



## MEDIA RELEASE

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Media Contact:

Angela McGettigan, Director of Community Relations & Development

[Angela@NOVABucks.org](mailto:Angela@NOVABucks.org)

215.343.6543

### NOVA Marks 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of BCAT During Human Trafficking Awareness Month

An opportunity to both remember & advocate for victims

(BUCKS COUNTY, Pa.) This month marks 10 years that the Bucks County Coalition Against Trafficking (BCAT), a project of NOVA, has been working to eliminate human trafficking in the county. Human trafficking, according the Department of Homeland Security is the “...use of force, fraud, or coercion to obtain some type of labor” either commercial or sex work.

To mark this milestone, NOVA invites members of the Bucks County community to participate in various events during January, which is also Human Trafficking Awareness Month, to both honor victims and raise awareness of this crime. The schedule of events is as follows:

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BCAT Quarterly Meeting—January 25, at 5:30 PM via Zoom. This free presentation, “The Truths about Trafficking” features Jackie Goldstein, MSW, LSW, a forensic interview specialist with the Philadelphia office of Homeland Security. She will focus on the tactics traffickers use to recruit victims and the kinds of trafficking seen in Bucks County and throughout the state. Question and Answer session to follow. To register, go to [novabucks.org/events](http://novabucks.org/events).

Survivor Voices in Art—From January 5 through January 31, Calm Water Coffee Roasters will display artwork created by survivors of human trafficking who live in the Bucks County area. This exhibit serves to support survivors and validate their experiences. It also ensures that their voices are included as awareness is raised about human trafficking. Calm Waters Coffee Roasters is located at 242 Mill Street, Bristol, PA.

Red Sand Project—Developed by artist and activist Molly Gochman in 2014, the Red Sand Project entails filling cracks in the sidewalk with red sand to call attention to the victims of human trafficking, who often fall through what the artist calls the “metaphoric cracks” of society. NOVA invites people in Bucks County to participate in this initiative by filling sidewalk cracks with red sand during the month of January to both highlight the crime of human trafficking and to raise awareness of the steps needed to end this crime.

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Red sand is available at NOVA's headquarters, located at 2370 York Road, Jamison, PA. Members of the community can share photos of the cracks they fill with red sand on social media while using the @BCAT handle and hashtag #RedSandProject. To learn more, go to [redsandproject.org](http://redsandproject.org).

The United Nations reports that human trafficking is a \$8-10 billion-dollar industry. In the U.S., the Urban Institute estimates that money made in the commercial sex trade in several major U.S. cities ranges from \$39 to \$290 million annually. Most victims of human trafficking are females, both adults and those under the age of 18. Boys, men and gender minorities can become victims of human trafficking as well. What these facts don't tell is the toll borne by the victims, many of whom are physically and sexually abused, not allowed access to money or identification documents and lacking knowledge about their whereabouts.

"Each of us has a role to play if we want to end human trafficking," said Elyse Hoekstra, BCAT Organizer. "Community involvement is key. Visit the NOVA website to learn how to recognize signs of trafficking. Contact state legislators and members of Congress to support legislation tightening laws against trafficking. Without action from thoughtful, committed citizens, human trafficking continues."

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### About NOVA

NOVA supports, counsels and empowers victims of sexual assault and other serious crimes in Bucks County and works to prevent and eliminate violence in society through advocacy, training, community education and prevention programs. Founded in 1974, NOVA is a non-profit 501(c)(3), community-based organization operating out of three offices in Fairless Hills, Jamison and Perkasié. Services are made possible through the financial support of federal, state and local government grants and contracts, corporations, foundations and private donations. All contributions are tax deductible to the extent provided by law. For more information, visit [www.NOVABucks.org](http://www.NOVABucks.org).

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Editor's Note: Interviews are available with NOVA staff. To schedule an interview, please contact Debbie Goetz at [dgoetz@dgmediaconnections.com](mailto:dgoetz@dgmediaconnections.com) or 215-630-5408.