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Lehigh County DA awarded for work against human trafficking

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Published August 20, 2019 12:25PM

Lehigh County District Attorney Jim Martin has received an award in acknowledgment of his work in the fight against human trafficking.

The Victory through Service Award was given to Martin by Aspire, a local organization working to assist victims of human trafficking, at the group's anniversary event held on July 25.

The award is sponsored by Marsy's Law for Pennsylvania, an organization working toward elevating victims' rights through the Pennsylvania Constitution.

Martin, one of three recipients, received the award in the Public Servant category. Lisa Pektor, president of PennCap Properties, received the award for the company category, and Hope Sabbaugh, a field worker for VAST (Valley Against Sex Trafficking), received the Front-Line Fighter award.

Aspire's mission is to provide an environment of safety, healing and empowerment that will equip victims of trafficking with the services and programs that are essential to their pursuit of independence. Its objectives are to provide comprehensive case management to trafficking victims, housing ranging from emergency shelters to independent living, and a peer-led drop-in center where victims can get support, interact with other victims and get linked to resources.

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The award ceremony was part of a larger event during which local wineries, breweries and distilleries joined with local restaurants to supply refreshments for the attendees. In addition, the Art for Autonomy fundraiser took place to assist Aspire in attaining its goals.

In an effort to combat human trafficking in Lehigh County, Martin and the Regional Intelligence and Investigation Center recently partnered with Lehigh University; AEquitas, a prosecutor’s resource; and The Why, a nonprofit whose mission is to eradicate modern slavery in the fashion industry and to economically empower survivors. The goal of the partnership is to develop an artificial intelligence application to identify potential human trafficking victims and perpetrators within police incident narratives.

The partnership is part of a larger initiative coordinated by Martin to attack human trafficking in Lehigh County.

Martin has assembled a team consisting of representatives from the RIIC, the District Attorney’s Office, Lehigh University’s Computer Science & Engineering Department, AEquitas, the Institute to Address Commercial Sexual Exploitation at Villanova Law, and members of the community.

The objective of this program will be to provide victims treatment and to arrest and to prosecute traffickers and the consumers of sex for money. A part of this initiative is to establish a safe house for victims of human trafficking where they can find safety as well as support to enable them to live productive,

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healthy lives with the hope of a positive future free from the control of their traffickers.

Recently, a grant from the Dorothy Rider Poole Trust was given to Martin to help in the furtherance of these goals. The funds will allow several team members, including representatives from AEquitas, Lehigh Valley Health Network, Lehigh Conference of Churches, and a community donor to travel to Nashville, Tennessee, to visit an existing project, Thistle Farms.

The Thistle Farms recovery model includes the following to aid victims of human trafficking, prostitution and addiction: free long-term housing without a live-in staff; free, comprehensive mental and physical health care; and free job training and/or continued education that connects survivors to a sustainable income.

Tags:

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<< August 2019 >>

| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| | | | | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 |
| 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 |
| 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 |

UPCOMING EVENTS

Free Hands-Only CPR Class
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Wed, 08/21/2019 - 17:30

Basket Raffle
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Sat, 08/24/2019 - 09:00

Peach Festival and Quilt Show
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Sat, 08/24/2019 - 15:00

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