

# *The STOPLight*

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In 2002 our organization changed its name to Adults Saving Kids. Prior to that we were called A-STOP (Alliance for Speaking Truths On Prostitution), STOP (Speaking Truths On Prostitution), or Grassroots Ministry Alliance.

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The mission of Adults Saving Kids is to prevent commercial sexual exploitation, bringing honor and accountability to all relationships.

## *Second chance wisdom*

Cathy was active in her Christian youth group and helped teach Sunday School. Some of her friends were party-ers but not her. She had set some limits and tried to keep herself from doing drugs and meaningless sex.

One day she met Jason and felt she found a soul-mate. She found herself telling him her thoughts and feelings that she never thought she would tell a boy. He seemed to do the same. She felt this closeness and intimacy she had never experienced before. Before she knew it the relationship was becoming physical and at the time, it seemed so natural she couldn't figure out how to stop it. She became sexually active and didn't know how to tell her parents. Going to church became a pain.

Jim was a good athlete and brought up in the church. He had fun joking around with the youth pastor and had gone on a mission trip. It seemed right to him to have Christian values and not stray from the church.

One day all the seniors on his team said it was time for him to have a grown-up experience. They were all going to the strip club in the neighboring town. Everybody started piling into a couple of cars. He was caught off guard. He definitely did not want to look like a nerd so before he knew it, he was in the car with them.

On the way he remembered what he had heard in confirmation class. A woman who had been in stripping told of how she had been beaten up by a pimping guy and how much her kids had suffered. Jim didn't really want to get involved but didn't know how not to. So he went along with his friends anyway.

If you or I were Cathy or Jim, what would we do at this point? Most of us think we can be strong enough to not get then we get involved anyway. Now what? The most natural outcome is that we regard ourselves as "spoiled merchandise," so we despair of having it any other way. For us, following Christ is all about how we are doing. Wrong! **How so?**

Peter followed Jesus three years and when he saw that Jesus was going to be put to death, he jumped in with how loyal and strong he would be. “I will follow you, Jesus, even to the point of dying with you.” Boy, that strong will power felt good to him. \_\_\_\_\_

But Jesus did not buy it. Jesus told him, “Satan has demanded to have you that he might sift you like wheat but I prayed for you that your faith may not fail; and when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers and sisters” (Luke 22:31,32).

We know how Peter went on to deny Jesus three times, fearful for his own life (Luke 22:54-62). We also know how Jesus returned to restore him and commission him to Christian leadership (John 21). We often learn the hard way. Living in Christ is not about our personal smarts, our strong self-will.

Christ has come to turn our heads and hearts away from ourselves to his forgiveness, to his wisdom, to the eternal life he has given us. He did not come so that we can prove how strong we are, but how in him, we have first grace, then strength.

We ask him for wisdom rather than depending on our own. When we fall away as Peter did we need others to help us discover God has not abandoned us. The ministry of Christians is to keep interrupting the despair we each feel and call ourselves and others back to confession, forgiveness, and renewal.

The church is a hospital for sinners not a sanctuary for good people. Every congregation is challenged to be that kind of community. How are we going to be there for each other— like really?

When our youth quit coming after confirmation, does this not say something about the way they feel in relationship to all the adults? Have they ever felt really included, really important, like their faith and lives and gifts really mattered?

Have they experienced the adventure of following Christ, the power of prayer among us?

This is why Adults Saving Kids believes every congregation is called to have people praying specifically for its youth every day. We will not interrupt despair by being passive.

It is time to move out and make sure we are there for the young people even when they have messed things up. A big first step is for a congregation to get our prayer manual and enroll people in praying. This is a tremendous gift to every finding-their-way young person.

Step out and contact us for material if you are interested in having this happen in your congregation.

Wisdom in Christ is there for those who have realized their own weakness, their own foolishness.

When Abraham Lincoln was pressed to have Jefferson Davis, the president of the Confederacy be hanged, his reply was “Judge not, that ye be not judged.” When we recognize the log in our own eye, we will have more compassion for serving those who have come out on the losing end.

True wisdom comes forth from a community in Christ where people abide in Christ and in the surprise of being forgiven. We are not to tear down one another but to be a gift to benefit

one another and build up each other.

*by Rev. Al Erickson*

## ***The STOPLight: Giving voice to prevention***

*To celebrate the privilege of sharing the voices of this movement to prevent exploitation, we are providing excerpts from articles previously published. If an article grabs your attention, please go to our website [www.adultssavingkids.org](http://www.adultssavingkids.org) to read the complete article.*

### ***Survivors' stories dispel myths surrounding prostitution***

Fall 1990

These are the voices of survivors of prostitution. When we begin to listen we begin to understand. We start to see, as they see, the connections which bind up prostitution, child abuse, and rape under the name of violence, and we come to an understanding that these forms of violence are parameters of a world in which men's desires become women's reality.

### ***Court-ordered treatment for johns***

Spring 1991

A unique program has been developed for the treatment of men arrested for soliciting prostitution in Ramsey County, Minnesota.

### ***Confronting child sacrifice in America***

Fall 1991

Virtually all over the world, children are still being sacrificed in large numbers daily. The altars on which these kids are offered are *Sex* and *Power*.

### ***A tour of the streets***

April 1992

We serve homeless kids. For whatever reason, their family system has been shattered and they don't have the option of going home. There are tons of people willing to help our kids out on the streets. But the price the kids pay for that help, which is housing, clothing and food, is super high and usually involves sexual exploitation.

### ***Saving young lives***

November 1992

It's a real thrill to know how much we've helped these girls," says Frank Barnaba, "and how meaningful their lives have become." He can think of dozens of cases in which the lives of frightened, exploited young girls have been turned around. Today, he knows these former prostitutes as self-assured women; some married with children of their own, some in business ventures, and still others back in school.

***'I am a survivor!'***

June 1993

In 1990 I heard Al Erickson speak on the subject of truths about prostitution. I cried through most of the presentation because he was speaking in public that the church has to be a leader in helping those victimized by prostitution.

I knew I had to help him in some way. After conversing with him, I decided the best way I could help was to begin telling my own story of incest and prostitution. I am one of the victims he was speaking about. I am a survivor!

***Through a survivor's eyes***

August 1994

As a survivor of the strip industry, I have been subjected to numerous challenges to my claim that I am a survivor of sexual exploitation and abuse.

***Are you man enough to read this?***

August 1994

The sex industry would have us believe that being a “customer” (john) means we are real men and that the rules are fair to all involved. It connects being a real man with going to “gentlemen’s clubs.” It promotes the message that real men have the right to “adult entertainment” which hurts no one.

As one of the millions of men on this planet, I say this is plain and simple hogwash.

***Mind control is real and effective***

December 1994

Many people do not believe in mind control because they don't understand it. They think that the controlled person is just disobeying or rebelling against their parents and authority. But it does exist, and we must first understand mind control before we can deprogram the one whose mind is being controlled by someone else.

***What is holding us back?***

December 1994

How long can we in the church of Jesus Christ keep our heads in the sand without suffocating ourselves? What is keeping us from providing leadership and working hard so our youth won't be exploited?

***Teen's eyes are opened***

April 1995

I am writing this article to show a different point of view on the subject your newsletter expresses. The point of view is mine—that of a young adult. This is probably one group people don't get much feedback from and, really, it's kids' futures that are mostly affected by this problem.

***How does a regular guy become a john?***

April 1995

Men might boast of scoring with a woman. Most men do not boast of using a person in prostitution. It is hardly something to be proud of. It is expensive. It compromises any ethical standards he might have—like having a relationship of integrity with his wife and children and the outcome of their lives together. And it can be dangerous.

***Community involvement is needed***

August 1995

As a police officer, I had the task of enforcing laws against prostitution related crime. It was both a confusing and daunting task.

***Unconnected lust: The way life is?***

December 1995

Wherever we turn today, highly regarded and visible people in the media endorse and legitimize unconnected lust. Respected reporters, editors, and broadcasters condone, promote, and even celebrate unconnected lust as “the way life is.”

***Prevention begins with you and me***

May 1996

For the past eleven years, I have been working to help people who feel helpless, oppressed, and powerless over their lives. They speak of feeling violated to the core of their being, their soul. The people I work with are survivors of sexual violence. Over the years, I have come in contact with people who were victimized by a form of sexual violence-prostitution.

***Speaking up makes a difference***

September 1996

‘I’ve been thinking about our conversation... and I want you to know that I’ll never go to one of ‘those places’ again.”

***What a reporter—and dad learned***

December 1996

During August and September of this year, *The Christian Science Monitor* (CSM) ran a nine-part series called “The Child Sex Trade: Battling a Scourge.” Al Erickson, director of A-STOP, was quoted in two of the articles, and A-STOP was listed as one of the organizations working on the issue of commercial sexual exploitation of children. Mark Clayton, a CSM staff reporter who was assigned to report on this problem in North America talks about doing the series.

***Are you a father? Read this***

December 1996

This article is written for every man who has ever fathered a child. It is not written to blame anyone. My intention is to help you fathers see the impact you have on the lives of your children.

***Author enlightened by research***

April 1997

Rita Nakashima Brock is co-author with Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite of *Casting Stones*, a multicultural and multiracial theological reflection on prostitution from a global perspective. Dr. Brock recently spoke with *The STOP Light* about researching and writing the book.

***Prevention curriculum developed***

December 1997

Having young people live their lives in [a healthy, safe] way is a vision of A-STOP. *Wise as Serpents* is a tool that will help us achieve that vision. The confirmation curriculum will be used with junior high youth who are at an age in which they are very vulnerable to peer pressure or to being recruited and exploited by the sex industry.

***Young man, you have a life!***

December 1997

Young man, you have a life. In it you can create joy—or pain. Being a man means creating and building healthy relationships over a long period of time.

***Ploy of pimps: A warning to all***

April 1998

Mark is a former pimp. By way of warning, he reveals some of the tactics he used to get girls and young women into prostitution—and keep them involved.

***Are kids getting lost in cyberspace?***

September 1998

There was a time in America when pornography was only available in old, run-down buildings—a person had to intentionally seek it. In the past, worry about abduction ended when we locked our doors at night. Today, the Internet sidewalk leads directly into our homes.

***Bedbugs needed now!***

September 1998

A-STOP wants to be your bedbug-like friend. In fact, this very issue of *The STOPLight* might bite you a few times.

***Porn distributor earns new rating***

December 1998

Bill is a pretty typical 51-year-old guy; he has a wife, four children, a home in the suburbs. But just 2 years ago, Bill was part owner of the largest telemarketing porn video distribution company in the United States. Bill tells why he left the adult video business...

***Different dynamics: Boys in prostitution***

December 1998

Prostitution is a complex issue surrounded by a confusion of emotions, stereotypes, and unknowns. Much has been researched and written about women in prostitution, and many programs have been developed and funded to help them get out. But what about boys and young men in prostitution?

Who are they? Where do they come from? How do they get involved? Why do they do it? Who are their customers? Who is helping them to get out? What can be done to prevent it?

### ***Sexual addiction: Definition, prevention***

June 1999

Sexual addiction is an unmanageable or powerless pattern of acting out a sexual activity; it is a pathological relationship with sex. Like alcoholism, it's not defined by the kind of sexual activity, but is a pattern of behavior that generally gets worse over time (meaning the frequency increases), usually leading to destructive consequences.

### ***Survivor pursues real recovery***

October 1999

Heidi grew up in a small Minnesota town then went to college in Saint Paul. There she was recruited into prostitution. The next ten years of her life were spent in prostitution—her pimp was her husband. After getting out, she went back to college and got a bachelor's degree. Here she talks about her complex and on-going recovery.

### ***How can we grieve this tragedy?***

October 1999

Can we find a way to grieve a recent tragedy? In early August news broke that a very large family-operated prostitution ring was busted with raids, indictments, and arrests in Minnesota and elsewhere.

### ***Keeping kids safe—and parents sane***

December 1999

Book review of: *Protecting the Gift: Keeping Children and Teenagers Safe (And Parents Sane)* by Gavin de Becker. Gavin de Becker talks about things parents fear most for their children—things like abusive babysitters, school safety, abductions, sexual predators, guns, violence, suicide, more.

In this book, his premise is that the more you know, the less you'll fear. His promise is "by the end of this book, you'll know more and be uncertain less; see more and deny less; accept more and hesitate less; act more and worry less."

### ***Off to college***

July 2000

Heidi was an honor student in her small-town high school. She went off to college in a big city, and while there, was date-raped. That experience along with other factors in her life made her vulnerable to the recruitment of a pimp who eventually got her into prostitution. Here she offers insight into what kids going off to college should be aware of.

### ***Strip clubs: an insider's view***

November 2000

David Sherman spent 14 years managing various strip clubs in the United States. Five years ago he left that business and now tells others what really goes on in these clubs.

### ***Fish netting for your kids***

November 2000

In the early 1990's the concern of A-STOP was illegal pimping-how it enslaved young people and caused untold suffering in families... Today we are faced with a wholly different phenomenon in America: the right to cleverly and legally lead a young person (and older people as well) into traps which will devastate their lives.

### ***Internet crimes against children***

August 2001

This article is from an interview of Commander Rick Anderson of the St. Paul Police Department Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) task force.

### ***Building a wall of safety for kids***

August 2001

We can, brick by brick, begin to teach, to converse, to pray, to use good materials, to befriend, to speak out, to find ways to prepare our young people for what is coming at them. We can work to make sure what is coming at them is healthy. We can love and honor the lives of young people around us and give our time on their behalf. Once we do, we will meet others who are ready to build the wall with us.

### ***Special agent speaks out***

July 2002

This is an interview with Ann Quinn-Robinson, a special agent with the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA). She investigates juvenile prostitution cases.

*compiled by Amy Hartman*

## ***White House speaks for exploited kids***

What prompted President Bush to call a White House Conference on Missing, Exploited and Runaway Children?

American young people are sitting ducks for exploitation. There are so many vulnerable, needy, naïve youngsters and so many treacherous, greedy, lustful adults hunting them down, we now have an American disaster of unbelievable proportions.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America stated this problem in its *Message on Commercial Sexual Exploitation*, which it released earlier this year. Now the President has revealed the scope of the exploitation and declared its ruinous impact by having this special conference on Oct. 2, 2002, the first of its kind.

Two people from Adults Saving Kids went to the White House Conference: Carrie Graves, a North Carolina synod team member, and myself, Pastor Al Erickson.

This conference was motivated by recent horror stories of abductions and missing children. The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, started by John Walsh host of "America's Most Wanted," was a driving force in this conference.

What became apparent however was that a few hundred abductions a year cannot compare to the 300,000 American juveniles caught in prostitution. Nor can it compare to the 30 million American youngsters now on the Internet, one-fourth of whom receive unwanted sexual materials.

The Bush administration put forth top government leaders to speak and share throughout the day: President and Laura Bush, Attorney General John Ashcroft, Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson, FBI Director Robert Mueller, Education Secretary Roderick Page, and Secretary of State Cohn Powell.

Panels of experts in different fields also shared their insights. It was obvious that the problems of abductions, internet pornography access to kids, the sexual exploitation of kids, and how the government and others can respond to these dangers were taken very seriously by panel speakers and government officials alike.

Three women whom I have met before spoke about what we see as the real issue: the huge numbers of vulnerable, unsuspecting young people whose lives are being ruined by clever adults.

Chief Presiding Judge Nina Hickson of Fulton County in Atlanta spoke of how she and others in her community responded to local pimping operations by passing new state legislation and starting a shelter for exploited girls.

Dr. Laura Lederer of the U.S. State Department told how girls are recruited overseas and brought to the U.S. She stated the need for the U.S. to be a world leader to reduce the number of young people trafficked.

Susan Breault, Executive Director of the Paul & Lisa Program in Westbrook, CT, shared how there are young women from every state being prostituted in New York City. They have educated 200,000 students in schools about the recruitment and harm of the sex industry.

President Bush told the conference:

*Each year about a million girls and boys are trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation and forced labor. Such trafficking is nothing less than a modern form of slavery. All these dangers demand action to protect our children from harm.*

Some say President Bush is an alarmist. I say he is not alarmist enough. We Americans underestimate this tragedy in our midst—to our own peril. What are we going to do about it?

*by Rev. Al Erickson*

The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children can be reached at 1-800-843-5678 or 1-800-THE-LOST. Their website is [www.missingkids.com](http://www.missingkids.com).

They have free publications about:

- Female juvenile prostitution
- Child pornography
- Internet safety
- Safety tips for children

It is easier to build a strong child than to repair a broken adult. - Frederick Douglas

20% of our citizens are children, but they are 100 % of our future. Children are vulnerable and must be protected.

## ***About The STOP Light***

### ***Purpose***

*The STOP Light* is an educational tool that illuminates the realities of prostitution and provides resources, support, and hope to people of all cultures; and openings for action to families, survivors, people on prostitution, people vulnerable to recruitment, communities affected by prostitution, and the organizations in a position to work with these groups.

### ***Submissions***

We reserve the right to select, reject, and edit any material we receive. Submissions must include your name and address; anonymity will be honored when requested. Previously published material will be considered if source name and address is supplied and/or written permission to reprint accompanies the material. Articles published are not necessarily the opinion of the Adults Saving Kids Board of Directors or *The STOP Light* editorial committee. Any references to specific treatments, programs, or organizations do not constitute endorsement.

### ***Reprints***

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