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Local advocacy group spreading the word about human trafficking in Dufferin County

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LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

CRY NoT, a grassroots anti-human trafficking committee based in Dufferin County, is working to confront a crime that often remains invisible in small communities.

A local committee of parents, concerned residents and volunteers are taking the initiative to shine a light on human trafficking in Dufferin, a danger they say is all too real. The group offers educational presentations to schools, community groups and charities to teach them what they can do to help.

Member Sheri Moir said that the group, formed in 2020, just before the onset of COVID-19, grew out of a presentation to the Rotary Club of Orangeville by Dufferin Caledon Victim Services on sex trafficking in the region.

?We joined together as a committee because a Rotary Club member was moved by a presentation that was given to our Rotary Club of Orangeville by the Caledon Dufferin Victim Services about human trafficking, in particular sex trafficking, in our area,? she said. ?Our vision is just to safeguard and protect our community against the evils of sex trafficking through awareness and education of the public.?

That mission was on display during a recent presentation at the Centre Dufferin New Horizons Club.

Using a standard educational talk they have refined over time, CRY NoT walked attendees through the stages of sex trafficking, from grooming and manipulation to control and exploitation.

The session was designed for people with little or no prior knowledge of the issue, breaking down complex information into clear, understandable segments and offering concrete takeaways.

The presentation drew strong engagement, with questions and discussion continuing afterward, a sign Moir was happy to see as a crucial way of keeping such a heavy topic from being silenced by shock.

?I just loved how we engaged and had a really good Q&A after a presentation,? she said. ?Sometimes the audience is very silent because it's just so much information and they've just never heard of it before, and they're just so shocked by the information. But it was really nice to have that engagement at our presentation last week. It just keeps the conversation going.?

The seniors session is just one example of CRY NoT's broader outreach. The committee has brought its presentation to town councils across Dufferin County, local service clubs, school parent councils, and other community groups.

Their material has been vetted by the Upper Grand District School Board for use with parent councils, reflecting their focus on equipping adults ? parents, grandparents, and caregivers ? to speak with youth and recognize red flags.

CRY NoT's educational efforts are supported by partnerships with organizations such as Caledon Dufferin Victim Services and the OPP's anti-human trafficking task force, which have provided specialized training and webinars. These resources have been put to good use in reaching youth, who are most affected.

?Dufferin Caledon Victim Services provided us with guidance and information, and the OPP anti-human trafficking task force did a webinar for us? and we were able to speak with two officers who were directly involved in it,? Moir said. ?Having conversations

with the young people in our lives, whether they're our children or our nieces, or nephews, or friends' children, is very important. The more they know, the more they can spot the danger before it happens.?

Underlying their work is a central message: human trafficking is not just a big-city issue or solely a matter for police.

It is a community problem that can surface in rural areas and small towns, and an informed public is a critical line of defence in spotting warning signs and supporting those at risk.

For more information, go to: crynot.ca