

****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****

August 6th, 2026

Hamilton County Health Department & Community Partners to Host 2026 Red Sand Project to Raise Awareness of Human Trafficking

HAMILTON COUNTY, TN— The Hamilton County Health and Social Services Division, [WillowBend Farms](#), the [Dr. Carol B. Berz Family Justice Center](#), [Vision Hospitality Group](#), and other community organizations will host the 2026 Chattanooga Red Sand Project on Friday, August 7. This event aims to raise awareness about human trafficking and unite the community in support of survivors. It is part of a statewide initiative involving all 95 counties in Tennessee.

During the [Red Sand Project](#), interactive and visual displays will help participants learn more about human trafficking, modern slavery, and exploitation, while also acknowledging those who often go unnoticed in society. The project encourages community members to recognize the signs of human trafficking, understand its impact, and actively participate in prevention and support for survivors.

“The Red Sand Project serves as a powerful reminder that no community is immune to human trafficking. The red sand placed in sidewalk cracks symbolizes the victims and survivors whose experiences are often overlooked,” said Beka Bohannon, Administrator of Hamilton County Health and Social Services. “The Health Department is committed to combating human trafficking and proudly collaborates with local leaders such as WillowBend Farms and the Vision Hospitality Group to support survivors. Together, we can demonstrate that human trafficking has no place in Hamilton County.”

According to the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation, human trafficking is a crime driven by demand that involves the exploitation of individuals for labor, services, or commercial sex acts. This crime affects men, women, and children alike. Human trafficking is one of the fastest-growing criminal industries in the United States, with cases reported in all 50 states. [The National Human Trafficking Hotline](#) reported that in 2024, Tennessee had 213 cases of human trafficking, involving a total of 446 victims, as each case can include multiple victims.

“This year's Red Sand Project is set to be one of our best. We are not only raising awareness about the significant impacts in the fight against human trafficking in the Chattanooga area, but we are also placing survivor voices at the forefront of this year's event,” said Sarah McKinnis, CEO and Founder of WillowBend Farms Inc. “There is no greater influence in leading this fight than those who are willing to stand up and share their stories about the freedom available to victims who courageously step forward and inspire others. As we celebrate 250 years of freedom in the United States, this event will highlight how that foundation has led to generational freedom right here in Chattanooga.”

Event Details:

- Friday, August 7, 2026
- Program begins at 10 a.m.
- Aloft by Marriott Chattanooga Hamilton Place
- 2090 Hamilton Place Blvd., Chattanooga, TN 37421

“Vision Hospitality Group is once again proud to host our 6th annual Red Sand Event at the Aloft Hotel at Hamilton Place. When we first collaborated with various incredible groups and businesses in Chattanooga to combat the horrifying crime of human trafficking, we could never have imagined how much this partnership would grow,” said Jenelle Hawkins, Director of Operational Excellence at Vision Hospitality Group. “The impact of our collective efforts is

truly making a difference in our community. This year's theme for the Red Sand Event focuses on how everyday people can continue to contribute to this important cause, and we at Vision are excited to see Chattanooga come together once again."

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 233733.

As part of our outreach efforts to raise awareness about human trafficking, there will be a Red Sand Project Networking event on Friday, August 7th, following the press conference. Due to limited space, please RSVP. You can find all event information and the RSVP link at: [Eventbrite](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/red-sand-project-chattanooga-tickets-1992653906475?aff=oddtcreator&mc_cid=8e7ed6df76&mc_eid=UNIQID).

Additional resources

- Questions? Call the Health Department at 423-209-8000.
- Free interpretation services are available at all Health Department clinics.
- For Health Department information, visit: [Health.HamiltonTN.org](https://www.health.hamiltontn.org)
- To read this information in Spanish, visit the Health Department's Spanish Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/SaludHamiltonTN>