

Press Release

Hamilton County Health Department

WILLOWBEND FARMS
restoring human trafficking survivors

VISION
HOSPITALITY GROUP



Web: health.hamiltontn.org

****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****

July 25th, 2024

The Health Department and Community Organizations will participate in the Red Sand Project to Raise Awareness of Human Trafficking.

HAMILTON COUNTY, TN – The Hamilton County Health Department, [WillowBend Farms](#), and [Vision Hospitality Group](#) partner with local organizations to participate in the Red Sand Project to raise awareness of human trafficking.

The [Red Sand Project](#) uses sand artwork as a way for people to come together and connect, raising awareness about human trafficking, modern slavery, and exploitation. The red sand symbolizes the human trafficking victims that fall through the cracks of our society every day. Although Hamilton County makes continuous efforts and improvements, human trafficking remains a significant public health concern within our community.

“Vision Hospitality Group is honored to serve as host for our third annual collaborative Red Sand Project. The One Voice Coalition, the Hamilton County Health Department, and our civil leaders across Chattanooga have been hard-working partners in putting a stop to human trafficking. For that, we are deeply grateful. In keeping with our theme this year of “progress,” Vision is proud to represent the hotel industry by sharing the ways hospitality has been taking a stance and our efforts towards increasing survivor support and awareness. While progress is being made, this fight isn’t over, and we invite the community to join us with their voices.”

According to the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation, human trafficking is a demand-driven crime that involves exploiting a person for labor, services, or commercial sex acts, targeting men, women, and children. Human trafficking is also one of the fastest-growing criminal industries in the country, with cases reported in all 50 states. According to the [National Human Trafficking Hotline](#), in 2021, 217 victims in Tennessee were involved in 152 reported cases; cases can have multiple victims.

As a survivor, I understand the importance of decreasing barriers to victims seeking services and that having a continuum of care provides survivors with sustainable restoration. During the Red Sand Event on Thursday, August 1st, we will share the progress made in the last year, including information on the Counter-Trafficking Alliance of Chattanooga (CTAC) launched in January 2024. That has brought together over 52 agencies in our community to address human trafficking. Massive steps to protect our community, bring awareness, and coordinate care with cultural sensitivity as a critical objective to serve the most vulnerable of populations to trafficking are at the forefront. One Voice collective comprises five local counter-trafficking agencies that serve the Chattanooga region that come together as one unified voice with a mission to support survivors and prevent human trafficking,” says Sarah McKinnis, co-founder and CEO of WillowBend Farms.

If you know someone who needs help to escape trafficking, contact the **Tennessee Human Trafficking Hotline** at **1-855-558-6484**. If you suspect you have encountered a victim of human trafficking, you may call the **National Human Trafficking Hotline** at **1-888-373-7888** or text **233722**.

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As part of outreach efforts regarding Human Trafficking Awareness, a Red Sand Project event will be held on Thursday, August 1st, at 10 a.m. at the Aloft Hotel. Due to limited space, RSVPing is preferred. Event information and the RSVP link are available at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/red-sand-project-chattanooga-tickets-929321203737>.

Additional resources

- For more information on human trafficking and the hotline, visit <https://humantraffickinghotline.org/>.
- To learn more about the indicators of human trafficking, visit: <https://bit.ly/3K1Vm1v>
- For a complete list of resources, visit the [Tennessee Department of Health's](#) webpage.
- To read this information in Spanish, visit the Health Department's Spanish Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/SaludHamiltonTN>