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## Dayton anti-human trafficking group partnering with area hotels

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### COMMUNITY CONTENT

By [Samantha Wildow](#), Staff Writer

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### Volunteers sought for March 4 event.

The Save Our Adolescents from Prostitution Dayton Chapter is supplying 80 hotels in the area with prepackaged soaps and makeup remover wipes with the National Human Trafficking Hotline phone number labeled on them.

The products will be delivered before the March Madness college basketball tournament begins. The group says this is a time when there is an uptick in traveling and a potential increase in human trafficking.

"We always try to do something around the First Four," said Tony Talbott, who is the co-founder and director of Abolition Ohio and the director of advocacy at the University of Dayton's Human Rights Center.

The Dayton SOAP Chapter also posts flyers of missing children from around the area.

Theresa Flores, founder of the SOAP Project approximately 13 years ago, said calls to the National Human Trafficking Hotline, which is operated by the Polaris Project, double during major sporting events where they have shared their soaps.

"Just because of the sheer number of people that come to an area, and especially when you're talking about more males due to sporting events, you're going to have an increase in trafficking, and we know that any time that we give out soaps and do the SOAP Project during events, the calls to [Polaris](#) double," said Flores.

Aidan Mornhinweg, a UD sophomore, has been working with Abolition Ohio for two semesters, and this will be his first campaign with the Dayton SOAP Chapter. He said one common misconception about human trafficking is that the victims are taken by individuals they don't know before getting trafficked. Mornhinweg said individuals are more often coerced or threatened by someone they know, such as a dating partner or a family member, into these situations that they then feel like they cannot leave.

"It's hard to do that with a stranger. It's much easier to do that with a relationship that's been built," Mornhinweg said. [Data from the](#)

[Polaris Project](#) showed trafficking victims are generally recruited by someone they know, such as a family member or caregiver (33%), an intimate partner (28%), or an employer (22%) in 2021.

The Dayton SOAP Chapter is holding an event from 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. on March 4, and they are seeking more volunteers to help with labeling soaps and then sharing the items with area hotels.

"We're hoping to get a strong volunteer base," said Zola Howard, who works with Abolition Ohio and the Dayton SOAP Chapter.

Those who want to register to volunteer can visit [eventbrite.com](#) and search for "SOAP Up Dayton." Sponsors of the March 4 event include the Sisters of the Precious Blood, Abolition Ohio, and Wright View Church of the Nazarene.

#### By the numbers

Since its inception in 2007, the National [Human Trafficking Hotline](#) has identified 3,102 cases of human trafficking and 6,013 victims were identified in these cases.

For 2021, the National Human Trafficking Hotline identified 291 cases with 424 victims.

#### Need help?

The National Human Trafficking Hotline is 1 (888) 373-7888 or text "BeFree" to 233733. Visit [polarisproject.org](#) for a live chat.

Above, **Sister Mary Lou Schmersal labeling makeup remover wipes with the National Human Trafficking Hotline phone number as part of the Dayton SOAP (Save Our Adolescents from Prostitution) Project. She was among the Sisters of the Precious Blood at Salem Heights in Trotwood labeling 3,000 makeup remover wipes.** CONTRIBUTED