



**Center for the Study of Human  
Trafficking and Modern Slavery**

UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

# **ANNUAL REPORT**

**AUGUST 2024 - JUNE 2025**

# A MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends and Partners,

As Executive Director of the UCF Center for the Study of Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery, I am proud to reflect on another impactful year of collaboration, education, and progress in our shared mission to combat exploitation and support survivors. This year, we expanded our reach, deepened our community ties, and delivered transformative training and resources to those on the front lines of prevention. We have now **educated more than 6,000 hospitality students** to identify and report trafficking in their workplaces and community.

A cornerstone of our efforts remains our trusted partnerships with national and international organizations whose leadership and dedication continue to strengthen our region's coordinated response to trafficking. Together, we have hosted awareness events, supported survivors, and provided critical resources to community stakeholders.

We are especially proud of our training initiatives for **Orange County Youth Leaders**, designed to equip the next generation with the knowledge and tools to identify and prevent trafficking in their schools and communities. Empowering youth with prevention education is one of the most effective ways to build resilience and awareness from the ground up.

On a global level, our team has partnered with **ECPACT International to develop an anti-trafficking curriculum tailored for tour guides** within the travel and tourism industry. This work underscores the need for targeted, sector-specific solutions that empower professionals with real-world knowledge to spot and report red flags.

Our student leaders, **Knights of the RELM were celebrated this spring by winning the Liberator Award for the "Best Student Group"** in their efforts to combat trafficking. They hosted a panel for 500+ high school students, hosted two Red Sand Project events, and volunteered for the 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Human Trafficking Awareness Conference. We are so proud of you all! Go Knights! Charge ON!

The work is challenging—but it is also deeply rewarding. Every connection we make, every student we teach, and every survivor we support moves us closer to a world free from exploitation.

Thank you for standing with us in this fight. Together, we are making a difference.

With gratitude and resolve,



**DR. JESSICA WICKEY BYRD '13MS, '24EDD**  
**Executive Director**, UCF Center for the Study of Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery  
**Director**, Internship Program,  
Rosen College of Hospitality Management  
**Associate Lecturer**, Department of Tourism, Events,  
Entertainment and Attractions



**JAIDA SMITH**

**Fall 2024 - Spring 2025**  
**Intern Student**



**SEONJAE "LUCA" KIM**

**Summer 2025 Intern Student**

**Editorial:**



**MAYARA MARTINES '22MS**

**Project Manager & Advisory**  
**Board Member**

## CONTACT INFORMATION

UCF Rosen College  
of Hospitality Management

9907 Universal Blvd.,  
Orlando, FL, 32819

[htmscenter@ucf.edu](mailto:htmscenter@ucf.edu)

[hospitality.ucf.edu/htms](https://hospitality.ucf.edu/htms)

# UCF'S CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND MODERN SLAVERY HIGHLIGHTS



# UCF'S CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND MODERN SLAVERY

## MISSION, VISION AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES



## EDUCATION

### OUR MISSION

At the Center for the Study of Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery, we are committed to deepening the understanding of the escalating global challenge of human trafficking and modern slavery. Our approach encompasses comprehensive community engagement, rigorous research, focused education, and specialized training. Our goal is to not just study this complex issue but to actively seek and implement solutions.

## RESEARCH

### OUR VISION

We aspire to be the foremost platform for collating and distributing knowledge, research, and fostering community partnerships to effectively counteract human trafficking and modern slavery on a global scale. Our vision extends beyond academic research; it seeks to influence policy, inspire action, and ignite change.

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

### OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Tackling all forms of human trafficking with a holistic approach.
- Prioritizing the dignity and rights of every individual.
- Collaborating with survivors as key partners.
- Working together with various sectors for a unified response.
- Focusing on tangible outcomes and real-world impact.
- Utilizing research and data to guide our actions.

# UCF'S CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND MODERN SLAVERY IMPACT

## 6,300+ STUDENTS

have been educated since 2020 via their internship courses to identify and report Human Trafficking in the hospitality industry.

## 20+ GLOBAL INITIATIVES

hosted by U.S. Department of State's International Leadership Visitor's Program and in international conferences.

## 15 BOARD MEMBERS

from UCF, Valencia College, Love Missions Global, One More Child, FLITE Center, a Certified Coach, and lived experience experts.

## 30+ PRESENTATIONS

in collaboration with the Florida Department of Health, Pasco County Sheriff's Office, the Florida State Attorney's Office, and the University of Surrey, both within various states and internationally.

## 900+ ATTENDEES

For on campus and online attendance to our events educating the community on human trafficking in the hospitality industry.

## 10 EVENTS HOSTED

Red Sand Project, Polaris Star Awards, Research Colloquiums, Guest Lectures, and Leadership Development Workshops.

## 1 STUDENT ORGANIZATION

Knights of the RELM - established in 2023 to support the UCF HTMS Center's anti-trafficking efforts, and advance social justice in events and beyond.

## 1 NATIONAL AWARD

2024 Student Group of the Year - Knights of the RELM at the Liberator Awards.

## 6 PARTNERS

United Abolitionists, Inc., It's a Penalty, Paving The Way Foundation, One More Child, FLITE Center, and Resolved Strategies.



Photos by Rosanne Perez, UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management Photographer (rperez64@ucf.edu)

# UCF'S CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND MODERN SLAVERY STUDENT ORGANIZATION, KNIGHTS OF THE RELM



Knights of the RELM is a student organization that focuses on making a positive social impact through the use of events. KoTR focuses on student development academically, professionally, and socially. They work alongside UCF's Center for the Study of Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery and other anti-trafficking organizations to achieve their mission.

## CULTURE

## PASSION

## RESPECT

### THEY ARE THE BEST IN THE NATION

Congratulations to our Student Organization, Knights of the RELM, for winning the **Student Group of the Year at the 12th Annual Liberator Awards!**

This award celebrates advocates in the fight against human trafficking for their impact and contributions, created by The SOAP Project with Theresa Flores as their CEO & Founder in Columbus, Ohio.

Thank you, Dr. Marianne Thomas, for nominating them, and thank you, Dr. Jessica Wickey Byrd, for introducing our students to this fight and for your guidance over the past two years. Because of all the past and current members of Knights of the RELM and their tireless effort, they were nationally recognized: Sydney Weisman, Madelyn Hutchinson, Liv Wastier, Gabriela Bonilla, Francis Pepe, Aili Wu, Ashley Zarwanitzer, Natalie Weiss, William Zambelli, Mia Rossi, Erin Bridgan, James Costa, Daniel Neddo, Annastazia Allgire. We cannot be prouder of our students.



*This nomination represents the incredible efforts of the Knights of the RELM and the University of Central Florida's Center for the Study of Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery. To be nominated for the Liberator Awards is not just an honor but a testament to the collective power of education, advocacy, and action in the fight against human trafficking.*

*To all our students in the Knights of the RELM, this nomination is a reflection of your passion, perseverance, and unwavering commitment to justice. You have turned learning into leadership, compassion into community, and awareness into advocacy. Through your workshops, events, and outreach, you have not only educated your peers about the intersection of human trafficking and the hospitality and tourism industries but have also ignited a spark of change that extends far beyond our campus.*



*They also attended and volunteered at the backpack event at the **Orlando World Center Marriott, hosted by the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children**, along with our Executive Director, Dr. Jessica Wickey Byrd, and Board Member, Kimberly Brewster.*



**UCF'S CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND MODERN SLAVERY**  
**STUDENT ORGANIZATION, KNIGHTS OF THE RELM**  
**2025-26 BOARD MEMBERS**



**MADELYN HUTCHINSON**

**Major:** Restaurant and Lodging Management, B.S. Student

**PRESIDENT**



**FRANCIS "FRANKIE" PEPE**

**Major:** Hospitality Management, B.S. Student; Hospitality, Health, and Well-Being, Certificate

**VICE PRESIDENT**



**LIV WASTIER**

**Major:** Hospitality Management, B.S. Student; Leadership Studies, Minor

**SECRETARY**



**NATALIE WEISS**

**Major:** Hospitality Management, B.S. Student; Entertainment Management, Certificate

**SOCIAL MEDIA DIRECTOR**



**ASHLEY ZARWANITZER**

**Major:** Hospitality Management, B.S. Student; Theme Park Management Minor

**VOLUNTEER DIRECTOR**



**DR. JESSICA WICKEY**

**Executive Director**, UCF's Center for the Study of Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery  
[JWB@ucf.edu](mailto:JWB@ucf.edu)

**ADVISOR**

**CONNECT WITH THEM**



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21 posts 89 followers 56 following

Knights of the RELM  
 Education  
 We aim to be service leaders of change through impact, legacy, development, and sustainability in events on a local, national, and global scale.  
[forms.gle/TMuiNmsAt7C6wCvL8](https://forms.gle/TMuiNmsAt7C6wCvL8)

*We aim to be service leaders of change through impact, legacy, development, and sustainability in events on a local, national, and global scale. [Follow them here.](#)*



**WILLIAM ZAMBELLI**

**Event Coordinator**, Rosen College of Hospitality Management  
[william.zambelli@ucf.edu](mailto:william.zambelli@ucf.edu)

**CO-ADVISOR**

**UCF'S CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND MODERN SLAVERY  
STUDENT ORGANIZATION, KNIGHTS OF THE RELM  
THANK YOU GRADUATES, 2024-25 BOARD MEMBERS**



**SYDNEY W.**

**Major:** Event Leadership, M.S. Graduate; Event Management Graduate Certificate

**PRESIDENT**



**ANNASTAZIA A.**

**Major:** Hospitality Management, B.S. Graduate

**VICE PRESIDENT**



**MIA ROSSI**

**Major:** Event Management, B.S. Graduate

**SECRETARY**



**GABRIELA BONILLA**

**Major:** Event Management, B.S. Graduate; Entertainment Management Certificate

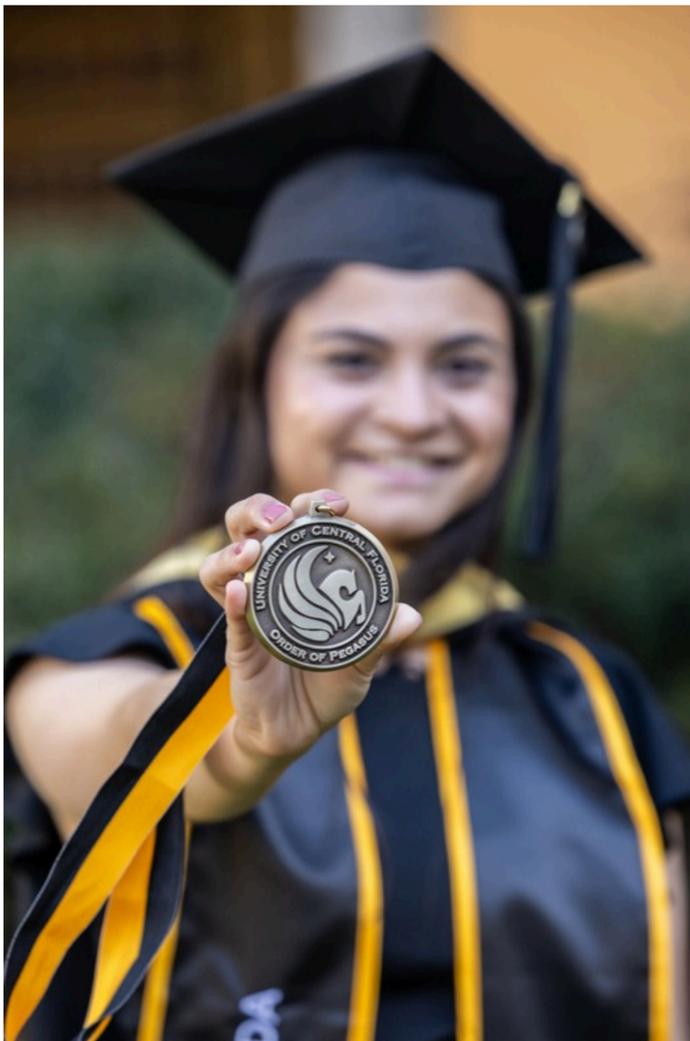
**MARKETING DIRECTOR**

*We extend our heartfelt congratulations and **deepest gratitude to the 2024-25 graduate student board members of Knights of the RELM.** Thank you for your incredible dedication, leadership, and hard work in advancing the organization's mission to make a positive social impact through meaningful events. Your commitment to supporting student growth and partnering with UCF's Center for the Study of Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery has truly made a difference. As you graduate and embark on new journeys, we celebrate all you have accomplished and wish you continued success in the future. Go Knights!*



# UCF'S CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND MODERN SLAVERY

## STUDENT ORGANIZATION, KNIGHTS OF THE RELM ORDER OF PEGASUS TO FORMER PRESIDENT, SYDNEY WEISMAN '23, '25MS



On every first Wednesday in April, the University of Central Florida celebrates Founder's Day. Founder's Day is celebrated through the recognition of the outstanding achievements of UCF's own faculty, staff, and students. At this year's ceremony on Wednesday, April 2, I had the honor of being inducted into the Class of 2025 Order of Pegasus.

**Order of Pegasus is the highest honor a student can obtain throughout their time at the University of Central Florida.** Having been awarded to only 438 individuals since 2001, this designation represents a student's exemplary academic achievement, leadership, community service, university involvement, and research contributions.

I am incredibly grateful to have been selected for this recognition, and more so, for my time as a student at the University of Central Florida - Rosen College of Hospitality Management. Without the support of my peers, staff, faculty, and mentors none of this would be possible. Dr. Jessica Wickey Byrd, Dr. Vicki Lavendol, Dr. Jeeyeon Jeannie Hahm, Kyle Trager, Vanessa Blackmon, Dr. Vanessa Gonzalez, Danielle Starceвич, Dr. Mike Duignan, Dr. Yun Ying, Dr. Cynthia Mejia, Julie Kephart. I am so thankful to have been a part of so many different groups, such as the Rosen College Leadership Council, Knights of the RELM and the Center for the Study of Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery, the Office of Academic Advocacy, PeerKnights Coaching, and the Peer Outreach Mentoring Program, which have all contributed to my development and impact at the University.”

**We are extremely proud of Sydney for her outstanding dedication and impactful initiatives in advancing student involvement in the fight against human trafficking.** Her exceptional leadership, commitment to raising awareness, and drive to foster meaningful change have significantly strengthened our shared mission. She is truly a force to be reckoned with, and we look forward to seeing the continued impact of her work in the years to come.



**UCF'S CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING  
AND MODERN SLAVERY**  
**INTERNAL ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS FROM THE  
UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA**



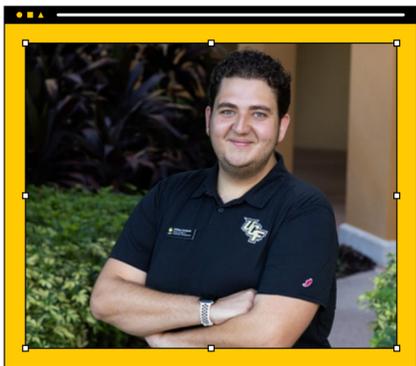
**DR JESSICA WICKEY**

**Executive Director, UCF's Center for the Study of Human Trafficking & Modern Slavery;**  
**Director, RCHM Internship Program;**  
**Associate Lecturer, Dept. of Tourism, Events, Entertainment & Attractions**  
**Email: [JWB@ucf.edu](mailto:JWB@ucf.edu)**



**HOLLY ROBBINS**

**Marketing and Communications Manager**  
**UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management**  
**Email: [hollyrobbins@ucf.edu](mailto:hollyrobbins@ucf.edu)**



**WILLIAM ZAMBELLI**

**Event Coordinator**  
**UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management**  
**Email: [william.zambelli@ucf.edu](mailto:william.zambelli@ucf.edu)**

“ Being a part of Knights of the RELM has been such an honor as a graduate student. I am now endlessly grateful to be apart of this organization as the co-advisor, and new advisory board member for the UCF Center for the Study of Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery. We lead by example, and we practice what we know best, which is to forever be an advocate for those in dire need. ”



**KYLE TRAGER**

**Director of Development**  
**UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management**  
**Email: [kyle.trager@ucf.edu](mailto:kyle.trager@ucf.edu)**



**MAYARA MARTINES**

**Project Manager, UCF's Center for the Study of Human Trafficking & Modern Slavery**  
**Email: [mayara.martines@ucf.edu](mailto:mayara.martines@ucf.edu)**

“ When commitment to using education as a vehicle for empowerment and systemic change drives our initiatives, we cultivate awareness, critical thinking, and skills that equip individuals and communities to recognize, prevent, and combat human trafficking. We can all work together to #StopHumanTrafficking with a #HigherEdImpact ”

## UCF'S CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND MODERN SLAVERY THANK YOU, ROSEN COLLEGE OF HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the members of the Internal Advisory Board of UCF's Center for the Study of Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery, whose expertise and guidance have been instrumental in advancing our mission. We are especially thankful to the leadership of the Rosen College of Hospitality Management for their unwavering support, with **special recognition to Dean Dr. Cynthia Mejia** for championing our initiatives and fostering a culture of engagement and impact. We also deeply appreciate **Dr. Arthur Huang, our Director of Research**, for his invaluable contributions in shaping our research agenda and strengthening our evidence-based approach to addressing human trafficking and modern slavery.

Additionally, we wish to acknowledge **Dr. Alan Fyall, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs**, and **Dr. Manuel Rivera, Assistant Dean**, at the Rosen College of Hospitality Management for their continued encouragement and strategic insights, which play a vital role in advancing our work. We also recognize the exceptional administrative and operational support provided by colleagues across the College. **Eric Backes, Contracts and Grants Specialist II**, ensures our projects remain compliant and effectively managed; **Sherri Dixon, Budget & Finance Director**, provides meticulous oversight of our financial resources; **A'Rion Raymond, Program Director**, offers strong leadership in advancing impactful initiatives; and **William Zambelli, Event Coordinator**, demonstrates unwavering commitment in coordinating events that elevate our mission and extend our reach. We are also grateful for the creative and technical professionals who help communicate our mission and elevate our visibility such as **Holly Robbins, Manager, Marketing Communications**, whose strategic direction shapes the Center's brand and outreach, **Sarah Hall, Social Media Specialist II**, for sharing our content to build awareness and community, **Rosanne Perez, Graphic Designer and Photographer**, whose visual storytelling brings our message to life with clarity and impact, **Vinay Manukonda, Web Applications Developer I**, for providing seamless digital solutions that expand our accessibility and engagement on our website, **Kanisha Clark, Graphic Design Specialist II**, whose creativity enhances our materials and messaging across platforms, **Fredrick Okumu, Director, Information Technology**, for overseeing the systems that support our work and safeguard our operations, **Stacy Little, IT Client Support Specialist II** and **Ryan Scarlett, Instructional Technology Specialist I**, for offering dependable technical support that ensures continuity in our day-to-day efforts, **Stephanie Gavarrete, Executive Assistant to the Dean**, for her steady organizational support and coordination across leadership initiatives, **Sheryl Goins, Academic Program Coordinator I**, whose behind-the-scenes efficiency supports our programs, **Seonjae "Luca" Kim, Summer 2025 Intern**, for bringing fresh perspectives and enthusiasm to our ongoing projects, **Jaida Smith, Fall 2024 and Spring 2025 Intern**, for her dedication and support that enhanced our program development and event management, and **Mayara Martines Ramalho de Oliveira, Project Manager & Advisory Board Member**, for her strategic leadership, expertise in design, marketing, project and event management, and everything overall!

Your commitment and collaboration continue to drive our efforts forward, making our collective work possible. Go Knights!

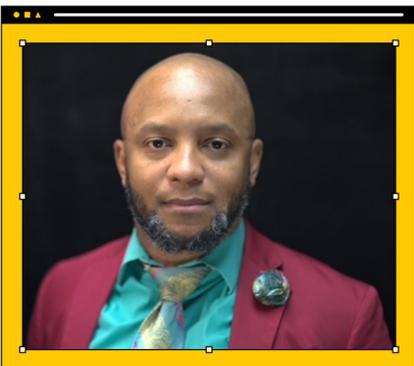
[hospitality.ucf.edu](https://hospitality.ucf.edu)



# THE WORLD'S #1 HOSPITALITY COLLEGE IN THE U.S.A.'S #1 DESTINATION.

At Rosen College, we open doors—to opportunity, to experience, and to your future.

**UCF'S CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING  
AND MODERN SLAVERY  
EXTERNAL ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS**



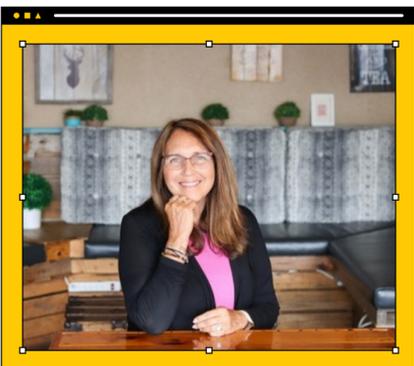
**EZEKIEL MCKINE**

**Regional Advocate II  
FLITE Center**



**OLIVIA LITTLETON**

**Anti-Trafficking Supervisor  
One More Child**



**TINA KADOLPH**

**Co-founder and President  
Love Missions Global**



**KIMBERLY BREWSTER**

**CTEAM ADAM Consultant  
National Center for Missing  
and Exploited Children**



**ALAN WILKETT**

**Law Enforcement (RET)  
Sergeant and Human  
Trafficking Consultant**



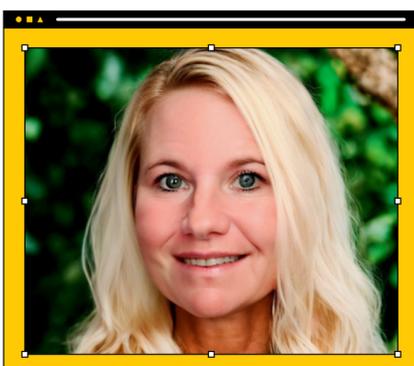
**DR. JEFFERY GOLTZ**

**Dean, School of Public  
Safety, Legal Studies &  
Education, Valencia College**



**DOUG GILMER**

**President and CEO  
Resolved Strategies**



**MISTI SPENCER**

**Business Development and  
Community Impact Strategist,  
Quality Labor Management**

*Over the past year, the Center has continued to bridge the gap between academic inquiry and actionable solutions, equipping practitioners, policymakers, and communities with the knowledge and tools necessary to confront human trafficking in all its forms. As someone who has been “hands on” and frontline in combating human trafficking, I can attest to the measurable impacts the Center brings to disrupting human trafficking. I am deeply honored to serve as a member of the Advisory Board.*

*It is an honor to serve on the Advisory Board where under Dr. Jessica Wickey Byrd's leadership, we advance education, research, and community engagement to confront this injustice head-on. In Central Florida, where the need is great, our work not only restores hope and freedom but also sets a powerful example for others to follow. I am confident the Center will continue to drive change and be a beacon in this critical fight.*

*It is a privilege to serve on the Advisory Board, where the passion of the staff and students drives innovative, victim-centered, and trauma-informed solutions. I deeply value the Center's unique focus on the intersection of human trafficking and hospitality, an area critical yet often overlooked. By elevating survivor voices and championing education, prevention, and accountability, the Center is creating real change for vulnerable populations and setting a powerful standard for this important work.*

*Serving with UCF's Center for the Study of Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery has been an honor and perfectly aligns with my mission as a survivor leader and lived experience expert. I am proud to be part of a multidisciplinary team that places survivor voices at the center, drives ethical, trauma-informed research, and advances real structural change. Together, we are not simply raising awareness, we are reshaping policy, education, and practice to build accountable pathways toward justice.*

## UCF'S CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND MODERN SLAVERY EXTERNAL ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS (CONT.)

We are deeply grateful to the members of our External Advisory Board for their continued partnership, insight, and dedication to our shared mission. Their diverse professional expertise and community-based perspectives have played a vital role in shaping the Center's strategic direction and ensuring our work remains grounded in real-world impact. From guiding program development to fostering interdisciplinary collaboration, **their contributions have strengthened our ability to address the complex challenges of human trafficking and modern slavery.** We thank them for their ongoing support, advocacy, and commitment to driving meaningful change through education, research, and community engagement.



Photos by Rosanne Perez, UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management Photographer and Kanisha Clark, UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management Graphic Design Specialist II

# UCF'S CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND MODERN SLAVERY

## NATIONAL HUMAN TRAFFICKING PREVENTION MONTH EVENTS, THE RED SAND PROJECT HOSTED BY THE CENTRAL FLORIDA HUMAN TRAFFICKING TASK FORCE: ORANGE, OSCEOLA, SEMINOLE COUNTY

#REDSANDPROJECT

Our Executive Director, Dr. Jessica Wickey, and our Project Manager, Mayara Martines, are members of the **Central Florida Human Trafficking Task Force**. This task force is a network of governmental & non-governmental agencies working together to combat all aspects of human trafficking in Central Florida.

One of the major events hosted by the Task Force is the **Red Sand Project** events. The Red Sand Project is a participatory artwork created by *Molly Gochman* that uses sidewalk interventions and earthwork installations to create opportunities for people to question, connect, and take action against vulnerabilities that can lead to human trafficking, modern slavery, and exploitation.

In partnership with the **Orlando Police Department** and the **Orange County Sheriff's Office**, we attended the first of many "Red Sand Project" events at the Orlando Police Department. A huge thank you to **Olivia Littleton** for your opening ceremony. We heard from the **Orlando Police Chief, Orange County Sheriff, State's Attorney's Office, Legislative Representative, and a survivor**. The second of three Red Sand Project events was hosted at the **Seminole County Sheriff's Office**. Thank you again, **Olivia Littleton** and **Stacie Ham**, for being part of his art installation shedding light on human trafficking. The final Red Sand Project event happened at the Osceola County Sheriff's Office.

**HUMAN TRAFFICKING AWARENESS MONTH** **RED SAND PROJECTS**

- JAN 11** ORANGE COUNTY - 10:00AM  
12520 W SOUTH ST., ORLANDO
- JAN 18** SEMINOLE COUNTY - 10:00AM  
100 ESLINGER WAY, SANFORD
- JAN 22** ROSEN COLLEGE FOUNTAIN - 12:00PM  
9907 UNIVERSAL BLVD, ORLANDO
- JAN 23** UCF MAIN CAMPUS - 12:00PM  
STUDENT UNION PATIO
- JAN 25** OSCEOLA COUNTY - 10:00AM  
201 E DAKIN AVE, KISSIMMEE

Take part in raising awareness. Join the movement by filling sidewalk cracks with red sand and documenting your sidewalk transformation on social media using #RedSandProject

UCF Center for the Study of Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery  
WWW.HOSPITALITY.UCF.EDU/HTMSCENTER

Hosted by the Central Florida Human Trafficking Task Force



Photos by Dr. Jessica Wickey, UCF's Center for the Study of Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery Executive Director

**UCF'S CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND MODERN SLAVERY**  
**NATIONAL HUMAN TRAFFICKING PREVENTION MONTH EVENTS,**  
**17TH ANNUAL HUMAN TRAFFICKING AWARENESS CONFERENCE**  
**HOSTED BY UNITED ABOLITIONISTS, INC. AND HTMS**

In recognition of Human Trafficking Prevention Month, we hosted a series of events focused on raising awareness and promoting education and prevention efforts against human trafficking. Along with our partner **United Abolitionists, Inc.**, we hosted the **17th Annual Human Trafficking Awareness Conference** on our campus, the Rosen College of Hospitality Management, which brought together experts, community leaders, and advocates to address the global crisis of human trafficking and modern-day slavery. Among the **500+ attendees** were **Orange County Mayor Jerry Demings, who issued a proclamation reinforcing the community's commitment to combating human trafficking, and Florida State Attorney Monique Worrell, who presented updates on Orange County's efforts to fight human trafficking.** Thank you for your support of anti-trafficking initiatives and the continued advocacy for survivors of human trafficking. We are a community that works collaboratively in our anti-trafficking efforts, and it starts from the top with our elected officials.

Our Executive Director, Dr. Jessica Wickey Byrd, was also interviewed by **WESH2** on this year's theme highlights *The Role of Artificial Intelligence & Big Tech in Fueling the Crime of Human Trafficking*, and how the community can detect, prevent, and combat the crime effectively. **You can watch the interview here.** We are so grateful for everyone's inputs and presentations at this year's event: Dr. David Metcalf, Dr. Douglas Gilmer, Michael Eakins, Shawna Hoffman, Alan Wilkett, Ezekial McKine, Kim Figueroa, Jan Edwards, Homeland Security, and FBI.

Watch the presentation, which was livestreamed on YouTube [here](#).

The event concluded with a **Red Sand Project installation hosted by Knights of the RELM** next to the fountain, where conference attendees, students, staff, faculty, and community members spread red sand between the gaps to symbolize individuals who have fallen through the "cracks" of our social, economic, and political systems.

Thank you to everyone who organized this unforgettable, insightful event, and thank you additionally to everyone who participated.

[Check out the full gallery here.](#)

**A special acknowledgment to Tomas J. Lares, founder and president of United Abolitionists, for hosting this awareness conference for 17 years. Without your support and mentorship, we would not be able to accomplish many things to #StopHumanTrafficking.**

**The 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Human Trafficking Awareness Conference will be on January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2026, at the University of Central Florida Rosen College of Hospitality Management in Orlando, Florida.**



Photos by Rosanne Perez, UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management Photographer

**UCF'S CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND MODERN SLAVERY**  
**NATIONAL HUMAN TRAFFICKING PREVENTION MONTH EVENTS,**  
**17TH ANNUAL HUMAN TRAFFICKING AWARENESS CONFERENCE**  
**HOSTED BY UNITED ABOLITIONISTS AND HTMS (CONT.)**



Central Florida community to hold 17th Annual Human Trafficking Awareness Day conference

This year's theme highlights The Role of Artificial Intelligence & Big Tech in Fueling the Crime of Human Trafficking — and how the community can detect, prevent, and combat the crime effectively



Updated: 11:07 AM EST Jan 21, 2025 Editorial Standards  
 Meredith McDonough X  
 anchor



Photos by Rosanne Perez, UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management Photographer

# UCF'S CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND MODERN SLAVERY

## NATIONAL HUMAN TRAFFICKING PREVENTION MONTH EVENTS, POLARIS STAR AWARDS

The **15th Annual Polaris Star Awards** is an annual event that brings together individuals, organizations, businesses, and activists who are dedicated to combating human trafficking. This prestigious award ceremony, hosted by **United Abolitionists, Inc. and the UCF Center for the Study of Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery**, honors and recognizes the outstanding efforts and initiatives made in the fight against modern-day slavery and exploitation.

The Polaris Star Award was named after the Polaris Star, also known as the North Star, and is what slaves used to find their way north to freedom along the Underground Railroad. This award is given to the modern-day abolitionists in our communities who are leading the fight against human trafficking in their profession and/or sphere of influence. **Since 2011, 105 individuals have received one of our various awards.**

In 2025, the Polaris Star Awards was hosted at **UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management on January 24th, 2025. Thank you, Karla Ray**, for being the Master of Ceremonies. Your ability to connect with the audience created a fantastic atmosphere.

Thank you to **Mr. Tomas J. Lares, Founder and President of United Abolitionists, Inc.**, for hosting the ceremony for the past 14 years, and for your dedication to combating trafficking in Central Florida.

To our amazing sponsors, Republic National Distributing Company and their VALOR program, CORE Foodservice, Earls Kitchen + Bar, The Coca-Cola Company, Hyatt House, and the University of Central Florida - Rosen College of Hospitality Management, we thank you for your generosity in celebrating this special event! [Click here to see the event's gallery.](#)

### THANK YOU, SPONSORS!



Rosen College of Hospitality Management

UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA



## POLARIS STAR AWARDS

FRIDAY, JANUARY 24, 2025, 6:00-9:00PM  
9907 UNIVERSAL BLVD., ORLANDO, FL 32819

<p><b>ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS</b></p> <p><b>LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT</b> Sue Aboul-Hosn</p> <p><b>WILLIAM WILBERFORCE AWARD</b> Dr. Doug Gilmer</p> <p><b>FREDRICK DOUGLAS AWARD</b> Ezekial McKine</p> <p><b>CATALYST AWARD</b> Evan Patel</p> <p><b>SPOTLIGHT AWARD</b> McKibbons Group Ally Martin and Greg Burnes</p> <p><b>VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR</b> Carol Welker Award Misti Spencer</p> <p><b>SURVIVOR AWARDS</b></p> <p><b>INDIVIDUAL</b> Kim Figueroa</p> <p><b>REGIONAL</b> Kelly Posze</p> <p><b>INTERNATIONAL</b> A21</p> <p><b>WELLBEING</b> Christine Frederick</p>	<p><b>EDUCATION AWARDS</b></p> <p><b>COMMUNITY</b> Dr. Shelly Wager USF BRIGHT Project</p> <p><b>INTERNATIONAL PACT - ECPACT USA</b></p> <p><b>CORPORATE PARTNER</b> Sean Walker G6 Hospitality</p> <p><b>NON-PROFIT</b> Dawn Hawkins The National Center on Sexual Exploitation</p> <p><b>AGENTS OF CHANGE</b></p> <p><b>MEDIA</b> Angel Studios</p> <p><b>LEGAL</b> Janet Owen</p> <p><b>MAJOR EVENTS</b> Rotary District 6980</p> <p><b>LAW ENFORCEMENT</b> Special Agent Seminole Co Sheriff's Office</p>
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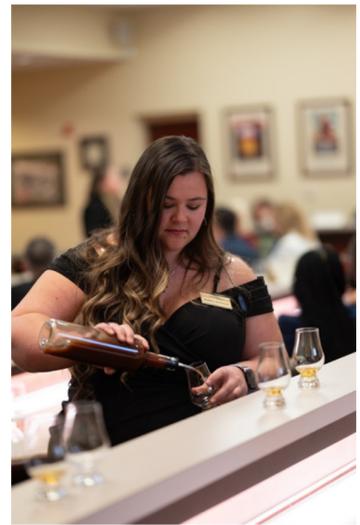
# UCF'S CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND MODERN SLAVERY

## NATIONAL HUMAN TRAFFICKING PREVENTION MONTH EVENTS, POLARIS STAR AWARDS (CONT.)

For the first time at a Polaris Star Awards, a bourbon tasting was held after the ceremony. Ms. Jennifer Hostetter, an Instructor at the UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management, hosted the tasting for attendees. **The student group, Knights of the RELM, planned and executed the event.**

**Ms. Jennifer Hostetter is a thirty-year veteran of the service industry.** She has over twenty years of experience in food and beverages, where she has served in numerous capacities both in and out of the kitchen. She also spent seven years in high-end retail sales working in various management roles for the Fine French Linen company, Yves Delorme. Ms. Hostetter holds a Master of Food Culture & Communications from the University of Gastronomic Sciences in Italy, a Bachelor of Arts in History from Covenant College, and an Associate of Science in Culinary Arts from Johnson & Wales University. In addition, Ms. Hostetter is a Certified Specialist of Wine, and she is currently working towards certification as a Specialist of Spirits, both awarded through the Society of Wine Educators. Thank you to Ms. Hostetter for your expertise, and to the Rosen College Events and Catering team for the exquisite food during the bourbon tasting and the ceremony.

**The bourbon was sponsored by Republic National Distributing Company's Valor program. We thank this veteran-owned bourbon company, Hotel Tango for the generous donation of their tasty bourbon. It was a highlight of the evening!**



# UCF'S CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND MODERN SLAVERY

## NATIONAL HUMAN TRAFFICKING PREVENTION MONTH EVENTS, POLARIS STAR AWARDS - OUR BOARD MEMBER WINNERS

### CONGRATULATIONS, DR. DOUG GILMER

#### WILLIAM WILBERFORCE AWARD

Dr. Doug Gilmer is the president and founder of Resolved Strategies, LLC, a global justice solutions group, helping connect organizations with the relationships, resources, technology, and training they need while also helping build collaborative, multidisciplinary teams, to effectively address various forms of human exploitation around the world. A 35-year law enforcement veteran, the last 25 years being with the Department of Homeland Security, he finished his federal law enforcement career serving as a Senior Advisor and the Senior Law Enforcement Liaison at the Department of Homeland Security's Center for Countering Human Trafficking (CCHT) in Washington, DC where he was responsible for external engagement, stakeholder development, national policy, and strategy implementation. Prior to his role at the CCHT, he served in a variety of management, supervisory, investigative, and operational positions within Homeland Security Investigations to include many years working inside the U.S. Intelligence Community on matters of national security and counterterrorism. His human trafficking work predates the TVPA.

Dr. Doug is known as a leader, innovator, change agent, fixer, and most importantly, a collaborator. He is a dedicated defender of human rights and a fighter against crimes such as human trafficking and child exploitation. He is passionate about building and equipping teams to effectively combat these crimes, assist victims, and hold offenders accountable for their crimes. He is in high demand across the country as a speaker, lecturer, and trainer to communities, faith-based organizations, law enforcement, non-profit organizations, non-governmental organizations, and on college campuses. His background and experience allow him to communicate a compelling message to deliver vital information, drive change, and direct action.

Doug Gilmer holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Interdisciplinary Studies from Liberty University in Virginia, a Master of Natural Resources and Global Sustainability degree from Virginia Tech, a Master of Counseling degree from Luther Rice University in Georgia, and a Ph.D. from Columbia International University in South Carolina where his research focus was on the organizational outcomes of collaborative, multi-disciplinary teams used in human trafficking investigations. He has completed additional courses of study at the National War College, Joint Special Operations University, and the Senior Executive Leadership course at the Defense Equal Opportunity and Management Institute. He is a member of the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), serving on the IACP's Victim Services Committee. With a strong desire to work with students and young adults, he recently served as a mentor to the 2023-2024 cohort of Frederick Douglass Fellows, a program of the Human Trafficking Institute, serves as an adjunct professor and lecturer at multiple universities, and sits on human trafficking research center advisory boards at both the University of Houston and the University of Central Florida.

Doug is also a proud veteran having spent career in the military, retiring in 2019 from the United States Coast Guard Reserve, where in his last assignment, he served as the Gold Badge Command Master Chief for the Coast Guard's Fifth District, encompassing Washington, DC, the Mid-Atlantic Seaboard, and about 5000 personnel.

Doug makes his home in the "Magic City" of Birmingham, Alabama, where he is also a proud graduate of the 2023 class of Leadership Birmingham and the first law enforcement officer to be nominated and selected to the program in over 30 years. He is also the recipient of the 2024 William Wilberforce Lifetime Achievement Award for his efforts in countering human trafficking.



# UCF'S CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND MODERN SLAVERY

## NATIONAL HUMAN TRAFFICKING PREVENTION MONTH EVENTS, POLARIS STAR AWARDS - OUR BOARD MEMBER WINNERS

### CONGRATULATIONS, EZEKIAL MCKINE

#### FREDRICK DOUGLAS AWARD

Ezekiel McKine, Sr., better known as “Zeke,” is a dedicated advocate and former educator from Fort Lauderdale, Florida. He served as an educator with the Broward County School Board and has over a decade of experience as a Welfare Transition Program facilitator. During his tenure, Mr. McKine received numerous accolades for his impactful work with underserved communities, at-risk populations, and youth.

Currently, Mr. McKine works as the Regional Advocate II with the F.L.I.T.E. Center, an anti-human trafficking organization that provides trauma-informed services to individuals aged 10-24. Throughout his professional career, he has been fortunate to receive multiple awards and recognitions for his work, but the most rewarding aspect has been helping those impacted by human trafficking. His journey to this work is deeply personal; as a father, and someone who has faced challenges in their own life. He finds that he can connect with both survivors and families in a way that fosters trust and understanding.

He holds a bachelor’s degree in human services and a variety of certifications in related fields. Known for his straightforward approach, he draws from his individual experiences as an adolescent and as a father to connect with both clients and their families. His ability to relate on a personal level has made him a trusted advocate in his field. He believes that our work in combating human trafficking is vital, not just for those affected but for the broader community as well. He looks forward to sharing his experiences, learning from his fellow panelists, and discussing the ways we can all play a role in ending this atrocity.



### CONGRATULATIONS, MISTI SPENCER

#### VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR, CAROL WELKER AWARD

Misti Spencer is a survivor leader, lived experience expert, and advocate whose journey from surviving exploitation and human trafficking to leading the charge for justice and empowerment is a testament to resilience, strength, and unwavering dedication. A proud UCF alum with a degree in Psychology, Misti has harnessed her personal experiences and academic foundation to create impactful change for survivors and the communities that support them.

As the founder of Reflections and Impressions Life Coaching, Misti’s work is deeply focused on empowering survivors to reclaim their lives, break cycles of trauma, and find hope and healing. She brings her lived experience to the forefront of her mission, ensuring that survivor voices remain at the center of her advocacy and initiatives. Her coaching platform emphasizes security, stability, and growth, introducing pathways for survivors to heal, thrive, and build fulfilling futures.

In addition to her professional work, Misti serves as an Advisory Board Member for the UCF Center for the Study of Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery. Her contributions include shaping survivor-centered policies and programs, advocating for awareness, and educating communities on the complexities of trafficking and exploitation. Misti’s dedication to this work stems from a deeply personal mission: to ensure that no survivor feels alone and to inspire others to turn their pain into purpose. She is honored to be recognized as the Polaris Star Awards Volunteer of the Year, a reflection of her tireless efforts to create a world where survivors are empowered, supported, and celebrated for their resilience.



**UCF'S CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING  
AND MODERN SLAVERY  
NATIONAL HUMAN TRAFFICKING PREVENTION MONTH EVENTS,  
POLARIS STAR AWARDS - UCF WINNER**

**CONGRATULATIONS, JANET OWEN  
AGENTS OF CHANGE, LEGAL AWARD**

It is an absolute privilege to celebrate the remarkable work of Janet Owen in the fight against human trafficking. Janet, your unwavering dedication, compassion, and tenacity have made an indelible impact in the battle against this pervasive injustice. Janet's efforts to advance anti-trafficking initiatives for UCF and the Center for the Study of Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery have been instrumental in providing access to legislators, a champion for funding, and a boots-on-the-ground advocate for change. The work you do is not easy, but it is profoundly important. Your resilience and determination remind us all that even in the face of immense challenges, meaningful change is possible when we act with courage and purpose.

Janet Owen joined the University of Central Florida at the end of June 2018 as its Vice President for Government & Community Relations and Associate General Counsel. She previously served in that same role for the University of North Florida and as the Legislative Liaison for the Florida Board of Governors, overseeing the State University System.

At UCF, Janet serves as the university's principal liaison with federal and state offices and legislative bodies and oversees the university's regional and community relations program. She is responsible for the development and implementation of strategies and programs to attain public funding goals and to foster mutually supportive, ongoing relationships with elected officials, executive branch leaders, and other education and governmental organizations. She also serves as associate corporate secretary to the UCF Board of Trustees and oversees the Office of Board Relations.

Janet has worked on system-wide initiatives and legislation to increase efficiency and flexibility for the state universities and has served on several statewide committees to review, develop, and recommend laws and policies governing public higher education. A Jacksonville native and graduate of the University of Florida, Janet received her law degree from Stetson University College of Law and spent nearly a decade in private practice before joining UNF in 1994.

Active in her community, Janet has served on numerous local boards, chambers and non-profit arts and education organizations and is a member of the Florida Bar's Education Law Committee, the National Association of College and University Attorneys, the Florida Association of Professional Lobbyists, the LeRoy Collins Institute Board of Directors and Leadership Florida's Cornerstone Class XXX.

Additionally, Janet chaired the 2017 Task Force for the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) Higher Education Government Relations Conference. She is a frequent speaker on higher education issues and has been recognized by the Jacksonville Business Journal as a Woman of Influence and as an EVE Award Finalist in the field of education by the Florida Times-Union. Janet, tonight we honor not just your accomplishments but the heart and humanity that drive everything you do.

On behalf of all of us, thank you for your extraordinary contributions and for being a beacon of hope and change in the fight against human trafficking. Congratulations on this well-deserved recognition, and may your work continue to inspire us all.



## UCF'S CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND MODERN SLAVERY

### TIM TEBOW AND THE TEBOW GROUP

**Tim Tebow** and **The Tebow Group** met with UCF's Center for the Study of Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery in March of 2025 to exchange insights and explore opportunities for collaboration in the fight against human trafficking at the Rosen College of Hospitality Management. **Your team of Ashlee Lucas, Tommy Martin, and Kelsey Mize, along with your partners Wes Lyons and David Niccolini, mirror our passion in the fight against human trafficking.**

A heartfelt thank you to everyone who joined us for this important discussion, including **Dr. Jessica Wickey Byrd** (Executive Director, UCF's Center for the Study of Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery), **Kyle Trager** (Director of Development, Rosen College of Hospitality Management), **Alan Wilkett** (Law Enforcement RET Sergeant and Human Trafficking Consultant), **Dr. David Metcalf** (Director at the UCF's Institute for Simulation and Training), **Dr. Winston Schoenfeld** (UCF's Vice President for Research and Innovation), and **Robert Agrusa** (President & CEO for the Central Florida Hotel & Lodging Association) **A special thank you to our board member, Dr. Douglas Gilmer, of Resolved Strategies LLC, for organizing this meaningful discussion.**

We look forward to continued collaboration to combat this crime and support survivors. Together, we can make a difference and end human trafficking.



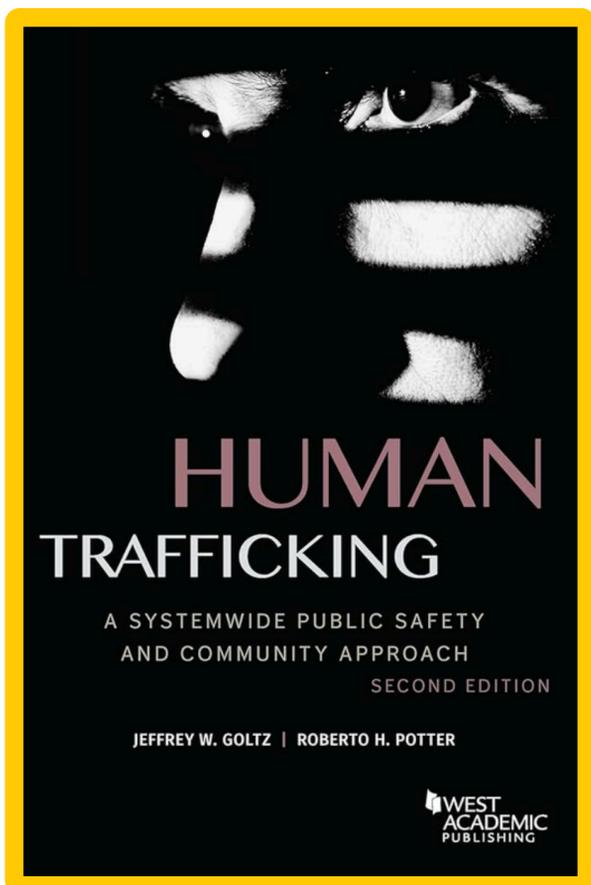
*Photos by Kanisha Clark, UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management Graphic Design Specialist II*

## UCF'S CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND MODERN SLAVERY

### HUMAN TRAFFICKING: A STATEWIDE PUBLIC SAFETY AND COMMUNITY APPROACH, SECOND EDITION BOOK

We believe in the power of knowledge dissemination to inspire change. Our team produces a range of scholarly publications, including journal articles, book chapters, and research reports, to share our findings with the global community. These publications contribute to the body of knowledge on human trafficking and modern slavery, offering evidence-based solutions and influencing policy and practice worldwide.

**\*\*Please let us assist you in using research and data to combat trafficking. For more information, email [htmscenter@ucf.edu](mailto:htmscenter@ucf.edu)\*\***



Beginning with a crime summit in 2014 and a three-day “Tips to Trail to Recovery” human trafficking workshop in 2015, a comprehensive, systemwide approach to combatting human trafficking began to take shape. This effort culminated in the 2017 publication of the **first edition of Human Trafficking: A Systemwide Public Safety and Community Approach**. That inaugural edition **served as the foundational chronicle of coordinated efforts to address trafficking across multiple sectors**. Seven years after the original publication, **the second edition published in 2024, reflects a significant evolution in knowledge, collaboration, and best practices across sectors**. While the first edition comprised ten chapters and contributions from nineteen experts covering six sectors, the new edition features fifteen chapters, contributions from forty-six professionals, and insights from eleven distinct sectors. In essence, it represents a complete overhaul and expansion of the original work and is a vital resource for anyone engaged in the fight against human trafficking.

Today, the second edition presents a significantly expanded and updated compilation. It is simply **an encyclopedia to fight human trafficking. It incorporates new components of the systemic response and highlights the critical roles played by investigators, prosecutors, judges, corrections professionals, social services, community and faith-based organizations, criminal justice agencies, healthcare providers, the hospitality industry, media, and educational institutions**. This edition features insights and strategies shared by leaders, practitioners, and experts working on the front lines. It underscores the collaborative nature of this effort, emphasizing that it truly “takes a village” to fight human trafficking and support survivors. The book is structured across comprehensive chapters and spans multiple disciplines to present a thorough, in-depth analysis of human trafficking. Importantly, **this edition also amplifies the voices of five survivors, offering readers powerful, firsthand accounts of lived experiences**. Their stories convey the stark reality of human trafficking and serve as a call to action.

Moreover, this book is designed to support a collective effort with a comprehensive set of tools and insights. **Key features include an inventory of nearly sixty current and future anti-trafficking laws and legislative acts, framework outlining three levels of risk factors across the phases of trafficking, and a tiered interview approach for identifying risk factors in juveniles. Additional resources include case studies, a prosecutor’s toolbox, an exploration of the impact of trauma and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), analysis of trafficking trends and indicators specific to the hospitality industry, and a strong emphasis on the role of data and research in informing policy and practice**. These and many other features make this edition a vital resource for professionals across disciplines working to prevent trafficking and support survivors.

“**This book is a masterpiece of voices from leaders across numerous sectors in our village that come together to fight human trafficking**. We have taken the systemwide approach to the next level and want the world to know that bringing loosely connected networks together to develop a common understanding of the challenges of human trafficking creates everlasting solutions to reduce this abomination and save lives.”

**Dr. Jeff Goltz, Dean, School of Public Safety, Legal Studies & Education, Valencia College**

**Access the book [here](#). Save 15% with code HESTUDENT at checkout.**

**All royalties from this book go into a special fund at the University of Central Florida’s Center for the Study of Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery.**

# UCF'S CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND MODERN SLAVERY IN THE MEDIA

PEOPLE ON THE MOVE

## Douglas Gilmer Joins Advisory Board for UCF's Center on Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery

By Matt Seldon | September 16, 2024



The Center for the Study of Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery was prominently featured in Homeland Security Today with the announcement of Dr. Douglas Gilmer joining its Advisory Board. The article written by Matt Seldon and published on September 16, 2024, underscored Dr. Gilmer's distinguished 35-year career in law enforcement and human rights, including leadership roles with Homeland Security Investigations and the U.S. Coast Guard. It highlighted how his deep expertise in counter-trafficking operations, along with his success building partnerships across government, academia, and the private sector, will be instrumental in advancing the Center's mission.

By showcasing this strategic addition to our leadership, the article reinforced the Center's commitment to leveraging experienced voices to guide research, inform policy, and bolster prevention efforts against trafficking and exploitation within Florida's hospitality and tourism industries.

[Read the article here.](#)

RCHM TODAY ROSEN COLLEGE NEWS | STORIES OF HOSPITALITY EXCELLENCE + INNOVATION | ORLANDO, FL

## 18 Anti-human Trafficking Champions Honored by UCF Rosen College, United Abolitionists Inc.

The Polaris Star Award winners include anti-trafficking advocates and educators as well as survivors who have become leaders in combating human trafficking.

By Connelly Vincent | February 6, 2025



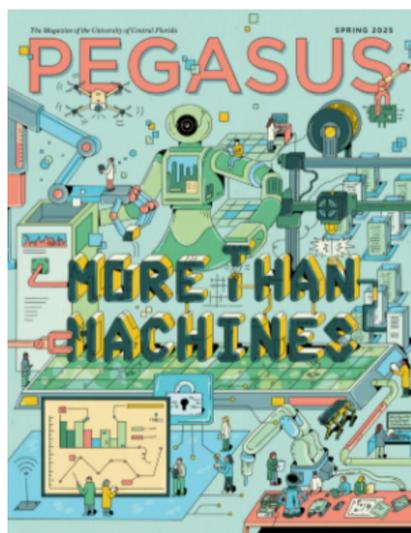
The UCF Center for the Study of Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery was featured in a Rosen College News article highlighting the joint recognition event with United Abolitionists, Inc., Polaris Star Awards, which honored 18 "Polaris Star Award" recipients for their leadership in combating human trafficking.

The article emphasized the Center's pivotal role in organizing and co-hosting the event at Rosen College, underscoring its commitment to fostering collaboration among advocates, survivors, law enforcement, and educators, while also highlighting all the award-winning winners.

This recognition highlights the Center's ongoing dedication to raising awareness, advancing survivor support, and strengthening anti-trafficking initiatives within Florida's hospitality industry and beyond.

*"We are fortunate in Central Florida to have so many advocates and organizations working closely together with a shared mission of ending the horrors of trafficking,"* says Dr. Jessica Wickey Byrd, executive director of the center.

[Read the article here.](#)



## An Unseen Issue

With support from the National Institute of Justice and the state of Florida, UCF is educating students and using AI to combat human trafficking.

The UCF Center for the Study of Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery was interviewed by Ryan Randall for the Pegasus Magazine Spring 2025 edition, which showcased our efforts to build partnerships with local organizations, conduct vital research, and prepare students to recognize and respond to signs of trafficking. It also highlighted our partnership with Dr. David Metcalf, an associate research professor in UCF's School of Modeling, Simulation and Training, and director of its Mixed Emerging Technology Integration Lab, to harness AI to develop tools that can identify and dismantle trafficking operations.

[Read the article here.](#)

# UCF'S CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND MODERN SLAVERY CONFERENCES, PRESENTATIONS, TRAININGS AND MEETINGS

## HOSTED PRESENTATIONS AND TRAININGS

*World Orlando, with the World Affairs Council of Central Florida and the International Visitor Leadership Program, hosted by the U.S. Department of State*

**Topic: Combating Trafficking in Persons: A Project for Mexico**

Presenter: Dr. Jessica Wickey Byrd

Date and Location: November 2024, Orlando, FL



*Open Meeting*

**Topic: Discover How You Can Collaborate with the UCF Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery Center**

Presenters: Dr. Jessica Wickey Byrd and Mayara Martines Ramalho de Oliveira

Date and Location: November 2024, Orlando, FL

*Orlando Kidz Zone Training*

**Topic: Children, Youth and Families Division Youth Leaders Training**

Presenters: Dr. Jessica Wickey Byrd and Tomas J. Lares

Date and Location: September 2024, Orlando, FL

*Workshop hosted by the UCF Center for the Study of Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery, United Abolitionists, and G6 Hospitality to discuss human trafficking in the lodging industry.*

**Topic: Guest Services Anti-Trafficking Workshop**

Presenters: Dr. Jessica Wickey Byrd, Tomas J. Lares, Sean Walker, and Kim Figueroa

Date and Location: September 2024, Orlando, FL

*World Orlando, with the World Affairs Council of Central Florida and the International Visitor Leadership Program, hosted by the U.S. Department of State*

**Topic: Human Trafficking Education in the Hospitality and Tourism Industry**

Presenters: Dr. Jessica Wickey Byrd, Tomas J. Lares, Mayara Martines Ramalho de Oliveira

Date and Location: July 2024, Orlando, FL



**To request a specialized presentation or tailored workshop for your company, school, or event, email [htmscenter@ucf.edu](mailto:htmscenter@ucf.edu)**

# UCF'S CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND MODERN SLAVERY

## CONFERENCES, PRESENTATIONS, TRAININGS AND MEETINGS

### INVITED PRESENTATIONS

*Hotel Equities Hotel General Managers and Leadership Teams Training*

**Topic: Human Trafficking Awareness Webinar**

Presenters: Dr. Jessica Wickey Byrd

Date and Location: January 2025, Virtual.

*2024 Human Trafficking Summit. hosted by the Florida Office of the Attorney General and the Statewide Council on Human Trafficking*

**Topic: Mitigating the Scale, Reach, and Impact on Human Trafficking at Major Events: a North American Perspective**

Presenters: Dr. Jessica Wickey Byrd and Dr. Alan Fyall

Date and Location: November 2024, Virtual.

*Florida Joint Task Force Meeting*

**Topic: UCF's Center for the Study of Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery Presentation**

Presenter: Dr. Jessica Wickey Byrd

Date and Location: November 2024, Orlando, FL

*We Are SAM (Student Abolitionist Movement) Conference*

**Topic: "Dangers of grooming, sugaring, and artificial intelligence" with the Knights of the RELM Student Organization Panel**

Presenters: Sydney Weisman, Anastazia Allgire, Gabriela Bonilla, Liv Wastier, Sydney Gross, William Zambelli, and Mayara Martines Ramalho de Oliveira

Date and Location: November 2024, Orlando, FL

### CONFERENCE ATTENDED

*3rd Human Trafficking & Drug Abuse Awareness Conference*

**Organized by: Osceola County Sheriff's Office**

Attendee: Mayara Martines Ramalho de Oliveira

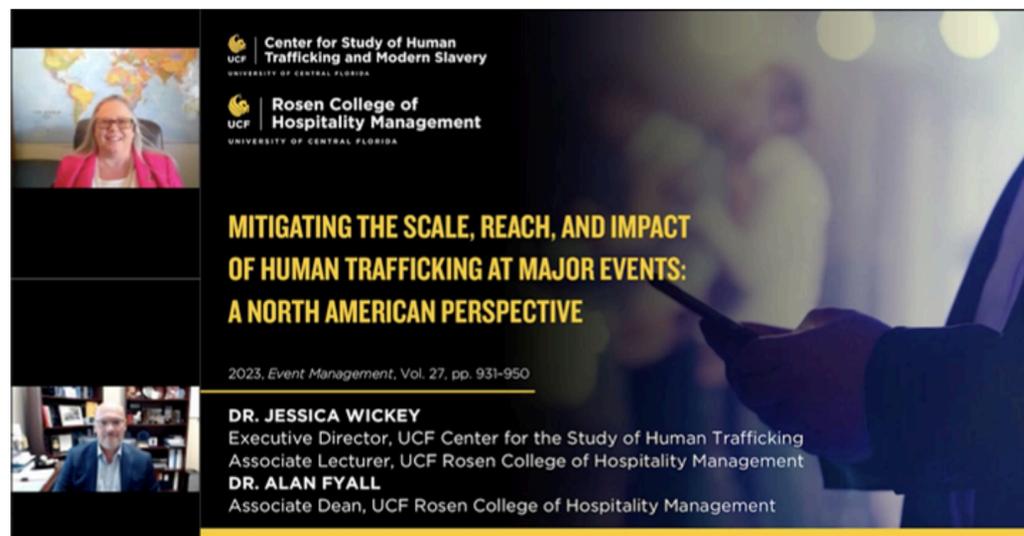
Date and Location: June 2025, Kissimmee, FL



### ADVISORY BOARD MEETINGS

*March 24, 2025, at UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management*

*September 24, 2024, at UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management*



# UCF'S CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND MODERN SLAVERY

## CONFERENCES, PRESENTATIONS, TRAININGS AND MEETINGS

### INVITED PRESENTATIONS (CONT.)

*Core Competencies Framework hosted by ECPAT International*

**Topic: Human Trafficking Education in the Hospitality and Tourism Industry**

Keynote Presenters: Dr. Jessica Wickey Byrd

Date and Location: April 2025, Webinar

*Women in Tourism, Facing Challenges Creating Solutions, hosted by the Tourism Institute*

**Topic: Human Trafficking Education in the Hospitality and Tourism Industry**

Keynote Presenters: Dr. Jessica Wickey Byrd

Date and Location: December 2024, Webinar

*International Congress on Preventing and Combating Human Trafficking, Domestic Violence, and Child Sexual Violence*

**Topic: Human Trafficking Education in the Hospitality Industry**

Keynote Presenters: Dr. Jessica Wickey Byrd and Mayara Martines Ramalho de Oliveira

Date and Location: November 2024, Orlando, FL

### MEETING WITH ORANGE COUNTY MAYOR JERRY DEMINGS

In March 2025, our Executive Director, Dr. Jessica Wickey Byrd, our board member Olivia Littleton, and partners Tomas J. Lares, Jan Edwards, and Sydney Dressler were honored to meet with **Orange County Government Mayor Jerry Demings** to discuss our work combating human trafficking. We have a community that works collaboratively in the fight against trafficking. Educators, law enforcement, policy makers, legislators, advocates, and lived experience experts all with the same goal - to save people from modern-day slavery.

**Thank you, Mayor Demings, for your continued support.**



## UCF'S CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND MODERN SLAVERY GLOBAL CURRICULUM AND TRAINING

In October of 2024, in Vienna, Austria, Dr. Jessica Wickey Byrd had the honor and privilege to meet with global leaders to discuss anti-trafficking efforts to combat child sex tourism and child sex trafficking. She met with global leaders from Belgium, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Australia, Austria, Cambodia, Norway, the UK, the U.S.A., the Netherlands, Italy, Germany, Thailand, the Philippines, South Korea, and India, all focused on collaboratively combating child trafficking. They met for two days of intense workshops - designing a curriculum for industry partners, associations, and schools to use to educate people about this horrific crime. **A focus was on education and training for tour guides to be able to identify child sex tourism and trafficking, and how to work with local and national authorities to report the crime.**

**The goal is for every tour guide in Asia to receive training on how to identify and report human trafficking.**

The workshop was led and organized by ECPAT International, a global organization dedicated to protecting children in Asia and around the world. The framework developed outlines core competencies that can be applied across various areas of work and roles that students will assume once they enter the travel and tourism industry.

The Knights of the RELM students facilitated a focus group to review the curriculum through the eyes of Generation Z and provided thoughtful feedback to address child sex trafficking. You can view the full report on the ECPAT website:

**ECPAT.ORG**

Dr. Wickey Byrd also presented our anti-trafficking curriculum that we have used to educate more than 6,000 UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management students to be able to identify and report trafficking.

One of our students' testimonials was also published in the ECPAT's **"Core Competencies Framework for Tourism Education Professionals"** report:

**"Training, and every internship class should include a simulation (related to addressing child protection), so students experience it multiple times and it really sinks in"**

- a student who participated in a focus group in the USA.

*ECPAT International. (2025). Core Competencies Framework for Tourism Education Professionals. Integrating child protection into the curricula and training for students, future tourism professionals.*



**Over 6,000 undergraduate students have been educated on how to identify human trafficking in their workplace at UCF Rosen College.**

**To learn more about Human Trafficking education:**

Email us at: [HTMSCenter@ucf.edu](mailto:HTMSCenter@ucf.edu)

# UCF'S CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND MODERN SLAVERY SPONSORSHIPS AND DONATIONS

Your sponsorship supports groundbreaking research, education, survivor empowerment, and community engagement in the fight against human trafficking.

**EVERY DOLLAR DONATED IS USED IN THE FIGHT AGAINST HUMAN TRAFFICKING**

## IN-KIND AND PROBONO DONATIONS

**In-kind donations** can provide valuable support to the UCF's Center for the Study of Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery.

- **Technology and Equipment:** Computers, laptops, or tablets for staff, student fellows, or survivors participating in scholarship programs.
- **AV equipment** such as projectors, cameras, or microphones for training sessions and events.
- **Office supplies** like notebooks, pens, or printing paper for day-to-day operations.
- Marketing materials such as **printed flyers, posters, or banners** for outreach and awareness campaigns.
- **Educational materials** like books or subscriptions to relevant journals.
- **Legal assistance for survivors or advocacy-related efforts.**
- Graphic design or marketing services to enhance awareness campaigns.
- **Translation services** for resources in multiple languages to assist survivors from diverse backgrounds.
- Professional development training for staff or teachers involved in related educational programs.
- Workshops or seminars hosted by experts in related fields.
- **Financial Support Alternatives:** Gift cards for food, transportation, or clothing to directly assist survivors.
- **Event sponsorships** for public forums, awareness walks, or campaigns during major events like Human Trafficking Awareness Month.
- **Print or media** advertising to amplify messaging during high-visibility campaigns.

## SPONSOR A SURVIVOR SCHOLARSHIP

**An investment of \$25,000 provides comprehensive support for one survivor to attend the University of Central Florida for an entire academic year, covering all costs associated with housing, tuition, and educational materials.**

## SURVIVE TO THRIVE TOILETRY DONATION DRIVE

**Center for Study of Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery**  
More information at: [hospitality.ucf.edu/htms](http://hospitality.ucf.edu/htms)

### SURVIVE TO THRIVE TOILETRY DONATION DRIVE

Join Us for Sexual Assault Awareness & Prevention Month. We're hosting a **Toiletry Drive benefiting human trafficking survivors** to help them take that very first step toward their journey of healing.

Many times, when police or social service agencies encounter victims, they only have the clothes they are wearing and are in need of basic personal care items. By receiving these items and experiencing the care of others, the individual's sense of dignity, self-worth, and safety begin to be restored.

**WHAT DO DONATE**

- Feminine Hygiene Products
- New Undergarments
- Toiletries such as (travel size is accepted):
- Shampoo & Conditioner
- Face Wash
- Chapstick
- Toothbrush & Toothpaste
- Mouthwash
- Lotion
- Soap/Body Wash
- Liquid Hand Soap
- Deodorant
- Hairbrush
- Tissues
- Body Wipes
- Small Backpacks

**DROP-OFF LOCATIONS:**

- Rosen College of Hospitality Management (Suite 109)
- UCF Transfer Center (TCH Bldg. Room 215)
- UCF Connect Cocoa Center (Bldg. 3)
- UCF Connect Daytona Beach Center (Bldg. 140, Suite 107)
- UCF Connect Sanford/Lake Mary Center (Partnership Bldg., Suite 1100)
- UCF Connect South Lake Center (Bldg. 2, Suite 220)
- UCF Valencia East Center (Bldg. 1, Suite 265)
- UCF Valencia Osceola Center (Bldg. 4)
- UCF Valencia West Center (Bldg. 11, Room 104)

**FROM APRIL 21 TO APRIL 25, 2025**

**STOP HUMAN TRAFFICKING**

In April 2025, our Project Manager, Mayara Martines, led the Center's first university-wide toiletry donation drive in collaboration with UCF Transfer Connect, **collecting 400+ items** from 9 drop-off locations to be distributed to trafficking survivors for the Sexual Assault Awareness & Prevention Program, and served as a first step toward restoring dignity and trust.

**DONATION INFORMATION**

*\*If you don't see the designation you're looking for, please visit [ucffoundation.org/givewith](http://ucffoundation.org/givewith) and use the "Search for a fund" tool.*

Amount:

Designation:

**MAKE AN IMPACT, DONATE**

[foundation.ucf.edu/givetorosen](http://foundation.ucf.edu/givetorosen)

# UCF'S CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND MODERN SLAVERY PARTNERS

Thank you to our partners who lead the way in advancing anti-trafficking education and outreach.



First Responders to the Human Trafficking Crisis in the United States, United Abolitionists, exists to stop all forms of human trafficking in the United States. Through our 24/7 UA Hotline, Training & Learning Center, and community-driven programs, we've established a comprehensive approach to tackle human trafficking head-on.



## CONCRETE HELP FOR A BETTER AND KINDER WORLD

- Providing Crucial Training for the Front Line
- First Responders to the Human Trafficking Crisis
- Coordinated Care for Victims
- Providing Backpacks to Recovered Victims

## CONNECT WITH THEM

- [stophumantrafficking.com](http://stophumantrafficking.com)
- Email: [info@stophumantrafficking.com](mailto:info@stophumantrafficking.com)
- Office: 407-495-5846
- Call Hotline: 888-88-4673-1 Text Hotline: 407-504-1319

- @unitedabolitionists
- @UnitedAbolitionists
- @TJLares
- United Abolitionists
- @UnitedAbolitionists



## IT'S A PENALTY

Since 2014, It's a Penalty has contributed to creating a culture through education, awareness-raising, and advocacy where abuse, exploitation, and human trafficking are no longer acceptable. It's a Penalty is a UK-registered charity (1161848) with a global impact.



## 4 KEYS STRATEGIC AREAS

- **Campaigns** - raising awareness about human trafficking, exploitation, and abuse during major sporting events.
- **CommonProtect** - advocating for legal reform to improve protection from sexual exploitation and abuse of children.
- **Student Ambassador Programme** - educating and raising up students to prevent human trafficking and exploitation.
- **Safe to Compete** - training sports coaches and parents of children in Little Leagues (age 5-12 years) in the USA to prevent abuse and exploitation.

## CONNECT WITH THEM

- [itsapenalty.org](http://itsapenalty.org)
- Email: [hello@itsapenalty.org](mailto:hello@itsapenalty.org)

- @its\_apenalty
- @itsapenaltycampaign
- @its\_apenalty
- It's a Penalty
- @ItsAPenaltyCampaign

# UCF'S CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND MODERN SLAVERY PARTNERS (CONT.)



Paving The Way Foundation was created to provide answers to those questions. We've educated over 38,000 youth, parents, teachers, and community leaders over the past 8 years about child trafficking and online exploitation, sharing with them the impact it has on our children and the actions to take to prevent it.

**What the youth have to say about our program:**

"Thank you for coming. We really need this because it is real and it does happen all around us."

"I really enjoyed this! It taught me a lot and I will always remember it!"

"I think it's important to try to be a hero even you don't think you are. Fear is pulling you back and it shouldn't, because even though you might be scared, she might be scared and in more danger than you are"

"I will remember to use advice givin in real life!"

"It helped me think before doing something."

"I became more aware of how frequent it happens, who are targeted and what to lookout for."

"Thank you for coming. I really enjoyed this. I hope you come back."

6th, 7th & 8th Graders

## WE EMPOWER COMMUNITIES TO BE A FIERCE DISRUPTION

- Providing Educational and Training Programs for:
  - Students
  - Parents (including an online Parent Tool Kit)
- Education & Intervention Nursing CEU Courses
- Volunteer Programs
- Youth Ambassador Program

## CONNECT WITH THEM

- [pavingthewayfoundation.org](http://pavingthewayfoundation.org)
- @pavingw
- @PavingtheWay
- Paving the Way
- @pavingthewayfoundation8752



Last year, we had the privilege of serving 250,259 children through our Foster Care, Anti-Trafficking, Child Hunger, Single Moms, and Family Support programs. An additional 143,334 individuals were impacted through advocacy, training, awareness, and volunteering. We look forward to a future filled with hope for every child in need.

## Together we can reach one more:

**Hungry Child**    **Foster Child**    **Trafficked Child**

**Single Mom**    **Struggling Family**

## PROVIDING HOPE AND HEALING TO THE NATIONS

- **Family Support** - comprehensive support, basic needs, educational resources, referrals, and spiritual mentorship.
- **Foster Care** - find foster or adoptive homes, and foster family homes.
- **Anti-Trafficking** - mobile team services, 24/7 support, prevention resources.
- And others, such as **Child Sponsorship, Global Programs, Single Moms Support, Fighting Child Hunger**

## CONNECT WITH THEM

- [onemorechild.org](http://onemorechild.org)
- Email: [children@onemorechild.org](mailto:children@onemorechild.org)

- @onemorechild
- @OneMoreChildSince1904
- @One\_MoreChild
- One More Child
- @OneMoreChild

# UCF'S CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND MODERN SLAVERY PARTNERS (CONT.)



FLITE (Fort Lauderdale Independence, Training & Education) Center has become the hub of all support services for our vulnerable youth to become successful adults within a safe, nurturing environment that promotes personal growth while developing practical life skills. FLITE Center is Broward County's one-stop resource center offering all supportive services.

## OUR IMPACT

October 1, 2023 - September 30, 2024

Number of unduplicated youth served:  
**2,382**  
47,116 touch points

### OUTCOME PERCENTAGES

**100%**

of Youth gained positive educational outcomes

**95%**

of Youth have stable housing

**80%**

of Youth who remain employed

### SYSTEM OF CARE COORDINATION

**95**

landlords and housing partners

**75**

collaborators in the TIL system of care

## NO YOUTH TRAVELS THE ROAD TO ADULTHOOD ALONE

Coordinating Assistance Program in:

- Education
- Employment
- Housing
- Health and Wellness
- System of Care Coordination
- Resource Navigation
- Human Trafficking

## CONNECT WITH THEM

flitecenter.org

Email: info@flitecenter.org

Office: 954-530-4686

Broward 24/7 Hotline: 954-649-8700

@flitecenter

@FLITECenterBroward

FLITE Center

@flitecenter6274



Resolved Strategies LLC is a values-driven company helping provide solutions to the critical justice issues you seek to solve. We accomplish this by delivering the knowledge and data you need; helping you define your mission; helping identify your purpose; connecting you with the right partners for meaningful collaboration; and action your plans for the outcomes you want to achieve.

## OUR GLOBAL JUSTICE SOLUTIONS

**Building collaborative**, multidisciplinary teams to help solve issues such as human trafficking in communities.

**Training** - human trafficking (sex or labor), child exploitation, victim-centered and trauma-informed practice, resiliency and mental health, financial intersections and typologies with exploitative crimes.

**Media Consultation** - around exploitative crimes to provide accurate information, context, and perspective while avoiding the sensational myths that do more harm than good.

**Data and Research**

**Content and Campaign Development**

**Policy and Protocol Development**

**Mission Resource and Technology Integration in the Justice Space**

**Consulting on Global Justice Issues** in labor trafficking, sex trafficking, forced labor in the supply chain, online child sexual exploitation, transnational crime, human rights abuses, financial crime, and immigration

## CONNECT WITH THEM

resolvedstrategies.com

Resolved Strategies LLC

## **TOGETHER, WE CAN #STOPHUMANTRAFFICKING**

### **VISIT OUR OFFICE**

**UCF CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND MODERN SLAVERY**  
UCF ROSEN COLLEGE OF HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT  
9907 UNIVERSAL BLVD., SUITE  
ORLANDO, FL, 32819

### **MAKE AN IMPACT, DONATE**

[foundation.ucf.edu/givetorosen](https://foundation.ucf.edu/givetorosen)

### **VISIT OUR WEBSITE**

[hospitality.ucf.edu/HTMS](https://hospitality.ucf.edu/HTMS)

### **PARTNER WITH US**

[HTMSCenter@ucf.edu](mailto:HTMSCenter@ucf.edu)

### **FOLLOW US ON LINKEDIN**

[linkedin.com/company/ucfhtms](https://linkedin.com/company/ucfhtms)

### **FOLLOW US ON INSTAGRAM**

[instagram.com/ucf.htms](https://instagram.com/ucf.htms)

### **UPCOMING EVENTS**

**18th Annual Human Trafficking Awareness Conference**

January 22nd, 2026, 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. at UCF Rosen College

**Polaris Star Awards**

January 23th, 2026, 5:30 p.m. - 9 p.m. at UCF Rosen College

*See more information and how to register on our website.*

# THE WORLD'S #1 HOSPITALITY COLLEGE IN THE U.S.A.'S #1 DESTINATION



YEAR IN REVIEW | FY 2024-25



UCF

Center for the Study of Human  
Trafficking and Modern Slavery

UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA



UCF

Rosen College of  
Hospitality Management

UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA