2020 Highlights

• Innocents at Risk was selected by the Christ Church Georgetown to be a Mission Partner to expand awareness outreach of Human Trafficking to the community. Innocents at Risk is grateful to be selected to work with Christ Church Georgetown.

• On January 20th, as January is Human Trafficking Awareness Month, Innocents at Risk's Founder Deborah Sigmund was interviewed on MSNBC's online-only show, Road Map, by Ayman Mohyeldin. Deborah was asked about the Innocents at Risk's Flight Attendant Initiative, which she started in 2008 with Senior American Flight Attendant, Sandra Fiorini and The National Hotline Number. In 2009, The Department of Homeland Security partnered with Innocents at Risk to establish a Guide for Aviation Personnel to Report Human Trafficking which is used today. In 2009, Deborah introduced the Flight Initiative to Nancy Rivard and Airline Ambassadors who continue to help train aviation personnel. In 2009, Congressman Chris Smith invited Nancy Rivard (Airline Ambassadors) and Deborah Sigmund (Innocents at Risk) to speak at a Congressional Briefing to representatives of the US Airlines. From that briefing, American Airlines produced a one-page training bulletin using the Innocents at Risk Training Brochure for Flight Attendants. In 2010, Deborah met with the Secretary of Transportation, Secretary Raymond LaHood, regarding the Flight Attendant Initiative and asked for his support. Secretary LaHood agreed and began having everyone trained in transportation to spot situations of trafficking on trains, trucks, buses, shipping, cargo and all transportation sources. From that meeting, Truckers Against Trafficking was established. Today they are heroes and have trained millions of eyes on the highways.

• On January 28th, Innocents at Risk was invited by Secretary Elaine Chao, Secretary of The Department of Transportation, to attend "Combatting Human Trafficking in Transportation" event. Secretary Chao has taken the Department of Transportation to new heights with the "Putting the Brakes on Trafficking" initiative. Secretary Chao was joined by Representative Chris Smith, Representative Henry Cuellar, First lady of Georgia Marty Kemp, Utah Attorney General Sean Reyes, and Kendis Paris, Executive Director of Truckers Against Trafficking, and members from the Transportation Sector. The purpose of the event was to expand the efforts of the transportation industry to fight human trafficking. Secretary Chao was able to obtain 100 Signatures in 100 Days of members in the transportation industry to help end trafficking!

• On January 31st, President Donald Trump hosted The White House Summit in Honor of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 authored by Representative Christopher Smith to eliminate human trafficking! Federal, state, and local government officials watched the president sign a trafficking-prevention executive order. President Trump was joined by The Attorney General William Barr, The Acting Secretary of Homeland Security, Chad Wolf, Special Advisor Ivanka Trump, Ambassador John Richmond of the Trafficking in Persons Office, FBI Director Christopher Wray, Congressman Chris Smith, Representative Ann Wager, several human trafficking survivors, and leading nonprofit organizations. The event was to celebrate the advances our country has made in ending human trafficking and what needs to be done to eliminate the threat of sexual exploitation in women and children! President Trump declared that his administration would be dedicated to eradicating human trafficking.
On February 16th, our Founder Deborah Sigmund and Innocents at Risk Intern, Prachi Jhawar, Presented an Awareness Program at Christ Church Georgetown on Mission Sunday. Deborah and Prachi explained how everyone can get involved in fighting human trafficking and keeping children safe by staying alert, reporting red-flag situations, and talking about the issue.

On March 14th, Innocents at Risk and members of the Department of Homeland Security’s Blue Campaign were invited to Girl Scout Sovereignty Waldron's Human Trafficking Awareness Event for her Gold Award. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19, this event will be rescheduled in 2021. We look forward to working with Girl Scout Sovereignty Waldron this upcoming year.

Innocents at Risk continues to work in partnership with The National Center of Missing and Exploited Children to educate parents and students about how to stay safe online. Through weekly newsletters, recommended articles, and books we continually keep the public informed.

On June 25th, Innocents at Risk attended the Department of State's virtual event discussing the release of the new 2020 Trafficking Persons Report (The TIP Report) on June 16th. Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, spoke of the importance of the Trafficking Persons Report, which provides updates on each country's performance in fighting human trafficking. The 2020 TIP report also recognized and honored several trafficking survivors and showed the advances the U.S. has made in the fight against human trafficking.

On July 29, as a Member of Voices Against Trafficking, Innocents at Risk participated in a program in recognition of World Day Against Trafficking in Persons. In addition to Members of Voices Against Trafficking, the event included Secretary of Transportation Elaine Chao; Congressman Chris Smith; Representative Ann Wager; Congressman Greg Waldon; Congressman Jim Costa; Representative Debbie Lesko; Department of Homeland Security Chief Jerry Garnett of Immigration and Customs Enforcement; Ambassador Senator Nancy de la Sierra (Mexico); Senator Manuel Anorve (Mexico); Bishop Marcelo Sanchez Sorondo from the Vatican.

On August 19, Innocents at Risk attended an important video conference hosted by Ambassador John Richmond of the Office to Monitor Trafficking in Persons on "The Rise of Sex Trafficking Online in the United States and Around the Globe”. Expert panelists included Marissa Peden of the Dressember Foundation; Viona Dixon, regional director of the Canadian Eyes Open International Office; Priya Dhanai of the Asia Foundation; attorney Erin Burke; Yvette Corone, a caseworker in the Philippines; and Melissa Snow of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. Panelists stressed the importance of parents and guardians being alert and educated about what children are doing on the Internet. And panelists stressed that US technology companies need to cooperate with law enforcement to protect children.

On September 22nd, Attorney General William P. Barr hosted a virtual event where he announced in Atlanta, Georgia that The Department of Justice would be allocating over $100 Million Dollars dedicated to Fighting Human Trafficking. The funds were allocated to go to law enforcement and service providers of survivors. The Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) awarded over $97.4 million to state, local and tribal jurisdictions, service providers and task forces all over the country, while OJP's National Institute of Justice awarded the remaining $3.5 million to support research and evaluation on human trafficking.

On October 9th, Innocents at Risk joined The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, Shared Hope International, NCOSE, Enough is Enough, National Children's Alliance, and many other nonprofits in the effort to Take Down Porn Hub, a website that promotes child exploitation and sex trafficking.

On October 29, Washington Life Magazine joined Innocents at Risk, NCOSE, The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, and many other nonprofits by publishing an online article highlighting our efforts to pressure Congress to pass pending legislation, the EARN It Act, S 3398. EARN It Act will protect children from sexual exploitation by holding tech companies accountable for child sexual abuse material on their websites.
On November 29, Christ Church Georgetown announced that Innocents at Risk would again be a Christ Church Mission Partner for 2021! Innocents at Risk is very proud to work with Christ Church Georgetown for awareness outreach.

On December 6, Innocents at Risk's Founder Deborah Sigmund was invited by Women of Reform Judaism of the Temple Emanuel in Kensington, Md., to speak about The Flight Attendant Initiative and anti-trafficking success stories working with the Department of Homeland Security, the FBI, local law enforcement agency and nonprofit partners. Deborah said, "You do not have to be a flight attendant to report a red-flag situation to law enforcement or The National Human Trafficking Hotline" (888) 373-7888.

On December 8th, Innocents at Risk attended an event hosted by Secretary of Transportation, Secretary Elaine Chao "Combatting Human Trafficking in Transportation". The virtual event highlighted counter-trafficking initiatives across the transportation sector through leadership, funding, partnerships, policies and protocols, training and awareness, data and information-sharing, and victim and survivor support. Statements were made by Joel Szabat, Acting Under Secretary of Transportation for Policy, and TIP Ambassador John Cotton Richmond. The event featured three panels comprised of Transportation Leaders Against Human Trafficking stakeholders: State & Local Efforts, Private Sector and Airport Efforts, and NGO Efforts.

Our Innocents at Risk newsletters will continue with our updates for the remainder of 2020 and going into 2021.