We’ve been hearing a lot about human sex trafficking in the news lately, but many of us may not know what it means. “Sex trafficking” is the trade of human beings for the purpose of sexual exploitation, and, unfortunately, it may very well be happening in our community.

Sex trafficking and prostitution are synonymous, particularly when referring to minors. The average age when girls are first trafficked is 12 to 14 years old, according to the Women’s Foundation of Minnesota. The Center for Missing and Exploited Children estimates that 100,000 children are exploited each year for prostitution in the United States and the FBI identified the Twin Cities as one of 13 US cities with a high incidence of child prostitution.

Sex traffickers target our most vulnerable youth – those in homes struggling with poverty or the homeless, those with a history of physical or sexual abuse, or those experiencing chemical dependency who lack a support system sufficient to mitigate these various traumas. The amount of information shared online through social media makes it easy for traffickers to identify and recruit vulnerable youth for the sex trade industry.

This is an issue that can potentially affect everybody in our community. There is a societal financial cost through increased public spending on public health services, law enforcement expenses, and social welfare programs. But, perhaps more importantly, it is also a human rights issue. Minnesota has taken a major step to address the problem of child sex trafficking by enacting the Safe Harbor law which helps young girls and boys who are trafficked to be treated as victims and not as criminals. The Safe Harbor law outlines a statewide response for sexually exploited youth that includes comprehensive services to the youth as well as training and protocol development.

If you work with or care for teenagers there are certain warning signs that might indicate this is their experience. If they suddenly have expensive clothing or electronics with no explainable income, if they become secretive and have frequent short disappearances, if they have different people picking them up or dropping them off at school or at home, something might be amiss. If you would like further information about this topic please give us a call at the Crime Victims Resource Center (507 437-6680).
Sexual Assault

Every community member is affected in one way or another by sexual assault. Hearing about sexual assaults that occur in our community makes us afraid for our own safety or angry that it is happening to our neighbors and friends. We are also affected by the financial costs of medical and mental health treatment as well as the cost of the criminal justice system. Preventing sexual assault is key to minimizing the safety and financial costs to our community.

Individuals can help change the social norms that contribute to sexual assault by speaking up when others exhibit disrespectful behavior towards women or men and by avoiding sexist behavior that objectifies or stereotypes community members. It is important to not participate in victim-blaming and for the community to support the criminal justice system when they work to hold the offender accountable for their crime.

Sexual assault is not a private matter; it is a public health, human rights and social justice issue. For more information please give Crime Victims Resource Center a call (507) 437-6680.

Law Enforcement training

In April we had the privilege of providing our local law enforcement officers (city and county) with training and information about the history of Crime Victims Resource Center (CVRC), the services we provide, safety/shelter options for victims, and how we can work together to enhance the overall response to victims. It was a very positive experience and a great way to connect with the many new officers as well as reconnect with those we have worked with for years. Thank you to Captain Dave McKichan for supporting this collaboration and committing the time for officers to attend. We have an exceptional group of law enforcement in Mower County and we appreciate their hard work and dedication.

Women’s Education/Support Group is expanding

CVRC is offering another group on Wednesdays that meets at 1 p.m. This addition will help those who would benefit from the group have more options to attend at a time convenient to their schedule.

Some of the topics discussed during the support group sessions are; the impact of the abuse on their life and their children’s life, useful skills (i.e. boundaries, assertiveness), red flags of abusive relationships and what healthy relationships look like. The goals of this support group are to help members identify what’s been going on in their relationship, and to help them understand they have the ability to make choices to improve their situation. Some participants are currently in the challenging relationship and the sessions can also help them make decisions about what might be appropriate in the future. We recognize that “leaving” is not always the best answer, nor is it always the safest.

If you know of someone who may benefit from this support group please have them give us a call at the office to schedule an intake. Like all services provided by CVRC the support group is provided free of charge.
Give Hope Through Help.

The Crime Victims Resource Center (CVRC) has been providing services to crime victims in Mower County since 1977. All services are provided free of charge, and an advocate is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to provide skilled, non-judgmental care and support services to anyone experiencing various types of crime, including victims of sexual assault and domestic assault, as well as general crimes like burglary and stalking.

You can make a difference for crime victims in Mower County by becoming a volunteer advocate. Advocates receive training so they can appropriately assist crime victims who call the CVRC crisis line for support, information and referrals. It is volunteer advocates who allow CVRC to provide 24-hour assistance to victims of crime by answering the crisis line via a cell phone after hours and on weekends and holidays when the office is closed.

Q: As a volunteer for CVRC would I ever be in an unsafe situation?

A: Absolutely not! It is a very important policy of CVRC that you are never in danger.

Q: I do not have a degree in psychology or social work – how do I know what to say to a person in crisis?

A: The training we provide gives you the tools and knowledge you need so that you can be an effective volunteer advocate. And – a CVRC team member is ALWAYS available as your backup to answer any questions you may have.

Q: What is the most important skill a CVRC volunteer should have?

A: The ability to listen is the most important skill a victim advocate can have. What people in crisis need is for someone to really listen to them and assure them that they eventually will be okay.

For more information call 507-437-6680.
Any person, regardless of age, gender or life circumstances can be a victim of crime.

The Crime Victims Resource Center (CVRC) is here to serve you and those close to you with support and options. Growth and recovery are encouraged by caring and skilled people in a nonjudgmental setting.

Our job is to work for changes which will enable all citizens to live in a community free of fear and violence through advocacy, actions and education.

The Crime Victims Resource Center will help individuals who have been victims of many different types of crime. Some of the specific crimes we work with are:

- Accidents involving intoxicated driver
- Assault
- Burglary
- Child Abuse
- Domestic Abuse/Assault
- Elder Abuse
- Harassment
- Sexual Abuse/Assault
- Stalking
- Terroristic Threats
- Theft

CVRC offers education/information presentations on the nature and scope of victimization, prevention strategies, and the services we provide.

All services of Crime Victims Resource Center are provided free of charge.

Crime Victims Resource Center
101 14th Street NW, Austin • 507-437-6680

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Victim Support Services

- 24 hour crisis hot-line
- Crisis counseling
- Safety planning
- Arranging emergency shelter
- Support groups
- Referrals to other agencies
- Emergency transportation
- Support during hospital examinations
- Support during police reporting
- Assistance with Orders for Protection and Harassment Restraining Orders
- Assistance with understanding the criminal justice system
- Accompaniment to court proceedings for support
- Updates on the progress of court proceedings
- Notification of victims’ rights

Crime Victims Resource Center is a free and confidential service brought to you in part through community funding by The Hormel Foundation, Minnesota Department of Public Safety and United Way of Mower County.

Looking for a speaker for your service/civic or professional organization?

Find us on Facebook: www.facebook.com/CVResourcecenter
Crime Victims Resource Center is always actively recruiting volunteers, but if you don’t have time and would still like to make a difference, donations and in-kind contributions help to keep this service available to victims free of charge. Please cut out and return the voucher below.

Here is my caring gift of:

☐ $15  ☐ $25  ☐ $40  ☐ Other ____________________________

Make checks payable to Crime Victims Resource Center and mail with this voucher to: Crime Victims Resource Center, 101 14th Street NW, Austin, Minnesota 55912.

Name: ____________________________  Phone: ______________________________
Address: ________________________________________________________________________________

☐ I would like to be recognized in publications  ☐ Please do not recognize me in publications