

Kristi and Vince Wagner and Brenda Meyer traveled to Emory University for the Roundtable meeting for Diocesan Social Action Directors in July. We spent three days learning about human trafficking of individuals for sex or use of their labor. **Human trafficking** is modern-day slavery. It involves the illegal transport of individuals by force or deception for the purpose of labor, sexual exploitation, or activities in which others (not the person themselves) profit financially. The United States is the destination for many of the sex trafficking victims. We learned of children, men and women caught up in sex trafficking, young people and young adults offered “jobs with schooling opportunities” in more affluent countries which turned out to be traps and even three generational families where the children and grandchildren were enslaved to pay off a parent’s debt that could never be repaid.

This is a 50 million person problem around the world. One presenter told Kristi that she could come into our community and very quickly identify where trafficking was happening in our community. It can happen anywhere, and rural areas or small communities are not free of this problem. It appears that those individuals on the fringe in any community are vulnerable. Those most at risk are those who are immigrants who do not have language skills in the places they land. Also, the likelihood that someone possess as a helper and tricks or traps the person into servitude is high. We came back not sure of what we should be doing in our community, but feel our eyes were opened for a reason. We are praying for those who are caught up in this mind, soul and body breaking abuse. We hope to start the conversation so that we can make a difference.

A few of us (Kristi and Vince Wagner, Brenda Meyer and several others) saw the movie Sound of Freedom on opening night at the North side Showplace Cinemas. It is still in town and is one of those movies we think you shouldn’t miss. The movie tells the struggle of two young children who were tricked into human trafficking through the guise of getting involved in the glamor photography business and those who tracked them down and rescued them. Yet it is told in a manner that opens one’s eyes without traumatizing the viewer. Not easy viewing, but we think increases understanding and puts a human face on a very difficult subject.