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Kristi House's Project GOLD awarded major U.S. Department of Justice grant

Award expands vocational and career development in its program for sex trafficked girls

MIAMI – Kristi House, the not-for-profit Children's Advocacy Center serving child-victims of abuse in Miami-Dade County, was awarded a federal grant from the U.S. Department of Justice, Office for Victims of Crime. The three-year, \$700,000 grant will add a major vocational and career development component, *Bridges to the Future*, to its program for sex trafficked girls, Project GOLD.

Kristi House's Project GOLD—the first and longest-running program in large Miami-Dade County dedicated to child sex trafficking—operates the only Drop In Center in South Florida exclusively for underage girls overcoming trafficking. The Drop In Center provides a home-like setting for engagement and delivery of restorative services, including case management, therapy, advocacy, transportation, educational and recreational enrichment.

Bridges to the Future will provide vocational/skills training, financial counseling, job readiness assistance, education programs, and assistance with education and professional certifications, internships and apprenticeships. Additionally, key staff will be added with vocational and career counseling experience, a Faculty Team comprised of several highly experienced university researchers and community professionals has signed on to assist this project, providing their talent and time to make a difference in girls' futures.

"Community professions working with trafficked girls have expressed the tremendous need for career and employment readiness training, an essential component of recovery, for this highly challenged population," CEO Claudia Kitchens said.

“We are very excited to be leading the way with *Bridges to the Future*, by undertaking this vital component and providing young women with the paths and tools to a bright future,” she said.

This three-year program will build upon services to some 400 girls since Project GOLD began. It is anticipated 90 girls will participate in the vocational and career component, and 2,250 or more will participate in education programs with a special focus on raising awareness of male and LGBTQI victims of trafficking.

Community partners in this program include professionals and researchers from Florida International University, Miami Dade College, and the Ark of Freedom Alliance, a survivor-led organization of human rights advocates working to prevent and combat the trafficking of male and transgender victims and survivors.

The grant from U.S. Department of Justice will allow Kristi House to continue and expand its services to sex-trafficked youth, while furthering its understanding of interventions and emotional healing for this population. By providing a specialized and robust career development program, Kristi House will lead the community in helping sex-trafficking victims create a sustainable recovery plan for the future.

About Kristi House

Kristi House is dedicated to eradicating child abuse and child sex trafficking. Kristi House works to heal victims, and train the community on how to prevent abuse atrocities by equipping professionals, children and families with evidence-based prevention practices. As the state-designated Children’s Advocacy Center for Miami-Dade County, Kristi House is responsible for coordinating the systems of justice and care for 1,400 child-victims of abuse each year, working side by side with our partners in law enforcement, medicine, prosecution and guardianship. Kristi House provides a full continuum of wrap-around services and care for victims and their families free of charge including mental health services, critical for recovery from the trauma of sexual abuse for most survivors.

Kristi House is located on the University of Miami/Jackson Memorial Hospital campus at 1265 NW 12 Ave. It operates four satellite locations for improved client access. Founded in 1995, Kristi House has served more than 16,750 victims of child abuse and their families. Thousands more are reached every year with education and prevention outreach programs. Visit www.kristihouse.org for more details.

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