



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

COVID-19 Not Stopping Men's Movement to End Human Trafficking

Five-week HEMAD Campaign is raising awareness and seeks an end to societal scourge

MILWAUKEE (Dec.21, 2020) – A men's movement to oppose human trafficking is picking up steam despite lockdown measures to prevent the spread of the novel Coronavirus. Through December 20, more than 20,000 men in Wisconsin and seven other states have taken the HEMAD pledge to stand against human trafficking and the commercial sexual exploitation of adults and children.

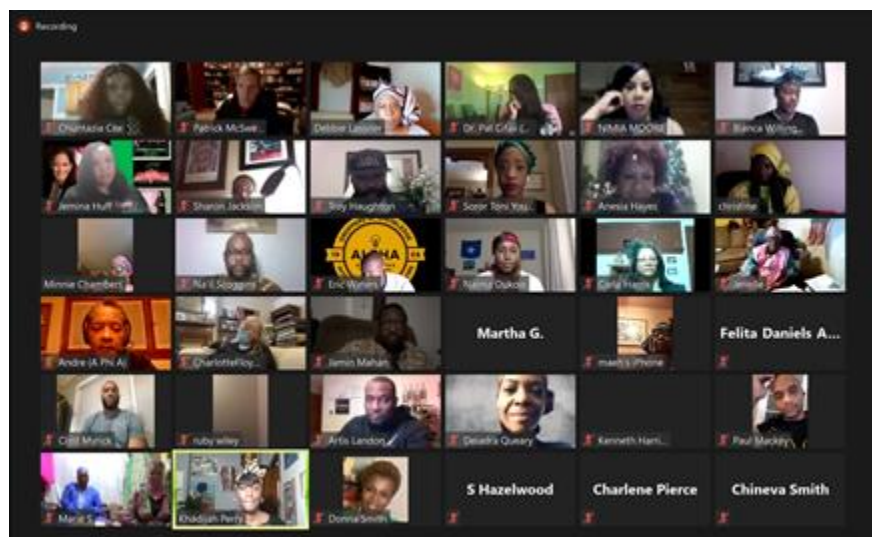
HEMAD (**H**uman trafficking **E**ducators working with **M**en and boys to stand **A**gainst the **D**emand) is a program of [Convergence Resource Center](#) (CRC), a faith-based nonprofit community service organization helping women rebuild their lives after trauma with an emphasis on justice involved women and female survivors of human trafficking.

"The response to this effort has been amazing. We've had men's groups and churches in Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, North Carolina and California join us," said State Rep. Jason Field, who has introduced or supported a number of bills aimed at helping human trafficking victims escape the commercial sex trade.

"People all over are recognizing that the commercial sex trade exists in cities, suburbs, small towns, rural areas and tribal lands," he said. "It is a multimillion-dollar criminal enterprise that we must put out of business. It is victimizing vulnerable teen boys and girls in every community."

The HEMAD campaign, now in its third year, kicked off just before Thanksgiving and runs until Dec. 28. Organizers hope 60,000 men will go to [CRC's website](https://www.convergenceresource.org/hemad) (<https://www.convergenceresource.org/hemad>) or [YouTube](#) to watch a 3-minute video and take the pledge.

"While there have been some in-person presentations made at churches, many more are being done virtually through Zoom, Skype, Teams or Facebook Live," said Arnold Cifax, senior youth pastor at New Testament Church in Milwaukee and a CRC board member. "People have quickly adapted to using these methods to stay connected and share information despite the pandemic. We conducted several training sessions for volunteer ambassadors through Zoom and have been using social media to spread the word."



Members of Alpha Kappa Alpha met via a Zoom call for a virtual holiday party on Dec. 19. During the call, members and their spouses learned about the HEMAD program and the men took the HEMAD pledge to oppose human trafficking.

One such virtual event was the Alpha Kappa Alpha holiday party held December 19. During the Zoom event, CRC co-founder and CEO Debbie Lassiter showed the [HEMAD video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dYOeMuhmf1E&t=29s) (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dYOeMuhmf1E&t=29s) illustrating the issue of human trafficking and how men can play a key role in ending the demand of sex trafficking. She then led the 99 attendees in the pledge.

“We encourage individuals and organizations to watch the video and take the pledge. They should email us at hemad@convergencesource.org if they want one of our ambassadors to conduct a short presentation in-person or virtually,” said Lassiter. “While this campaign is focused through the end of the year, we have presentations already scheduled into January and are happy to do any and all in the coming weeks and months. This is an important issue happening all year long.”

Cifax noted that high-profile arrests of Jeffrey Epstein associates Ghislaine Maxwell and Peter Nygard as well as local cases involving federal charges in sex trafficking has raised awareness of the issue.

“Statistics show that 80 percent of human trafficking cases in the U.S. involve sex trafficking, and that more than half of the criminal trafficking cases in the U.S. involve children,” noted Cifax. “One in three runaways will be lured into sexual exploitation within 48 hours of leaving home and the average age of entry into the commercial sex trade is 13 – that is a kid in the seventh grade!”

“About 300,00 children are at risk of being sex trafficked each year in the U.S.,” add Fields. “That’s the combined populations of Kenosha, Racine, Waukesha and Wauwatosa or Green Bay, Eau Claire, Sheboygan, Oak Creek, Mequon and Germantown. That’s a lot of kids and they are worth saving!”

Fields added that nearly 45,000 cases of human trafficking have been reported to the National Human Trafficking Hotline (888-373-7888 or text 233733) in the past five years and the number of human trafficking cases in the U.S. is rising every year.

“Traffickers are using social media platforms to recruit and advertise. But we can use those same social media tools to fight this epidemic and squash the demand for commercial sex trafficking,” said Fields. “Working together, we can put this multimillion-dollar demand-driven industry out of business.”

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About Convergence Resource Center

Convergence Resource Center (CRC) is a faith-based nonprofit community service organization providing support for women rebuilding their lives after trauma with an emphasis on justice involved women and female survivors of human trafficking. It is a contracted member of the Milwaukee Joint Human Trafficking Task Force (MJHTTF). To learn more, call (414) 979-0591 or visit www.convergencesource.org.

About HEMAD

Human trafficking Educators working with **M**en and boys to stand **A**gainst the **D**emand (HEMAD) is a program of Convergence Resource Center directed at men on the importance of ending human trafficking. To learn more, visit <https://www.convergencesource.org/hemad-campaign> or contact [HEMAD@convergencesource.org](mailto:hemad@convergencesource.org).

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