

Report to MIA Working Group on Human Trafficking
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In mid-October, I participated in the Western Hemispheric Conference of Talitha Kum, which is an International Network of Consecrated Life Against Trafficking in Persons. Eight sister-led networks, representing sisters from Canada to the southern tip of Argentina, gathered in Cleveland, Ohio from October 24-27 to proclaim that "Borders are not Barriers" in working together to combat human trafficking. (<https://www.talithakum.info>). The website includes a photo of our group, including the interpreters, and details of the gathering itself. Four languages were spoken -- Spanish, Portuguese, French and English. It was a profoundly moving experience as well as a very fruitful one. It was clear that we all wanted to continue our collaboration. I was struck and moved by the enormous odds so many face in addressing human trafficking in their home countries as well as the complicated journey many made just to get to the Jesuit retreat house in Cleveland, Ohio USA. One sister from Honduras had a six-hour bus ride just to get to the airport in her country.

I continue education and advocacy efforts within and beyond the Mercy Community, using an issue-specific e-list on which there are over 350 people. They represent Mercy community members and associates, ministry colleagues, other religious communities, laypersons, students, etc. It is an inclusive list.

I continue to make presentations to a wide-variety of groups and organizations. Most notably this year was the Missouri Catholic Conference of Bishops Annual Assembly. This lead bridge building between our Diocesan Human Rights Office and me. A relationship ruptured under our previous bishop.

Besides me, five other West Midwest Mercy Sisters in the western half of the U.S. are addressing human trafficking through education, advocacy and direct services. We all belong to coalitions, statewide task forces and work in partnership and collaboration with others. I am also a member of the U.S. District Attorney's Office of Western Missouri's Coalition against Human Trafficking.

I am a member of a county health department human trafficking task force. An annual "*Day of Hope*" is sponsored by the health department for families in need. Two of us from the task force participated last year and will do so again this December. We emphasized the role of social media in human trafficking since all these families had children who could be at risk through media. Nineteen hundred families participated last year and a similar number is expected this year.

Another member of U.S. Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking and I staffed our exhibit at the August Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) Annual Assembly. Conference participants are leadership team members of women religious communities in

the U.S. We are exploring participating at the national Ecumenical Advocacy Days and the National Catholic Education Association's annual assembly, both in the spring.

I continue to provide referrals and serve as a consultant to groups, coalitions, organizations and individuals; and I participate in webinars and conference calls provided by colleagues and partners. Last May, I "face timed" with students from Mercy High School in Merion, Pennsylvania. In August, the editor of a local public school paper interviewed me for a human trafficking focused article. I also represent both Mercy and the USCSAHT at our state level, especially for the annual January human trafficking day for state legislators and their staffs.

I continue to serve as board member and Mercy representative to the U.S. Catholic Sisters against Human Trafficking, now a not for profit coalition whose membership consists of women religious from many communities or congregations as well as laypersons and collaborators. We have several working groups. I am a member of our educational resources advocacy working groups. We have an annual board meeting and work groups meet by regular conference calls.