the Human Trafficking Commission.

Kirsten: Trooper Cuff, moving over to you, what makes North Carolina an attractive state to human traffickers?

Trooper Donald Cuff: North Carolina, being that we have the interstates running north-south, also east and west, the troopers, that's what we do. We stay on the interstate a lot of the time. That's where a lot of us are. We also have rural areas which, uh, high demand for cheap labor. The increase in the gangs in North Carolina is real big, and also North Carolina is real big now on the sporting events. We have that, uh, concerts, state fair is one of the big ones that, uh, you can kind of hide under that umbrella. It's a lot of people that come to North Carolina that's not even *from* North Carolina that just come to the state fair just to enjoy. That's a couple of the bigger things in North Carolina that would attract a trafficker to come to North Carolina.

Julia: So, what type of training do troopers receive to address and combat human trafficking in North Carolina?

Trooper Cuff: Well, as trafficking increases, it is vital that we train the troopers. As Miss Caswell spoke earlier, for a lot of our younger troopers, as they're coming through our program, they're getting it in our Basic Law Enforcement. As far as the older troopers doing this today and getting out, speaking to them, we're trying to do a lot with that. Also, we're partnering with other states. We do, uh, we're partnering with Texas which is real big in human trafficking, and we'll be meeting with them in 2020 to get their criteria and how they're actually operating with human trafficking. Myself and there's a couple of other troopers that will go out, and Special Agent Wall also, will help train troopers on what to look for because it's more than just a stop for the troopers, um, now that we're getting into it. It's more to us than just stopping a car and writing a ticket, so we need to look a little further in our—in our stops. And that's not just Highway Patrol, it's any law enforcement.

Kirsten: Speaking of what to look for, as a trained law enforcement professional, uh, what do you guys look for in potential victims of human trafficking, and what are these warning signs or red flags that you may come across?

Trooper Cuff: It's a lot of red flags. It's a lot of it is hidden right up under our noses. We're looking at it, and we don't know it. Speaking for myself, there was a lot that I look back now at just stopping cars, and I probably looked over some things, but now, being trained and trying to train other troopers on it... But a couple of signs that you could look for will be branding. It could be a brand, it could be a tattoo, it could be names of the actual trafficker. False identification: people from—from other countries that's coming over, and they're keeping their identifications, or they're giving them fake IDs. It will take a second just to look at that picture to make sure what you're looking at is the person that you're looking at. Victims appear hungry and malnourished.

Inconsistent stories would be a great one for any stop or any at that point of contact because they're coming through North Carolina and—and the biggest key is transportation. They have to go from one place to the next place, and that's where we hope to intercept them. If we can intercept them in that, getting the stories to be the same, and that's just, again, just going a little

further in your investigation, separating the people and see if you can get the stories to be the same. If you can't separate them, if you got them in the car or a female, they will be reluctant to make eye contact with you, or the people, they're gonna look down because they're scared of the trafficker.

Physical abuse signs: bruises, black eyes, any of that stuff that's being covered up, that's something we can look suspicious. Look for that. And then controlling the personal documents. If you've got somebody in the car that, or you're dealing with someone that they don't have their own ID, that's not normal. Or social security card, birth certificate, if somebody else holds those documents, and they're speaking for that person, that's when we need to take a step back and we need to look deeper into what we got.

Kirsten: You're right, it is hidden in—in plain sight. I think that's one of the goals of human trafficking prevention and Human Trafficking Awareness Month is just to get this information out there and things that people, myself included, may not have known.

Julia: If you are a victim of human trafficking, or if you, uh, suspect human trafficking activity somewhere near you, what should you do?

Trooper Cuff: I would say, especially if you suspect human trafficking around you, for one, never approach that subject. Get as much information as you can. And when I mean information, vehicle, uh, tags, description of the people in the car, um, direction. That's a big key for us because you can put that out or we can get that out to troopers that's on the road, and if we have those specific things and we are looking for a certain car, as much as you can get off of that—that vehicle will help us out.

As far as the victims, it's tough to—to get away from that trafficker, to get that interaction. So, we also have, uh, *HP is one of our—our numbers that you can contact that's not a 9-1-1, uh, number that you can contact which won't send it to that 9-1-1 Center, but you can get one of our communicators on the phone. They also have the Human Trafficking Hotline that you can call which is 888-373-7888. And if all else fails, you can also call the SBI. Through those avenues, you'll get somebody that can potentially help in that situation, and you can—you can talk to them, and we'll try—they'll do their best to get one of us out there.

Julia: So, any mobile phone can call *HP which is *47.

Trooper Cuff: Yes.

Julia: Um, and that will put them in touch with the nearest 9-1-1 Center.

Trooper Cuff: It will.

Julia: Yep.

CDS Cashwell: And then Julia, again, the hotline that Trooper Cuff mentioned, the 1-888-373-7888 number, but also you can text HELP or INFO to BeFree which is 2333-733.

Kirsten: Um, so, Special Agent Wall, can you describe the different types of human trafficking cases that occur in our state?

Special Agent Carl Wall: In North Carolina, we're—we're seeing every type: sex trafficking, forced labor, agricultural, uh, domestic servitude. So, it's *all* across the state of North Carolina. Each of the individual types of trafficking we're seeing almost on a daily basis.

Julia: So, can you give us some examples of, like, what that looks like? Um...

Special Agent Wall: Sure.

Julia: You mentioned the sex trafficking, forced labor, and domestic servitude.

Special Agent Wall: Right, so, sex trafficking, you know, we're looking at manipulated or forced to engage in sexual acts. As far as labor, uh, a lot of our migrant camps sometimes are not being paid what they were promised when they came here which would—would fall into a coercion or a force issue. Um, and then, of course, domestic servitude, individuals, you know, maids or nannies that could be forced and their documents withheld. They're having to work in a situation which they didn't choose to.

Julia: Human trafficking is not the same thing as a—as an immigration issue.

Special Agent Wall: No.

Julia: Um, and I think people often get those confused, and they are two different things.

Special Agent Wall: Two—two totally things from human smuggling...

Julia: Right.

Special Agent Wall: ...and human trafficking. Yes, ma'am.

Julia: Mmm-hmm.

CDS Cashwell: And I think one of the misnomers, Julia, just to jump in for just a second, is that people think that someone has to have been on the front end forced into something.

Special Agent Wall: Right.

CDS Cashwell: That force may come at a later time. Perhaps a person voluntarily decided that they would be a maid or a nanny, but then the supervisor, if you will, or the

person who is forcing them into that labor has taken their documentation, or they are not paying them properly by saying, "You owe me money for this, that and the other." And so, they are unable to leave because either they don't have their documentation, or they don't have the resources and they don't have anywhere to go. And so, you know, it may start out with a situation that you've agreed to, but then it becomes human trafficking at some later point.

Julia: I think that brings up a very good point. So, Special Agent Wall, what are the penalties for those convicted of human trafficking?

Special Agent Wall: For those convicted of human trafficking, it's a felony in the state of North Carolina. North Carolina, along with the Human Trafficking Commission, has done an excellent job in heightening our penalties for— for traffickers.

Kirsten: So, we've gone over the different types of human trafficking. Can you now take us through what areas and what industries human trafficking is most likely to occur in North Carolina?

Special Agent Wall: Well, as we said in the beginning, it's—it's all, um, but prominently, um, the sex trade here in North Carolina, again, as you alluded to in the beginning, we rank in the top 10 in the nation for reports to the POLARIS or the National Human Trafficking Hotline. Uh, so, sex trafficking is there. Uh, we're seeing that on a constant, daily basis across the state, in every large city, municipal city and even rural counties.

The other things that we're seeing actually labor trafficking. North Carolina's a—a very large agricultural community, so we see that often where individuals have been forced or coerced into something that they didn't agree to. And believe it or not, in the restaurant industry we're starting to see that more and more. We've worked multiple cases now where individuals are working, just as an example, for a buffet, and there's a lot of individuals in there, and they all reside at the same residence that's controlled by the restaurant owner. And so, a lot of times they find themselves here without their documentation, forced into work for a long number of hours with not the pay that they were promised and maybe sometimes not even being fed what a normal human being would think you would when you're an employee. So, we're seeing all kinds, but those three specifically stick out in my mind for what we've worked just this past year.

Julia: And I know, um, one of the reasons that this continues is, I've been told, that it's—it's a highly profitable industry. Is that correct?

Special Agent Wall: This—this is literally, possibly the—the—the highest grossing revenue illegal activity that there is out there. Uh, the drug trade is very high, but when you look at human trafficking across the the—the—the globe, it is *the* highest. It's a business, and so they're out to make money. But it's highly profitable because the commodity of—the commodity in which they're selling never goes away, so they don't have to replenish it, per se. Uh, so, that individual is sold over and

over and over again or used over and over again. So, yeah, it's a highly profitable industry.

Julia: So, I know we mentioned earlier that, um, SBI has the authority to prosecute, so what strides is the SBI taking to find and prosecute human traffickers?

Special Agent Wall: So, in 2018, I was assigned to create, stand-up a human trafficking unit. Uh, so in the past year, we've gone around to educate both local, state and federal law enforcement officers what human trafficking in the state of North Carolina looks like. Uh, the Bureau has taken strides in that we have trained approximately, uh, about 16 agents specifically in—in being able to work a human trafficking case on their own. Uh, we've trained all of our agents of what it looks like, who to call and how to react to it. We're all going out and doing proactive, uh, operations. We did over, uh, 16 operations just this past year in which we encountered 53 victims, rescuing some, as you said earlier, as young as 15 and as old as in their mid-thirties. Um, we've also—we do a lot of education pieces, not only to other law enforcement officers and agencies, uh, but to the public. Uh, so, just this past year, the Bureau alone did 20 different speaking engagements in 15 various counties across the state to make sure we try to get the word out of what human trafficking is, what it looks like and how it is specific to North Carolina.

Julia: Mmm.

Kirsten: It comes back to the approach for all.

Special Agent Wall: Correct.

Kirsten: Not just one approach for it.

Special Agent Wall: Absolutely.

Kirsten: So, what efforts are being done to ensure that victims are provided with the resources they need to re-enter society after this most likely traumatic experience. For example, what if the victim has been charged with a crime as a result of criminal activities they participated in due to demands of the trafficker?

Special Agent Wall: For the first part, to ensure the victims are provided with resources, that's the one thing that law enforcement has to work together with our partners in the non-governmental organizations, or NGOs, as we call them. When an officer comes across a human trafficking victim, we have to make sure—you have to realize that victim's been traumatized, and so we have to make sure we take the correct steps not to retraumatize that victim and make sure that they get to a person or a place that can provide those resources, such as the NGOs I just described. We have them all across the state of North Carolina. They work hand-in-hand with law enforcement. So, that's what we do to get them the resources to be able to re-enter society. Those NGOs provide those victims with

sometimes jobs, sometimes educational resources to get them over that traumatic experience as much as we can.

Now, when you ask, you know, what if they've been charged with a crime, that's one of the things that North Carolina's currently looking at. We have a trial court process going on right now in Cumberland County where we have a human trafficking court. It's held once a month. So, a lot of times what we're finding, uh, in other states is using that type of court where that victim who may have been charged with a crime previously, we could adjudicate that because we, again, don't want to traumatize them again or re-victimize them.

Julia: Vic-victimize them twice.

Special Agent Wall: Correct. So, that's something we're on the cutting edge. Cumberland county is one of the first right now. It's kind of been a trial period to see what that looks like.

Conclusion

Julia: Thank you to our listeners for joining us to learn more about preventing human trafficking and what you can do to protect potential victims from being trafficked. Again, if you think someone is the victim of human trafficking or to report suspected human trafficking activity, call the national hotline. That number is 1-888-373-7888. Again, that number is 1-888-373-7888. And as I mentioned earlier, you can also text either the word HELP or the word INFO to BeFree, and that number for BeFree is 233733.

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