



The Bucks County Board of Commissioners proclaimed Jan. 8 as Human Trafficking Awareness Day. Joining in the proclamation ceremony are (from left) Dan Emr, executive director of Worthwhile Wear, a nonprofit that helps survivors of human trafficking; Julie Dugery, co-chair of the Bucks Coalition Against Trafficking; Penny Ettinger, executive director of the Network of Victim Assistance; Bucks County Commissioner Chairperson Diane Ellis-Marseglia, Commissioner Gene DiGirolamo and Commissioner Robert Harvie.

[PEG QUANN / STAFF PHOTOJOURNALIST]

Bucks honors those fighting human trafficking

By Peg Quann

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When he read the number — 24.9 million — Bucks County Commissioner Gene DiGirolamo had to stop and read it again. That's the number of people around the world who are estimated to be trafficked, or held against their will as sex slaves or in involuntary work situations.

Members of NOVA, the Network of Victim Assistance, received recognition from the Bucks County Board of Commissioners last week when they appeared before the commissioners to promote both awareness that human trafficking has occurred in the county and ways to prevent it and help the victims.

NOVA has established a Bucks Coalition Against Trafficking

“victim identification, community education, enhancement of arrests and prosecution of traffickers, legislative advocacy and a coordinated response of survivor services.”

DiGirolamo read a proclamation to mark Jan. 8 as Human Trafficking Awareness Day. The proclamation noted 75% of victims are women and girls. He also said that statistics show that one in seven children who run away from home end up in child sex trafficking.

Penny Ettinger, NOVA executive director, said that Bucks is not immune from human trafficking.

“Human sex and labor trafficking happens everywhere, including right here in Bucks County. To stop the perpetuation of sex and labor trafficking in our community, each one of us needs to be aware of the signs that someone may be at

and take action,” she said. “Here's what you can do. Educate yourself on the signs of trafficking. Get Involved and volunteer. If you suspect that someone may at risk or is being trafficked, call your local law enforcement agency. For more information, go to www.novabucks.org/projects or www.polaris-project.org.”

As part of the program, NOVA is encouraging participation in the Red Sand Project, which was developed by artist and activist Molly Gochman in 2014. Packets of red sand are used to fill in cracks in sidewalks to promote awareness of people “who fall through the metaphorical cracks” in society.

Packet are available at the NOVA office, 2370 York Road, Building B-1, in the Jamison section of Warwick. Contact julied@novabucks.org or call 215-343-6543, ext. 6604, about the Red Sand