

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release



AAHOA and BEST Form New Partnership to Prevent Human Trafficking

Atlanta-based AAHOA is committing to raise awareness among its 16,000 hotel members.

ATLANTA, Georgia – [February 8, 2017] – The Asian American Hotel Owners Association (AAHOA) and Businesses Ending Slavery and Trafficking (BEST) are announcing a new partnership to proactively prevent the victimization of children, women and men across the U.S. Human trafficking is a crime that compels both foreign and domestic victims into work or prostitution. Human trafficking also takes place when American children are prostituted, at ages as young as 11 years old.

AAHOA, an association representing 50% of hotels across the U.S., is one of the first national organizations to form a public-private collaborative with BEST to openly address human trafficking. Through this new partnership, AAHOA is committing to raise awareness among its 16,000 hotel members while sponsoring BEST's new "Inhospitable to Human Trafficking" online training program for hotels. The training teaches hotel owners and staff how to identify and report human trafficking and how to prevent it from occurring on hotel properties. Over a four year period in Seattle, 63% of police reports about charged sex trafficking crimes mentioned hotel properties as a location where the crimes occurred.

"Associations like AAHOA are at a unique advantage to address human trafficking while helping to keep U.S. communities safe from this type of crime," said BEST Executive Director, Dr. Mar Brettmann. BEST aligns and equips leaders to use the power of business to prevent human trafficking through a variety of programs and training curriculums.

Hotel owner and AAHOA member, Arvind Patel, first learned about human trafficking on television. "You see a 14 or 15-year-old before they were involved. Then you see them again after they've been trafficked for three months and it's just bad. It's a glaring concern that needs to be addressed, not just by hotels. The politicians need to look at it more closely. The guys who are doing this need to be punished." After hearing about the issue, Patel began working with his colleagues to raise awareness and empower AAHOA to take leadership.

"As a member-led association, our members said that they wanted to be on the frontlines of human trafficking prevention, so we listened," said AAHOA CEO, Chip Rogers. "I am proud of our members who are proactively working to enhance the safety of their communities and keep vulnerable people safe from the traffickers and sex buyers who seek to exploit them."

Dr. Kelly Davis, a researcher from the University of Washington evaluated the effectiveness of the BEST training program. Davis' research found that only 8% of hoteliers had recognized trafficking in the prior year to participating in a live training program. Within months after the training, that number jumped to an estimated 44% of hoteliers identifying trafficking cases. After completing the training, 97% of hoteliers said that the best practices would help to prevent human trafficking on their properties.

"It's important that hoteliers understand that training their staff to prevent human trafficking isn't only the ethical thing to do, it's a smart business decision," said Sandip Soli, an attorney at Real Property Law Group.

“Trafficking poses numerous risks to hotels, including risks to reputation, risks to employee and guest safety and security, and legal risks.”

What can you do to stop human trafficking?

If you see a person being harmed or children involved in prostitution or the making of pornography, call 911. If you suspect that an adult is being coerced into working in prostitution or in any type of work, the National Human Trafficking Resource Center provides 24-hour support: (888) 373-7888.

About the Asian American Hotel Owners Association

Founded in 1989, AAHOA (www.aahoa.com) is the largest hotel owners association in the world, with more than 16,000 small business owner-members. AAHOA members own almost one in every two hotels in the United States.

About Businesses Ending Slavery and Trafficking (BEST)

BEST (www.bestalliance.org) strives to create a world in which no person is trafficked. A majority of human trafficking involves business and business people--without their knowledge. BEST programs provide businesses with training and resources necessary to be a part of the solution to address human trafficking while providing victims of trafficking much needed support and opportunities to thrive.

BEST leads three main programs designed to engage and educate businesses that may unknowingly fund and facilitate trafficking:

1) Inhospitable to Trafficking (ITT): ITT a program to raise awareness and provide training to hotel staff and managers to identify and report trafficking and connect suspected victims with services. BEST provides training online at training.bestalliance.org.

2) Employers Alliance: BEST Employers Alliance is the first public/private, cross-sector partnership in the nation to address sex trafficking and buying. The Alliance offers employers a risk and opportunities assessment, best practices, and online training for employees..

3) Safe Jobs Program: A lack of job opportunities is one of the most serious barriers for people seeking freedom from a trafficker. BEST aims to leverage its networks in the business community to find safe employment for trafficking survivors and persons at risk of trafficking.

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