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The Salvation Army USA Central Territory News

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The Salvation Army Assists Victims in Illinois First Human Trafficking Conviction

State's Attorney Anita Alvarez Expresses Gratitude to The Salvation Army's STOP-IT Program

In the first human trafficking conviction in Illinois, two men operating a trafficking ring in the south suburbs pled guilty and were sentenced on Tuesday to four-year prison terms, announced the office of Cook County State's Attorney Anita Alvarez. The two victims in the case, a 17-year-old and 18-year-old, received support services from *The Salvation Army's STOP-IT Program*, which provides psychological and medical treatment, educational services and vocational training for victims who have been harmed by the sex trade.

"This conviction is the result of the collaborative effort by officers from the Cook County Sheriff's Police Vice Unit, Assistant State's Attorneys from the Special Prosecutions Unit and our community partner, **The Salvation Army**," State's Attorney Alvarez said in a press release. "Each agency is truly committed to working together to not only arrest and prosecute the offenders, but also to help victims of sex trafficking and end the cycle of servitude and violence."

In 2010, State's Attorney Alvarez created a Human Trafficking Initiative to more effectively combat the escalating problem of sex trafficking and underage prostitution. Specially trained prosecutors work closely with other local, state and federal law enforcement entities to investigate and prosecute these specific cases. The conviction in this case resulted from the initiative, and it represents the first state conviction for human trafficking.

The Salvation Army **STOP-IT Program** is aimed at combating human trafficking by educating the community on identifying the "red flags" of human trafficking, operating a 24-hour hotline and reaching out to and assisting the victims of trafficking. The STOP-IT program has built collaborative relationships with government and juvenile service providers and conducted extensive outreach in an effort to identify victims, aid their safe exit and connect them with needed services. STOP-IT was authorized by the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2008.

"In the Chicago metropolitan area, on any given day, between 16,000 and 25,000 women and children are the victims of commercial sexual exploitation," said Lt. Col. Ralph Bukiewicz, Salvation Army Metropolitan Divisional Commander. "The Salvation Army is here to support the efforts of law enforcement and the Office of the States' Attorney through community education, and by providing treatment and support for the victims of human trafficking. This is a prime example of what we can achieve when all we work together to protect our children and our communities."

For more information about how The Salvation Army combats human trafficking and assists victims of human trafficking, visit www.sa-stopit.org. **The STOP-IT 24-hour hotline is 877-606-3158.**

The Salvation Army also operates the **PROMISE** program (**Partnership to Rescue our Minors from Sexual Exploitation**). PROMISE has trained more than **10,000** first responders across five major U.S. cities in human trafficking prevention, identification and intervention skills. In September 2010, The Salvation Army opened **Anne's House**, a residential home for women and girls who are victims of commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking. Anne's House provides a safe, nurturing environment; long-term trauma treatment; life skills training; and education for young women ages 12-21 who are victims of sexual abuse and violence. Anne's House is one of only a few homes in the U.S. providing residential care and long-term therapeutic treatment for victims of human trafficking.

About The Salvation Army

The Salvation Army, an evangelical part of the universal Christian church established in 1865, has been supporting those in need in His name without discrimination for 129 years in the United States. Nearly 30 million Americans receive assistance from The Salvation Army each year through the broadest array of social services that range from providing food for the hungry, relief for disaster victims, assistance for the disabled, outreach to the elderly and ill, clothing and shelter to the homeless and opportunities for underprivileged children. About 83 cents of every dollar raised is used to support those services in 5,000 communities nationwide. For more information, go to www.salvationarmyusa.org.

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