



LEAVING 'THE LIFE'

'Falling through the cracks'

SERVICES, FUNDING FOR SEX TRAFFICKING VICTIMS IN SHORT SUPPLY



ROBERTO E. ROSALES / JOURNAL

Michelle Schroff, the executive director of Project Zoe, picks out clothes to give to a teenage girl who needs help. Project Zoe provides clothes and other personal items to at-risk teenagers.

How to get help
VICTIM HOTLINE:
505-Get-free

Other resources

THE LIFE LINK:
www.505getfree.org
PROJECT ZOE:
www.project-zoe.org
SPOKEN FOR NM:
www.spokenform.com
STREET SAFE NEW MEXICO:
www.streetsafenm.com

No escape
One victim's tragic end
A4

This is the second article in a two-part series about the often under-reported and under-detected crime of sex trafficking in New Mexico. It was spurred by the death of a 20-year-old woman who police say had been shot and killed by a hit man hired by the people who had been forcing her to sell sex.

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BY ELISE KAPLAN
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

When Michelle Schroff heard that one of the girls who used to attend workshops hosted by her nonprofit organization was killed in January after being trafficked for sex, she said she knew more had to be done to provide services and resources for at-risk teenagers.

The body of Tobin Lynn Stanfill, 20, was

discovered in a Foothills park in mid-January. Before she was killed, police say, she had been forced to work as a prostitute, locked in a dog crate in a hotel and threatened if she didn't make enough money — all signs that she was a victim of sex trafficking.

Two years ago, Stanfill had attended workshops conducted by Schroff's Project Zoe, a local nonprofit founded to give at-risk teenage girls a sense of belonging by providing them with clothes and personal items.

After Stanfill's death, Schroff said she began hosting breakfasts twice a month and looking for ways to fund a drop-in center for homeless teens in order to further her mission.

Schroff and a handful of other women in Albuquerque and Santa Fe are leading the charge to help victims of sex trafficking.

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Woman was trapped by sex trafficking life



Tobin Lynn Stanfill, 20

BY ELISE KAPLAN
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

Long before she was shot and killed in the Albuquerque Foothills early this year, Tobin Lynn Stanfill was a child growing up in the small New Mexico town of Tularosa.

She was the only girl to talk her way onto the youth football team. She was the middle daughter of four kids, "always protecting her sisters or anyone else that she thought would be harmed," her mother recalls.

But no one could help her in the end, when police say she was forced into prostitution and a terrifying last few weeks of life.

"When things were getting bad, she could not leave," said Shelley Repp, executive director of Spoken For, a

group whose mission is to prevent human trafficking in New Mexico. "That's how quickly the situation escalated."

In May, federal authorities arrested three people, including an Albuquerque couple, on sex trafficking charges. Detectives said they had hired a hit man to kill Stanfill and another man "because their activities were contrary to the objectives of the criminal sex trafficking organization."

Early trouble

As a child, Stanfill was bounced from home to home, living with her mother, then with each set of grandparents, said her mother, Cynthia Salazar.

"She was very strong-willed," Salazar

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Tough exam puts NM districts in funding bind

Thousands of students remain classified as English language learners

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BY KIM BURGESS
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

New Mexico students learning English as a second language are struggling to pass a tougher proficiency exam, which is creating budget challenges for districts, according to some administrators.

WIDA, a Wisconsin-based company, recently revamped the scoring system for the ACCESS assessment, which is used by New Mexico, and 38 other states and agencies to test English language learners.

Under the new system, it is much more difficult to earn a high score.

The change has impacted districts across the state.

Albuquerque Public Schools reported that roughly 16 percent of its ELL students met proficiency on the ACCESS test during the 2015-16 school year — about 2,200 children — but last year the rate fell to about 1 percent — 131 children out of roughly 10,000 in total.

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Board to probe double dipping

Co-op says it followed the rules

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BY DAN MCKAY
JOURNAL CAPITOL BUREAU

SANTA FE — A state board plans to investigate whether retired public school employees have been circumventing New Mexico's return-to-work regulations by drawing both a salary and a pension at the same time.

Critics call the practice double dipping. Hundreds of people who work at public schools throughout New Mexico could be affected, depending on how the state's retirement rules are interpreted, one official said.

The investigation involves retirees who work at schools, but as employees of a group called Cooperative Educational Services.

The central question is whether the employees really retired, or if they just continued working in

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STUDYING THE ANCIENTS



Highlands University students visit New Mexico archeological sites.

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Services, funding for victims in short supply

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ing by providing housing, clothing and other services through donations, volunteer efforts and other social programs.

That's in part because no state or local money was allocated this year to specifically help victims of human trafficking, even though advocates say victims have very specific problems that need to be addressed in order for them to recover and participate in the prosecution of those who were trafficking them.

During the 2015 and 2016 legislative session, the state allocated \$125,000 in its annual budget to be used to provide social services to victims of sex trafficking, sexual assault and domestic violence, but this funding was not included in the budget this year. The money, while not enough to fully fund any services, was helpful while it lasted.

Now advocates, like Schroff, are left entirely to their own devices to try to provide services for victims through donations and their own money.

They say victims who are trying to escape their traffickers and rebuild their lives need help, with or without state money.

NM scores low grade

Shared Hope International, a Vancouver, Wash., organization working to end sex trafficking, rates New Mexico's laws against sex trafficking as the sixth-worst in the nation. In the group's 2016 report card analyzing state laws about sentencing, reparations and more, New Mexico received a D grade.

State law says victims of human trafficking are eligible for benefits and services from the state as long as they are cooperating with an investigation, but the state budget no longer allocates any funds for these services.

Instead, advocacy organizations work with victims to find them services through existing social programs — like Section 8 housing and food stamps or shelters and soup kitchens.

Two years ago, the New



ROBERTO E. ROSALES / JOURNAL

In mid-January, police found the body of 20-year-old Tobi Lynn Stanfill in Supper Rock Park in a foothills neighborhood. Several months later, they arrested a hit man who they said had been hired by an Albuquerque couple who had been trafficking Stanfill for sex.

Mexico Attorney General's Office received a federal grant and worked with The Life Link behavioral health center to form a task force that focuses on identifying resources for trafficking victims throughout the state.

Lynn Sanchez, program director for The Life Link's Anti-Human Trafficking Initiative, said more often than not the organization finds there aren't enough appropriate services for victims in New Mexico, especially teenagers.

"We don't have any safe place in our state, so they wind up continuously victimized," Sanchez said. "They're falling through the cracks in the system or they're in juvenile detention centers or treatment centers."

Sanchez said that when the Anti-Human Trafficking Initiative still had money from the state, it was able to provide emergency services for sev-

eral victims of sex trafficking who needed a safe place to go immediately.

"That money was really important for creating that sense of well-being, safety and normalcy," Sanchez said. "Without that, they're back on the streets and back in desperate survival mode."

Nonprofits helping

The lack of state money for trafficking victims has authorities turning to nonprofits for help, as well.

Toya Kaplan, executive director and co-founder of Freedom House, said the Attorney General's Office, Homeland Security and the FBI have all brought sex trafficking victims to her 20-acre property in the Albuquerque area.

Kaplan said they have housed seven women since they opened two years ago, and are funded by the Kaplan family and

donations from churches and individuals.

Bernalillo County Sheriff's Office Detectives Kyle Hartsock and Kyle Woods work with the department's Ghost Unit, named "after the part of society that is often overlooked," according to the BCSO website.

When they begin working with a new teenage victim of sex trafficking, they also turn to nonprofits and visit Project Zoe's clean, brightly lit boutique to pick up care packages of clean clothing and personal hygiene products.

Schroff, who provides clothing for up to 10 suspected victims of sex trafficking each month, said Project Zoe gives clothing to girls to give them a sense of normalcy and to boost their self-esteem.

"The whole purpose is to instill worth, value and that their past doesn't define them," Schroff said. "They're more

than what their pimp told them."

For Hartsock, these services can make a difference in whether the victim will stick around and whether he can pursue a criminal case against the trafficker.

"We have to have a victim who is stable and who can give a coherent statement about what happened before a prosecutor is going to feel comfortable enough to take it to a grand jury," he said.

Sanchez said that she's seen a couple of different law enforcement agencies convict traffickers when The Life Link has been able to find consistent shelter for them.

"Either the victim is stabilized and the trafficker will plead or, if it does go to trial, the victim shows up because she has safety and support," Sanchez said. "You can't really touch the traffickers without providing victim support."

Woman was trapped by sex trafficking life with no escape

From **PAGE A1**

said. "She was a happy girl growing up. She was always protecting her sisters or anyone else that she thought would be harmed."

But her grandmother said Stanfill began to change around the age of 12 when she was diagnosed with bipolar disorder and started getting into fights with other students in Tularosa.

"I tried to keep her in school and in the eighth grade, I took her to psychiatric hospitals in El Paso and Las Cruces," said Rebecca Christopher, her grand-

mother. "She had a lot of anger at one time."

Stanfill was eventually sent to a juvenile justice center in Albuquerque after violating probation on charges that neither her mother nor grandmother could remember anymore. They say she blossomed at Camino Nuevo Youth Center, earned her GED, and took theater and Bible classes.

At 18, she was released to a reintroduction home and Christopher said that's when they began to worry about her again.

"Something went wrong and she got mixed up with the wrong

people," Christopher said. "Things went downhill."

'She had a heaviness'

Both her mother and grandmother said Stanfill had changed in the months leading up to her death.

They said when she returned home to Tularosa to visit, she was skittish and scared and depressed. When they talked to her on the phone, she was always in a rush to hang up.

"She had a heaviness about her when she had to go back (to Albuquerque)," Salazar said. "She said, 'I just have to go back,

Event planned

The Life Link and the city of Albuquerque are holding an event open to the public to raise awareness about anti-human trafficking efforts on July 30 from 4 to 8 p.m. at Civic Plaza.

you don't understand. Maybe one day you will, but right now you don't understand."

During a visit with her mother in early December, just weeks before she was killed, Stanfill received a text message, and packed up and left almost immediately.

"A vehicle came later on that evening or early that morning to pick her up," Salazar said, choking up at the memory. "That's the last time I saw my baby. She wasn't even home 24 hours."

Christopher said that although the family suspected something bad was going on with Stanfill, they could never have suspected she was being forced to have sex for money.

"I never dreamt it was human trafficking," Christopher said. "I didn't even know it was a thing in Albuquerque. It's really shocked our family."



COURTESY OF REBECCA CHRISTOPHER

Tobi Lynn Stanfill, 17, at her high school graduation from Camino Nuevo Youth Center.



Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

The County of Bernalillo, New Mexico, wishes to inform all interested parties that a public hearing will be held:

**Thursday, July 27, 2017
5:30 p.m.**

**North Valley Library, 7704 2nd St. NW
Albuquerque, NM 87107**

The purpose of this public hearing will be to report on past CDBG program activities and to receive public input on community development needs and suggestions for future CDBG projects. The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program was established under Title I of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, as amended, in order to assist communities in providing essential community facilities, providing decent housing for residents, promoting economic development and maintaining a suitable living environment. The State of New Mexico estimates the 2018 appropriation of \$9,000,000 to be distributed statewide on a competitive basis. State and national objectives of the CDBG Program require that assistance be made available for activities that address at least one of the following:

- 1) An activity identified as principally benefiting persons of low and moderate income;
- 2) Aid in the prevention and elimination of slums and blight;
- 3) Meet other community development needs of recent origin having a particular urgency because existing conditions pose a serious and immediate threat to the health and welfare of the community where other financial resources are not available to meet such needs.

Applications are limited to a maximum of \$500,000 without Certified Cost Estimates and \$750,000 with Certified Cost Estimates, except for planning applications which have a limit of \$50,000. Eligible activities and categories will be described. All interested parties are invited to attend, to submit project ideas, to provide supporting data and testimony, and other pertinent information. With sufficient notice, a translator will be provided for non-English speaking residents. Those unable to attend the public hearing may send written comments to:

CDBG Grant Program Requests
Attn: Richard Meadows
2400 Broadway Blvd. SE
Albuquerque, NM 87102
(505) 848-1598

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) NOTICIA AL PÚBLICO

Condado de Bernalillo, Nuevo Mexico, desea anunciar sobre las juntas publicas para informar a los interesados en el proceso de solicitud del programa de CDBG:

**Jueves, 27 de julio, 2017
5:30 de la tarde**

**North Valley Library, 7704 2nd St. NW
Albuquerque, NM 87107**

Esta junta considerará propuestas de proyectos para aplicación de 2018 fondos del Community Development Block Grant (CDBG). El estado de Nuevo Mexico ha recibido fondos en la cantidad de \$9,000,000. El programa de Community Development Block Grant fue establecido en 1974 bajo el Title I/Housing/Community Development Act para asistir:

- 1) A comunidades y a residentes de pocos o moderados recursos,
- 2) Ayudar a eliminar el deterioro urbano.
- 3) Y tambien estos fondos se pueden usar en condiciones de emergencia que pongan en peligro inmediato a la salud y bienestar de la gente.

El programa esta administrado por el estado de Nuevo Mexico, Department of Finance and Administration, Local Government Division. El publico esta invitado a hacer presentaciones, peticiones y recomendaciones al consejo acerca de los proyectos que se quieran aplicar para el próximo ciclo de fondos CDBG. El máximo total por cada aplicación es \$500,000 sin estimaciones de costos certificados o \$750,000 con estimaciones de costos certificados, excepto aplicaciones en la categoría de un plan de proyecto que tienen límite fijo de \$50,000. Si usted o su organización tienen un proyecto que pueda ser elegible para consideración, usted esta invitado a hacer su presentación y petición en esta reunión pública. Para los residentes que no hablan ingles, y requieren un interprete, contacten a la siguiente dirección una semana antes de la reunión. Para la gente que no puede atender la reunión pública, sus comentarios se recibirán en la siguiente dirección:

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